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Welfare No: W/O 30/94
www.matobo.org

NEWSLETTER 101 / NOVEMBER 2017

1 – ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Another year goes past and our Annual General Meeting falls due. The AGM will be held at Rowallan Park on Sunday 26th November, 2017 at 10:00am. We hope that you will support your Society by attending this important event. The Society has had a busy year, and yet there remains a full calendar ahead!

We hope that the accessibility of Rowallan Park will attract our members. Normal National Parks fees will apply, but for those over 65, ask for pension discounts at the gate. Once you have entered the Park for the meeting, you are of course free to travel around the Circular Drive in the afternoon to enjoy this very special place – and hopefully come across a rhino or leopard!

2 – COMMITTEE

We will be electing a new Committee at the AGM in November. We have lost a few Committee members, and we need some fresh input. So, we call on our members to give some thought to serving. If you cannot, perhaps you know someone who would be an asset to the Committee. Please contact the Chairman or the Secretary.

3 – RAMSAR

The MCS is spearheading the drive to have the Matobo Hills declared a UNESCO Wetland of International Importance under the Ramsar Convention. The technical committee has already started work, and aims to have the application completed in time for the deadline of 15th December. As with the nomination dossier for the Matobo Hills World heritage Site, there is a wealth of information already in print, and this being collated into the draft submission. Apart from the MCS, the committee includes EMA, ZINWA, The Natural History Museum, National Parks, NUST and a representative from BLZ. The two rural district councils will be asked to assist with the outreach programme and community involvement.

The technical committee has taken the decision that the boundary of the Matobo Hills Wetland Site will be the same as those for the Matobo Hills World Heritage Site, and that the management committees of both sites will be merged into one, with distinct reporting requirements.

4 – WORLD MONUMENTS WATCH

The Matobo Hills has been included on the 2018 World Monuments Watch. This should make available resources for the conservation of our Rock Art Heritage. Details are included under item 17 below.

5 – ORCHIDS

The new orchid season has begun. First up was our only arboreal orchid, *Anselia Africana*, the Leopard Spot, so aptly named and so appropriately Matopian! The *Dissa woodii* followed suit in October, and just as this was fading, so the *Eulophia coeloglossa* came into flower, its bright pink bells decorating the vleis. The *Eulophia angolensis* has started to push its leaves up, and will most likely start flowering in late November, along with *Eulophia streptopetala* located in the drier areas. It will be interesting to see if this year's orchids flower in greater abundance following the very wet last season.

6 – ROAD REPAIRS

The Ministry of Transport has undertaken road repairs to the Old Gwanda Road as part of its National Disaster following the ravaging rains earlier in the year. So far, the Tuli river crossing has been

expanded and more works are planned, along with a fresh layer of gravel. The Rural District Councils have also been busy attending to the Khumalo West Road and others, but so far no work has been done on either the Fort Usher Road or the Sotcha Loop Road. In the Game Park, ZimParks have been busy repairing the roads and they are generally in a good state of repair.

7 - NEXT EVENT

Date	26 th November 2017
Venue	Annual General Meeting
Meet	8:15am to leave by 8:30am, Churchill Arms Car Park
Travel	All Vehicles
Details	Provide own chairs, tables, meals and drinks. Don't forget your hat and umbrella! Don't forget something warm as well!

Apart from the AGM, we will have a talk and tour of the new Rowallan Park, whilst remembering its past history as first a Scout Camp, and then a Girls Guide Camp. We also have a walk to Imadzi cave planned.

8 – HAVE YOU PAID YOUR SUBSCRIPTION?

Subscriptions for the year 1 October 2017 to 30 September 2018 fell due on 30 September 2017. Please ensure that your subs for 2018 are up to date. There has been no increase in rates.

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

These can be paid in cash to any committee member, or by RTGS. Please contact the secretary for bank account details.

9 – REPORT BACK

In August it is always hit and miss with the weather, and so it was on Sunday 20th when only a small convoy ventured out of Bulawayo and down the recently graded Old Gwanda Road. They were met at the Tuli River by your erstwhile Chairman, on a bike, who then led them off the road and down unmarked tracks deeper into the hills. So, a few folk took a wrong turn, but by riding back and forth he kept the group intact. Part of the road was impassable, which required a Tuli river crossing – plenty of water but a firm base ensured all got through. The still wet bogs were avoided and so after a circuitous route we finally arrived in the shade of a great pod mahogany, albeit losing its leaves, ready for a good cup of tea.

