



PO Box FM 648, Famona. Bulawayo, Zimbabwe

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### NEWSLETTER 69 / MARCH 2009 (s/be 2010)

#### **1 – WWW.MATOBO.ORG**

The MCS has finally joined the Web, and we hope our members will access our news and events via the Society's web site at [www.matobo.org](http://www.matobo.org). This should allow former members, and friends of the Matopos, spread across the globe to access news and stories about the Society, and our special hills. The site contains links to other Matopos sites (on both facebook and twitter) as well as to like-minded conservation bodies, related organisations and accommodation / visitor references. But members should remember that this is their site, so please send us your comments, suggested improvements, and most importantly news, pictures and articles about the hills! The site is not yet fully developed, but steady progress is being made. This newsletter will be posted on the site, along with membership application forms and an introduction to the Society.

We must thank Duncan Purchase for setting up our website and managing it for us – and the vision of our former Chairman Iain Sheasby who first proposed a web-site at a strategic planning meeting some years ago! Members who attended our planning meeting last year at Gordon Park will remember that the issue was raised again – and this time we have made progress! Thank you to all who have contributed and assisted.

#### **2 – WORLD ENVIRONMENT DAY**

The UN World Environment Day falls on Sunday 6<sup>th</sup> June. To commemorate and participate in this event, we shall again hold a Matopos clean-up event, scheduled for Saturday 5<sup>th</sup> June. We have approached National Parks to determine where we might be able to provide the most impact, and hope that our members will participate. Meet at the Churchill Arms at 8:30am, bring a picnic lunch, and of course gloves and bin bags!

#### **3 – RAINFALL**

The rains this year have been, well unusual! They started well enough, then dried out through January, and recovered well in February, through to April. But, whilst Bulawayo enjoyed rains that were well above average, the Matopos has had a year that has been behind average. For the first time ever, Bulawayo exceeded the eastern Matopos! Also, whilst Bulawayo enjoyed three particularly heavy storms (of the 100mm type), no such falls fell in the Matopos. But all the same, the hills look magnificent, the streams and rivers are flowing and every dam has spilt. Good rains over the Easter period have still to be accounted for.

Rainfall 31 Jan 2010; western Matopos 412.5mm; eastern Matopos 507.5mm; central 403.25mm

Rainfall 28 Feb; western Matopos 450mm; eastern Matopos 593mm; central 511.5mm. Byo 709mm.

Rainfall 31 March; western Matopos 502mm; eastern Matopos 700mm; central 516.75mm. Byo 779mm.

#### **4 – BOOK RAFFLE**

We continue to sell tickets for our raffle and we have now exceeded our target – but demand still seems good so tickets will be on sale at the next field trip. So if you have not yet bought your tickets, it's not too late. A reminder of the prizes; "Legacy on the Rocks" by Elspeth Parry (donated by Elspeth Parry) and "Albizia Southern Africa" by Martinus Steyn (donated by Brian Kalshoven).

## 5 – CALENDAR

16 May 2010	Ringing Rocks	Topic – tba
05 June 2010	RMNP	Topic – Annual Clean-up Day (World Environment Day)
15 August 2010	tba	Topic –tba
28 November 2010	AGM	Venue to be advised

(We will endeavour to keep to these dates, but reserve the right to make amendments)

## 6 - NEXT EVENT

Date	16 May 2010
Venue	The Ringing Rocks (Maleme Valley)
Meet	8:15am to leave by 8:30am, Churchill Arms Hotel
Travel	Trucks recommended
Details	Provide own chairs, tables, meals and drinks. Don't forget your hat!

A number of members over the years have asked about the “Ringing Rocks” and so finally we have arranged a field trip to this unique site. To our knowledge there are two such sites in the Matopos, but this is the more easily accessed, and better known (remember that access is relative!) We will visit the Ringing Rocks, and see if we can indeed play a tune.

Please remember that national park Fees will be payable, \$3 per person, and \$2 per car.

