

MATOBO



SOCIETY

PO Box FM 648, Famona. Bulawayo, Zimbabwe

www.matobo.org

Welfare No: W/O 30/94

NEWSLETTER 84 / AUGUST 2013

1 – ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

This year's Annual General Meeting will not only be a celebration of 20 years, but will also see a degree of changing of the guard as a number of our Committee members are not available for election. So, it is important that our members give this some thought and support our AGM to ensure that we elect a fresh and revitalised Committee. Both the Chairman and Secretary are not available, and a number of members.

2 – 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 a special 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, including a string quartet.

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!

We trust that this date has already been recorded in your diary – if not be sure to make it a date!

3 – ZITF

Just prior to the ZITF the Society received an appeal from Dr Norman Monks for assistance with the Zimbabwe Parks and Wildlife Management Authority stand at the ZITF. Your Society was able to secure sponsorship, and staff, whilst thatching grass and other materials were supplied by the Matopos National Park. In record time a structure was erected, though the final thatching was not finished until after the exhibition closed. In the past the ZPWMA relied on temporary tents – it now has a permanent thatch structure which should see many years of service. We hope our members will be able to visit the completed stand in 2014!

4 – WORLD ENVIRONMENT DAY

We had a very poor turnout for the “Maleme Clean Up” on 22nd June. However, the time was used to plan for a more detailed exercise and Falcon College and Quest have undertaken to run this exercise on our behalf in the third school term. Three species of cactus have been identified, and these will be removed and destroyed. We are appreciative of the support from Falcon College and Quest.

5 – MATOPOS CLASSIC MTB

The annual three-day Matopos Classic MTB event will be staged from 20th to 22nd September. The race will be based out of Camp Dwala, with new and interesting routes. On the Friday, the ride will take competitors to a lofty dwala on the side of Sotcha, where racing will be abandoned and drinks and snacks enjoyed whilst the sun sets, and an almost full moon rises. Then, with head-lamps burning, the riders will return down the kopje in the dark and back to camp for dinner. Saturday's ride will incorporate a new route, much within the Mazhowe valley. On the Sunday, the race will cross the hills to incorporate the Matopos World Rhino Day celebrations at Sandy Spruit, before returning to the finish line!

Whilst this event is not staged to the same degree as the Matopos Heritage ride (in March) it has developed a reputation of its own, and is well supported by mountain cyclists. *Contact the Secretary if you want to enter!*

Proceeds from the event will be donated to the Society to support our various projects.

6 - NEXT EVENT

Date	8 September 2013
Venue	Badja Secondary School
Meet	8:15am to leave by 8:30am, Churchill Arms Hotel
Travel	All vehicles, trucks preferred
Details	Provide own chairs, tables, meals and drinks. Don't forget your hat!

This school, which is located near Fumugwe is part of the Dambari Wildlife Trust Bio-Diversity project that has received funding from the MCS. Farayi, of Dambari, will accompany us to explain the objectives of the project and the work done at that site. The drive will take about two hours – yes that's a long time, but the drive itself through the south-western hills will prove to be part of the interest and is beautiful.

7 – REPORT BACK

On 15th May we travelled out once again on the Old Gwanda Road to make camp at Dzazi Dam (on the Sigiti River). The first winter weather had blown in during the night, so the day was cool and pretty wet on the southern escarpment of the Matopos. But this did not deter our band of explorers! After the obligatory tea, tucked away in a sheltered corner (and the sun came out to cheer us up) the fitter members set off to visit Mbolele cave, whilst others got out their fishing rods to try their luck in the dam. The walk was delightful, mostly through *Brachystegia* forest, though the climb was a little tricky given the wet rock. After a “perfect scramble” the team got into the cave – more of a large rock shelter, and enjoyed the fine grain bins, and interesting art. The view out was also appreciated. Then back to the path and homeward bound. After a late lunch, the convoy packed up and wound its way back to Bulawayo. As is so often the case, the day was delightful despite the potentially poor weather, and the cave was interesting.

8 – 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.

9 – CALENDAR 2013

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

Sun 21/07/2013	Postponed due to the General Election.
Sun 08/09/2013	Bhadja Sec School (in IBA) with Dambari & BLZ
Sat 23/11/2013	MCS 20 th Anniversary Dinner
Sun 24/11/2013	MCS AGM

10 – 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. We can also be found on Facebook via a search on “Matobo Conservation”.

