

MATOBO



SOCIETY

PO Box FM 648, Famona. Bulawayo, Zimbabwe

www.matobo.org

Welfare No: W/O 30/94

NEWSLETTER 70 / JULY 2010

1 – MATOPOS ELEPHANTS

Elephants were essentially shot out of the highveld by about 1850, but recent evidence suggests that they are returning to reclaim their lost lands. Perhaps they also have a valid land claim!

In May, three elephants were reported at Esigodini, and at least one of these then ventured further north to take up temporary residence at Hillside Dams. Overnight he moved on down the Matsheumhlope - leaving sizable footprints across the Bulawayo Golf Club. He passed through the city, and literally through a few business yards (knocking down walls and sending terrified security guards scurrying for cover) before leaving via the Khami Rd. He was reported later near Solusi University.

A day later a lone animal was reported at Big Cave Camp, having entered the property from the north, and leaving in much the same direction. We assume this was the same traveller that had been through Bulawayo.

At about the same time another three elephants meandered up the Umzingwane valley, and then along the upper reaches of the Mtshabezi before reaching Ntunja Business Centre on the Old Gwanda Road. They then travelled towards Camp Dwala, but before reaching those high valleys, they sadly killed a local villager and were then chased back in the direction of the Umzingwane. We believe that one of the three was killed by the authorities – an eye for an eye?

Then two weeks later further evidence of elephant - in the form of dung, was seen by Norman Scott at Gordon Park - clearly an elephant had taken a walk in the park! Now, at 4500 kilograms for a male adult, there is some royalty for you!

These are not the first to visit in the last year, for Big Cave Camp had elephant last October, Camp Dwala the year before, and two years ago four young adult males were seen in the bush near World's View, four kilometres from Gordon Park. So we had better add "Elephant" to the mammals list of the Matopos and pay a little more attention to our rock art depictions of these great beasts that once roamed our old hills.

2 – WORLD ENVIRONMENT DAY

The MCS intended to mark the World Environment Day by undertaking the annual clean up within the National Park. Unfortunately, whilst Parks were keen for the clean-up exercise, they would not grant free entry (as had been done in prior years). The members decided that as one good turn deserves another, and that if Parks did not want to "play ball" that the outing would go ahead elsewhere, and so the small band of volunteers found themselves on an impromptu field trip to an interesting, but seldom visited, cave south west of Sotcha. The grannies were literally dragged up, but the effort was worth it.

3 – RAINFALL

Finally, after some late and unexpected rains in June (between 20 and 25 mm in parts of the Matopos), the rains came to an end, and so at the end of the season, 30th June, the final rainfall amounted to:

Rainfall 30 June 2010; western Matopos 712.5mm; eastern Matopos 797mm; Bulawayo 904mm

It is not often, if ever that Bulawayo receives more rain than the eastern Matopos! The western Matopos finished above average by 112mm (average 600mm) and the eastern Matopos on average (800mm).

4 – NEWS FROM NPWMA

Herald, Thursday May 6

The National Parks and Wildlife Management Authority has appointed Vitalis Chadenga as its new Director General. Parks board chairman George Pangeti on Tuesday said Chadenga is replacing Morris Mutsambiwa whose term expired in March.

5 - NEXT EVENT

Date	15 August 2010
Venue	Mtshelili Dam
Meet	8:15am to leave by 8:30am, Churchill Arms Hotel
Travel	All vehicles
Details	Provide own chairs, tables, meals and drinks. Don't forget your hat!

This outing is in conjunction with Birdlife Matabeleland, and as you can guess is directed at a study of birdlife in the Matobo Hills. We have selected Mtshelili as this should also give us good water fowl as well as other species – at the same time this will be our first outing to what is arguably the prettiest dam in the Rhodes Matopos National Park. So join us for a spring outing with our twitter colleagues! Please remember that National Park Fees will be payable, \$4 per person, and \$2 per car.

