

MATOBO



SOCIETY

PO Box FM 648, Famona. Bulawayo, Zimbabwe

www.matobo.org

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NEWSLETTER 73 / MARCH 2011

1 – RHINO SLAUGHTER IN THE MATOPOS

Poachers killed 5 rhinos in Bulawayo in 2 weeks in Mid-January, in an unprecedented onslaught on the endangered species. The development has forced the government to deploy security forces in all rhino sanctuaries. The rhino is an internationally-declared endangered species facing extinction and is valued at \$120 000 per beast. 5 rhinos were killed in the Matopos National Park just outside Bulawayo in the week ending January 15 while 2 others were killed at Ruware Ranch outside Chiredzi last week. Both areas are intensive rhino protection zones and the poachers are using rifles fitted with silencers or poisoning the animals. The rhino horn has a ready market in Asia, albeit an illegal one. Although the rhino horn is believed to be an aphrodisiac, there is no scientifically proven medicinal value – *Herald, Tuesday January 25, 2011.*

Police have arrested 4 poachers who last month escaped from National Parks rangers who were trailing them at Matopo National Park. They have recovered two AK-47 rifles, three magazines and 113 rounds of ammunition. Police spokesperson Superintendent Andrew Phiri yesterday said they were also looking for an ex-National Parks member Ndodana Dube, Dumisani Moyo (believed to be the ringleader), and 4 Zambians who could have escaped the country – *Herald, Friday February 11, 2011.*

2 – ZEBRA POACHING UPDATE

The Police Crack Team swooped on 4 people who were reportedly trying to smuggle copper cables and zebra hides to South Africa in separate incidents last week. The 4 were travelling in 2 buses when police intercepted them and recovered 1.621 tonnes of copper cables and zebra hides worth \$21 000. Chief police spokesperson Senior Assistant Commissioner Wayne Bvudzijena yesterday said the suspects will appear in court soon – *Herald, Thursday January 27, 2011.*

3 – POACHING UPDATE

Poaching of the rhino and elephant went down by 49% in 2010 after an intensive antipoaching drive, the National Parks and Wildlife Management Authority has said. At least 144 poachers were arrested while 31 rifles, 226 rounds of live ammunition were recovered during the year under review. Among the poachers were 125 Zimbabweans, 7 Zambians, three Congolese, 3 South Africans and 6 Batswana. Parks public relations manager Caroline Washaya Moyo recently said there were 82 cases involving poaching of elephants, rhinos and other game – *Herald, Tuesday January 11, 2011.*

ED - Whilst this may be true of the country, it does not apply to the Matopos, which is suffering its greatest losses ever recorded.

4 – MATOPOS MERCHANDISE ON SALE

Members are reminded that the Matobo Hills World Heritage submission DVD is Available. Members wanting to acquire copies should contact the Secretary to place orders. The Society also has both branded hats and caps for sale, at a price of \$10.00 per item. These articles have proved popular in the past. Please contact the Secretary for orders. We hope to be able to make available shirts and other items during 2011.

5 – MEMBERSHIP 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.

6 - NEXT EVENT

Date	10 April 2011
Venue	Mt Fumukwe
Meet	7:45am to leave by 8:00am, Churchill Arms Hotel
Travel	All vehicles
Details	Provide own chairs, tables, meals and drinks. Don't forget your hat!

PLEASE NOTE THE EARLIER DEPARTURE TIME. This is due to the lengthy drive to our destination.

Please ensure that your vehicle has adequate fuel!

Mt Fumugwe is one of the largest hills in the South Western Matopos. Local tradition prevents one from pointing at the hill lest it bring inclement weather. The drive is through a very interesting part of the hills, with a fine view of Njelele, and the road is in fair condition. Dr Phinot Moyo will speak to us about local traditions, history and Ndebele culture, before we set out to climb the great dome. This promises to be an interesting talk given the rich history of this area. After lunch we will visit Fumugwe School. It would be appreciated if we could take any excess pens, pencils etc to give to the school. So please clear out your cupboards and give to a worthy cause.

7 – REPORT BACK

The outing to Tshingengoma (Drum Kopje) was very well supported; there were at least 13 vehicles that set out, some with more than four people in them! We all made it to the first stop, Rhodes Indaba Site, which though still fenced, is very overgrown; however, we all enjoyed the sighting of a climbing *Gloriosa superba* (a maroon flame lily) in the bushes nearby.

The road was a bit potholed in places but not too bad, but one intrepid vehicle took one look at a stream crossing and refused to go further, so the owners left it under a tree and continued with friends for our outing.

