

**MATOBO**



**SOCIETY**

PO Box FM 648, Famona, Bulawayo, Zimbabwe  
[matoboconservationsociety@gmail.com](mailto:matoboconservationsociety@gmail.com)

Welfare No: W/O 30/94  
[www.matobo.org](http://www.matobo.org)

## **NEWSLETTER 90 / JANUARY 2015**

### **1 – NEW COMMITTEE**

Following our well attended AGM, your new Committee has met and agreed the following positions:

Chairman	Gavin Stephens	Secretary	Gaynor Lightfoot
Vice-Chairman	Jean Whiley	Treasurer	Darryl Friend
Members	Adele Edwards	Rob Burrett	Paul Hubbard
	Cindy Sellick		

We welcome the new members onto the Committee and whilst look forward to fresh ideas, thank them for volunteering their time to assist. It is always encouraging having new members.

At the same time we thank Shelagh Adams and Duncan Purchase for their service and support.

We are looking for “Champions” to head up three projects, namely Lantana, Litter and Ramsar. Any member who would like to help please contact the Chairman.

As you can see from our mast head, this is a special newsletter, being our 90<sup>th</sup> since the first in early 1993

### **2 – MATOBO PARK NEWS**

*Matobo National Park awarded Certificate of Excellence. HARARE, Oct 22 (Newsday)*

Matobo National Park has been awarded a 2014 Certificate of Excellence by a travel website that provides reviews of travel-related content, TripAdvisor. The award signifies that it has consistently earned outstanding feedback from TripAdvisor, Zimbabwe Parks and Wildlife Management Authority spokesperson Caroline Washaya-Moyo said yesterday. She said the award was based on the quality of reviews and opinions Matobo has earned on TripAdvisor over the past year. Washaya-Moyo said the authority would continue to be a member of TripAdvisor as there are huge marketing benefits to be drawn from being one. These include the viral marketing effect being a member has on the authority.

### **3 – MUSEUM NOTES**

The Museum is holding a Fun day at the Natural History Museum on 28<sup>th</sup> March. Your Society will be present, so please support. If you wish to be involved, please contact either Cindy or the Secretary.

On Friday afternoons the Museum Conservation Club meets between 2 and 3pm for children in grades between grades 4 – 7.

### **4 – NEW WORLD HERITAGE COMMITTEE APPOINTED**

A new Management Committee for the Matobo Hills World Heritage Committee has been appointed to oversee the implementation of the management plan. We recognise the good work done by Dr Moira Fitzpatrick in achieving this. The Committee comprises:

Chairman	MCS
Secretary	National Museums and Monuments
Vice-chairman	National Parks & Wildlife
Treasurer	ORAP
Members	Chiefs, Traditional Leaders, MRDC, URDC, Hospitality Industry, EMA and others.

## 5 – CALENDAR 2015

Herewith the proposed dates for the 2014 field trips –make a note in your diary!

Sun 1 <sup>st</sup> March	Whitewaters Mission
Sun 12 <sup>th</sup> April	Sedges with Dr Jane Browning
Sun 17 <sup>th</sup> May	Stone Ruins (Lumane)
Sat 06 <sup>th</sup> June	World Environment Day (MCS Park Clean Up)
Sun 23 <sup>rd</sup> Aug	Stone Hills
Sun 29 <sup>th</sup> Nov	AGM (venue to be advised)

Other dates

11 <sup>th</sup> – 15 <sup>th</sup> March	Matopos Heritage MTB
28 <sup>th</sup> March	Museum Fun Day
12 <sup>th</sup> April	Matopos 33 Miler
28 <sup>th</sup> – 30 <sup>th</sup> August	Matopos Classic MTB

## 6 - NEXT EVENT

Date	1 <sup>st</sup> March 2015
Venue	The Whitewaters Mission
Meet	8:00am to leave by 8:00am, Churchill Arms
Travel	All vehicles, trucks preferred
Details	Provide own chairs, tables, meals and drinks. Don't forget your hat!

The Whitewaters Mission is a special story, and this will be related to us by our own Rob Burrett. The Mission was abandoned when the present boundaries of the National Park were established, bringing to an end a vibrant and strong Christian Community within the hills.

