

MATOBO



SOCIETY

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Welfare No: W/0 30/94
www.matobo.org

NEWSLETTER 102 / JANUARY 2018

1 – ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The AGM was successfully held at Rowallan Park on Sunday 26th November 2017. There was good attendance and much interest shown. The Society has had a busy year, and there remains a full calendar ahead!

We enter our 25th year – an achievement in its own right. We hope in this special year to have the Matopos recognised as a Wetland of International Importance under the RAMSAR Convention – and hope to celebrate our silver anniversary later in the year.

2 – COMMITTEE

We welcome Verity Bowman onto our committee. With the immense work carried out by Dambari Wildlife Trust in the Matopos, we are confident that Verity will bring much valuable input to our committee.

The remainder of the Committee were re-elected en bloc, and comprises –

Gavin Stephens	Chairman	Jean Whiley	Vice-Chairman
Gaynor Lightfoot	Secretary	Darryl Friend	Treasurer
Verity Bowman		Cindy Sellick	
Rob Burrett		Moirra Fitzpatrick	

3 – MEMBERSHIP

We have initiated an electronic register of members, and an electronic means of applying for membership. We have written to all our members asking them to complete the easy, and simple, application form! It takes a few minutes – and even if you are a member, you need to reapply so as to re-populate the data base with your current details. We ask you to please participate.

If you think you are a member, and we have missed you out, please contact the Vice-Chairman on matoboconservationsociety@gmail.com

4 – TRAGEDY AT MPOPOMA

A crocodile attack on the afternoon of Saturday 30th December at Mpopoma dam in the Matopos Game Park left one person severely injured, and resulted in the death of another.

Details are still emerging as to what actually occurred and will be reconciled at a later date.

Sadly, as a result of the attack John Bowman (90) lost his life and Rosie Mitchell (57) was severely injured. Assistance was provided by National Park senior staff and rangers and further help was given by Billy Dally of Amalinda and Paul Hubbard.

Rosie was admitted to Mater Dei Hospital in Bulawayo and has received excellent care. She and her partner returned to Harare on 26 January 2018 to continue with her recuperation.

5 – EVENTS

A. Matopos World Heritage MTB Challenge

The 9th edition of the annual Matopos Heritage MTB Challenge will be held from 21st to 25th March 2018. There has once again been a full house of entries, with 8 countries represented, including riders from Denmark, Australia and New Zealand. Other countries include Kenya, Zambia, Botswana, South Africa and across Zimbabwe. Preparations are well underway!

B. Matopos Trail Run

The 2018 event will be held from 18-20 May, with entries opening on 15th January, 2018. We are looking for assistance in hosting this event, so please contact the Chairman if you will be able to help.

C. Matopos 33 Miler

The annual Matopos 33 Miler will be held on 24th March. We hope that the number of participants will exceed the record set last year.

6 - NEXT EVENT

Date	25 th February 2018
Venue	Three Vleis, a Cave and a Field of Orchids
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 your swimming costume!

We will be travelling out on the Old Gwanda Road, and our first point of call will be the Ntunjambili Wetland. Work has been undertaken to rehabilitate this wetland, which is extensively farmed. We will take the opportunity to visit Ntunjambili Cave, and enjoy the views from the summit of the hill.

Thereafter we will proceed to the Matopo Mission wetland, which is not cultivated, but subject to heavy grazing by cattle. We will then go onto Camp Dwala for lunch. After lunch we will visit the Mvuru wetland on Besna Kobila – a protected wetland, and we hope still field of orchids in flower!

The intention of the field trip is to visit three important wetlands of the Matopos subject to different land use, and share with members the work being carried out for the recognition of the Matobo Hills as a wetland in terms of the RAMSAR Convention.

7 – REPORT BACK

We were welcomed to Rowallan Park on Sunday 26th November to hold our AGM. With fair attendance at the AGM, and following a good cup of tea, we managed to get through formalities before being led on our first outing of the day - a visit to Imadzi shelter. After a few halts en route we managed to get to the shelter, despite the humidity. The relative cool air inside the shelter was welcome. We had a good look at the art, which included interesting Sotho paintings amongst the older rock art, and enjoyed a brief talk from Rob Burrett. Then back to Rowallan for lunch, and a short walk around that site.