11 – MCS APPAREL

The Society has just received a limited stock of sleeveless fleece jackets, in Matopos Grey with gold MCS logo. These are available at \$20 each, from the Secretary at Portland House (Main St/13th Ave) in sizes from S to XXL.

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

12 – SANDY SPRUIT

Your Society is assisting other NGO's and private volunteers (including social cyclists) to repair the sandy Spruit ablation block ahead of World Rhino Day on 22nd September. The original thatch building was burnt down some years ago in a veldt fire, but the repairs will be done with fibre cement roofing.

13 – MATOBO RHINO INITIATIVE TRUST

(With acknowledgment to Sharon Stead)

The Matopos Rhino Fence project officially began at the public meeting held at the Bulawayo club on the 15th September 2012. At the meeting the project gained overwhelming support from stakeholders and the general public and thus it was decided to go ahead.

The Matobo Rhino imitative trust was set up to facilitate the project and put a business plan together to implement the project and plan for the future.

The Trust has 7 Trustees

Sharon Stead	Chairman and Safari Operator
Oscar Nyathi	National Parks
Effort Nkomo	Rhodes Matopos Committee
John Burton	Safari Operator
Gordon Geddes	Legal matters
Barry Knight	Finance
Colin Gilles	Wildlife Society.

At the start there was enthusiastic funding with US\$55 000 raised in cash and a further US\$10 000 pledged in the form of equipment and support. I would like to say at this point a big thanks to the Matopos Conservation Society their contribution. Greatly appreciated and very helpful.

The project had to face numerous obstacles at the start. The main one being National Parks approval which was a stop/ start affair. Through real perseverance we have pushed on and now happy to report that significant progress has been made.

Due to delays at the start, the trust had to modify its plan and have given out most of the starting erection as contracts. Again, a big thanks go to National Fencing and Fence Africa.

The fence construction began 1 km West of Bambata cave, primarily as this was deemed the most sensitive boundary. The fence went west to the Northern/Western point and then proceeded south where we are now about half way down the Western boundary.

Almost immediately the effects are being felt. National Parks has renewed enthusiasm and feel they have a chance to protect the Wildlife. The community has been very involved in the erection and the elders are feeling a sense of ownership of the area. Cattle have been patrolling up and down without access.

Most importantly the Rhino are a step closer to being well protected. Mr Nyathi has had positive anti-poaching results with no Rhino poached this year and 2 births. We don't want to say too much, but feel good about making things better.

There have been a lot of people who have contributed with their time, a special mention to Paul Hubbard.

We are now getting thin with finances and need support to maintain momentum.

The Trust plans to hold an event on 22nd September 2013 – World Rhino Day.

It is proposed that it will be held at Sandy Spruit and will involve new entry signage and the erection of a "Shop window" section of fence at the entry gate in front of Sandy Spruit Dam.

Our Trust and the project have endured criticism, but we are not discouraged and will continue to help the Park, the Rhino and the community.

We are driven to re-establish the parks reputation as an area of outstanding beauty and want Matopos to be known as the best place to view Rhino in the World.

14 – WORLD RHINO DAY; MATOPOS 22nd SEPTEMBER 2013

The Matobo Rhino Fun Day is being hosted at Sandy Spruit on World Rhino Day, September 22nd and our members are invited to attend. It starts at sandy Spruit at 10:00am. The entrance fee will be \$20 per adult and \$10 per child. All entry proceeds will go to the Matopos Fence Project, so hopefully will be seen as a donation rather than entry.

The entry fee includes:

- Light Braai Lunch
- A drink
- Participation in the sponsored 5km walk
- Bested Dressed Rhino competition – prizes by Lodges in Matopos.
- Cycle ride

Part of the Rhino fence will be erected on site during the event

An auction of Rhino Paintings and Prints.

Speeches by prominent people and National Parks about the Matopos Rhino.

Full bar available.

The event is generally for the public to support the Matopos Fence effort which in turn protects our precious Rhino population, and to hear about developments in the park. Our members are invited to get involved in any way they can from promoting the event to helping run events on the day among other things. The MCS has already been a kind sponsor of 1km of materials for the fence and so we look forward to further support from our members as we celebrate World Rhino Day.

Contact the Secretary if you would like to participate in this worthwhile event, Matopos 22nd September.

15 – NATIONAL RHINO DAY; BULAWAYO, 21st SEPTEMBER 2013

MESSAGE FROM ENVIRONMENT AFRICA, Charlene Hewat, CEO, Environment Africa

Dear All

This year's National Rhino Day Event, 22nd September, will hopefully be celebrated in Bulawayo on the 21st September.