## 7 – REPORT BACK

### *TREES WITH MEG COATES-PALGRAVE*

Members enjoyed a fascinating and insightful day with well-known botanist Meg Coates Palgrave in October 2014. The day began with an introduction to leaf structure as it is on this basis that the preliminary identification occurs. We then went on a short walk (which took some time!) during which we applied our new knowledge. The walk also took in some interesting bushes, sedges and orchids, but there was a good variety of trees.

During the course of the weekend Meg was shown a few trees of particular interest, and we await her assessment.

It was a most worthwhile visit and we were privileged to have Meg with us.

### *AGM – RHODES STABLES*

Our AGM at the end of November was well attended – probably because of the interesting venue, and the relatively easy road to get there. The day started with some scrambling around Rhodes Stables, with pictures shared by Rob Burrett. Then when we good get some order, the group walked across to the site of Rhodes Summer House where we contemplated the view, and the different approach to the Matopos. Sadly, the Summer House was burnt down in a veld fire some years ago, and has not been rebuilt. Again, Rob shared the history of the area, before we returned to the Stables for tea, and the AGM. After the AGM we went across to sandy Spruit and visited the stone ruins located near there. Again, there was much discussion over the site and the likely people who built the walls.

A full day and interesting day was enjoyed by everyone.

## 8 – FOR THE DIARY

Sunday 12<sup>th</sup> April.

Dr Jane Browning will be visiting the Matopos to further her work on sedges. We have been invited to join her on a field trip on Sunday 12<sup>th</sup> April at Camp Dwala, where there are extensive wetlands. This will be such an amazing chance to identify the fantastic diversity of sedges found in our wetlands. The camp will be available at a discounted price for members for those who wish to make it a week-end trip.

## 9 – NEW SIGNS

In the meantime, your Society has been busy erecting signage at various points within the park and greater World Heritage site. First up were three signs at Silozwane cave, Gulubaghwe cave and Lumane Falls, all sites that are visited regularly within the World Heritage area, but outside the National Park.

These are in both the vernacular and English, reminding visitors to protect their heritage and not to litter. The remainder of the signs, 15 in total, have been erected within the park, and are in English only. They too remind visitors of the importance of the World Heritage Site and ask you to take your litter home!

### **10 – THE MATOPOS GAME PARK FENCE**

The new fence is marching on, and by the end of January it was down to the last 200m. This has been a sterling exercise and we commend the team behind this project. This brings phase 1 to a close, and already there have been significant benefits for both the Park and the neighbouring community.

### **11– MATOPOS HERITAGE CHALLENGE**

The annual Matopos Heritage Challenge MTB event is scheduled to run from 11<sup>th</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup> March. The field was increased by a third, and still all 100 places were taken within 3 days of the bookings opening! This marks the popularity of the event. For the first time there is a large response from Bulawayo, which is very good, and also large contingents from Harare, Botswana and South Africa. Organisation is well under way for what promises to be the best ride to date.

A new race logo has been adopted, and will be used for the first time this year.

### **12 – MCS APPAREL**

You are reminded that the Society has a stock of fleece sleeveless jackets, in olive green with orange MCS logo. They are ideal for the cool mornings and evenings. These are available at \$20 each. We still have stocks of hats and caps (at \$10 each). CD's are also available.

### **13 – WORLD RHINO UPDATE**

*Northern white rhino will die unless science can help, News 24; 2014-12-10*

OI Pejeta - The keepers of three of the last six northern white rhino on Earth say it is highly unlikely the three will ever reproduce naturally. Kenya's OI Pejeta Conservancy announced on Wednesday that recent medical examinations of the three show the species is doomed to extinction, unless science can help. A park official says in vitro fertilisation and genetics-based science known as de-extinction are being examined.

Five years ago four northern white rhino were flown from a zoo in Prague to Kenya where it was hoped that the natural environment could lead to a pregnancy. One of the two males died earlier this year of an unknown cause. The other three are effectively infertile.

Though the northern white rhino is nearly extinct, southern white rhinos and black rhinos are not. The silver lining, though, is science. Efforts will now be made to keep the species alive through in vitro fertilization, and possibly by working with the rhinos' genetic material in a budding field known as de-extinction. "We always knew from the very beginning that the chances of this working were small even if they bred," said Richard Vigne, chief executive of the OI Pejeta Conservancy, where the rhino have lived since December 2009.