In the afternoon, the remaining few went in search of Mtshelili Shelter, which was duly located after some scrambling amongst the rocks. Again the rock art was admired, before finding a good direct path back to the cars via the old track. Once again, an interesting day out, in which we all learnt something new.

8 – RAINFALL

After an excellent November, December and January have been very dry. Just before the end of January, the south-western hills had had as little as 50mm so far this year, with farmers not even preparing their lands. Maleme had had 90mm to date. The western Matopos was on 200m and the eastern Matopos 380mm. Yet the hills generally looked lush and green – but you could see the stress in the plants.

Then right at the end of January rain started to fall and at the time of going to print (29th January), the following totals had been recorded; western Matopos 286mm, eastern Matopos 418mm, Bulawayo 279mm. We hope our fortunes are about to change!

9 – ROAD REPAIRS

The MCS is currently repairing roads in the western part of the Matobo National Park. This is to ensure that access to the famous Nswatuge Cave remains possible for all vehicle types. In this way we assist both Parks and Museums to remain sustainable in their own right.

At the same time, the Ministry of Transport is well into rebuilding the Old Gwanda Road, with work progressing steadily. The re-build is substantial.

10– BLACK MAMBAS

There has been a noticeable increase in snakes this summer – no doubt a consequence of the good rains last year. So, we thought we would share this timely advice.

There have been a number of posts on Black Mamba bites in recent months and discussions on the pros and cons of administering antivenom. Polyvalent antivenom is highly effective when it comes to treating snakebites but, like most forms of medication, has its side-effects. Depending on what data one refers to, up to 40% of patients that receive polyvalent antivenom have some form of an allergic reaction and about a quarter of them go into anaphylactic shock. This is a serious medical condition that medical doctors often have to deal with. It is manageable.

As for snake venom, most venom consist of cocktails with dominant effects - in the case of the Black Mamba and Cape Cobra the venom is largely neurotoxic causing progressive weakness that will also affect breathing. Fatalities are as a result of a lack of oxygen and not cardiac affects as is often thought. Snake venom is complex and contains various toxic protein factors, some of which will manifest in certain animals but not in humans. Visser and Chapman (1978) defined snake venom as follows:

- Proteases (including thrombase, haemorrhagin, etc.) which cause cellular damage and necrosis, disrupt capillaries and interfere with blood coagulation.
 - Phosphatidases which increase lysis of blood.
 - Neurotoxins acting mainly by paralysis of motor-nerve endplates.
 - Hyaluronidase which encourages spread of the other toxins.
 - Cholinesterase which hydrolyses acetylcholine and interferes with transmission of nerve impulses.
- So while many Black Mamba victims have survived without antivenom by being ventilated, there may be various other complications.

The correct treatment for severe Black Mamba envenomation is polyvalent antivenom and many victims whose lives have been saved in this manner can attest to that.

Once bitten, any snakebite victim is hospitalised and the doctor in charge of the patient will assess the individual case, look at the symptoms and if justified administer antivenom. In a recent survey of 879 snakebites over five years where the victims were hospitalised, only 96 (11%) needed and received antivenom. Every single victim survived.

Herewith an account of a Black Mamba bite as it appeared in Complete Guide to Snakes of Southern Africa:

Some years ago a colleague of mine at Assagai Safari Park in KwaZulu-Natal, Crawford Coulsen, was bitten on his leg by a Black Mamba. Initially he thought that a rat had bitten him, as the snake was stuck onto his leg briefly, but he saw it slither away and could identify the snake.

He remained as calm as possible while reporting the incident, although the wound was bleeding freely. Someone has removed the first aid kit with pressure bandages and I could not find anyone to accompany us to the nearest hospital. I decided to drive to Addington hospital, about 45 km away.

Only ten minutes after the bite Crawford began to experience the first alarming symptoms. He complained of numbness around the lips, was sweating profusely and his breathing was shallow. I tried to reassure him as I drove. Within 20 minutes of being bitten he stopped speaking and was staring blankly ahead of him. His breathing was becoming more and more laboured and he started losing consciousness. In the half an hour that it took to get to Addington hospital his condition had deteriorated alarmingly. He was rushed into intensive care where he was intubated and ventilated. They had no antivenom on hand and it took several hours for them to source antivenom. By the time the antivenom arrived Crawford was breathing on his own and he was not treated with antivenom. He was breathing normally within 11 hours and discharged two days later.