Thereafter we walked down and into the Tuli river gorge, and along the valley floor to the approximate site of King Lobengula's office. This building, built from baked bricks, was largely demolished after 1896 when the bricks were carted upstream to the newly established Police camp at Fort Usher. A stroll back to the cars followed, with time to study both the late winter flora, and the geology of the valley. After lunch a short walk took us to the Tuli-Tendere Dam. Here Paul Hubbard gave a talk on the historic battle site of Nkantolo, with the dam marking its most easterly position. Sadly, a hole in the dam wall meant that the dam was fairly empty, even after the wonderful rainy season, but this did allow for a sweeping view of the concluding scenes of this first major Matopos Battle. Then it was back to the cars for afternoon tea, and slowly the party broke up and wended its way home.

10 – THE UNTOLD STORY OF ICRISAT'S GENE BANK

With acknowledgement to Mayibongwe Madlela, August 31, 2017

Despite playing a critical role in helping Zimbabwe and the whole SADC region adapt to the impact of climate change, the story of the International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT) gene bank remains largely untold. The research institution which is located at Matopos Research Centre on the outskirts of Bulawayo plays host to the only gene bank in Zimbabwe.

The international research organisation also runs a similar gene bank in Kenya. A gene bank is a bio-repository which preserves genetic material. For plants, this could be by freezing cuttings from the plant or stocking seeds while for animals the process involves the freezing of sperm and eggs in zoological freezers for future use.

The ICRISAT Regional Director for Eastern and Southern Africa, Dr Moses Siambi, said the Matopos facility plays a crucial role by conserving a collection of germplasm of small grains such as sorghum, finger millet, groundnuts and chickpea. “Our gene bank at Matopos conserves over 20 900 accessions of regional importance to meet market requirements and farmer preferred multiple uses.” Several landraces now conserved in the gene bank have disappeared from their natural habitats not only in Zimbabwe but in Africa and Asia as well,” said Dr Siambi.

The regional director stressed that the Matopos ICRISAT gene bank holds genetic material which impacts on climatic variability particularly on water and temperature. “Climatic variability that impacts on water and temperature is actually captured in the materials which we have in the gene bank. Now, if you can assume that sorghum has been grown in South Africa for several centuries all that variability is captured and kept in the materials which we have in the gene bank. I can’t emphasise enough the importance of the gene bank because it holds material that for generations will be able to produce products that can withstand variable climate,” said Dr Siambi. Through the gene bank, Dr Siambi said the research institution has been able to extract the necessary genes from the stored material to produce seed varieties that can withstand drought.

Researchers at the centre also use the preserved genetic traits to create new crop varieties that also offer benefits such as higher yields, improved nutritional value, resistance to pests and diseases as well as the ability to survive changing climatic conditions. ICRISAT has changed the perception and attitude towards small grains in Zimbabwe following the development and introduction of sorghum and pearl millet (SMIP) technology.

The SMIP programme has transformed some drought-prone areas such as Jambezi in Matabeleland North province from being a mere subsistence farming community to a commercially viable rural community. Dr Siambi, however, decried the private sector’s lack of interest in investing in small grains seed producing facilities.

“Seed value chain is complicated for the crops which we deal with. The reason being that the private sector is not very active in the seed value chain for the dryland cereals and legumes. So the challenge is to make enough seed available which makes it very different from the maize value chain. We are a research institution and we produce seed in small quantities (foundation seed). The private sector needs to take this up to multiply to certified seed,” said Dr Siambi.

Vice President Emmerson Mnangagwa recently toured the gene bank and pledged government’s support for the research centre. Speaking after touring the seed storing facility, VP Mnangagwa said until his recent visit, he did not appreciate the importance of the centre in contributing towards food and nutrition security in both the country and the region. “With the knowledge that I have now, we are going to take you on board on our Command Agriculture programme. The Command Agriculture programme has devised ways of finding funding to ease your challenges. We do not think it will be a problem to fund you. I can’t see anybody in my team or even cabinet who will say we should not support you or take you on board among the participants or stakeholders in the programme,” said VP Mnangagwa.

