



PO Box FM 648, Famona. Bulawayo, Zimbabwe

www.matobo.org

Welfare No: W/0 30/94

NEWSLETTER 75 / SEPTEMBER 2011

1 – ZIMBABWE MOUNTAIN CLUB

Twenty-eight members of the Zimbabwe Mountain Club descended on the Matobo Hills over the long week-end in August. Whilst a number of interesting walks were done, mainly to rock art sites, only a limited amount of actual climbing was done. However, the “sticky finger” members identified a number of rock faces which would pose real challenges, and so the ZMC have promised to return. We hope to establish some true climbing routes, such as the west face of Mt Silozwe, or the eastern face of Siloti, and so have a few climbing routes registered! Any of members want to join the “sticky fingers” when they scale the heights?

2 – MTB EVENT; THE MATOPOS CLASSIC

The annual two-day mountain bike event (from Bulawayo to the eastern Matopos, and then onto the western hills) is set for 16 and 17 September. This event will incorporate the “Cross to Cross” cycle ride. Proceeds from the event are donated to the MCS and will be used to support our projects. Contact the Chairman for more information.

Members who are non-riders may want to join in at Granite Ridge on the evening of 17th September where there will be a social braai, and “Drums of Peace” will be active. For more information on this contact the secretary.

3 – UMZINGWANE RIVER

Your Chairman recently rode across the Umzingwane River, downstream of the Old Bulawayo road drift. He was shocked to see the state of the river bed and banks – all dug up as though giant moles had been living there. There was not a square inch of undisturbed river bed, whilst the banks were hazardous due to the deep unprotected pits. No wonder the Umzingwane dam never fills up – and if the river does come down it must carry a load of silt such that the dam must surely be losing capacity fast. We have an active Environmental Management Agency which pounces on industry, but is blind to the real environmental degradation all around us. The Umzingwane River is in the intensive care unit – a very sad sight to see.

4 – CAMERA TRAPS

Dambari Wildlife Trust (formerly Marwell Zimbabwe Trust) has installed 10 camera traps in the Game Park, and these have recorded more animals than anticipated, with sightings of rhino, eland, leopard, serval and caracul. Viv Wilson has also installed camera traps near Maleme. These two have produced interesting pictures, including brown hyena. This latest research shows that the Matopos is full of wildlife, yet it is seldom seen.

5 – 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 useful sites.

6 – MCS APPAREL

The Society has received new stocks of hats (at \$10 each) and we are looking into shirts and other apparel.

7 – MEMBERSHIP DETAILS

We are in the process of updating our data base and so will be removing members whose subs are in arrears. Please ensure that you are paid up to date and that your details are current.

8 - NEXT EVENT

Date	18 September 2011
Venue	Practical game count transept with Dr Nicky Lunt
Meet	8:15am to leave by 8:30am, Churchill Arms Hotel
Travel	Trucks preferred
Details	Provide own chairs, tables, meals and drinks. Don't forget your hat!

Please note that the field trip will be into the Matobo National Park and so entry fees will be applicable. These are \$5 per person, and \$5 per car.

This promises to be a fun day as families and groups will be able to undertake sampling. At the same time however we will learn more about the research work done in the Park, how the research teams work, and how they come to their conclusions. There are presently a number of projects in the Matobo Hills and this gives an opportunity to learn about them. Dr Nicky Lunt is a Research officer with Dambari Wildlife Trust (formerly Marwel Zimbabwe Trust)

9 – REPORT BACK

(with appreciation to J Ross)

The week of the outing was one with overcast skies and chilling winds and guti; but those hardened Bulawayo folks donned extra layers of clothing and set off for the North East part of the Matobo area. 8 vehicles and 22 people braved the elements to listen to Craig Friend talk about the Brandt Patrol where it was said to have been a battle on top of a small dome of granite which gave views of the surrounding kopjes and the lands in-between. There was some speculation about the actual site and we were tasked with traversing the area in search of anything that might have confirmed there having been a battle - only one find made by Georgie Friend turned up but because of the type of article it was it was deemed not to have been around in those past years. The rest of us just wandered about chatting and kicking over stones. From there we went onto the grave site with 17 graves and a centre path well maintained for the Ironwill Challenge as this was one of their stops. It is an area of great interest as it has a small dam (still with water in it) and there is a fort the sides built from excavated rock forming a mote around it. It was here that the troops laagered when any threat of trouble arose although it was not used for very long. From there it was onwards to Diana's Pools for lunch - a chilly lunch (most of these intrepid folks had brought much warming sustenance like whiskey, sherry, brandy and soup which was shared around in the most friendly of manners!) with guti threatening but the gods were kind and kept the guti away till after we'd ambled over the hill and down into the stream where the most amazing rock formations were found - these orbicular formations are fairly rare and unusual. How to describe these beautiful formations - being a quilter it looked like a 1930s repro piece of fabric with circles in circles - water had stained some rock faces pink and some shades of rust and mostly shades of grey - how they came to be like this no one was able to enlighten us. After tramping back over the hill some stayed for a final cuppa tea whilst we wandered over to look at the chalets then on the way back to the vehicles the guti started to move in. It was a bracing day with fine walks and excellent company. Sorry you missed it - the Matopos has never let me down even in dodgy weather and it's always a pleasure to be with friendly folks who are also interested in everything to do with our wonderful country. Thanks guys for your efforts in tracing battles and sites.