National Parks is coordinating the event and requires as many stakeholders as possible to get involved.

Last year the event was held in Harare and it was a great success and I know that Bulawayo will rise to the occasion and do something amazing for our rhino. National Parks will be getting in touch to set up a meeting with stakeholders in Bulawayo so please if you have any other organisations, individuals, companies who you think would like to get involved please kindly send us their contact details.

There is a team working with National Parks on establishing a National RHINO Trust Fund and the framework is currently being worked on together with the Trust document. We have had meetings with CABS who have asked for a framework document which is being prepared and they seem very keen to come on board and assist. Once the draft has been done we shall be circulating this for input from stakeholders interested in being part of this National initiative. It would be fantastic to bring individuals, organisations, companies, youth and our children together for the RHINO in Zimbabwe.

Uniting together for RHINO.

Contact the Secretary if you would like to assist in this worthwhile event in Bulawayo, 21st September 2013.

16 – RHINO DAY GOLF DAY

Dambari Wildlife Trust will be holding their annual Golf Day on 21st September. This is a four ball better ball competition, with great prizes to be won. Entry is \$20. Call Bulawayo Golf Club on 231 428 to book your tee-off time, or Verity on 0772 255 998. Let's support this worthwhile cause. Dambari Wildlife Trust is actively involved in research within the Matopos, with a special focus on the Rhino.

17 – PLANTS IN ROCK ART

(With acknowledgement to Paul Hubbard, Associate Researcher, Monuments and Antiquities Department, Natural History Museum, Bulawayo. A version of this article was first published in in 2013 in The Digging Stick 30 (1): 16-17.)

Introduction

Rock art studies have tended to study aspects of the art in isolation from one another, thus some authors have concentrated on interpreting animals or people or the strange abstract figures found so often on the walls of shelters and caves. This approach leads to a pigeon-hole effect in rock art studies which is often combined with “ethnographic snap” whereby researchers tend to look for similarities between Bushman beliefs and the art on the walls and then claim one explains the other. That said, some thoughts are offered on one neglected category of paintings, that of plants in general.

Following the interpretive work of Garlake (1995), Lewis-Williams (1981 & passim), Mguni (2002, 2009), and others, as well as a vast array of historical and ethnographic data, it is clear that there is religious and spiritual function, meaning and symbolism behind all images painted on the walls. Paintings were not created randomly nor was there a lack of purpose.

Plants in the Rock Art of Zimbabwe

Plants were essential sources of medicine, bedding, hallucinogens, tools, weaving materials and even shelter for hunter-gatherers in Zimbabwe. Paintings of plants are widespread in Zimbabwe, although they are far from common when compared to other categories such as animals or humans.

Trees are the most commonly painted category of plants. They are most often shown in profile, with slender trunks, skeletal branches and occasionally roots. The trees often thus appear as caricatures and should be seen as representations of ideas rather than attempts to define a species. Trees are often painted in association with animals and people. Often people, as thin and stylised as the trees, are shown touching the trunk or reaching into the branches. Paintings of trees in Mashonaland (Garlake 1995; Goodall 1959), are elaborate, often with leaves and fruits. The trees painted in the south, especially the Matobo Hills are stylised, mostly lacking roots, with rudimentary branches and leaves.

Some smaller blobs have been said to represent flowers and underground tubers and bulbs (e.g. Cooke 1959, 1964; Erwee 1987 a, b; Goodall 1959) but this cannot be comfortably confirmed. In general, species are seldom identifiable although this has not stopped numerous authors making less than convincing attempts (e.g. Cooke 1959, 1964; Goodall 1959; Mguni 2009; Mitchell & Hudson 2004).

Trees and other plant-like eidolons are often associated with formlings (Mguni 2002, 2009) as well as groups of dots and flecks indicating a deeper meaning, perhaps associated with potency (Garlake 1995: 101) as well as the spirit world (Mguni 2002).

“The Sap of the Spirit”: Plants in Rock Art

Mguni (2002, 2009) has made a convincing argument that certain plants and trees had qualities and associations beyond the natural world. Ethnographic evidence from the Kalahari and elsewhere shows how the hunter-gatherers valued the arboreal world as much as the animal or human realms and trees figure largely in many creation myths and religious metaphors (cf. Mguni 2009: 143-145).