11 – GAZETTED FORESTS UNDER THREAT AS 40,000 ILLEGAL SETTLERS INVADE FORESTS

Sunday News Online, Sunday, Aug 6, 2017. Tinomuda Chakanyuka, Senior Reporter

GAZETTED forests in the country are under threat from land invaders, with the Forestry Commission reporting that more than 40 000 illegal settlers have occupied protected forests countrywide. Zimbabwe has 24 gazetted indigenous forests covering 800 000 hectares. In an interview last week, Forestry Commission acting general manager Mr Abednico Marufu expressed worry at the rampant invasion of gazetted forests by land seekers. Mr Marufu said the invasion of protected forestry land was more rampant in Hwange and Gokwe South districts. He said the illegal settlers were causing serious forestry degradation, destroying valuable trees such as Teak and Mukwa through poaching of timber.

Mr Marufu said the illegal settlers were also involved in poaching of animals.

“There are about 40 000 illegal settlers from Hwange, going to Mafungautsi in Gokwe and it’s so rampant. People are just settling themselves illegally and they are destroying the valuable trees that we have like Teak and Mukwa. “It’s so rampant. There is a lot of forestry degradation that is happening, poaching of our animals and poaching of timber. That is not sustainable for Zimbabwe,” he said. Mr Marufu said the illegal settlers should be evicted from the protected land that they have annexed. “Forestry Commission’s position is that as long as you are staying illegally, it means you are not following the law.

“As far as we are concerned every person that has moved into the Forestry Commission area, the gazetted forests that are in Matabeleland North and elsewhere, all those people are settling there illegally and we advise them especially their leaders, traditional leaders and even our politicians that these people must be moved to where they came from,” he said.

Mr Marufu advised the illegal settlers to approach the Government and be resettled accordingly.

“If they want land, I think there are proper procedures that should be followed. The Government has been settling people properly and when people decide to settle themselves in these protected areas, as Forestry commission we can only say they should move out,” he said.

Mr Marufu said the illegal occupation of protected forests was negatively impacting on the ecosystem in the woodlands, in the process affecting communities that live around the forests.

“I can add to say that these forests are there to protect our rivers which flow from those areas.

“Once people disturb those forests, they will be destroying rivers like the Gwayi and Sengwe Rivers. Those rivers are the ones that are giving life to our animals even to people who are living outside those forests. So once we continue to destroy the forests then what are saying to the heritage of Zimbabwe,” he said.

“The forests are preserved to promote soil protection, nutrient recycling, biodiversity conservation, climate regulation, wildlife habitats and providing non-timber products, among other benefits.”

The country has, in recent years, experienced rapid reduction in the size of gazetted forests due to illegal land occupations.

In the Midlands province, Mapfungautsi State Forest, was gazetted in 1953, measuring 101 000 hectares, but half of it has been taken over by illegal settlers.

Zimbabwe loses about 330 000 hectares of natural forests annually due to deforestation.

Deforestation has led to loss of more than 21 percent of Zimbabwe’s forest cover over the past two decades.

Among some of the main causes of deforestation in the country as listed by the Forestry Commission are expansion for agricultural purposes and use of firewood as a source of energy for both rural and urban areas.

Mashonaland Central, Mashonaland West, Mashonaland East and Manicaland provinces, which are the hub of tobacco farming activity in the country, are the worst ravaged by deforestation.

12- PARLY PROBES FORESTS PLUNDER

Daily News, 1 October 2017, Andrew Kunambura

The parliamentary portfolio committee on Environment, Water and Climate has set out to investigate the plunder of commercial timber and protected indigenous forests following a massive public outcry from

environmentalists and the timber industry. Settlers and illegal miners have besieged commercial timber forests in Chimanimani and some gazetted natural forests such as Mapfungautsi in Gokwe and Bembesi, Gwaai and Lake Alice in Matabeleland North.

Committee chairperson Wonder Mashange confirmed the development in an interview this week. “We are planning to make a field visit to those seriously damaged forests. If there are big names involved in the settling of people and mining activities there, we will name and shame them,” Mashange said. “After the investigation, we will compile a report which will then be tabled in Parliament for debate. We are particularly concerned with the existing environment laws which we think are not deterrent enough. We want government to establish special courts to try environment crimes.

“The world today is burdened by the effects of climate change and we cannot be seen promoting decimation of these important forests which help protect the environment,” he added. Environmentalists have since welcomed the development saying it would go a long way in mitigating against the whims of climate change.

“We are happy that Parliament is getting actively involved in this process as they appreciate the disaster that is on the ground. Adding their voice as politicians will probably make people realise that this is a serious national issue that goes beyond political lines. It is about protecting our environment for future generations,” said Environment Africa communications officer Sandra Gobvu. “I would be particularly glad to see results where people regardless of their social standing are prosecuted for environmental crimes. “We do appreciate the role that EMA has been doing especially around policing the plunder of indigenous forests but we feel more can be done especially in terms of law enforcement and prosecution,” she said.