An interesting case and with a good outcome. A week later a Green Mamba victim was hospitalised soon after a bite, intubated and ventilated and died a day later. He did not receive antivenom.

11 – ZIMBABWE ELECTED TO UNESCO EXECUTIVE BOARD

HARARE, Nov 09 (Herald) Zimbabwe has been elected to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) executive board at the 36th session of the general conference

underway in Paris, France. The country joins 12 other African member States to the 58-member executive board. The General Conference is UNESCO's highest decision-making body. Zimbabwe's Ambassador to France, Rudo Mabel Chitiga described the election as a major milestone for the country. States are elected to the executive Board for four years.

12 – CLIMATE CHANGE IMPERILS ONE IN FOUR NATURAL HERITAGE SITES

Bonn (13TH November) - Climate change imperils one in four natural World Heritage sites, including coral reefs, glaciers, and wetlands - nearly double the number from just three years ago, a report said on Monday. The number of sites at risk has grown to 62 from 35 in 2014, when one in seven were listed, according to the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), which released the report at UN climate talks in Bonn, Germany.

Among the ecosystems most threatened by global warming are coral reefs which bleach as oceans heat up, and glaciers which melt. "Climate change acts fast and is not sparing the finest treasures of our planet," said IUCN director general Inger Andersen. The report found that 29% of World Heritage sites faced "significant" climate change threats, and 7% - including the Everglades National Park in the United States and Lake Turkana in Kenya - had a "critical" outlook. "The scale and pace at which it (climate change) is damaging our natural heritage underline the need for urgent and ambitious national commitments and actions to implement the Paris Agreement," said Andersen.

Negotiators are gathered in Bonn to work out a nuts-and-bolts rulebook for executing the planet-rescue pact adopted by nearly 200 countries in the French capital in 2015. The agreement seeks to limit average global warming caused by greenhouse gases from fossil-fuel burning to under two degrees Celsius (3.6 degrees Fahrenheit) over pre-industrial levels, and to 1.5 C if possible. The 1 C mark has already been passed, and scientists say that on current country pledges to cut emissions, the world is headed for a 3 C future.

'Devastating'

The IUCN monitors more than 200 natural Heritage Sites listed by the UN Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO). Three World Heritage-listed coral reefs - the Aldabra Atoll in the Indian Ocean, the Belize Barrier Reef in the Atlantic, and Australia's Great Barrier Reef, the biggest on Earth - have been affected by "devastating" bleaching events over the last three years, said the IUCN report.

Corals "bleach" when they are stressed by environmental changes - due to ocean warming or pollution. The corals expel the colourful algae that live in them, and turn bone white. "Retreating glaciers, also resulting from rising temperatures, threaten sites such as Kilimanjaro National Park, which boasts Africa's highest peak, and the Swiss Alps Jungfrau-Aletsch, home to the largest Alpine glacier," said the union. Wetlands, low-lying deltas, permafrost and fire-sensitive ecosystems are also affected by changes to Earth's climate, it added.

'Urgency' to protect

Harm to these natural sites endangers local economies and livelihoods, the IUCN report said. "In Peru's Huascarán National Park, for example, melting glaciers affect water supplies and contaminate water and soil due to the release of heavy metals previously trapped under ice. "This adds to the urgency of our challenge to protect these places."

Only invasive plant and animal species surpassed climate change as a risk to natural heritage sites, said the union. And climate change boosts their spread. Tourism was the third-biggest threat, followed by infrastructure expansion, mining, and oil and gas exploitation.

Sites on the World Heritage list are earmarked for protection for future generations. Countries assume responsibility under the World Heritage Convention to protect listed sites within their borders. The report said the management of heritage sites has declined since 2014, "notably due to insufficient funding".

The Bonn meeting is the first of UN climate envoys since US President Donald Trump said he would pull America out of the hard-fought Paris Agreement, a move many fear will make the 2 C goal that much harder to reach.

13 – RAY OF HOPE FOR ZIM RHINOS

Daily News, 30 November 2017 HARARE

French-based satellite operator Eutelsat and Sigfox Foundation have joined forces to combat rhino poaching by inserting Global Positioning System (GPS) sensors to 3 000 rhinos over the next three years.

This comes as the rhino population has significantly declined due to rampant poaching from an estimated figures of 500 000 across Africa and Asia in the early 1900s to around 29 000 to date, according to Save the Rhino — an international organisation supporting endangered rhinos.

