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NEWSLETTER 112 / SEPTEMBER 2020

1 – MATOPOS NATIONAL PARK READY FOR PHASED REOPENING

Acknowledgment Sunday News; 31st August 2020; Robin Muchetu, Senior Reporter

The Zimbabwe National Parks and Wildlife Management Authority (Zimparks) has refurbished their lodges in the Matobo National Park as they get ready for the phased reopening of the tourism sector. In an interview, Zimparks spokesperson Mr Tinashe Farawo said the company was also aiming at boosting domestic tourism in the country which was spearheaded by President Mnangagwa. “As part of President Emmerson Mnangagwa’s tourism revival strategy which he recently launched in Victoria Falls, we have completed some of the renovations in Matopos where we have painted our lodges and put in new furniture so that our tourists, especially domestic ones, can enjoy their stay,” he said. Mr Farawo said the tourism sector in the world had suffered the devastating effects of Covid-19 and domestic tourism was supposed to get the ball rolling for the sector. “What we are simply saying is encouraging locals to visit Zimbabwe in order to build Zimbabwe so that we can work together. This will also assist in building and protecting our wildlife too. In preparation of the reopening of the tourism sector, our lodges are ready to accommodate visitors,” he said.

Contrary to popular belief that domestic tourism was expensive, Mr Farawo said Zimparks was offering competitive rates. “We also have competitive prices. We have a leadership which is sensitive to the needs and aspiration of the people too so we have a good pricing system that will allow everyone to come and visit our lodges and partake in domestic tourism,” he said. Mr Farawo also said the authority has a new product on board that will attract more on the domestic tourism front.

“We have a new package available called ‘pay now and stay later’. People need to take advantage of it and plan their holidays in advance. People are now able to pay for a holiday in instalments prior to their stay and they can pay 12 or six months in advance then they come for their holiday at a desired time,” he said. Mr Farawo said the promotion was aimed at encouraging domestic tourism and also for the public to save for a holiday.

As part of luring the public to visit tourist destinations nearest to them, Zimparks has brought in part of the big five animals to Tshabalala Game Sanctuary on the outskirts of Bulawayo so that people can see the animals nearer to them. At the moment there is a pride of lions, the Mafidi pride with one male and two females but the authority is hoping to increase the pride with time.

2 – MCS ERECTS NEW PARK FENCE

The MCS was the beneficiary of a generous donation to start work on the erection of a 1.8m game fence to protect the northern boundary of the Park. At the same time, the fence is being pushed north to provide more valuable grazing land for the rhino in the Arboretum / Sandy Spruit area, and encompasses the former Bull Paddock. The project is meant to secure the rhino, and the not inconsiderable herds of wildebeest, zebra and other wildlife that has moved into the area from the upper Mtshelili valley.

The construction of three new water troughs has supplemented the security for the wildlife, and it is planned to erect a permanent and proper structure for parks staff who have been living in dilapidated tents for many years.

In due course the fence will be extended along the eastern boundary to join up with Cardross Park farm, which is currently being game fenced. This project will enhance protection for the rhino population which in this area have become a major tourist draw card, and ensure sustainability of the Matobo National Park.

This has been made possible through the support of Mr Frank Zindel and the Educasa Foundation, to whom we are greatly indebted, whilst labour was provided by the Gulati Community and on-site management by Rowallan Adventure Park. The fencing was supplied and installed by Fence Africa. So, on your next visit to the Park, look out for the new fence opposite the REPS estate.

3 - NEXT EVENT

Date	Sunday 20 th September 2020
Venue	Field Trip to Mtshabezi Dam
Meet	8:15am to leave by 8:30am, Ascot Car Park
Travel	All vehicles but sturdy/high clearance recommended
Details	Provide own chairs, tables, meals and drinks. Don't forget your hat, sunblock and plenty of water! It will probably be HOT so remember to stay hydrated

The Brachystegia are coming into leaf so we hope that, this year, we are not too late to see their splendid show

4 – REPORT BACK



The MCS at the iconic Mother and Child rocks



Gondombezi orbicular granite

A good number of members turned out for our excursion into the Matobo Game Park on 29th July 2020. Despite a chilly week, the weekend weather was superb, and many folk, anxious to beat the “cabin fever” of 3 months of Covid enforced lockdown were desperate to get out into the hills.

We were warmly welcomed by parks and formalities were hurried through. We first went to an area of Brachystegia and left more confused than before by the variety of trees growing there. They did however provide a wonderful park for our morning tea!