At just 200 000 hectares, commercial timber forests occupy 0.5 percent of Zimbabwe’s total land size of 39 million hectares. The timber industry lost a total of 14 000 hectares of these forests in the last two years alone, as they are being destroyed at a faster rate than they can be replenished, and players in the besieged sector have warned that the country could be forced to import timber if urgent measures are not taken. Zimbabwe has been able to satisfy local timber demand since 1986 and even produce surplus timber for export to Botswana, Malawi, Zambia and Mozambique. Zambia, Malawi and Botswana sorely rely on Zimbabwe for timber.

Also, there could be grave climatic consequences because the timber forests have helped combat effects of climate change through their carbon sequestration abilities. At its peak in the 1990s, the timber industry directly employed around 50 000 people, but now manages just 5 000. Towns and cities such as Mutare, Chipinge, Nyanga and Chimanimani have their foundations on the timber industry, on which their sustainability also depends.

It is a multi-million-dollar industry which, despite being in a quandary, still contributes around four percent to the country’s Gross Domestic Product. Players say Zimbabwe had just enough timber to last the next nine years. Apart from the commercial timber forests, Zimbabwe’s 14 gazetted natural forests which are studded with rich tree species are also under siege. About 836 478 hectares of land in Zimbabwe is under statutory protection, inclusive of both commercial and natural forests. The forests are under threat from human settlements, especially after government’s forest-based land reform policy which saw an influx of settlers invading the jungles despite statutory provisions barring such. The Forestry Act Chapter 19:05 provides that demarcated indigenous forests must ideally continue to be owned and managed by the State for conservation purposes as provided for by the same law. Sadly, the environmental bulwarks are vanishing due to unplanned settlements.

In addition to decimating tree species, some of which, like teak and mahogany, are of high commercial value, settlers are also poaching large and small game. As a result, wildlife which has been roaming freely in these protected forests is diminishing due to habitat loss and excessive poaching.

13 – EVENTS

A. Matopos World Heritage MTB Challenge

The annual Matopos Heritage Bike was successfully held from 30 August to 3 September. Whilst participation was at 75% of normal, following the postponement of the event from March. Participants came from Zambia, Botswana, South Africa and across Zimbabwe. There was a particularly strong field this year, with the first placed team from Zambia winning in an incredible 12 hours, 35 minutes. Particular thanks are extended to the Organising Committee working on behalf of the Society to host the ride, and to the volunteers who manned the water points en route. Once again, the event received recommendations from those who participated. The 2018 event will be held from 21 – 25 March, with entries opening online on 1st December.

B. Matopos Trail Run

The 2018 event will be held from 18-20 May, with entries opening on 15th January, 2018.

C. Matopos 33 Miler

We are waiting to confirm the dates for the annual 2018 Matopos 33 Miler.

14 – ZIMBABWE TO RELEASE 1 MILLION HECTARES OF PROTECTED LAND FOR MINING

Posted on July 19, 2017 in [Zimbabwe](#).

Zimbabwe is planning to release one million hectares of protected land to small-scale gold miners across the country to boost production, Mines and Development deputy minister, Fred Moyo has said, a development that threatens wildlife areas. Moyo told journalists at the on-going Mining, Engineering and Transport (Mine Entra) expo that the land would be released very “soon”. “The geology is largely gold so those provinces that have got more gold than others obviously will have more hectareage but we are releasing in all the provinces. It’s basically happening now and paperwork is in the process of being signed,” Moyo said.

“Remember these will be protected areas and we are removing the protection and once these are lifted people can go and peg in the normal way that they do. Last week I signed one in Mashonaland West, one in the Midlands, and there was one in Masvingo.”

Zimbabwe has six categories of protected land; national parks, gazetted forests, botanical reserves, botanical gardens, safari areas and 15 recreational parks and sanctuaries.

Zimbabwe Miners Federation president, Aplonia Munzverengwi told The Source that some miners were already mining in state-reserved areas. “Right now, those activities they are informal and people are taking the gold to the black market. The (mines) ministry has now managed to identify those State reserved areas where they are going to release land,” she said. “As soon as the land is officially released, they should register their activities and they will be able to access loans from (government owned gold buyer) Fidelity, mechanisation and the working capital.”

