

MATOBO



SOCIETY

PO Box FM 648, Famona. Bulawayo, Zimbabwe

www.matobo.org

Welfare No: W/O 30/94

NEWSLETTER 82 / APRIL 2013

1 – BLACK EAGLE SURVEY GOLDEN JUBILEE

2013 is a milestone for the Black Eagle Survey marking 50 years of continuous observations. This makes this the longest and probably most extensive bird survey anywhere in the world. It goes to show what a group of dedicated volunteers can achieve, against all odds. The MCS congratulates the Black Eagle Survey on this outstanding achievement.

- a) Matobo Hills has the highest concentration of black eagles per square kilometre in the world.
- b) All eagle species are protected in Zimbabwe
- c) The high number of pairs of black eagles in the Matobo Hills allows a realistic 'replacement rate' per pair to be determined for this species.
- d) In March each year a briefing is held for participating volunteer teams. Each team is given a list of allocated black eagle nest sites, and hyrax population census sites.
- e) In 2013, 12 teams will be monitoring 104 known nest sites within 78 territories in approx. 620 kms² survey area, and 20 hyrax colony sites.
- f) In April/May the teams check all their nest sites for occupancy, and if any breeding attempt is being made, i.e. – mating, nest rebuilding and lining with greenery, or incubating. This is the first reporting period.
- g) If the first nest within a territory is found to be occupied, other nest sites within the same territory need not be checked.
- h) Also in May, the Hyrax population census is conducted, to try and determine if the eagles' main prey base is stable.
- i) Come June/July and the teams return to occupied sites and check if a chick present. This is the second reporting period.
- j) In August/October the teams check if the chick has successfully fledged. This is the third reporting period.
- k) Finally in December preparation of the report on the results takes place for publication in BirdLife Zimbabwe journal Honeyguide, and for submission to Department of National Parks and Wildlife Management Authority.
- l) The 'replacement rate' of the black eagle is determined by the number of pairs which have attempted to breed and the success rate of these breeding attempts.
- m) Teams may visit as frequently as they wish, but three visits are mandatory, as is submission of standard report forms by end of each reporting period.

2 - MATOBO WORLD HERITAGE

Both National Parks and National Museums have recognised the need to resuscitate the Matobo Hills World Heritage Management Committee and plan. Your Society has played a part in this process and hopes to continue in its engagement. There is a real recognition that the two bodies have to work together to ensure that the site does not get listed as an "Endangered Site" and we are confident that real progress will be made in the year ahead.

3 – RHINO NEWS

60 rhinos killed in Save: The country has lost about 60 rhinos in the past 10 years due to massive poaching activities in the Save Valley Conservancy. Half of the conservancy's 350km fence has been torn down and much of it is being used to snare animals in the game park. Chairman of the Save Valley Conservancy Basil Nyabadza confirmed the unprecedented levels of poaching in the conservancy – *Fingaz, February 14, 2013.*

4 - NEXT EVENT

Date	19 May 2013
Venue	Mbelela Cave, Eastern Matopos
Meet	8:15am to leave by 8:30am, Churchill Arms Hotel
Travel	All vehicles – Old Gwanda Road
Details	Provide own chairs, tables, meals and drinks. Don't forget your hat!

This is our annual *Autumn* outing to the hills! We will travel to the delightful Dzazi dam (on the Sigitu river) set in the eastern Matopos, and then walk from there to Mbelele cave which is near-by amongst some outstanding *Brachystegia* forest. The dam was spilling earlier in the year and so still is fairly full, whilst the trees should be in full foliage. To escape the dust on the Old Gwanda Road, some folk may leave earlier and we will regroup at the Matopo Mission Cemetery at 9:30am, before pressing on.