Then onto the main activity of the day – the search for Gondombezi, the second orbicular granite site in the Matopos. Our game Scout summoned a local elder, and we walked in single file through the game park, with eyes open for the resident black rhino! Safety was reached once we started to climb a dwala, and soon over the neck we arrived at the site – just as it had been described – “The footprints of zebra left in the soft rock when the hills were formed!”. Some time was spent examining the area before returning to the cars.

En route to Mpopoma Dam we stopped to study a Black eagle chick on its nest, and then a superb picnic on the banks of a rather low Mpopoma Dam.

5 – MATOBO VILLAGERS BRUTALISED BY POLICE AFTER EVICTING ILLEGAL GOLD MINERS

Domboshaba villagers in Matobo district were allegedly assaulted by anti-riot police on Sunday forcing them to seek refuge in the mountains, after they chased away some illegal miners who had invaded a

protected area. The illegal miners had invaded the village, which is part of the Matobo Hills World Heritage Site, to prospect for gold. However, the move incensed the villagers who chased them away.

The anti-riot police were reportedly deployed and allegedly assaulted the villagers and in the process arrested two of the villagers who were identified as Thembelani Sibindi and Martin Khumalo. After the beatings and threats from the armed police officers, over 20 people were forced to flee their homes and seek refuge in the mountains. Matabeleland South Police Spokesperson, Chief Inspector Philisani Ndebele, told CITE that no one including police has a right to beat up villagers for upholding the law.

“How can we condemn these villagers when we are fighting illegal gold panning?” he asked. “You must tell those villagers to phone me. I cannot comment first without a report, as the villagers must file a report of assault. Assault by another person, whether it is by a soldier or police officer is a crime because they would have committed an offense. Everyone must be able to report.”

Chief Inspector Ndebele added that he was yet to receive a report on the matter. “I have to confirm that with the council at Matobo,” he said.

In an interview with CITE, one of the villagers, an elderly woman, who slept in a cave at the mountains, said they were afraid of being shot and taken away like two other villagers. She also expressed fear that the illegal miners they evicted might have poisoned a key water source that also caters for their livestock in the area. “That area is protected and sacred. There are graves there and a water source we use for our livestock. In a move to prevent anyone from defiling the area, villagers moved them out together with their belongings. Around 4pm Sunday, anti-riot police came and beat up people for removing those illegal. They beat up everyone around that area,” she said.

“Two villagers, Martin Khumalo and Thembelani Sibindi were taken by the police and we don’t know where they are. We had to flee to the mountains for safety, running away for protecting our environment.” The woman said the illegal gold panners first came to the village in January, and sought permission to mine from the village head but villagers refused. “They came back again on September 1, 2020,” she said.

She noted that villagers were informed by the Matobo Rural District Council Chief Executive Officer Elvis Sibanda that the group had applied for land on August 25, 2020 but was surprised to see them move in. “On September 6, 2020, the CEO told us these illegal miners would vacate the area between September 7 and 8, 2020, as officials from the Environment Management Authority (EMA) and National Museums and Monuments of Zimbabwe will come to remove them,” she said.

But by Sunday, illegal miners were still there with no sign of vacating, which motivated the villagers to take action, she added. Contacted for comment, Sibanda said he was unaware that villagers were beaten but confirmed the local authority had received a mining prospectus from Mazinahue Syndicate. He noted that the site in question was a protected area, classified as a World Heritage Site.

“The Mazinahue syndicate came with papers signed August 25, 2020 by the Ministry of Mines and Mining Development. Of course that land is a World Heritage Site and it is within Matopo Hills. It’s correct I did visit the area to have an appreciation of what was taking place but I didn’t address anyone,” he said. Sibanda said Matobo council had submitted its submissions to the province raising its concern against mining in that area.

“That place is a world heritage site and if interfered with will affect tourism in the area and province plus the country is a signatory to World Heritage Sites (administered by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation – UNESCO,” Sibanda noted.

6 – ZIMBABWE BANS COAL MINING IN HWANGE AND OTHER GAME PARKS

With acknowledgement to the BBC, 10th September 2020

Zimbabwe has banned mining in all its national parks, reversing a decision to let Chinese firms explore for coal at its famous Hwange game park.

The move came after campaigners instituted court action against the government to prevent “ecological degradation” in parks. Two Chinese-owned firms had been given a licence to explore for coal in Hwange National Park. It is famous for its elephants and the endangered black rhino.

In court papers filed on Monday, the Zimbabwe Environmental Lawyers Association (ZELA) warned that the park would turn into a “site for drilling, land clearance, road building and geological surveys” if coal exploration went ahead.

Following a cabinet meeting on Tuesday, Information Minister Monica Mutsvangwa announced the ban on mining with immediate effect. “Steps are being undertaken to immediately cancel all mining titles held in national parks,” she added.