15 – ZIMPARKS SEEKS \$7MILLION

The Herald; September 26, 2017; Ishemunyoro Chingwere Business Reporter

The Zimbabwe Parks and Wildlife Management Authority is scouting for investors to pour in \$5,6 million into the firm to rehabilitate and upgrade its accommodation units so as to maximise revenue from tourist arrivals.

ZIMPARKS operates 250 accommodation units across the country, which have a current carrying capacity of 880 beds and is now targeting to have them all upgraded to standards of four-star and five star hotel status.

The rehabilitation and upgrade will be staggered into stages with Lake Chivero and Matopos facilities earmarked for the first stage. Zimparks public relations manager Mr Tinashe Farawo, confirmed the development that he said is meant to give the authority a competitive advantage over other players in the accommodation business and ultimately lead the parks authority to profitability.

“We are scouting for investors to upgrade or rehabilitate our accommodation units to at least four and five star hotel status,” said Mr Farawo. “Standards at these facilities have been going down over the years due to a number of challenges we have been facing so we want them to return to profitability,” said Mr Farawo.

Mr Farawo also said the parks will be repairing access roads to the accommodation units so as to outdo the competition. He said the plan is to repay the investment using proceeds from the rehabilitated facilities.

Zimparks is embarking on an offensive to generate cash flows from tourism, which is on an upward trajectory. Statistics from the Zimbabwe Tourism Authority (ZTA), shows that 2017 arrivals went up by six percent to 479 718 in the first quarter compared to the same period last year with 450 572 tourists having visited the country in the first quarter.

Hotel occupancy also rose in the first quarter this year to 38 percent from 36 percent last year. ZTA is targeting to grow arrivals this year from last year’s figure of 2,1 million tourists which earned the country \$890 million. The move comes as Government, in July, announced that it has stopped funding the Zimparks amid expectation that it must operate as a commercial entity. Addressing Members of Parliament at the Zimbabwe parliamentary conservation caucus workshop in July, Environment, Water and Climate Minister Oppah Muchinguri-Kashiri also noted that Zimparks generates 60 percent (\$28 million) of its revenue from hunting.

16 – ZIMPARKS DECLARES WAR ON POACHERS

24 September, 2017; The Sunday Mail

At least seven poachers have been shot dead in armed confrontation with Zimbabwe National Parks and Wildlife Authority (ZimParks) rangers since the beginning of the year as the crackdown on illegal hunting intensifies. This year alone, 416 people have been arrested for poaching while 92 suspected illegal hunters escaped arrest. The latest arrests took place in Harare last week when a Zimbabwe National Army officer was found with an elephant tusk after falling into a trap set by Parks officials and the police. During the same week, eight people were arrested in poaching-related crimes, including a man who was found with a live pangolin in Gokwe.

According to statistics from the wildlife authority, of the 416 poachers, 396 were locals. ZimParks rangers also recovered 19 rifles, 71 rounds of ammunition, 285 snares and 50 boats during the anti-poaching operations. ZimParks spokesperson Mr Tinashe Farawo said the bulk of the incidents occurred in the northern region of the country. He said: “We will continue to fight against this menace in an effort to protect our wildlife heritage which is under threat as a result of these illegal activities. “We are calling upon all corporates and individuals to join hands with us to fight poaching. It is in the interests of the country to protect our wildlife heritage. “While the loss of life is regrettable, we have a mandate to protect our wildlife as well as our rangers from any harm which at times results in the use of lethal force. “We have declared war on poachers and we are warning would-be poachers that they will be dealt with accordingly without fear or prejudice.”

In 2013, poachers killed more than 300 elephants and countless other safari animals after a cyanide poisoning incident in Hwange National Park. The deaths sparked international outrage. Conservationists described the incident as the worst single massacre of wildlife in Southern Africa in the past 25 years.

17 - WORLD MONUMENTS FUND ANNOUNCES 2018 WORLD MONUMENTS WATCH

October 15, 2017

World Monuments Fund (WMF) today announced the 2018 World Monuments Watch, presenting a diverse group of cultural heritage sites that face daunting threats, including human conflict, natural disaster, climate change, and urbanization, or present unique conservation opportunities. The list features 25 sites spanning more than 30 countries and territories, dating from prehistory to the twentieth century.