The conservancy said in a statement on Wednesday that artificial reproductive techniques "could provide the last chance of survival for the world's most endangered mammal." That echoed the phrase written on the wooden crates the rhinos were transported in from Nairobi to OI Pejeta: "Last Chance to Survive."

Some animal experts at the time said the effort was too little, too late, and that the experiment's budget could have been better spent on other conservation projects. But the bulk of the more than \$100 000 effort came from a donor - Alastair Lucas, then the vice chairman of Goldman Sachs in Australia - who wanted to see the project carried out. Vigne said the project was not done in vain.

#### Genetic material still alive

"They've been returned to Africa from a zoo, and they've thrived in that environment. In that way it's been a success," he said. "The fact they haven't bred is clearly a massive disappointment, but there are new technologies being invented all the time to rescue technically extinct species."

One of the two male rhinos transferred to OI Pejeta died of an unknown cause earlier this year. Veterinarians that examined the remaining three last month determined that the male's sperm count is very low and that the two females either cannot get pregnant or not carry a pregnancy to term.

The loss of the last six northern white rhinos does not signal the end of the rhino. Southern white and black rhinos still exist in bigger numbers. But southern white rhinos cannot live in central Africa.

The in vitro fertilization experiment could take place with a southern white surrogate mother. And Vigne said scientists are working with old genetic material to see if they can resurrect the passenger pigeon or dodo bird. By contrast, he noted that the genetic material from northern whites is still alive.

Ol Pejeta sits on a high-elevation plain in view of Mount Kenya's slow and ominous rise. The conservancy has 104 black rhinos and 26 whites — mostly of the southern variety. Because of increasing demand for rhino horn in Vietnam — a phenomenon that has resulted in more than 3 000 rhinos killed by poachers in South Africa since 2010 — the animals must be closely guarded. Mohamed Doyo is one of the rhinos' main keepers. He rubs their back and hind legs when they are inside their smaller wooden pens. And he helps shoo them outside into the much bigger penned area where they can roam. He points out how Najin, the 25-year-old female rhino, has a pronounced limp, one of the reasons she likely cannot bear a calf. He blames it on her time in her concrete zoo pen.

The northern white rhino is a major mammalian species that is "probably or potentially" going to become extinct in the coming years, Vigne said, notwithstanding new reproductive technology. "And to me that's a real indictment of the human race," he said. "We're all responsible for it, and to stand by and watch it happen ... I think would have been horribly wrong."

#### One of six remaining northern white rhinos dies in US

Only five northern white rhinos remain after poachers hunted them to near extinction

A northern white rhinoceros has died at the San Diego Zoo in California, leaving only five in the entire world.

Angalifu, a male thought to be 44 years old, is said to have died of old age. One of the critically endangered species remains at the California facility, while another resides in a Czech Republic zoo and three remain in a Kenyan preserve. The rhinos have been hunted by poachers to near extinction for their valuable horns, used in dagger handles. "Angalifu's death is a tremendous loss to all of us," San Diego Zoo safari park curator Randy Rieches wrote in a statement.

Earlier attempts to mate Angalifu with the zoo's other northern white rhino, Nola, were unsuccessful. Meanwhile, preservationists at the Kenyan preserve have acknowledged their one male and two female rhinos will not reproduce naturally. In vitro fertilisation efforts will now reportedly be undertaken to keep the species from extinction.

## **14 – UN CLIMATE CHANGE CONGRESS**

*UN members agree deal at Lima climate talks*

United Nations members have reached an agreement on how countries should tackle climate change. Delegates have approved a framework for setting national pledges to be submitted to a summit next year.

Differences over the draft text caused the two-week talks in Lima, Peru, to overrun by two days.

Environmental groups said the deal was an ineffectual compromise, but the EU said it was a step towards achieving a global climate deal next year in Paris.

The talks proved difficult because of divisions between rich and poor countries over how to spread the burden of pledges to cut carbon emissions.

'Not perfect'

[The agreement](#) was adopted hours after a previous draft was rejected by developing countries, who accused rich nations of shirking their responsibilities to fight global warming and pay for its impacts.

Peru's environment minister, Manuel Pulgar-Vidal, who chaired the summit, told reporters: "As a text it's not perfect, but it includes the positions of the parties."