5 – REPORT BACK

(with appreciation to Gaynor Lightfoot)

OUTING TO THE VIEW OF THE WORLD - Malindidzimu - Sunday 10th February 2013

On a cool Sunday morning a few of us met at Cresta, whilst two of our energetic members (Gavin and Iain) rode to Lower Outspan. Some members had arrived early and were having breakfast upon our arrival. At the main gate a queue was waiting to pay and enter, reminding one of the old fuel queues! (This is a frequent occurrence at the gate, and we hope that Nat parks will find a way of improving access in the future). Most members took the route passed Efifi Picnic Sites, on the western leg of the Circular Drive. Upon arrival it was necessary to find a parking space as this was slightly limited. Tea baskets came out. Paul then rounded up the walkers for our trip along the route the gun carriage took to convey the coffin of Cecil Rhodes to its final resting place. So, with bottles of water, hats, sticks, and camera etc., the walk began, with the fast walkers up ahead with Paul and the rest following behind. At the beginning of the walk is a plaque on a rock advising of the one-mile route; Paul explained the preparations for the route that started here with the 12 black oxen being trained twice a day, so that they did not slip on the rocks their feet had sacking tied around them as well as the wheels of the gun carriage. These animals disappeared after the burial not doubt as in Ndebele tradition they were slaughtered and eaten. The path was like a road not much of a 'bundu bash' grass was high and great for tick collection. We climbed a small rocky outcrop where Paul gave his talk about the area and the valley. Then the climb began it was over rocks uneven in places, finally at the top you could see the boulders that surrounded the grave. Fees were collected then off on the route again Paul stopping every so often to advise what had taken place in that particular area. The oxen walked most of the way unaccompanied, there was at one stage a klipspringer ran under the gun carriage but did not startle the oxen. Near the top where it got steep, winches were put in place to help pull the carriage to the site. At the grave Paul gave us the talk of how deep the grave was and that it was hand dug. The grave is waist deep and six by six. There were four coffins one lead, one metal and a wooden one, made from Rhodesian teak taken from his Groote Schuur home. It was interesting to note that Rhodes body was not embalmed hence the number of coffins. Rhodes was buried facing north as this was his vision, to look to the north. The body was already in the grave when mourners had gathered at the top all dressed in their finery; gents in suits, ladies in their crinoline dresses in the mid-morning sun. Various pictures were taken of the burial. It was mentioned that the Ndebele, as the gun carriage passed, shouted "Bayete" once only. As the situation was still tense the 21-gun salute did not take place and once again the Ndebele saluted once again 'Bayete'. The lizards were all over the grave site as a retired, maybe even now deceased, Parks Ranger called 'The Lizard Man' used to call and feed them. They were scurrying around the site with their bright colours. Paul also talked about Leander Starr Jameson, Alan Wilson Memorial and Charles Coghlan in brief. Time was given to have a look around the area and people left in different stages back on the route home. Back at Lower Outspan it was lunch time, little groups formed in the shade and lunch was eaten. Gavin thanked Paul in his absence for his interesting walk and talk. People present on the outing was in the region of 75 lots of visitors and advised for those interested they would be taking a walk down the river course to look for pools in which to have a well-deserved swim. Note the writer did not come for a swim. People slowly moved off to take advantage of a ride in the Park or home. A very interesting day was had by all.

6 - WETLANDS COMMEMORATIONS AT MATOBO HILLS

February 4, 2013 (With acknowledgement to Rosie Mitchell)

The Secretary General of the Ramsar Convention Secretariat, Sir Anada Tiega, was in Zimbabwe in February 2013 for World Wetlands Day 2013 Commemorations that were held near Matobo National Park.

He visited Bulawayo and Victoria Falls and mid-morning on Monday 4 February went to Monavale Vlei, the wetland managed by the Conservation Society of Monavale (COSMO), which constitutes one of so far seven sites round the country selected as Ramsar Wetlands of International Importance.

The others are Victoria Falls National Park, Mana Pools, Lake Chivero and Manyame, Driefontein Grasslands, Chinhoyi Caves, and Cleveland Dam.

Zimbabwe has officially acceded to this Convention and will on May 3 become the 164th contracting Party in the Ramsar family. UNESCO has confirmed that the instrument of accession and the names and maps of the seven wetlands were duly received on January 3 2013.

The Wetland Survival Forum formed at a gathering of experts, journalists and concerned citizens on January 22 has now issued its promised statement about the crisis facing Zimbabwe's wetlands, particularly those in urban areas, being both eyed for development, and actually developed.

Urban vleis, already seriously degraded by human interference, can be restored to their natural state when they receive full protection from any human activity or development under existing environmental laws as long as these are timeously and without exception enforced. This has been well-demonstrated by COSMO, set up by concerned residents in the flagship Monavale Vlei area, which succeeded in protecting their vlei effectively and restoring it, now a Ramsar Site, to pristine state. Community involvement in vlei protection is very effective and other residential areas can achieve much by following the COSMO model.