Among the sites, the 2018 Watch includes areas affected by the recent string of hurricanes and earthquakes that will need emergency assessment and conservation for damaged cultural heritage (**Disaster Sites of the Caribbean, the Gulf, and Mexico**); a collection of little-known homes, churches and community centres in Alabama where pivotal events of the Civil Rights Movement took place (**Civil Rights Sites of Alabama, United States**); a once-vibrant marketplace burned amid fighting between the Syrian government and insurgents (**Souk of Aleppo, Syria**); a trio of historic piers threatened by the effects of climate change (**Blackpool Piers, England**); one of two remaining synagogues in a once-flourishing Jewish community (**Eliyahu Hanavi Synagogue, Alexandria, Egypt**); a collection of vulnerable modern architecture conceived as hopeful symbols of a newly independent nation (**Post-Independence Architecture of Delhi, India**); and the last-remaining rural passenger railway in Chile (**Ramal Talca-Constitución, Chile**).

The biennial World Monuments Watch aims to protect history, preserve memory, and strengthen social bonds by bringing these sites and their challenges to an international stage and identifying opportunities for local communities to collaborate with preservation agencies, governments, and corporate sponsors. “By building an international coalition, the World Monuments Watch protects both the sites themselves and the shared history they embody,” said Joshua David, President & CEO, WMF. “We may be best known for the excellence of our conservation practices, but the human impacts of our work ultimately mean the most. Sites like the 25 on the 2018 Watch are where we come together as citizens of the world and renew our commitments to justice, culture, peace, and understanding.”

American Express, the founding sponsor of the World Monuments Watch, continues to fund the Watch, as well as other initiatives taken on by WMF. The company’s grants, totalling \$17.5 million for the Watch, have made a critical difference to conservation efforts at 166 sites in 71 countries.

"American Express is proud to continue partnering with WMF to save and sustain the world’s most treasured places through the World Monuments Watch," said Timothy J McClimon, President,

American Express Foundation. "By protecting these endangered sites across the globe, we have the power to unite current and future generations around our collective history."

Cultural Landscapes

Isolated, rural environments face a growing set of challenges, including economic systems that trigger depopulation, leaving aging residents struggling to maintain the built and natural heritage that define their daily lives. The 2018 Watch recognizes three cultural landscapes; the **Tebaida Leonesa**, rural communities in Spain fighting to preserve the character of their villages and landscape in the face of growing tourism and development; the **Ramal Talca-Constitución**, Chile's last-remaining rural passenger railway recently damaged by forest fires; and the **Matobo Hills Cultural Landscape** in Zimbabwe, one of the world's great rock art collections threatened by deforestation, damage and the risk of fires. Through these sites, the 2018 Watch calls for local and international action that will ensure the continuity of a way of life.

Visit wmf.org/2018watch to learn more.

Launched in 1996 and issued every two years, the World Monuments Watch calls international attention to threatened cultural heritage sites around the world. Watch-listing provides an opportunity for sites and their nominators to raise public awareness, foster local participation, advance innovation and collaboration, and demonstrate effective solutions.

The list is compiled by a panel of international heritage experts in the fields of archaeology, architecture, art history, and preservation.

Since the program's inception, more than 800 sites in more than 135 countries and territories—including those on the 2018 Watch—have been included. The international attention given to Watch sites provides a vital tool with which local entities may leverage funding from a variety of sources, including municipal, regional, and national governments; foundations; corporate sponsors; international aid organizations; and private donors. Since 1996, WMF has contributed \$105 million to date; while almost \$300 million has been allocated to the sites by other entities. In addition, Watch Day is a component of the program that aims to connect communities to their built heritage through public events. Learn more at wmf.org/watch.

Matobo Hills Cultural Landscape *2018 World Monuments Watch*

The Matobo Hills in southern Zimbabwe is a dramatic cultural landscape most for its granite rock formations that extend approximately 3,000 square kilometres. A continuously inhabited area, sites within the Matobo Hills mark critical stages in human history and evolution, reaching back 100,000 years. The first settlers were the hunter-gatherer San people, who created the rock art that is found throughout the landscape. The Ndebele settled in the area during the early nineteenth century and in the 1890s, the British conquered and incorporated the region into a new nation-state known as Southern Rhodesia—named after Cecil Rhodes, a prominent figure in the expansion of the British Empire in Africa and Prime Minister of the Cape Colony in 1890-1896. The cultural landscape, including the Rhodes Matopos National Park, was inscribed on the World Heritage List in 2003.