## 7 – REPORT BACK

(with appreciation to Cathy Sharp)

ED – The team left Bulawayo as usual, and the convoy made slow progress along the Old Gwanda Road, finally arriving at Matopo Mission, to be joined by some members on the bikes! On we went to arrive at the parking site on the Mshashasha River. As tradition dictates, morning tea followed, and then the hike to the Falls - longer this time as we were frequently stopped by our guest speaker Cathy Sharpe as mushrooms and fungi were spotted and unearthed! Finally, the falls, flowing well enough. Those eager members continued across and down to the pool at the foot of the falls. Of course, time ran on and soon we were all toiling back up the hills to return to the picnic site for a late, but well deserved, lunch.

*Cathy* - The fears that it was too dry for mushrooms were allayed when walking downwards towards the Falls - the drainage of water down the granite slopes obviously maintained enough soil moisture to encourage an interesting range of fungi. The most abundant group of mushrooms were the boletes (sponge fungi) that have tubes rather than gills underneath, and 10 different species were collected. Next were the *Amanita* group with 7 species, all characterized by having some form of volva or cup at the base of the stem. These ranged from a tiny white one found by one of the youngest members of the Society - he was low to the ground!!!! (5year old Ross Stephens) - and is an un-named species. Some of the others were: Nedzi or Sticky Top (*Amanita loosii*); *A. afrospinosa*, (the huge one covered in small pyramidal warts); *A. tanzanica* the bronze-orange one with white gills. 5 *Russula* species including one that's been collected from Matopos before but still undescribed - if possible and if I have a say in the matter, I'd like to call that one *Russula matopoensis*! The little red one with pink stem was *R. congolensis*, the dappled, green-grey one *R. termitophila*, and a large, fishy-smelling one I don't have a name for. There was only one chanterelle growing in the damp seep off the granite in the open sun at the Falls - possibly *Cantharellus heinemannianus*. This was growing with an *Inocybe* (an LBJ = 'little brown job', it's not only the birders who have such things on their checklist!) in the *Cortinarius* group which is not supposed to occur in Africa! Trust Zimbabwe to break the rules again! All the above are ecto-mycorrhizal fungi that have a symbiotic relationship with the roots of many of our miombo trees - the *Brachystegia tamarindoides* (= *glaucescens*) in Matopos.

There were many wood-rotting bracket fungi on fallen twigs and branches, the most common being a grey, funnel-shaped one with a stalk, *Microporus quarrei*. The *Hexagonia* with its honey-comb pores was also quite distinctive. These are saprotrophic fungi that utilize dead vegetation as their source of nutrient. We didn't find any litter fungi as these are obviously very susceptible to dry conditions - the litter does not hold its moisture as well as rotting wood does.

Overall, a good selection of species was collected. Had the woodland been wet we'd have been tripping over the mushrooms and one week later, I'd probably still be making my way down to the Falls

ED – After returning from the Falls, Cathy gave a most interesting talk to the members, demonstrating with the specimens collected. Having the samples to hold, touch and smell, made this particularly fascinating, and I think we will all appreciate the incredible rich fungi environment we have in the Matobo Hills!

## **8 – GROUND HORNBILL UPDATE**

(With acknowledgement to Elspeth Parry)

We thought it might be of interest for the Society to know that this term the Ground Hornbill Project will be teaching in their school workshops [amongst other subjects] on Preservation and Conservation of the Rock Art. 30 schools are visited each term and each will also be donated one of my books, "A Guide to the Rock Art of the Matobo Hills" for their libraries.

Possibly you know our work is supported in the main by the British Embassy, Harare with individual donations from well-wishers in the form of second-hand books/clothing/unwanted household goods/blankets/groceries etc. These are distributed to the schools and the communities who have been unfailingly helpful in finding us nests and acting as custodians.

We now have 32 nests many with chicks calling.

Book Aid International has also been magnificent in allowing us to distribute their new remainder books to all schools.

Tongayi Mwedzi, Assistant Curator in Ornithology at the Museum has now joined us so we are able to send him out for an hour from each school with 5-6 pupils and binoculars to learn birding. This is proving very successful.