We travelled on the Lumane valley road and turned left at the Shale School turnoff and went some way into lovely countryside to our picnic site, near a few huts with mealies growing and the rather Swiss Alps sound of cattle with bells on them! All had tea and then trekked up Tshingengoma to see the "Drum", a large African drum shaped rock perched on the side of the mountain.

We could see a muddy Umzingwane Dam in the far distance from the spectacular 360 view at the top. Gavin pointed out certain peaks and points of interesting, noting that the Matobo Hills World heritage MTB Challenge passes over the summit of Tshingengoma itself.

After lunch back at the picnic site we all started off to the stream nearby to follow it to a set of falls. Some went down to the base where there was a lovely pool in which the kids swam and played and we believe it was very refreshing, and all kinds of fungi and sedges were spotted around that area. It was a lovely day, the sun shone and the air was cool, everyone enjoyed themselves immensely.

On the way back we towed the poor vehicle left under the tree on an interesting route home over the Blue Hills, coming out near Esigodini

8 – NEW CELL PHONE MAST

Shortly after our visit to Tshingengoma we learnt that a new cell phone tower had been erected on the hill Pata just south of Tshingengoma (Pata is incorrectly labelled as Mazhowe on the Government Survey Maps). This is one of the highest points in the eastern Matopos – and it is sad to see this huge granite dwala marked by a cell phone tower. Your committee is endeavouring to enquire as to which cell phone service provider erected the tower – the second to have been erected within the World Heritage Site. It again shows the importance of the World Heritage Management Committee – which of course is defunct and so not discharging its duties.

9 – RAINFALL

Whilst the rains started late this year we experienced good rains in both December and January. At the end of January Bulawayo was ahead of average, and whilst the eastern hills have had more rain than Bulawayo, the Matopos is now slightly behind average following a very dry February, when less than 30mm fell in what should be the third wettest month. As at 24 March 2011, the rainfall records are as follows - the Eastern Matopos has received 700mm, the Western Matopos 540mm, and Bulawayo 625mm.

10 – www.matobo.org

We continue to upgrade our website, and are adding new material, so be sure to log in and follow the progress of the Society. Please give us news, views and links to other sites.

11 – WORLD HERITAGE UPDATE

A meeting has been called by National Museums and Monuments to revisit the Matopos World Heritage Management Committee structure. Reports to UNESCO are required and a frame work to compile these is now urgently required.

12 – A MEMBER COMMENTS

Mr Trevor Hemans writes (following the article that read “October 12th recorded the hottest ever temperature for Bulawayo at 38.2C”)

Congratulations again on an outstandingly interesting newsletter. One query - my diary shows that on Christmas Day 1987 the temperature in Bulawayo reached a record 38,7 degrees.

ED - We contacted the Meteorological Department to see if we could obtain details on Bulawayo Temperatures. After many diversions we were advised that this was only possible after the payment of a fee in Harare, so we are left asking any of our members who may be amateur meteorologists to add their contribution on this topic.

13 – MATOBO HILLS WORLD HERITAGE MTB CHALLENGE

The annual Matobo Hills World Heritage MTB challenge was held from the 16 to 20 March with thirty seven riders taking part – an increase of 37% above last year. The first briefing was held at Maleme Rest Camp, under a clear starry sky, with representatives of the two main sponsors in attendance, Stanbic and PPC Zimbabwe. The next morning the convoy of vehicles, riders and bikes left Maleme and headed to Shashani Dam to start the 3 day, 200km ride. A slightly later start than planned meant a little more heat on route, but the riders were all back in Maleme by early afternoon. Day two of the ride saw the riders leave Maleme and head through Mtsheleli Dam, and down to the Tuli River before tackling three hard climbs that took them to the summit of Mwazi, the highest point in the Matopos. Then an exhilarating plunge down to Matopo Mission and a short floating bridge, before their arrival at Camp Dwala. Day three was a loop from Camp Dwala, down to the Mtshabezi Gorge, then up and over Tshingengoma, past Diana’s Pool, the Orbicular Granite and onto the water point at Fort Umlugulu Cemetery that had been cleared for the event. Then a long slow climb back to the finish at Camp Dwala. Prize giving was held under a full moon on the dwalas behind the Camp – the end of a magnificent ride. There were more riders from Harare than from Bulawayo, and we welcomed our first SA rider from Cape Town. We also had teams from Botswana and across Zimbabwe! The route was challenging, offering some of the best MTB cycling possible, and interesting. The MCS again provided a detailed route guide on places of interest along the 200km route. The winning time in 2010 was 14:43, and in 2011 it was 14:29, with only a minute separating the first two places.