6 – REPORT BACK

For some years members had asked to visit the “Ringing Rocks” of the Maleme valley. Well, they are more correctly called rock gongs, and they are not quite in the Maleme Valley – but all the same the expedition went ahead, with a pay stop at Whitewaters and a tea stop at the Lion paintings. The unusual heavy rains in that part of the Park caused some consternation to our Chairman – but not to be put off by a little water and mud, the outing proceeded as planned. We had a few slippery moments, until the first major river was reached. Paul Hubbard, in a little Suzuki 4x4 took the plunge and crossed safely to the other side. Iain Sheasby abandoned his Toyota at the side of the river, but Mary Friend in a standard truck forced her way across – well Adele Edwards was at the wheel! The track rapidly degenerated into an overgrown grass field, fallen logs and ant bear holes. But the convoy made steady if slow progress, and had to negotiate some rocky climbs. Finally, within site of the destination a large vlei was encountered. One car, two, three and then the mud began to claw its way back, claiming a few victims. But with ropes and manpower everyone was through, and we were soon banging away at rock gongs and every other poor rock within site! Lunch was had nearby, then a short walk, before the party started to return. Now the return trip was more adventurous, and the party split into two. Little did we know that the front party possessed Iain's car keys, and the second group had Iain! So when the last major river was reached, Iain's car had to be abandoned, and the second convoy journeyed back to Bulawayo in search of the “lost keys”. Later in the evening, Gavin Stephens returned with Iain to collect the lonely white Toyota from the moonlit Matopos wilderness! It's not the first-time keys have gone home alone! All in all, this was an outing for those with a sense of adventure and fun. You had to get wet and muddy, and trot slowly along the old tracks. But it was a great, if unusual, outing for those who attended and thanks to Paul for his shared knowledge.

We wonder if any members know of other “Rock Gongs” in the Matopos? They may be easier to visit! ED – we were unable to organise a tune on the “Ringing Rocks”, clearly we need a bit more practice!

7 – FROM OUR MEMBERS

We received an interesting contribution from one of our senior members following the last Newsletter, article entitled “Heir to the Ndebele Throne is found.”

Trevor Hemans writes – “Congratulations on a most interesting newsletter. Regarding Nkulumane, rumour had it in old Natal that when Nkulumane was evicted by Lobengula and returned South he obtained employment as a stable attendant to Sir Theophilus Shepstone (*Somsteu*). What his ultimate fate was is not known. Shepstone was my late wife's great great grand-father. I will try to get more information.”

8 – 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).

9 – CALENDAR

15 August 2010 Mtshelili Dam Topic – Birdlife
28 November 2010 AGM Venue to be advised

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

10 – RHINO UPDATE

POACHER KILLED

Herald, Friday June 18, web edition

Rangers from the Parks and Wildlife Management Authority have shot and killed one of Zimbabwe's most wanted rhinoceros poachers who had been on the run for close to 20 years. Samuel "Big Sam" Mazhongwe, who came from a family with 2 other known poachers, died last week after a shootout with Parks rangers at Mazunga Ranch in the Bubyane Conservancy. Parks Authority public relations manager Caroline Washaya-Moyo on Wednesday said Mazhongwe was in the company of 2 unidentified poachers who fled the scene. She said on June 6 this year, Mazhongwe, who was armed with an AK-47 rifle, spotted the game rangers and shot at them. The rangers returned fire and hit Mazhongwe.

11 – POACHING

Unconfirmed reports indicate that poaching of zebra has again surfaced in Matabeleland South. It's hard to believe that any zebra had survived the last onslaught, but apparently some had and it seems the poachers are determined to drive this species in extinction in this province. The Society is concerned that this latest surge will follow the last pattern, that is continue northwards until the animals within the Matobo National Park and surrounding farms become the target.

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 – MONUMENTS

Herald, Tuesday July 13, 2010

Old Bulawayo, the traditional palace of the late Great King Lobengula, is falling apart with many structures at the site dilapidated owing to lack of maintenance. The palace's King's Kraal – which houses a cattle kraal, the King's Palace and a site museum among other structures – is now an eyesore with the main palisade broken. Only the northern side of the palisade from the eastern entrance is still in reasonable shape while a heap of rotten poles resembles the palisade on the western and southern ends. Poles making the cattle kraal are completely rotten with long grass within and outside the kraal. Only 6 of the 21 beehive huts (*amaqhugwana*) have been maintained. However, the National Museums and Monuments of Zimbabwe maintain that the old place is in good shape as it was impossible to retain it in its original state.