Many tourists visit Hwange National Park to see its wildlife. Ms Mutsvangwa also announced a ban on mining along most river beds, in a decision that would affect small-scale Chinese gold miners in Zimbabwe. China is a major investor in Zimbabwe and a close ally of the government. It has for a long time pursued a “Look East” policy to boost the struggling economy following sanctions imposed by Western powers angered by the government’s human rights record and controversial land reform programme.

But the government’s decision to give exploration rights in the park led to a public outcry, and the hashtag #SaveHwangenationalpark trended on Twitter in Zimbabwe, reports the BBC’s Shingai Nyoka from the capital, Harare.

Environmentalists raised concerns that coal mining in the park would devastate wildlife, and negatively affect tourism – a major source of income for Zimbabwe.

7 – CHINESE HWANGE BLITZ A MINISTER’S DIRECTIVE

The shock decision by the Zimbabwe Parks and Wildlife Management Authority (Zimparks) to grant two Chinese mining firms the greenlight to drill and explore for coal in the giant Hwange National Park was a directive from Tourism minister Mangaliso Ndlovu and had the blessing of President Emmerson Mnangagwa, fresh details have emerged. In a move that sparked national outrage, government awarded licences to Zhongxin Coking Company Mining Group and Afrochine Smelting to conduct geological surveys, paving way for large-scale coal extraction inside the heart of the wildlife park, which generates millions of dollars annually in tourism receipts. Following intense criticism from wildlife watchdogs, environmentalists and the general public, government this week dramatically caved in to pressure, and reversed its decision to allow the Chinese mining firms to mine coal in the national park, which is a habitat to 10% of Africa’s elephants. The Zimbabwe Environmental Law Association led the chorus of condemnation by filing an urgent application at the Harare High Court contending that mining in the heart of the 14,651 square-kilometre park was catastrophic. Subsequently, government also banned riverbed and alluvial mining in other protected areas. According to documents seen by the Zimbabwe Independent this week, Ndlovu, despite citing the ecological risks and other associated consequences posed by allowing one of the Chinese firms (Zhongxin Coking Company) to conduct mining operations in the national park, instructed Zimparks director-general Fulton Mangwanya to grant the entity permission to prospect in Sinamatela, inside the Hwange National Park. In a letter dated July 27 this year, addressed to Mangwanya, Ndlovu highlighted that after considerations that a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Zhongxin Coking Company was signed in the presence of Mnangagwa, it was prudent to issue the entity with the requisite approvals – *Independent*.

EDITORS NOTE – Hwange is not the only Park to have been invaded. Chimanimani is overrun with illegal gold and diamond panners, Matopos is threatened by granite quarrying, poachers and cattle herders. Almost every Park is unprotected, so where is the ZPWMA in all of this?

8 - CHARAMBA SLAMS ENVIRONMENTAL LAWYERS

Acknowledgement Newzimbabwe

PRESIDENT Emmerson Mnangagwa’s spokesperson George Charamba has come out guns blazing against lawyers and environmentalists who forced government to abruptly withdraw two Chinese companies’ licences permitting them to mine for coal in Hwange National Park.

In a Twitter rant, Charamba said national parks were not “God ordained”. The statements come after Zimbabwe Environmental Lawyers Association (ZELA) lobbied cancellation of the special licences for protection of flora and fauna. Government eventually succumbed to pressure, cancelling the licences and also banning all other mining activities in national parks across the country.

“This pseudo-scholarship which seeks the respectability of law wants to convince us some parts of Zimbabwe, or any nation on this earth for that matter, is God-designated as a Game Park, as an inviolate haven for wildlife. What frothing idiocy!!!! Hwange, then Wankie National Park was from as far back as 1928 designated a Game Park by HUMANS, not by GOD!!” said Charamba in comments directed at ZELA. “And of course when human needs come second-rate to needs of wildlife, humans will find ways – including destructive ones – to restore EQUILIBRIUM, muchida musingadi!!!! One way of doing that is simply to remove the competitor for land, in this case WILDLIFE!!!

“SOCIETIES do determine LAND USES at every stage in the EVOLUTION of those SOCIETIES!! Some part of land goes towards agricultural uses; host water bodies, are dedicated to urban conurbation creating concrete jungles, are assigned to mining, to game, etc, etc!!!! Time was when the whole of England teemed with bisons. Today, hunting in England has shrunk to FOXES!!! They ate their animals to extinction, turned their lands into great cities and towns, and carbon-spewing industrial contraptions.