14 – NSVATUKE ROAD

We have received complaints regarding the condition of the both the Nsvatuke loop road (from Maleme Dam to Whitewaters) and the Nsvatuke road itself – the short access road to the cave. The recent MHWH-MTB Challenge travelled along this road, and so we can confirm the appalling condition. A 4x4 vehicle will battle to complete the loop, and the MCS will approach National Parks about the condition of the road. In the ‘90’s Nsvatuke Cave was the most visited National Monument in Zimbabwe after Victoria Falls, so if we intend to promote tourism then this needs to be attended to.

15 – FUMUGWE SCHOOL PROJECT

Duncan Purchase is looking for funding for materials to construct a classroom block at Fumungwe School. Any members who might like to get involved with this worthwhile cause should contact Duncan, or let the secretary know of your interest.

16 – GOOGLE PHOTO PROJECT

DP described a long-term project in which he plans to get a picture (from the base) of every major named kopje/dwala in the Matobo area, for use in 3-D Google. We are currently setting up a database of named outcrops with GPS co-ordinates, and will add digital photos as these are available. Requested assistance with names

17 – DASSIE SURVEY

Any member interested in participating in the annual Dassie Survey should contact BLZ chairman Cecilia Hubbard or the MCS Secretary who will provide you with the necessary contact details.

18 - TICKS

(With appreciation to Moira Fitzpatrick, we will be bringing you a short series on Ticks. This is the second article in our short series)

Ticks of the Matobo Hills

Some of the Matobo tick species have been well studied. The most important and commonly seen is the brown ear tick, *Rhipicephalus appendiculatus* (three-host tick). The larvae are active during the cool dry season (May-July), the nymphs during the hot dry season (Sept-Nov), and the adults in the warm wet season (Jan-April). These feed on a variety of hosts, mainly large mammals; impala, giraffe, eland, sable, kudu, reedbuck, steenbok, zebra, rhino, and warthog. *R. appendiculatus* is also responsible for the transmission of tick bite fever to man. Other lesser-known species of *Rhipicephalus* collected in Matobo include *R. arnoldi*, recorded from klipspringer and red rock hares, and *R. distinctus* a specific parasite of both hyrax species.

African ticks of the genus *Aponomma* are parasites of the larger snakes and lizards. All stages of *A. exornatum* have been collected from monitor lizards, the plated rock lizard and the girdled lizard. *A. latum* is a common parasite of snakes and has been recorded on cobras, mambas, pythons, puff adders, and olive grass snakes.

Hyalomma (bont-legged ticks) (two-host ticks) are common in semi-arid areas or areas that experience prolonged dry seasons. The adults of both species of *Hyalomma* are parasites of large ungulates (giraffe, eland, zebra, sable, kudu and white rhino) while the immature stages are mainly found on birds, hares and rodents. *Hyalomma marginatum rufipes* is a vector of tick bite fever in man.

Haemaphysalis cooleyi and *H. hyracophila* are both hyrax parasitizing ticks, and *H. norvali* is a specific parasite of the hedgehog. *Amblyomma marmoratum* is a parasite of tortoises and monitor lizards. *A. hebraeum*, the bont tick, (three-host tick) has a variety of hosts, having been collected off white rhino, giraffe, eland, kudu, wildebeest, impala, warthog, zebra, leopard, genets, ostrich, and tortoise. Although the activity of *A. hebraeum* adults peaks in the rainy season, adults, larvae and nymphs are encountered throughout the year. It is the nymphae of *A. hebraeum* that are the most important vector of tick-bite fever in man.

Ixodes matopi is a specific parasite of the klipspringer. Tick aggregations have been recorded on twigs marking klipspringer's territories. A dark pungent resin-like substance is secreted by the pre-orbital glands of the klipspringer. The tick-attractive component of the secretion is water soluble, and during heavy rains, this dissolves and runs down the branches and stems to the ground. The ticks respond to the extract, following it to the tip of the twigs. A klipspringer revisiting its scent mark prompts these ticks to climb onto their host.

19 – MUSEUM APPEAL

The Natural History Museum has asked if anyone going to the Matobo Hills could give Museums staff a lift. They are anxious to visit monuments and sites, but have no transport of their own.

20 – CALENDAR 2011

10 April 2011	Fumugwe (see above)
05 June 2011	World Environment Day and litter clean up in the National Park
10 July 2011	Brandt's Patrol Route
18 Sept 2011	Practical game count transept with Dr Nicky Lunt
27 Nov 2011	AGM, Matobo Mission and Camp Dwala

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