## **9 – THE MOUNTAIN ACACIA**

As many of our members know, the Mountain Acacia is not an acacia. Rather it is a member of the same family as the Musasa, *Brachystegia speciformis*. Now just as you were getting used to that idea, and coming to terms with the Latin name for the Mountain acacia *Brachystegia glaucescens*, it has changed it's name – back to what it was about twenty years ago, namely *Brachystegia tamarindoides*. So when we last walked to Mshashasha falls we hiked under *Brachystegia glaucescens*, but this year we hiked under *Brachystegia tamarindoides*. It all looked pretty much the same to me! This is the dominant tree of the eastern Matopos, and like its cousin the Musasa it bursts into new leaves, of various colours and hues, in spring each year.

## **10 – RHINO UPDATE**

Sadly, we learned that a young rhino was killed in the Matobo Game Park around early January this year, and that the remains of one more rhino was found following a recent fire in the Park. In 2008 the Park lost five rhino, in 2009 another five and now within three months, the Matopos lost another two to poachers. This sets a very worrying trend especially as prior to this the Park was regarded as a very safe sanctuary with almost no losses, and consequently we bring a variety of news articles for your interest.

## **RHINO POACHING CONTINUES AROUND ZIMBABWE**

*Extract from SAVE Foundation October 2009 newsletter, Volume 23. Nicholas Duncan, SAVE Foundation Australia.*

**More than 150 black and white rhinos have been killed illegally since January 2008**, some 20% of Zimbabwe's total. As reported in the previous edition of our newsletter, this is the highest level of poaching activity in the past 15 years. There was slight lull from May to August, after nine poachers had been killed in three separate contacts in the south-east of the country, but they are now back and up to their old tricks!

It has been fairly widely reported, both in the southern African and world media, that the Zimbabwe rhino poaching syndicates are clearly linked to highly placed government officials, senior military personnel, Chinese nationals and some staff within the ranks of National Parks. I'd like to emphasize that the previous statement is based on publicly available media information and not my own personal

research. Another concerning fact is that every single poacher who has been brought before the courts in recent years has been released on bail or had the charges dismissed – many times when there had been written confessions??

**Members of the various rhino intensive protection zones and conservancies are to be congratulated on their bravery in confronting the various armed gangs around the country. We are indebted to their courage and commitment to maintain the rhino numbers within Zimbabwe.** Unfortunately, their wholehearted efforts are being undermined by just a few people who are hell bent on harvesting the remaining rhino horns whilst the country is still in a state of semi-lawlessness.

### ***FALSE CLAIMS, SAYS MINISTER***

*Herald, Thursday February 11, 2010*

Environment and Natural Resources Management Minister Francis Nhema says media reports about increased poaching in Zimbabwe are false. He said this in a meeting with the Convention of Trade in Endangered Species secretary-general Willen Wijnstekers at his offices yesterday. He added people opposed to the indigenisation of the commercial wildlife sector were behind the claims.

### **Poaching blamed on Zim soldiers**

*AP, Thursday February 11, 2010*

Harare - The leader of a UN programme to protect endangered species says Zimbabwean security forces are spearheading the poaching of elephants and rhinos in the troubled country.

The secretary-general of the UN Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (Cites), Willem Wijnstekers, said the Zimbabwe government would be brought before his organization's board to explain the poaching.

He said an investigation had found evidence that 200 rhinos had been poached.

Zimbabwe's minister of environment and natural resources management, Francis Nhema, says he has been briefed by police about security forces being involved in poaching.