Animal conservationists assert that rhinos could become extinct in just over 10 years' time if poaching continues at current rates.

This has prompted the Sigfox Foundation, which uses connected sensors to save lives, to partner with Eutelsat to better monitor rhinos by having exact locations with a secured and long-term tracking system on the company's network, and therefore better protect the animals.

“In just a decade, more than 7 245 African rhinos have been lost to poaching. By tracking the animals, we can protect them from poachers and better understand their habits to encourage them to breed and ultimately conserve the species,” Eutelsat director of the sub-Saharan Africa region Nicolas Baravalle told the Business Daily.

Using Sigfox's very low-speed network, Sigfox Foundation has designed and implemented a remote tracking solution for rhinos in their natural environment.

GPS sensors installed in the horn of the animal send geo-location data which is then repatriated thanks to Eutelsat's satellite resources to a secure online platform. Wardens, vets and specialists, can access, three times a day, readouts of the movements of the animals.

This precise data will allow them to provide rhinos with better protection against poaching and improve understanding of an endangered species.

Rhino poaching has escalated in recent years and is being driven by the demand for rhino horn in Asian countries, particularly Vietnam.

Rhino horn can sell for as much as \$95 000 per kilogramme in Asia, more valuable than gold. It is also used in traditional Chinese medicine but more and more commonly now it is used as a status symbol to display someone's success and wealth.

This has resulted in South Africa — home to the majority of rhinos in the world — being heavily targeted by poachers.

According to Save the Rhino, in around 2013, the South African crisis spread to other countries in Africa.

Sigfox Foundation president Marion Moreau said Kenya was the first to be hit hard — its worst year for poaching was in 2013, when 59 animals were killed, which was more than five percent of the national population.

“In 2015, both Zimbabwe and Namibia were hit hard — Namibia lost 80 rhinos to poaching, up from 25 in 2014 and just two in 2012, while in Zimbabwe at least 50 rhinos were poached in 2015, more than double the previous year,” she said.

14 – CALENDAR 2018

Herewith the proposed dates for the 2018 events – make a note in your diary!

25 th February	Field Trip
21 st March	Matopos Heritage MTB Challenge
24 th March	Matopos 33 miler
18 th May	Matopos Heritage Trail Run
June	Field trip
24 th August	Matopos Classic MTB
September	Field trip
19 th November	AGM, venue to be advised

15 – 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.

16 – 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

Cash payments can be made to any committee member.

Please email matoboconservationsociety@gmail.com for bank account details if you wish to pay by RTGS. The society is busy setting up other payment options (Ecocash for local and PayNow for external).

17 – 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”.

18 – WORLD’S TALLEST TROPICAL TREE DISCOVERED, ALONG WITH NEARLY 50 OTHER RECORD BREAKERS.

Mike Gaworecki on 10 November 2016

The tallest is a towering 94.1-meter (nearly 309-foot) tree with a canopy that measures 40.3 meters (132 feet) in diameter, discovered in Sabah’s relatively undisturbed Danum Valley.

Asner was able to observe the tree first-hand during a helicopter ride on Monday to the remote region. “I’ve been doing this for a solid 20 years now, and I have to say, this was one of the most moving experiences in my career,” Asner told Mongabay.

The tree is in the genus Shorea, though the exact species has yet to be determined. Asner and his colleagues also found 49 other trees taller than 90 meters spread all over Sabah, and plan to visit each of them in the coming weeks.

A few months ago, it was announced that there was a new record for the world’s tallest tropical tree: a Yellow Meranti (*Shorea fagueticana*) found in Sabah, one of the two Malaysian states on the island of Borneo, that stands some 89.5 metres (about 294 feet) tall.

But that record was not destined to last long. Gregory Asner of the Carnegie Institution for Science at Stanford University announced at the Heart of Borneo conference today that he had not only found a taller tropical tree, but 50 taller trees.

The tallest is a towering 94.1-meter (nearly 309-foot) tree with a canopy that measures 40.3 meters (132 feet) in diameter, discovered in Sabah’s relatively undisturbed Danum Valley. Asner was able to observe the tree first-hand during a helicopter ride on Monday to the remote region. “I’ve been doing this for a solid 20 years now, and I have to say, this was one of the most moving experiences in my career,” Asner told Mongabay.