Miguel Arias Canete, EU Commissioner for Climate Action and Energy, said the EU had wanted a more ambitious outcome but he still believed that "[we are on track to agree a global deal](#)" at a summit in Paris, France, next year.

UK climate change minister Ed Davey said: "I am not going to say it will be a walk in the park in Paris." He described the deal as "a really important step" on the road to Paris.

"That's when the real deal has to be done."

*Analysis: Matt McGrath, BBC News, Lima*

There was a good deal of optimism at the start of these talks as the recent emissions agreement between the US and China was seen as an historic breakthrough. But that good spirit seemed to evaporate in two weeks of intense wrangling between rich and poor here in Lima.

It ended in a compromise that some participants believe keeps the world on track to reach a new global treaty by the end of next year.

None of the 194 countries attending the talks walked away with everything they wanted, but everybody got something.

As well as pledges and finance, the agreement points towards a new classification of nations. Rather than just being divided into rich and poor, the text attempts to reflect the more complex world of today, where the bulk of emissions originate in developing countries.

While progress in Lima was limited, and many decisions were simply postponed, the fact that 194 nations assented to this document means there is still momentum for a deal in Paris. Much tougher tests lie ahead.

#### Climate deal heralds historic shift

The talks, which began on 1 December, had been due to end on Friday but ran over into the weekend. The final draft is said to have alleviated those concerns with by saying countries have "common but differentiated responsibilities".

"We've got what we wanted," Indian environment minister Prakash Javedekar told reporters, saying the document preserved the notion that richer nations had to lead the way in making cuts in emissions.

It also restored a promise to poorer countries that a "loss and damage" scheme would be established to help them cope with the financial implications of rising temperatures.

However, it weakened language on national pledges, saying countries "may" instead of "shall" include quantifiable information showing how they intend to meet their emissions targets.

The agreed document calls for:

An "ambitious agreement" in 2015 that reflects "differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities" of each nation

Developed countries to provide financial support to "vulnerable" developing nations

National pledges to be submitted by the first quarter of 2015 by those states "ready to do so"

Countries to set targets that go beyond their "current undertaking"

The UN climate change body to report back on the national pledges in November 2015

Environmental groups were scathing in their response to the document, saying the proposals were nowhere near drastic enough.

Sam Smith, chief of climate policy for the environmental group WWF, said: "The text went from weak to weaker to weakest and it's very weak indeed."

Jagoda Munic, chairperson of Friends of the Earth International, said fears the talks would fail to deliver "a fair and ambitious outcome" had been proven "tragically accurate".

## **15 – FREE CLIMBERS REACH EL CAPITAN AND MAKE HISTORY**

Two US climbers - who spent more than two weeks scaling the sheer face of El Capitan in Yosemite National Park - have finally reached the summit of the 3,000ft (914m) rock. Kevin Jorgeson, 30, and Tommy Caldwell, 36, are the first climbers to do so without aids, except for harnesses and ropes to prevent deadly falls.

They began their historic half-mile ascent on 27 December, 2014. During the climb the pair slept in tents suspended from the mountain face.

Eric Jorgeson, Kevin Jorgeson's father, told local media his son had always been a climber and watching him fulfil a long-time dream had made him proud. "He climbed everything he could think of. It made us nervous early on as parents, but we got used to it," he said. He and his son had begun climbing the other routes to El Capitan's peak in California when Kevin was 15, making it a birthday tradition each year. "I feel like the most proud person in the world right now," Mr Caldwell's sister, Sandy Van Nieuwenhuyzen, said.

During their climb up the notoriously difficult Dawn Wall route, both took rest days to wait for their skin to heal and used tape and even superglue to speed the process. At one point it seemed unlikely that they would make it to the top, the BBC's Alastair Leithead at the foot of El Capitan reports. The pair suffered bruising falls, when their grip slipped, and they would bounce off the mountain face. Only their safety ropes saved them from further harm. "As disappointing as this is, I'm learning new levels of patience, perseverance and desire," Jorgeson had posted online at one point. "I'm not giving up. I will rest. I will try again. I will succeed."

#### How do they do it?

The rock face is not totally smooth, it has some cracks, lumps, rough edges and other irregularities

The climbers wear high-friction shoes and climb at night in cooler weather

When necessary, they rest fingertips and use treatments to heal broken skin

So, now over to our own “Sticky Fingers” in the hope we can establish climbing routes on faces such as Silozwe or Siloti!