Nhema says Zimbabwe is asking Cites to help

### **China buys up African rhinos 'to farm for horn'**

*From The Sunday Times (UK), 7 March, 2010; Jonathan Leake, Environment Editor*

Rhinos, among the world's most endangered and iconic animals, are being farmed on Chinese wildlife reserves in order to harvest their horns, a report by international conservation monitors has suggested. The monitors have found that China has imported 141 live white rhino from South Africa since 2000, far more than is needed for tourism purposes. They have also gathered evidence that the aim of the purchases is to set up rhino farms. "The suspicion is that these rhinos are being aggregated into herds and farmed for their horns, which are valued for medicinal purposes," said Tom Milliken of Traffic, the wildlife trade monitoring network. The revelation about China's surge in rhino purchases is part of an official report to be delivered to Cites (the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species). A meeting has been organised in Qatar from next weekend to discuss the burgeoning trade in threatened animals and plants.

The report says: "Since 2000 Chinese data suggest 141 rhinos were obtained from South Africa. Reports of horn harvesting of captive rhinos in China have surfaced but need further verification. Clarification on the purpose of keeping large aggregations of captive rhino in China would be welcomed." The discovery has alarmed British and European Union officials, who plan to ask the Chinese to explain if they are allowing rhino farming. Defra, the environment ministry, said: "There are allegations around horn harvesting of captive rhinos in China and these need to be investigated." Rhinos have suffered a catastrophic decline in numbers over the past 50 years. There are five rhino species, of which three live in Asia. One of these, the Javan rhino, is close to extinction, with just 130 creatures estimated to be left, while the closely related Sumatran rhino numbers only about 300. Even the great one-horned rhino, found mainly in India, has only about 2,800 animals.

However, it is the fate of the more numerous African rhinos that is causing the most concern because of a surge in poaching, as well as exports. Of the two African species, black rhinos number only about 4,200 while there are an estimated 17,500 white rhinos left. These days most are kept in reserves and wildlife parks, unlike a century ago when hundreds of thousands of animals roamed Africa. The recent decline is, according to Traffic, almost all because of surging demand for rhino horn in Asian traditional

medicine. Despite being made mainly of keratin, the same protein found in fingernails and hair, the ground-up horn is reputed to calm fevers such as malaria. There is also a renewed threat to rhinos from claims, said to be emanating from Vietnam, that the horn can cure cancer. Rhino horn is now so valuable that Vietnamese embassy officials have been caught trying to smuggle horns back home. Similarly, South Africa has seen a surge in applications from Vietnamese hunters for licences to shoot captive-bred animals in private wildlife reserves.

Mark Jones, programme director for Care for the Wild International, a conservation charity involved with the Cites agreement, said all rhino species were fully protected under the treaty - so the aim of the Qatar conference should be to improve enforcement. He added: "We would like to know what China is doing with all the live rhinos it is importing from South Africa but the increased reports of rhino poaching, particularly in South Africa and Zimbabwe, are very worrying too." Rhinos are just one of several species whose chances of survival could be determined by the talks. Others include African elephants, polar bears, bluefin tuna and hammerhead sharks. One of the thorniest issues under discussion is the growing number of tiger farms in China, where about 6,000 of the big cats are held in captivity - compared with the 50 or so which are left in the wild.