The tree is in the genus *Shorea*, though the exact species has yet to be determined. Asner and his colleagues also found 49 other trees taller than 90 meters spread all over Sabah, and plan to visit each of them in the coming weeks.

Gregory Asner presents the discovery of the tallest tree in the tropics at the Heart of Borneo conference. “This tallest tropical tree, and the 49 runners-up, are truly phenomenal expressions of the power of nature,” Asner said. “Conservation needs inspiration, and these sentinels of the Bornean jungle provide that to us. This discovery is a gift to science, to the people of Sabah and Borneo, and to the world.”

The helicopter flight was funded by film director James Cameron of *Avatar* fame, as well as the UN Development Programme. Asner described the flight and the moment he first saw the world’s tallest tropical tree with his own eyes:

We flew out of Kota Kinabalu on a Bell Jet Ranger helicopter. After crossing the usual miles and miles of development and oil palm plantations, we broke free into the hilly forests of central Sabah. We aimed

directly at the coordinates of the tree marked in our laser scanning data. Ninety minutes later at 110 knots airspeed, we broke over yet another of dozens of remote ridges in Danum Valley, about one minute out from the target. And there it was, sticking out above the rest of the canopy. The crazy thing is that our tallest tree is immediately flanked to each side by a tree of the same species of *Shorea*, almost as tall! So, there are three trees, like brothers, standing above the rest of the canopy. I almost cried as we circled the tree maybe 10 times before the pilot said we had to go back.

The tree was first discovered when Asner flew the Carnegie Airborne Observatory (CAO) over Sabah to image forests and map animal habitat, carbon stocks, and canopy biodiversity. CAO's sensors are designed to precisely measure the height and architecture as well as the chemical properties and species identity of trees, according to Asner.

"This technique relies on the 500,000 laser shots per second that we fire out of the bottom of the plane as we fly, which provides a very detailed 3D view of the forest canopy down to the ground level," Asner explained. "We then digitally process and comb the 3D data for the tallest trees (in this case). The same data are what we use to calculate how much carbon is stored throughout tropical forests."

Sam Mannan, head of the Sabah Forestry Department, which collaborated with Asner and CAO on the research that led to the discovery, said that he hoped it would help highlight the need to protect Borneo's rainforests. "Carnegie's discovery of the world's tallest tropical tree in our forests of Sabah highlights the importance of continuing and expanding conservation and management in this special region," Mannan said. "We are proud to protect not only the tallest tree, but also an expanding array of forest reserves, supported by Carnegie Airborne Observatory mapping."

Dr. Glen Reynolds, the director of the Southeast Asia Rainforest Research Partnership (SEARRP), another partner of CAO's in the research that led to the discovery of the tropic's tallest tree, added that the discovery of such a density of enormously tall trees in Danum Valley underscores the importance of retaining the last remaining areas of pristine lowland forest, of which Danum is exemplary. "Trees of this size and age simply don't exist outside of primary forest — so it's crucial that the forests which support these now-rare giants is protected," he said.

It can be hard to visualize just how big 94.1 meters really is, but Asner came up with an adequate comparison. "I tried to find an analogy for how tall this tree is, and I found that the largest toothed whale, the sperm whale, averages 16 meters in length," he said. "So this tree is six times that size!"

19 – LIKE US ON FACEBOOK

We continue to update our Facebook page; we welcome any contributions from Members. Go to "Matobo Conservation Society" on Facebook, and "like" the page to ensure you get regular updates. So far 861 people are following us on Facebook.

We share some comments received on the Mshashasha Falls pictures shared last year

- The scene of a serious accident in the early 60s when one of our party in fact my future sister-in-law, slipped at the top and miraculously even though injured hit a tiny narrow bit of water between all the rocks at the bottom. A long rescue and carry out, but she recovered. (Paul Gray)
- Spent many happy days in the middle 60's there. Parked the Landy at the end of the vlel and walking those sometimes hot but always beautiful k's to the falls. Anyone else remember the stone kerns along the way. We always used to scout for a "proper" stone to add the pile. (Ted Vickery)
- I remember a biology day trip with Mr. Calder and the class, a picnic, but mostly, running around naked on the rocks and bathing. What a superb day! Botany 101. (Timothy Calder)
- The most majestic Falls in the Matopos, but dangerous!! Surrounded by fantastic Mountain Acacias (*B Tamarandoides*). Last time we went there was 1975! Went there first time in 1965 with my late daughter Sharon as a family, however went to the carpark only in 1941 at 6 years old!! Can remember it very well. Camped there with Eve and Sox as well in 1957!! Met up with Roy Stephens there in 1975 as well by chance. (Mike Waddy)

- One of my favourite places. And the walk-in is part of the pleasure. Those shady glades with fungi growing everywhere. Glorious. (Brian Kalshoven)

20 - REPS

School still named after Rhodes despite Mugabe order: Rhodes Estate 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.