The site continues to be deeply associated with cultural and religious traditions. Adherents of the Mwari religion venerate the site and visit it to carry out rainmaking ceremonies and other rituals. Sacred sites (including pools, hills, wetlands), in particular Njelele, Dula, and Zhilo are important regional pilgrimage destinations. With over 3,500 rock art sites recorded in the region, in caves, cliffs, and boulders, the Matobo Hills feature the largest concentration of rock art in the country and the African continent overall. They depict a variety of motifs, including anthropomorphic and zoomorphic figures, as well as plants and abstract imagery. Numerous burial grounds, memorials, and shrines from the colonial period also form part of the material culture of the landscape.

While traditional and religious customs safeguard the authenticity of some areas by restricting passage, development or removal of vegetation, others areas and rock art are threatened by deforestation, grazing, graffiti, and damaging fires caused by human activities at the Matobo Hills. The natural environment of the landscape is under severe stress due to a number of environmental and economic factors. Population expansion coupled with the scarcity of natural resources has led to rapid degradation. This in turn threatens the rock paintings as their protective tree barriers are slowly disappearing, exposing them to direct sunlight and rain. The

interests of surrounding communities and those of conservationists often clash as the locals derive their livelihoods from the natural resources of the World Heritage site. Inclusion of the Matobo Hills Cultural Landscape on the 2018 World Monuments Watch is a call to explore ways to engage local custodians in the protection and preservation of the site and its rock art, in light of the new challenges of increasing tourism in the area.

MCS CHAIRMAN – The Matobo Conservation Society is encouraged that National Museums and Monuments Zimbabwe has taken note of our great concern with the preservation of our national heritage, the rock art of the Matobo Hills. The Matobo Hills are believed to contain the largest concentration of rock art to be found anywhere in the world, but like all ancient heritage it is under very real threat. This rock art heritage is a key component of the World Heritage Site. Our inclusion on the World Monument Watch will allow National Museums and Monuments access to critical resources, so that once again we may become a world leader in rock art preservation and study. The challenge is up to us as members of the MCS to support this exciting development and work towards improved conservation of the Matobo Rock Art.

18 – RAINFALL

The first rains of the new season have fallen, with the heaviest shower being 45mm on 6th October. A further 14mm was recorded in late October when freezing winds blew in from the south east. Sadly, this saw the demise of numerous little chicks, either blown out of their nests, or frozen to death.

As at the end of October the annual totals for the new season were as follows:

Bulawayo 40.7mm; Eastern Matopos 70mm; Western Matopos 20mm

SADC TOLD TO PREPARE FOR TWO-PRONGED RAINY SEASON

Aug 29 (Herald) Southern African countries have been urged to prepare for the worst in the 2017/18 rainfall season, after a regional forecast released over the weekend showed there will be a drought in the first half of the season and floods in the second. According to an outlook released by the Southern African Development Committee (SADC), Climate Services Centre (CSC) at a climate forum here, there would be normal to below normal rains from October to November and normal to above normal rains from January to March 2018. The southern parts of Zimbabwe, including the Matabeleland regions will have normal to above normal rains of between 200mm and 300mm in the first half of the season, with good rains expected throughout the country in January, with the threat of flooding in some areas. A detailed localised forecast would be issued by the Meteorological Services Department of Zimbabwe soon. SADC climate experts said at the meeting that the first phase of below normal to normal rains could result in some countries suffering a devastating drought, while the second phase could see some battling a humanitarian disaster caused by floods due to the normal to above normal rains.

19 – CALENDAR 2017

Herewith the proposed dates for the 2017 events – make a note in your diary!

3 – 5 November	Matopos Classic MTB
26 November	AGM, Rowallan Park

20 – 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.

21 – www.matobo.org

The web-site for the Society has been updated, so make some time to visit the site. Contributions are welcome. We have also revamped our Facebook page “Matobo Conservation Society”.

22 – FROM THE PAST

13 Sept 1940, Lascaux cave paintings discovered

Near Montignac, France, a collection of prehistoric cave paintings are discovered by four teenagers who stumbled upon the ancient artwork after following their dog down a narrow entrance into a cavern. The

15,000- to 17,000-year-old paintings, consisting mostly of animal representations, are among the finest examples of art from the Upper Paleolithic period.