## **11 – PRESS STORIES**

### **Heir to Ndebele throne is found** *New Zimbabwe, Tuesday March 23, 2010*

The heir apparent to the Ndebele Kingdom is safe and well in northern South Africa, according to shock new research. History enthusiast Colls Ndlovu, who is researching a book, claims to have also found the grave of Nkulumane, the first son of King Mzilikazi, who had a brief reign as Ndebele King and has long been thought to have been killed on the orders of his father. Ngwalongwalo Mzilikazi Khumalo, born on March 13, 1938, told Ndlovu his father, Ndlundluluza Mzilikazi Khumalo, was the son of King Nkulumane. Nkulumane was installed as King when he became separated from his father who led his tribe from Zululand across the Limpopo River into modern day Zimbabwe in 1838. Mzilikazi's journey took him to Botswana, where he remained for many years while the group led by Nkulumane settled in Bulawayo. The group led by Nkulumane gave up the King for dead and hailed his young heir as successor. On his reappearance, Mzilikazi asserted control. Accounts of what followed differ, but it is generally accepted that Mzilikazi ordered Nkulumane to be taken back to Zululand, although another opinion says Nkulumane was executed along with dozens of chiefs who installed him in what is known as Ntabazinduna, just outside Bulawayo. Mzilikazi died in 1868, and according to the Dictionary of African Historical Biography, he never revealed Nkulumane's fate "nor did he designate another heir". Lobengula was installed as King in 1870 after a delegation he sent to KwaZulu-Natal to look for his half-brother, Nkulumane, searched for a year and could not find him. His ascent to the throne was unpopular with some of Mzilikazi's decorated troops, notably Mbiko Masuku, who led an uprising which was violently crushed. Ndlovu was researching a book on 'The Assassination of King Lobengula', the last Ndebele King who is believed to have died in 1893, when he stumbled on the tantalising findings. His research took him to the Phokeng township just outside Rustenburg, in the North West Province of South Africa, where he met Ngwalongwalo, who claims to be a third generation Prince and direct descendent to King Nkulumane. Ndlovu told *New Zimbabwe.com* from South Africa on Monday: "This is an exciting moment for the Ndebele people and indeed all Zimbabweans. History is being rewritten ... a lot of what we have been told about our history is being proved to be fiction.

## **12 – MATOPOS DVD ON SALE**

Members are reminded that the Matobo Hills World Heritage submission DVD is now available. Members wanting to acquire copies should contact the Secretary to place orders.

## **13 – WORLD HERITAGE NEWS**

### **UNESCO may relegate Victoria Falls** *Zim Online, Friday March 5, 2010*

HARARE – Zimbabwe's premier tourist resort Victoria Falls stands to lose its world heritage status unless the country's tourism officials and their Zambian counterparts urgently submit a status report to the United Nations' Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). The report that a senior Zimbabwean tourism official told the media was already eight years overdue is meant to apprise UNESCO of the conditions at the mighty waterfall that forms a major tourist attraction for both Zambia and Zimbabwe. "Technical teams in both countries are working overtime and we hope to complete it within two weeks," said the official who spoke on condition that he was not named because he was not authorised to talk to the press. "It is, however, quite clear that neither Zimbabwe nor Zambia has paid the matter the necessary attention, despite repeated requests from UNESCO," he said adding that the

two governments are in a "mad rush" to finish the report that has triggered panic in the two neighbours' governments. Over the past eight years, UNESCO has given large amounts of money to both the Zimbabwean and the Zambian governments and offered technical help to complete the project which is supposed to address issues including threats to the natural beauty of the area, for instance development on both sides of the border. The Victoria Falls that lies on the Zambezi River is officially ranked one of the world's natural wonders and is a prime tourist destination in southern Africa. Zimbabwe which is struggling to revive its tourism industry that has been in the doldrums over the past decade in the aftermath of President Robert Mugabe's chaotic and often violent land redistribution exercise that attracted negative publicity for the country to scare away foreign tourists, stands to lose more if UNESCO goes on to relegate Victoria Falls. "One can only imagine what the economic damage to Zimbabwe would be if this mighty waterfall were to lose its status, especially with the 2010 World Cup just around the corner," the tourism official said. Zimbabwe, expecting economic benefits from the World Cup to be held in South Africa, has been busy trying to spruce up tourist destinations, hotels and stadiums to lure World Cup teams and visitors. The Tourism Ministry has submitted a US\$28 million budget to treasury for the sector's needs during the June World Cup finals.

#### **14 – LEOPARD PROJECT UPDATE**

##### **Project Liaison Officer - Zambezi Society Leopard Project**

Due to accepting a full-time regional position to increase efforts to conserve cheetah and wild dog in Southern Africa, Dr Gianetta (Netty) Purchase is no longer able to carry out the role of Project Liaison Officer for the joint project between the PWMA, Zambezi Society and the Wildlife Conservation Research Unit (Oxford University). However, during the previous two years, Netty has been working closely with Roseline Mandisodza (a senior ecologist under the PWMA) and she is certain that Roseline will be able to continue the role of liaison between all stakeholders and the various leopard research projects taking place throughout the country. As Netty is still based in Bulawayo, she will continue to assist the project and the new Project Liaison Officer wherever possible, and looks forward to keeping abreast of all developments in the leopard research and management world of Zimbabwe. She would like to thank everyone who has assisted the project and taken part in workshops and questionnaire surveys in the last two years, and urges all to continue to work with the project towards the sustainable utilisation of leopard in Zimbabwe.