14 – CONTACT DETAILS

Please don't forget to keep the Society updated on your contact details, especially your e-mail address! 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.

15 - NATIONAL PARKS FEES

National Parks fees increased from 1 May 2010 and are as follows-

Entry	\$4	Non-resident US\$15 (\$12 regional)	Children under 12 half price
Vehicle	\$2	Non-resident US \$5	
Eagle	\$165	Regional US\$125	Tourist US\$165 per lodge per night (4 persons)
Lodge	\$140	Regional US\$110	Tourist US\$140 per lodge per night (4 persons)
Chalet	\$40	Regional US\$75	Tourist US\$40 per lodge per night (2 persons)
Camping	\$50	Regional US\$40	Tourist US\$50 per person per night

There seem to be some anomalies in these figures, they are set to change, so please liaise with NPWMA.

16 – SUBSCRIPTIONS 2010

FAMILY / INDIVIDUAL	R 50
SPECIAL / PENSION	R 15
CORPORATE	R 150

These new subs were agreed at the AGM and are due by 31st July 2010.

17 – MATOBO HILLS CLASSIC

The annual Matobo Hills Classic MTB event will take place in September this year. This two day event has proved to be a real hit with growing numbers and teams from outside of the Bulawayo area taking part. Contact the secretary if you require more information.

18 – WESTONBIRT CHARITY RUN

On 24th May 2010 the Westonbirt 10Km run was held, and funds were raised in support of the MCS. We are looking to combine these amounts with the proceeds of the Matobo Hills World Heritage MTB Challenge and see if we can't repair or renovate the ablution block at Maleme Rest Camp.

We extend our appreciation to our friends in the United Kingdom for their support! Those resident in the UK who may want more information should contact Mr John Burton on burtonsuk@tiscali.co.uk.

19 – MOPANI FLIES

Soon we will be out of winter and approaching the hot dry months of September and October. Whilst we enjoy the return of the warmer weather it also heralds the return of the Mopani bee – and nothing irritates one more than a swarm of these little critters around you head on a dry summer's day! Mary Friend writes with a useful tip - "10% dettol in water sprayed on frequently" acts as a simple but effective repellent. Thank-you Mary - any other tips for beating off the Mopani Flies? Whilst we are at it, any tips from our members for fending off pepper ticks?

20 – PROPOSED CONSTITUTIONAL CHANGES

Our present Constitution contains an amendment that is reproduced below:

D Subscriptions

D-1 Subscriptions shall fall due on 31 JULY of each financial year, and members not paid up as at the Annual General Meeting shall not be allowed to vote.

D-2 The members at the Annual General Meeting shall set the subscriptions for the following year, due on 31 July of the following year.

It is the recommendation of the Committee that this be changed to read as follows:

D-1 Subscriptions shall fall due on 1 OCTOBER of each financial year, and members not paid up as at the Annual General Meeting shall not be allowed to vote.

D-2 The members at the Annual General Meeting shall set, or alternatively allow the Committee to subsequently review, the subscriptions for the following year.

Please note that our Financial year runs from 1 October to 30 September, and our accounting policies provide for recognition of revenue on a cash received basis only, so members who have not paid subscriptions before the AGM will automatically have lost their membership.

21 – www.MATOBO.ORG

We trust you have visited our website!

Please give us news, views and links to other sites

23 – ERRATA

The last Newsletter was dated March 2009 when it should have read March 2010! Our apologies!

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24 – SUBSCRIPTIONS 2010/11

Due by 31 July 2010. Changed Address? Please update our records

NAME	ADDRESS
MEMBERSHIP CATEGORY	
AMOUNT Cheque / Cash	
EMAIL	

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