First studied by the French archaeologist Henri-Édouard-Prospere Breuil, the Lascaux grotto consists of a main cavern 66 feet wide and 16 feet high. The walls of the cavern are decorated with some 600 painted and drawn animals and symbols and nearly 1,500 engravings. The pictures depict in excellent detail numerous types of animals, including horses, red deer, stags, bovines, felines, and what appear to be mythical creatures. There is only one human figure depicted in the cave: a bird-headed man with an erect phallus. Archaeologists believe that the cave was used over a long period of time as a centre for hunting and religious rites.

The Lascaux grotto was opened to the public in 1948 but was closed in 1963 because artificial lights had faded the vivid colours of the paintings and caused algae to grow over some of them. A replica of the Lascaux cave was opened nearby in 1983 and receives tens of thousands of visitors annually.

23 – LIKE US ON FACEBOOK

We continue to update our Facebook page, and have included some great pictures of the Matopos in its spring colours. Over 3,000 people are following the MCS on face book now, with many interesting comments being posted. Pictures from our outings have also been posted on the page whilst a separate Facebook Page “Matobo Hills MTB Challenge” posts pictures from the annual bike ride, which are in themselves interesting. Any pictures, news or updates are of course welcome. So go to “Matobo Conservation Society” on Facebook, and “like” the page to ensure you get regular updates.

24 - REPS

School still named after Rhodes despite Mugabe order: Rhodes Preparatory School, named after colonialist Cecil John Rhodes, is yet to be officially renamed, over 6 months after President Mugabe’s Zanu-PF ordered its name change. Rhodes, who led the colonisation of Zimbabwe is buried at the Matopos Hills, just a few kilometres from the school. Early this year, during the 21st February Movement party held at the school to celebrate Mugabe’s birthday, Zanu-PF national youth league commissar Innocent Hamandishe, who was the director of ceremonies at the event, declared that the school be renamed as it recognised Rhodes as a hero – *Daily News*, Wednesday August 30, Pg 7

25 – HONORARY MEMBER

At the AGM, three honorary members were elected. In our previous Newsletters we carried the citations for Mrs Mary Friend and Roy Stephens. This is the last citation, for Mrs Joan Stephens.

CITATION

HONORARY MEMBERSHIP

JOAN STEPHENS

Joan Stephens was born in 1935 to a family that enjoyed the great outdoors. As a result, her earliest memories are of picnics, and later courtship and friendship here in the Matopos.

Whilst in the Matopos Joan has appeared to play a passive role, but she has in fact developed a strong knowledge, interest in and love of botany. In particular she is known for the propagation of the indigenous trees of the Matopos.

She has supported her husband and sons in their passion of the Matopos and has never turned down a request for assistance – be it for MCS outings, Matopos bike rides, or even rescue missions. In her younger days, she hiked extensively in the Hills – at a time when much of the communal lands were still wilderness and very sparsely inhabited. As such she visited caves and waterfalls long before they became generally accessible and so enjoyed the Matopos at a time when it was perhaps in a better condition than it is today – certainly wilder, more remote and less accessible. She thrived on camping and hiking in the Matopos, enjoying the mountain streams, forests and wide-open vistas, and learning about the history, legends and traditions of this ancient landscape.

She has probably attended more field trips than any other member, with perhaps a few notable exceptions, and still staggers off with the main party as they ramble over rocks and through valleys.

Joan continues to partake in, and support Society activities, and spends a great deal of time on her farm in the hills tending to her trees and other plants.

Your committee proposes the election of Joan Stephens as an Honorary Member of the Society in recognition of her loyal contribution to the Society and in recognition of her passion for the Matobo Hills.

26 – IN MEMORIUM

Cecilia Hubbard passed away in Bulawayo on Monday 2nd October after a brave battle with cancer. Cecilia was married to the late Dudley Hubbard, and leaves behind two children, Clare and Paul.

Cecilia will forever be remembered in the wings of the black eagle. She largely took over the Black Eagle Survey from Valarie Gargett and managed the project for many years, including the almost impossible decade of 2000 to 2009. Her determination ensured that the study continued, and so remains not only the longest and most extensive study of any bird anywhere, but a tribute to this fine lady. Whilst this work was serious and professionally executed, Cecilia managed to bring humour and fun into the work. It takes some doing to get up on a winters morning to count dassies, or to walk through the thick brush to check on an eagle chicks' development. And yet Cecilia persisted, and in so doing learned enormously about the wealth of the Matobo Hills, as well as its avian legacy. Cecilia also served as Chairman of Birdlife Matabeleland for many years.

We express our sincere condolences to Clare, Paul and family at this sad loss.