## **16 – CONTOVERSIAL FENCING**

*Parks to cough up \$1 mln for Grace’s animal sanctuary:* As part of security measures to make it suitable for habitation by the “big five” animals, the cash strapped Zimbabwe Parks and Wildlife Management Authority would have to fork out at least \$1 mln to fence Manzou Estate in Mazowe, where First Lady Grace Mugabe is setting up a private wildlife sanctuary. This comes after Environment, Water and Climate minister Saviour Kasukuwere last week said the National Parks had taken control of Manzou Farm and would soon be translocating the “big five” animals from other sanctuaries to Mugabe’s private game park –*Independent, Friday January 23, 2015*

## **17 – PAINTED HUTS IN THE MATOPOS**

A beautiful home, a beautiful life: competition celebrates the art of painted huts, Posted on October 27, 2014 by Violette Zim.

Ma Dube bends over and tenderly runs a hand over the crescent-shaped curve of sea-shell pink at the base of her hut. It’s twilight and the colour shimmers in the rays of the setting sun. “This is made with soil from my home in Nkayi,” she explains. “Nkayi?” That’s over 250km from the Matopos in southern Zimbabwe where she now lives...and where we now stand. “Yes. I brought a 2kg bag of it back on the bus with me,” she adds nonchalantly.

We can’t help but imagine the average rural bus journey: the luggage which has to be carried from the homestead to the bus terminal many kilometres away, the babies on backs, the piles of goods tilted high on the roof of the bus. And then I try to imagine the love and pride that would inspire a woman to collect 2kg of the soil in a bag from her home so that she can carry it to her husband’s village 250km away.

Ma Dube shrugs her rounded shoulders. For her it makes absolute sense. No soil around here creates that exact shade of pink. We’re left amazed and humbled, as we have been so many times during this journey: to find the winner of the “My Beautiful Home” competition, an initiative aimed at preserving and celebrating the traditional art of decorated huts.

We had the same feeling when, earlier in the day while touring homesteads entered in the competition, we came across Fanwell Ngwenya, or “Mfeni” with his pointed goatee and dark expressive eyes: his wife, her clothes hanging on her tall frame, showed us around their homestead where spindly floral designs decorated the foot of two of the huts. But we were drawn to a decaying homestead on the edge of the compound and ducked under a barbed wire fence to find ourselves in the eerily beautiful remains of the original family hut.

The thatch of the roof had all but caved in and incredible sunlight fell through the crevices onto Mfeni’s face as he explained that the intricately stylized paintings had been done by his wife before she fell ill with AIDS. She was so ill, he tells us, she nearly died, and he would carry her on his back to the clinic 8km away for treatment. “We’re both HIV positive,” he explains, “but now we’re on ARVs and getting stronger. She was able to paint for the first time this year since she fell ill. It made her very tired but she did it. Soon she’ll be able to paint like this again,” he adds, sweeping his hand over the old homestead. We reluctantly leave the hut, filled with its ethereal light and benevolent spirits, uplifted.

We were a diverse crew of judges and specialists in our own fields, yet somehow complimentary; we were artists and writers, historians and architects, brought together by our shared passion for Matopos, the arts and rural Zimbabwe. Our guide that day, Sofaya, a tartan scarf wrapped jauntily around his head to protect it from the sun, led us through valleys and river beds and among the boulders of Matopos’ incredible granite landscape to each of the homesteads entered in the competition: 25 in all, spread out between two rural districts, sanctioned by the District Chief and various village heads, and toured and judged over three long but happy days in late August.

We encountered incredible poverty – a woman who has been suffering with acute toothache for two years but doesn’t have the money for the transport and the medication at the clinic several kilometres away, the children with threadbare clothes who, when we ask them their names, have no pens or paper so draw their names for us in the dust, the single mother who hasn’t sold a wooden carving, her sole income, in two weeks (yet still gives us a parting gift of a beautifully-carved guinea fowl) – but we also came across unbelievable pride: spotlessly swept hearths, cutlery polished until it shone, paper doilies cut out of newspaper to rest crockery on in the display units.