Wetlands catch and hold rainwater both falling on them and running into them. This water is slowly released into the river system. As it passes through the rich, black, spongy earth in the wetland, it is filtered thoroughly, removing pollutants and sewage — a no-cost water purification service.

The rivers in turn fill dams which provide water for towns and cities. In rural areas wetlands perform exactly the same functions, whether or not there are dams. By holding water this way, storing it, releasing it slowly and filtering it, wetlands prevent floods, erosion and water pollution and ensure water security, and so, food security, for all species.

There is no sustainable human use of a wetland. Cultivation, dumping, building, putting under a golf course or a park, any human intervention, on any part of a wetland, is degrading that wetland. Destroying wetlands puts all species — flora, fauna and humankind — at risk of having too little water to sustain life.

7 - RAINFALL

After a very late and disappointing start to the year, rainfall picked after the New Year, proving the long-range forecast to be accurate. As a result, the three months of January to March were good, with some particularly heavy falls. By the end of the season, rainfall was still below average, but not nearly as bad as was expected. More importantly good rains were received in March, unlike the previous season where no substantial rain fell after December 2011.

In the eastern Matopos rainfall for the current season (up to 31st March) has been recorded at 738 mm, in the central area at 475 mm and in the western part at 450 mm.

8 – NEW DIRECTOR GENERAL APPOINTED TO ZPWMA

The Zimbabwe Parks and Wildlife Management Authority Board has appointed Edson Chidziya Director-General with effect from May 1. Chidziya, who has been director of conservation, replaces Vitalis Chadenga who died in September last year. We welcome the new Director-General and wish him well in his post.

9 – MTSHABEZI DAM

Mtshabezi water finally reaches Bulawayo: The much-awaited Mtshabezi Dam water is finally coming to the city of Bulawayo in a move likely to bolster water supply, Water Resources Minister Samuel Sipepa Nkomo has said. This comes at a time when the project, which has been under construction for years, has missed several deadlines. Nkomo said the engineers were finally able to release water into the Lower Ncema Dam. However, Nkomo said Mtshabezi water was not going to significantly reduce the water shedding in the city as the pumping capacity was limited due to the inability of the pumps to operate optimally.

The dam filled and spilt in the current season, and we hope it is not pumped dry too quickly!

10 – VIC FALLS WORLD HERITAGE

Tourism Minister Mr W Mzembi says the World Heritage status of the Vic Falls Rainforest is intact: The World Heritage Status of the Victoria Falls Rainforest has not been downgraded as UNESCO still recognises it as one of the 7 Natural Wonders of the World, Tourism and Hospitality Minister Engineer Walter Mzembi has said adding that only God could delist the Victoria Falls Rainforest from being one of the Seven Natural Wonders of the World. Commenting on reports which alleged that the Victoria Falls Rainforest had been delisted from being one of the Seven Natural Wonders of the World making way for the so-called New 7 Wonders of the World which include the Table Mountain of South Africa, Eng Mzembi said the Falls, which is the largest curtain of flowing water in the world, would remain as a natural wonder until the end of time – *Herald*, Monday January 14, 2013.

11 – DEFORESTATION

World Top Ten Countries with Highest Deforestation Rate

Country	(SQ MILES PER ANUM)
Brazil	8,915
Indonesia	5,065
Sudan	3,702
Zambia	3,286
Mexico	2,436
Dem Rep of Congo	2,054
Myanmar	1,996
Nigeria	1,537
Zimbabwe	1,235
Argentina	1,100

It is alarming to see Zimbabwe amongst the top ten, but not surprising given the chaotic land reform programme, and the inability of ZESA to supply adequate power. Whilst the country celebrates the growing tobacco crop, most of this is being cured in primitive barns with inefficient heating – and mostly fuelled by timber. Previously, tobacco barns had become quite efficient and were fuelled by coal. New farmers can't afford coal, even if they could get it, and so the forests are steadily being reduced. At the same time, new settlers are following a slash and burn process on the occupied commercial farms, leading to further deforestation. One recalls the tremendous conservation work carried out by Agritex and others; it's literally going up in smoke! Saddest of all the silence from the Ministry of Environment that has failed to raise awareness, and the Ministry of Lands that appears to have no plan for future land management in the country.