10 – ENVIRONMENTAL NEWS

Bumper tobacco season costs environment dearly

While the country has witnessed a rapid increase in tobacco production this sea-son, the bumper harvest has come at a cost to the environment. Over 46 000 hectares of forests have been destroyed in order to cure some of the 127 million kilo-grams of tobacco sold this year. Environment and Natural Resources Minister, Francis Nhema, announced at the launch of the International Year of Forests event in Svosve recently that this figure excludes wood used by commercial farmers, hospitals, prisons, schools and brick-making enterprises. Firewood provides 49% of the total energy used in Zimbabwe, as around 90% of households depend on wood for their needs. With the average household consuming 7.7 cubic metres of wood annually, the rate of deforestation has risen from 312 900 hectares per year to 330 000. Nhema said, "Trees are an integral part of our farming system and are essential in our everyday lives.

They also help control soil erosion, gully formation, soil desiccation and siltation of water bodies.” – *The Herald*, 2 August 2011

11 – INFORMATION

We publish below an e-mail received as some members may want to respond. In any event the 1912 Newspaper article quoted below is of some interest.

24 June 2011 Christine Oberholzer <oberholzer.ch@googlemail.com>

Hello,

I saw your newsletter 'Matobo Conservation News' on the internet and was most interested in the piece about John Lee's house, or what was left of it! My husband is related to a John Lee of whom an article appeared in a newspaper in 1912. The following is the transcript:

“Mr John L Lee, of Potchestroom, at age 85 years, holding a 'Six-to-the-lb', grooved loading elephant gun. Mr Lee was the son of a distinguished naval officer, and was born in the District of Somerset East in 1827.

On his right is an oil painting by Thomas Baines, F.R.G.S., taken from life on July 3rd 1869. Mr Lee is seen shooting elephants from horseback.

This Herculean Nimrod, the father of big game hunters, holds the world's record for having shot 13 elephants in a single day, near the Dry River, Matabeleland, at the end of May, 1864.

Mr. Lee is also a veteran of the Kaffrarian and Basuto Wars and still bears the scars of battle-axe and assegai wounds.

He fought under Sir Harry Smith, Lieut-Gen. Cathcart, Col. Somerset and Col. Hare, President Boshof and others.

Mr Lee was in his time all powerful with the Matabele nation, and bore the name of Umkosa. He was granted 225 square miles of territory in perpetuity by Moseleatze. His dwelling house still stands in the Mankwe Valley. Unfortunately, the grant to Mr. Lee is not now recognised by the Chartered Co. as he possesses no written documents attesting the grant.”

I would be most interested if the photographs of the Lee's house, taken by Gaynor Lightfoot and posted on the eeg.org website are of the same John Lee as in our family tree.

Many thanks for reading this.

Yours faithfully,

Chris Oberholzer (Mrs)

12 – RHINO NEWS

10 men, among them 4 former soldiers, have been arrested in Harare in 2 separate incidents for poaching and illegal possession of ivory and rhino horns. The men were arrested in a combined operation between Parks and the Police Minerals and Border Control Unit. Deputy Chief Police spokesperson Chief Superintendent Oliver Mandipaka yesterday confirmed the arrests, saying full-scale investigations were under way. Godfrey Nyambuya, 3 ex-soldiers based at Three Brigade Nelson Abraham, Charles Muzenda, Brighton Kucherana, and Bikita villager Peter Makaye Murira and David Marahwu were arrested on Monday. They were caught selling two fresh rhino horns weighing 4.6 kg. The rhino was poached at Devure Ranch at the border of Bikita and Chiredzi – *Herald*, Thursday July 21,

13 – NATIONAL TOURISM AND HERITAGE

The government plans to set up a National Tourism and Heritage Advisory Council which will advise and guide the Ministry of Tourism to ensure that the country's cultural heritage is preserved. Speaking at the launch of the month of September as tourism month, Hospitality and Tourism minister Walter Mzembi on Monday said cultural tourism was growing in importance internationally and had been achieving an annual growth rate of 15%. Mzembi said this form of tourism represented a third of all tourism business and was a high-yield area – *Herald*, Tuesday August 30.

Will this provide some input and guidance to the management of the Matobo Hills World Heritage Site? We hope so!

14 – MZILIKAZE

Did you know that there are 324 recorded variations for the spelling of King Mzilikaze's name? Perhaps when I am short of articles, I'll list them all – Ed!

15 – CALENDAR 2011

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)
 The MCS plans to meet with WEZ, Birdlife, MTB and others to set the 2012 calendar.

16 – CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT

Associate Membership. Your committee proposes that a class of membership be formerly recognized in the Constitution. The current application form lists “*Society Membership. Membership is open to related societies (to facilitate the exchange of ideas and information). Members of the related society do not become members of the Matobo Conservation Society*”. It is proposed that Associate Members would include Society Membership and that such applicants would have to complete application forms but do not pay any subscriptions and do not have any voting rights. At present the Constitution does not make provision for this class of reciprocal member.

17 – SUBSCRIPTIONS

Subscriptions for next year (1 October 2011 to 30 September 2012) have been set as:

- US\$ 20 Individual/Family
- US\$ 5 Special Member (Pensioner/Student)
- US\$100 Corporate

Consequently, subscriptions are due as from 1 October, and should be paid before the AGM on the 27 November 2011 (if you want to retain your right to vote!). We are updating our data base and have removed all members with subs outstanding for more than one year.

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18 – SUBSCRIPTIONS 2012

Due by 1 October 2011. Changed Address? Please update our records only if you have changes

NAME	ADDRESS
MEMBERSHIP CATEGORY	
AMOUNT Cheque / Cash	
EMAIL	

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