Given the greater quantity of painted sites, the role of plants in Zimbabwean rock art seems to be different to that elsewhere in the region. Mashonaland in general has many more sites with trees and plants than the rest of the country (cf. Goodall 1959) and as Cooke (1964: 11) noted, “there must be a reason for the greater number of tree paintings north of the 20° parallel.” There is a very strong likelihood that, given their associations with formlings and other complex friezes paintings of trees and plants are related to episodes of trancing and access to the spirit world. “Unfortunately, there is no

collection of local San folklore to sustain this possibility and it is based on the suspect evidence of juxtapositioning and numbers, neither of which has been documented (Erwee 1987b: 14).

Using creation myths and folklore from various sources (e.g. Bleek 1956; Bleek & Lloyd 1911; Stow 1905; Thomas 1959), Mguni (2009) has revealed many facets of Bushman beliefs that inform interpretation of tree and plant rock paintings. The caricaturisation of trees, focusing mainly on roots, trunk and branches relates to the way trees were conceptualised as bridges, links between the spirit world (God's realm) and the real world, where most people lived. "Metaphors of trees are frequently associated with divinities in hunter-gatherer belief" and some were even "avatars of the gods" (Mguni 2009: 145).

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18 – ALOES

The Matopos boasts 6 aloe species, though *Aloe tauri* was "recorded" in the 1900's but has not been located since (this would be the 7th Aloe species and if it does occur, is likely to be found in the far south-eastern Matopos near Lumane falls). Our aloes mostly come into flower in the winter months; when the veld has lost much of its colour, they burst into flower from May through to July. The first to flower is the *Aloe chabaudii*, a smallish, grey leaved aloe found on dwalas. It has a delicate pink flower, quite noticeable against the grey dwala. At times, the pink can be quite glossy. This winter two remarkable colour forms were found.

A *chabaudii* that had bi coloured perianths. The base of the perianth was a deep pink, and the tip white, so that the flower appeared to have been frosted like icing on a cake. It was a striking and the flower quite unlike any other *Chabaudii* flower that I have seen.

Three yellow *Chabaudii* were also found. They had a clear yellow bud, and when opened a lemon colour perianth. As they flowered and fell off, so they turned to a light soft orange, then pink. The yellow flower was striking and whilst this form has been recorded, it is believed that this is the first time in the Matopos. As they were in good sunshine, I am certain that this colour was not due to any lack of sunshine.

After the *Chabaudii*, the *Aloe aculeata*, or red-hot poker comes into flower, in June. The aloe is a large ground species. This impressive flower is always bi-coloured, red turning to orange or yellow as they open. These are followed by *Aloe greatheadii*, a small aloe with spotted leaves, buried in the grass, and with an impossibly tall flower stem (up to 2m) with a soft pink widely spaced perianths. This is followed in July by the *Aloe excelsa*, which is well known to us all as it is the tall aloe living up to its name! With its often multi-headed candelabra, normally in deep glossy red, sometimes in bright orange, and rarely in a red flower that opens white, the flowers are always quite distinctive in the late winter months. The bi-coloured Excelsa's are very rare, and only two locations in the Matopos are presently known. The *Aloe criptopoda* flowers in July, but this is a rare aloe, tucked amongst the rocks, and so rarely seen. It too has a glossy red flower, but the raceme is not as dense as the Excelsa, giving this an elegant appearance. Finally, the *Aloe zebrina* flowers in February, not too dissimilar to the Greatheadii, but a deeper pink, and shorter stem, and thicker raceme.

Of particular interest this year were a number of hybrids that were found. These included:

Aloe excelsa x *Aloe acculeata*

Aloe excelsa x *Aloe greatheadii*

Aloe excelsa x *Aloe chabaudii*

Aloe chabaudii x *Aloe acculeata*

Aloe chabaudii x *Aloe greatheadii*.

Some of these, such as the Excelsa x Acculeata, are not uncommon, but others such as the Excelsa x Greatheadii are a first time recording in the Matopos.

Though not recorded this year, an *Aloe excelsa* x *Aloe criptopoda* has been recorded near Mtshashasha Falls in the Matopos. The plant structures and flowers of these hybrids have proved to be fascinating, as the plant carries genes from both parents. Attempts are being made to rear second generation plants, to see what they might look like. Of course, their hybridisation will have been diluted.

Not surprisingly no hybrids with *Aloe aebrina* have been recorded due to the different flowering seasons, and the search goes on for the missing *Aloe tauri*!

During the winter months, I would get on my bicycle every Sunday and ride for a couple of hours, covering about 60kms, admiring the scenery and looking at the aloes. Anything of particular interest would result in a vehicular visit the following week-end, and often one discovery would lead to another. So, cycling, aloe hunting and keeping fit all came together during the not so chilly winter months!