#### **15 – CONTACT DETAILS**

Please don't forget to keep the Society updated on your contact details, especially your e-mail address! We endeavour to keep in touch with our members – but it is a two-way exercise and we need your help and co-operation.

Friends of members are always welcome to attend our quarterly outings.

The Society is always looking for new members – help us to attract new members to the MCS.

Members are invited to make submissions to our newsletter and / or website.

#### **16 – BIRDLIFE UPDATES**

##### **INDIAN MYNAS**

We have been asked to let you know that Indian Mynas have arrived in Bulawayo and have probably been here for a while unobserved. There have been sightings reported by two people in March, one of 4 birds and the other of 6 – both within City limits. The group of 6 were on the roof of the National Executor & Trust building in Josiah Tongogara Street between 11<sup>th</sup> & 12<sup>th</sup> Avenues.

Any assistance you can give us in locating these unwanted birds will be much appreciated. We need to keep them out of the Bulawayo environs, and so protect the Matopos from this vermin. This is one creature you can kill on sight!

##### **RAPTOR SURVEY**

As you're undoubtedly aware, we (Birdlife) are running a raptor survey in the Matopos. Whenever you are in the Matopos, may we appeal to you to go armed with pencil and paper and make a note of any raptors you see. Ideally, apart from the species, we would like the date, time and GPS reading, and, if possible, the sex, age and what it's eating, if indeed you see it eating! This is the ideal information. But it would also be invaluable if you said something along the lines of "on Sunday morning on top of the third kopje on the left after you turn towards Maleme I saw a large brown raptor". A record of the sighting with as much description as possible, including size, is still useful to us, even if you don't

identify the species. And bear in mind that the survey is not restricted to the National Park or Game Park, but includes the whole of the Matobo Hills.

Data sheets are available from Cecilia Hubbard at Woodlands Service Station, and information can be emailed or handed to Cecilia or any committee member.

## **17 – MATOBO WORLD HERITAGE MTB CHALLENGE**

The Matobo World Heritage MTB Challenge was organised as a way of promoting not just the Matopos, but also its World Heritage Status. Consequently, a route was planned that took the 30 riders from the western corner of the site (Shashani dam) to the eastern boundary, at Esibomvu, from the southern edge to near the northern limits, from the lowest point (on the Tuli river) to the highest point (Mwazi hill), and across almost every major river – and just for good measure twice through the Mtshabezi Gorge! The route took cyclists through historic sites, such as Ndeleka's Pass, and the Tshingengoma Battle site, to places of interest such as Diana's Pools, the Orbicular Granite, Drum Kopje, Amadzimba cave, the Amadzimba Pearls (or pools), balancing rocks and so forth, and not forgetting botanical interest sites, such as the *Euphorbia confinalis* on the Badja plateau, or the various tree species along the way! National Parks gave permission for the ride to enter the southern side of the Game Park, and to ride through the Game Park (with a water stop at Mpopoma Dam) and past the iconic "Mother and Child" balancing rocks. The riders, over three days, rode 200km's and climbed an accumulated 2,750m. Whilst most of the route was cycling, there were a few places each day where cyclists had to carry their bikes uphill! Each rider was supplied with a set of route notes that detailed all the places of interest. And so after all this, did the riders enjoy it – a resounding yes. Did the event achieve its aims, again yes, and will we do it again, yes – so get your bike out and start to prepare for the 2011 Matobo Hills World Heritage MTB Challenge!