During our tour of the area we watched the landscape and the art change as we travelled deeper into the hills, influenced by its surroundings, its location and the cultural background of its inhabitants. Closest to the road which transports tourists from the upmarket lodges, cloistered away among luxury en-suite rooms on the Kezi Road, the huts were painted with wildlife, big, bold elephant, lion and buffalo. We were welcomed by traditional dancers and a montage in one of the huts showed tourists dancing with the villagers on carefully orchestrated tours.

When we asked the women of the household responsible for the painting which was their favourite work, they gave the groomed answer: “the big five”. But as we drove down into the idyllic Mtshelili Valley, and, the next week, even further from the tourist sites and closer to the spiritual centre of the Matopos, Njelele, the decorations become more spontaneous and less contrived, pure expressions of art and love and pride.

It was in such a place, nestled amongst a tumble of granite boulders, that we met the first-place winner of the competition. Though it was our first day of judging and we still had more than half the entries to go, we already knew it was going to be hard to match it; the homestead of Sikhanyiso Ngwenya of Ward 16 immediately pervaded our senses and stole our hearts. She spoke thoughtfully to us about the designs on her home: how she had created the delicate figurines and stylish floral work, painted against a warm apricot backdrop. How she changed the designs once a year, just after the rains. How she had been taught the art of painting by her mother, who’d learnt it from her mother before her. We left there breathless: the colours, style and design, a perfect blending of traditional with a personal artistic twist, imprinted on our minds.

Sikhanyiso, along with all the other competitors, was recognized at a vibrant prize-giving at the Amagugu Cultural Centre: there were individual certificates for every participant, merit awards for the top 10 homesteads and substantial prizes sponsored by Halstead Brothers, the Fortwell Group, ICRISAT, Kango Products, Frieight Consultants and Squeaky Clean, for the top three exteriors as well as the top three interiors.

The initiative, which organizers plan to make an annual event, was the brainchild of Veronique Attala, John Knight, professor of architecture at NUST and renowned cultural historian, Pathisa Nyathi. Veronique, an ardent hiker and cyclist who has lived in Zimbabwe for many years, has always had a deep love for the Matopos. Once, cycling through the area, she came across a particularly beautifully decorated hut. She wanted to ask the women of the homestead what had inspired the striking designs but the language proved a deterrent.

“That was when I realized that the huts were, in a way, speaking to me where the women could not, they were the expression of the women’s thoughts and feelings and aspirations: we shared the same thrust for beauty, the same love for our homes and families, the same desire for sharing; and the art was our universal language, to us, as human beings,” she said.

It was then that she started discussing the notion of a competition to celebrate the tradition of painted huts with Knight, who has always had a keen interest in rural architecture. They linked up with Nyathi and the competition was born.

Not only was the response from villagers entering from the two designated areas remarkable, but so was that of sponsors who came forward with incredible prizes, including a plough, wheelbarrow, home implements, cookware, seeds, fertilizer, t-shirts and cash. “What is really amazing was that this was a solely Zimbabwean initiative, for Zimbabweans and by Zimbabweans: no foreign company sponsored any of the prizes, it was all home-grown,” said Veronique.

There’s one moment for most of us who toured the homes that stands out from the many evocative moments we experienced: the moment we stood on the threshold of Sikhanyiso’s home, her neatly turned out children carefully watching us, the eldest girl sitting in the doorway of one of the huts studying for her O level maths. The sun hadn’t yet set but the heat of the day was starting to ebb and the light was turning from blinding to mellow, setting the warm apricot walls of the hut alight.

That other-worldly tranquility that precedes sunset was starting to settle and the hills in the background were turning to deep gold. And photographer, Andre van Rooyen, his Canon 1D mark IV camera hanging at his side, took one last look around, sighed deeply and said: “We need to rename this competition. It’s more than just My Beautiful Home, this is My Beautiful Life.” Sikhanyiso just smiled.

## **18 – BILHARZIA REMINDER**

Members are reminded that the dams and rivers of the Matopos are infested with Bilharzia, and therefore contact with the water should be avoided.

*'Bilharzia rampant in Zimbabwe'*: The Ministry of Health and Child Care MoHCC), says 57 out of the country's 63 districts are prone to the deadly bilharzia disease which, if untreated, could cause infertility and other health complications if left untreated. MoHCC epidemiology and disease control director Portia Manangazira said, according to a survey carried out in the country, it was found out that bilharzia and intestinal worms were prevalent in many provinces – *Standard*, Sunday January 25, 2015.