19 – OBITUARY : ERROL WOLHUTER

Errol Wolhuter was born in Bulawayo in 1938, and was educated at Milton High School before studying law at the University of Cape Town. He was admitted to the Southern Rhodesia Bar in 1964, and completed his Conveyancing qualifications in 1965. Errol was a highly respected legal advisor, and his opinion was sought far and wide. His passing is a great loss to the legal profession.

Having grown up in Bulawayo it was not unusual that Errol developed a real passion for the bush. He was a long-time member of the Wildlife and Environment Society, taking part in countless Game Counts over many years. He loved visiting the Hwange National Park, more than just a break from the stress of work – a recharging of the soul! In his quite manner, he was an expert on wildlife and birdlife.

And his passion extended to the Matopos, where he became a member of our Society almost from inception. He was initially a regular participant in our field trips, until some years ago difficulty in walking caught up with him! But he would enjoy the solitude and quite beauty of the “old Hills” and frequently would travel out to enjoy a picnic in the National Park, or some other part of the Matopos.

Errol provided much sound advice (legal and general) to the Society, always on a pro-deo basis, and so unofficially became our legal advisor. His wisdom and guidance will be missed.

Errol passed away in Johannesburg on 10th July 2013 after a short illness and surgery, and leaves behind his faithful wife of 50 years, Ann, two sons, Barry and Neil, and four grandchildren.

We extend our sympathy to the Wolhuter family on the passing of a real gentleman. You will be missed.

20 – OBITUARY : MARY FRIEND

(With appreciation to Adele Edwards)

Mary Friend was a founder member, for several years a committee member, and always a staunch supporter of Matobo Conservation Society, attending many of the outings and events. She passed away, after a brief illness, on 20 June at the age of 81.

As Mary liked to tell people she knew me from before I was born, having been bridesmaid at the wedding of my parents Dennis & Wendy Le Cordeur. I have many happy memories of leisure time spent out-of-doors with Mary and her family. Mary's father was a small mine worker and as a child, when she wasn't in boarding school at the Bulawayo Convent, she spent much of her time in remote parts of Matabeleland where she developed a passion and enthusiasm for the bush and all its creatures, and an eye for beauty – characteristics that were to remain with her throughout her life and that she passed on to many others

In particular I remember fishing trips and picnics in the Matopos. Mary was always a good cook and while in later years she is probably better remembered for her delicious jams and preserves and her tasty Sunday lunches shared with many friends, in earlier days her specialty was producing giant brunches cooked in the plough disk over a wood fire. Her camp was always very well organized, from the canvas basin on its wooden tripod, to the ice in the vacuum flask ensuring a cold drink on the hottest day, and the scoff box – a tall narrow box containing not only the table cloth and enough crockery and cutlery to provide for twenty people but also the tin opener, the corkscrew, the sharp knife and the salt - that someone else had inevitably forgotten. As a keen gardener and floral artist, she also always had her secateurs somewhere close to hand, useful not only for taking an interesting sample but also for removing that irritating thorn or shrub. Many of these items continued to make trips into the Matopos with Mary right up until our last MCS outing together in mid-May.

Mary was probably best known for her talent as an artist, and in particular for her paintings of the Matopos, where her love for the area shone through. On MCS outings we would often drop out of the convoy so Mary could take a photograph of a scene that had caught her fancy and that she thought she might want to paint. Her paintings adorn the homes of people around the world, who look at the scenes and remember a place they have known and loved. Mary also used her skill to illustrate the first MCS brochure to be produced, on Matopos National Park, and also the one on flora of the Matopos.

In latter years on MCS outings, Mary has chosen to come with her paints, or her bird book and binoculars, or her crossword, content to sit and absorb the beauty and tranquillity of the Matopos while others tackled more energetic pursuits. More often than not some-one would decide to stay and 'keep Mary company' – really an excuse not to tackle a two-hour hike and climb – and lively discussions and a few beers would follow.

Mary's contributions to MCS will long be remembered and her presence will be missed on future outings and we extend our condolences to the family.

21 – TREE FIELD TRIP

We are planning a tree field trip for Sunday 6th October 2013. Venue and details will follow, but make a note in your diary!

22 – REMINDER

Don't forget the Annual General Meeting at Pomongwe cave on Sunday 24th November, preceded by a dinner at Maleme Rest Camp on the evening of the 23rd November, and overnight stay at Maleme!