ED – Perhaps with recent regime changes this change of name will not take place after all.

21 – FIRST LADY PROMOTES WETLANDS RESTORATION

HARARE, Dec 19 (The Herald) First Lady and Zanu-PF deputy secretary for Environment and Tourism Auxillia Mnangagwa has called for national preservation of wetlands and discouraged people from cultivating and settling on wetlands because of their economic benefit to the ecosystem and the nation. Mnangagwa planted a tree on a wetland between the National Sports Stadium and Long Cheng Plaza at a ceremony that was attended by Minister of State for Harare Provincial Affairs Miriam Chikukwa, Cabinet Ministers; Minister of Water, Environment and Climate Oppah Muchinguri-Kashiri, Senior Zanu-PF officials and environmental organisations. She handed over tree seedlings that will be used in the restoration and management project on the wetland. The wetland will be leased to an environmentalist, Never Kasasa. Officiating at the function yesterday, the First Lady described wetlands as a source of livelihood in the form of food and water provision at local level. She said wetlands were an important resource, with the 1997 global value of the resource pegged at \$15 trillion.

22 – OBITUARY

John Bowman was born in 1927 in Ulleskelf in Yorkshire England to humble loving parents of English and German descent, but he died in Matabeleland, Zimbabwe the country he had adopted and loved.

His family on both sides served their nation in the army and police and with that family history it's not surprising that on leaving school John joined the RAF as an apprentice - became an aircraft engineer and served in Malaya during the troubles, as well as Singapore, Hong Kong, Sri Lanka - and a period at Heaney Base just outside Bulawayo. He was keen on sport and played football and cricket, sailed small yachts and in later years enjoyed golf.

It was whilst at Heaney that he fell in love with Zimbabwe and came across the magnificent Matobo Hills for the first time. He and his colleagues made multiple trips to the Matopos and were known to frequent the sailing club at Matobo dam.

After some assignments away from Bulawayo, he could not resist the call of Matabeleland and returned to live in Matsheumhlope - in the city he loved - amongst the people he loved.

John attended Main Street Methodist Church from the time they arrived in Bulawayo and were fully involved in many church related activities including the Boys Brigade. He was roped in as a willing parent to help with various aspects of the Boys Brigade character building programs - such as camping out and orienteering.

John continued to devote his time and energy to Stedfast Park for nearly 50 years where he has along with the Stedfast staff - spent countless hours developing and maintaining the facilities for the benefit of churches and youth groups.

One of the projects John was most proud of, was being part of the team that rescued the first Methodist Church in Bulawayo from destruction to make room for a new development. Many of

you will remember that the old church building was Bowden's Pharmacy on Rhodes Street (now George Silundika Street). The church was carefully dismantled and then rebuilt where it stands today in Stedfast Park. He also helped develop the cottage at Stedfast so that there was more than dormitory accommodation at the site for anyone who wanted to spend time there. The cottage's thatched roof was twice lost to runaway bush fires and John made sure all the damage was repaired. He was greatly assisted by the Bulawayo business community - Boys Brigade "Old Boys" and donors.....none of whom could resist an enthusiastic John Bowman.

John died on the evening of 30 December 2017 following a tragic accident at Mpopoma dam.

He had enjoyed 90 and a half years of a fun and interesting life. Throughout it all was his tremendous faith – the basis of his life and the basis of his family's life.

We take comfort and strength from the fact that he was in his favourite place – the Matopos - with very dear friends Rosie and Sarah Joan from Harare - whom he loved and who loved him.

He died whilst enjoying a great day out - living his life as he had always done. We will all miss him - but we know that he is safe with his Lord in Heaven. If he left us one lesson it would be to be kind to our fellow men.

We extend our condolences to the family on their untimely loss.