## **19 – RAINFALL**

Western Matopos was at 240mm at the end of January, whilst the eastern Matopos was at 384mm at the same time. Bulawayo was 412mm. Again Bulawayo is not too badly off, but the Matopos is significantly behind average for that time of the year. The season started well in the east, but remained dry in the west. Then January, which statically is our wettest month, came with almost no recorded rain. At the time of writing, February has started off a lot better with some heavy falls recorded – we just hope it continues.

Meanwhile to the north the season started very late, but when it did start, it made up for it! 90-year old rainfall records were broken when Guruve recorded 145mm of rain in a day while Rusape recorded 127,5mm in a week that saw four new records being set. The highest recorded rainfall that Guruve had received prior to Saturday the 3rd of January 2015 was 90mm, recorded on the 30th of January 1924. The district however recorded 145 mm on January 3 breaking the 90 year old record. Rusape also received 127.5mm, breaking the record set on 21 December 1924. In Mt Darwin, another new rainfall record was set when 116mm was received within 24 hours, surpassing the 74 mm recorded on the 18th of January 1965. Mvurwi also recorded 166 mm, breaking the 1990 record of 108 mm. Meteorological Services Department Director, Amos Makarau said the rains received across the country in the past week were too heavy for Zimbabwe as the ground was already saturated

*Rains to come late as seasons shift*: Zimbabwe will now receive rain later than usual, and experience longer mid-season dry spells due to climate change. However, the amount of rainfall is not expected to decrease in the short to medium term. Forecasts by the Meteorological Services Department show that the six-month rain season will begin in November. In normal seasons, most parts of the country received rains between October and March. Principal meteorologist Linia Mashawi Gopo told The Sunday Mail that rainfall distribution and frequency have also changed. She said all findings will be verified in 2015 – *Sunday Mail, October 12, Pg 2*

*SADC to receive normal rainfall*: SADC climate experts have forecast a normal to above normal rainfall season for the bulk of the region as Government targets to plant above 1, 5 million hectares of maize during the 2014/15 season. A statement from the 18th Southern Africa Regional Climate Outlook Forum (Sarcof 18) held in Namibia advises that the bulk of SADC will receive normal to above normal rainfall from October 2014 to February 2015 – *Herald, Tuesday September 2, 2014*.

*Normal rainfall season forecast*: Zimbabwe is likely to receive normal rainfall throughout the 2014-15 cropping season; though some areas will experience dry spells towards the end of the season. Meteorological Services Department forecaster Linia Mashawi Gopo said on Friday that Zimbabwe will receive normal rainfall in most parts of the country from next month to March next year – *Herald, Saturday September 6*.

## **20 – RESEARCH**

Don't forget that you can assist in the research work being carried out in the Matopos by Dambari Wildlife Trust by completing the table that was included in prior newsletters, and submitting it to Dr Nicky Pegg (or the Secretary).

## **21 – [www.matobo.org](http://www.matobo.org)**

The Matobo Conservation Society also has a Facebook page. So go to <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Matobo-Conservation-Society/234544749928841> and see what's happening – and share your contributions! Let us have any pictures that you may have from past outings, or of interest.

## **22 – SUBSCRIPTIONS**

You are reminded that subscriptions for the year 1 October 2014 to 30 September 2015 are now due and payable, and must be paid before the AGM, on 30<sup>th</sup> November. There has been no change from last year.

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

### **23 – CONDOLENCES**

Prominent British-born but controversial author of Zimbabwe’s history, Professor Terrence Ranger, died in early January 2015. A brief statement the British-Zimbabwe Society which the historian, who was born in 1929 was a member of, said he “passed away in his sleep” at his home in Oxford in England on Friday where he was now based. Terence Ranger has published and edited dozens of books, and published some 150 articles and book chapters. In his work, Ranger contributed substantially to the historiography of East Africa in general and Zimbabwe in particular. He is equally renowned for the continuous methodological renewal of African historiography over the last decades.

Dr Ian Player passed away in early February. Player is simply part of the conservation movement of southern Africa, an icon and a legend, and was instrumental in the transfer of white rhino from Natal to the Matopos in the 1950’s. We hope his legacy will live on and salute his lifetime’s work in conservation.