A BIG thank you to everyone who helped to make the event the success it was and especially to the following:

- The event sponsors, STANBIC BANK and PPC ZIMBABWE
- National Parks for permission to run the route through the Game Park and National Park
- The teams who tested the routes ahead of the event and Alan Winterton for doing the tracks for the GPS's
- Lee McNab and his chefs for the excellent catering
- Jean and Rob Whiley, Adele Edwards and Duncan Purchase for all their hard work over the three days, in support of the riders, and manning the daily water points.
- Andre Zietsman for providing drivers, and to the various seconds who supported teams en route.
- Camp Dwala for accommodation, and Maleme Rest Camp, for accommodation and allowing us access to the old tennis court area.

And finally - Well done to all those who participated, especially those who travelled down from Harare and up from Bots.

The ride was also a very interesting transect of the hills. There were valleys in the western hills through which the ride passed that were almost undamaged. Magnificent trees, undisturbed streams – almost National Park in status. There were however also parts of the National Park (such as Mtsheli Dam) that resemble the overgrazed communal lands, with fences down and gates broken. Through the Game Park the vegetation was thick, and the fence appeared secure. There was evidence of wood cutting, and dragging of timbers along the paths (which causes erosion) throughout the route. The Khumalo Communal Lands appeared to be better managed environmentally than the Matopo Communal Land – but stream bank cultivation was obvious throughout. At one site, villagers were seen filling a dip tank using buckets – some determination and a sense of community! The rivers were flowing well, but contained a lot of sand – an indicator of poor land management practice upstream – and there was a lot of surface water. Of botanical interest was the finding of a grove of mature *Brachystegia tamarindoides* just 5km's from the Shashani Dam – the most westerly report of this species which is much more common in the eastern hills, and a number of fine specimens of various other tree species en route.

Each cyclist received a cycling jersey that carried not only the sponsor's logos, but also the logos of the Matobo Conservation Society and the Matobo Hills World Heritage Site, along with our website detail [www.matobo.org](http://www.matobo.org). These green and white jerseys will act as advertising for the Society and the World Heritage Site. A special white jersey was presented to the best rider – not necessarily the fastest! This

was won by Jeremy Hubert for rendering assistance to a crashed cyclist on day 2 of the event. The winning time was 14hours and 43 minutes, the last team was in at 25 hours 44minutes.

### **18 – WESTONBIRT CHARITY RUN**

On 24th May 2010 it is the Westonbirt 10Km run.

For our friends in the United Kingdom! A charity fun run has been organized to raise funds for the Matobo Conservation Society – so get out your boots, give your friends a call, and join in for a good cause! For more information contact Mr John Burton on burtonsuk@tiscali.co.uk.

### **19 – WORLDS VIEW NEWS**

We have received reports that National Museums and Monuments have imposed a “photo fee” at the World’s View. The Society has written to both the Regional Director and the National Executive Director in Harare to obtain details of this practice as it seems incredible, and have requested a copy of the authorising gazette. We await their response. When there are insufficient National Museum Staff to protect our rich rock art history, it is very frustrating that staff can be found to act as “minders” to tail visitors up the hill to count the number of clicks of your camera. Not only does this irritate visitors, it spoils the solitude of the site, and of course adds to the already excess expenses paid by visitors which contribute to the making the Matopos the most expensive site to visit in the Country. An own goal for promoting tourism? These minders have no knowledge of the site, and so add absolutely no value to the visitor’s experience. The MCS will pursue this matter further if the authorities confirm this practice.

### **20 - FAREWELL**

Penny and Adrian Feather left for France at the end of March. They will be sorely missed by the Society, and the community at large, whilst Penny’s knowledge in the world of birding will be a great loss. However, we wish them well in the new homeland, and hope it won’t be long until they visit us!

We also bid farewell to Fr Noel Scott who has returned to his Irish homeland after a life of service to Bulawayo. Fr Noel was a regular Matopos visitor, enjoyed weekly walks in the hills, and has been a member of the Society almost from its inception. We wish him well “back home”.

### **21 - FINAL COMMENT**

This, our 69<sup>th</sup> Newsletter, is the largest yet produced at eight pages. Let’s hope this is a sign of increased activity within the Society!