12 – NEWS FROM THE PARK

- A. GAME FENCE; Work has started on the erection of the new Bonex game fence, that it is hoped will eventually replace the missing fence that once protected the National Park. The first section started west of Bambata and will proceed in an anti-clockwise manner. The task is daunting, but has received considerable financial support. Its costs about \$1,500 per kilometre of fencing.
- B. MALEME; The MCS built a "kitchen and serving" unit for ZPWMA at Maleme Rest Camp. Situated near the tennis court, it was ready (just) in time to host the 2013 Matopos Heritage Bike ride, but will of course be a facility for use by any groups using the Maleme Rest Camp. The thatch structure went up in record time.
- C. ZITF; Your society has assisted the ZPWMA to erect a structure at the ZITF for the 2013 exhibition. This will replace the previous tented structures that ZPWMA used at the ZITF, and so should be useful for many years to come.

13 – MATOPOS HERITAGE BIKE RIDE

The 2013 edition of this popular ride attracted much the same numbers as the 2012 event, but was an improvement on previous events in terms of service and route. Changes to Day 2 saw a large chunk of road route being replaced with a new single track from Mtsheli to the Tuli River – and all the riders hailed this new passage through the Hills. National Parks cut the paths through the Game Park, which was a great boost to the organisers, and all the competitors enjoyed two nights at Maleme Rest Camp, and were each supplied with a small booklet that outlined the places of interest along the route. By all accounts the event has earned its accolade as being ranked as the top mountain bike event in Zimbabwe. The 2014 event is diarised for mid-March 2014 with details on the www.matobo.org website. A DVD is available that covers the 2013 ride.

14 – MATOPOS 33 MILER IS BACK

The Matopos 33 Miler staged a comeback on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the first race, in 1963. The race had not been held for some years due to the impact of hyperinflation and unreasonable fees. However, with the sponsorship of PPC Zimbabwe, and an interest to relaunch the event shared by ZPWMA, the event was staged on 7th April 2013, attracting over 300 runners! Just in excess of 55 runners started the 33-miler (54km's Ultra-Marathon) at 5:30am, over 60 runners started the 21km half marathon at 7:00am and nearly 200 runners kicked off on the 5km fun run at 8:00am. There were also in excess of a dozen relay teams of six runners each, where each runner ran just under 10km's. The event finished at NUST and by all accounts was a resounding success. Your society was instrumental in organising the event and managed the race registration process. The event is set for the 2014 calendar and details can be found on the www.matobo.org web site.

15 – SUBSCRIPTIONS

The AGM maintained subscriptions for the year 1 October 2012 to 30 September 2013 at the same level as that which prevailed in 2012.

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

We urge members to settle their dues. At the same time you are encouraged to invite potential members to join the Society. Friends are always welcome at our quarterly events – and hopefully will join the Society thereafter. New subscriptions were due from 1 October 2012.

16 – CALENDAR 2013

Proposed dates for the 2013 field trips are listed below, but as always subject to alteration.

Sun 19/05/2013	Mbelela Cave
Sun 21/07/2013	Bhadja Sec School (in IBA) with Dambari & BLZ
Sun 08/09/2013	Ndebele Shrine (Njeleli?)
Sat 23/11/2013	MCS 20 th Anniversary Dinner at Maleme Rest Camp
Sun 24/11/2013	MCS AGM inside Pomongwe Cave

17 – www.matobo.org

Duncan is working on an upgraded web site. We hope you have been online to see the information on hand, check pictures from our last outing, and to see what is happening in the Matopos.

18 – MCS APPAREL

The Society has stocks of hats and caps (at \$10 each) and we are looking into shirts and other apparel. CD's are also available.

19 – ERRATA

In our last Newsletter we referred to DZAZI dam as the "Jeezie dam." It is located on the Sigiti River and was built in 1963. We will be visiting this area on our next outing – and hope to clarify the spelling once and for all! We apologise for the error.

20 – AGM 2013

The MCS will celebrate its 20th Anniversary this year, and to mark the occasion a special AGM will be held on 24th November. More information will be contained in the next Newsletter, but the plans are:

- The AGM itself will be held in Pomongwe cave
- Maleme Rest Camp has been reserved in full for the MCS for the evening of 23rd November
- A special anniversary dinner will be hosted that evening.

July 2013 also marks the 10th Anniversary of the inscription of the Matobo Hills as a World Heritage Site so this will be a double celebration!

So, get out your diary and be sure to join us.