“Know that it was the WHITEMAN’S GUN, not the AFRICAN SPEAR, which spelt doom for wildlife in the whole of Southern Africa and beyond. But all this is to wander off my angry point, which is: GAME PARKS ARE NOT GOD-ORDAINED, although the good Lord might have created all creatures, great or small!! GAME PARKS are a creation of HUMAN POLICY INTERVENTIONS, guided by availability of land for human use and exploitation.”

The Mhangagwa administration has in the recent past come under fire for granting mining rights to Chinese nationals in undesignated spaces and also an increased elephant population. Mhangagwa himself told Europe not to interfere with how Zimbabwe dealt with its animals after they (Europeans) had allegedly eaten all their animals. [newzimbabwe](#)

Editors Note – Government Officials are sworn to uphold the Laws and Constitution of the Land. Such a vitriolic attack only leaves one wondering and asking more questions as to who has been behind this debacle.

9 – MORE MINING FIRMS INVADE GAME PARKS

Watchdog

The Centre for Natural Resource Governance (CNRG) has established more companies, including the State-run Zimbabwe Consolidated Diamond Company (ZCDC), were awarded claims to conduct mining operations in game parks. In a statement to commend government’s decision to cancel all mining claims in national parks, CNRG said it hoped the remaining secret titles would “indeed be cancelled”. “CNRG has established that there are more companies holding mining titles in the national parks. “These include Zimbabwe Mining Development Corporation (ZMDC) in Hwange National Park — Sinamatela area, Zimbabwe Consolidated Diamond Company (ZCDC) and Rusununguko Pvt Limited in Chimanimani National Park, Lagerty Investments in Chizarira National Park. “There is also a yet to be ascertained company that is already mining gold at Umfurudzi Park. We pray that all these mining titles and others which are unknown to the public will, indeed, be cancelled,” the statement read. Cabinet recently gave in to pressure and reversed special grants for coal prospecting awarded to two Chinese companies in Hwange National Park – *NewsDay*, Monday September 21, 2020

10 – ALOES FOR SALE

We previously reported on the illegal sale of orchids at Morningside, Hillside, Bradfield, Ascot and Khumalo shopping centres. (*Anselia africana* and *Eulophia petersii*).

It has now come to our attention that indigenous Aloes are now being offered for sale. Once again, these are specially protected plants and may not be collected or sold without a permit.

Exotic aloes are not protected, and are often found in gardens. If you are unsure of the plants for sale then it is best not to buy them!

With the rains not too far off, we are likely to see Flame Lilies, Ammocharis and Boophane (both Amaryllidaceae lilies) being offered. These two are specially protected and must not be bought. We must stop the market for these plants in order to protect them in their natural environment.

During the recent Matopos Heritage MTB Challenge, that covered 220kms of the hills, we had never seen such a high degree of environmental damage. Our hills are under attack and action is required to protect our special environment.

11 – FREDERICK EYLES

This is the Wikipedia extract:- "Frederick Eyles (10 May 1864, Wick, Gloucestershire - 28 May 1937, Gatooma, Southern Rhodesia) was an English-born Rhodesian botanist, politician and journalist. [1] The standard author abbreviation Eyles is used to indicate this person as the author when citing a botanical name. [2] Eyles was probably resident in Natal for some time, since J.C. Juta & Co., published his book, "Zulu Self-Taught" in Cape Town in 1900. [3] Another edition was published in Johannesburg in the same year. He arrived in Rhodesia in January 1899, choosing to settle in Bulawayo and founding "The Bulawayo Observer" in August 1902. He acted as editor for this weekly, which reported on political and financial news, until its demise in January 1904. In 1910 he relocated to the vicinity of Mazoe, a village north of Salisbury, and stayed on the farm 'Tatagura' for a number of years. From 1911 to 1914 he served on the Legislative Council as a representative of the Northern Districts. In 1914 he joined the civil service, carrying out the duties of statistician and water registrar in the Department of Agriculture. Sometime later he became associated with the Census office and compiled the Report of the director of census dealing with the European census taken on 3 May 1921.

Eyles' scientific interests were wide-ranging, as shown by his contributions to the Rhodesia Scientific Association, of which he became a member in its founding year of 1899, and was elected president for 1922/3. At first Eyles collected insects, being particularly fond of the Coleoptera or beetles, a selection of which he presented to the Association's museum in 1900. The following year his interest had been captured by prehistory, so that in March 1901 he wrote a paper on "The origin of the native races of South Africa", a collation from various philological and anthropological sources - this work was published in the Proceedings (Vol. 2, pp. 30–42). His next contribution, "On a cave with Bushman drawings in the Matopos" (Ibid, Vol. 3, pp. 65–69), was presented in November 1902, and included descriptions of ancient stone artefacts from the cave. Other papers such as "The collection of natural history specimens" (Ibid, 1903, Vol. 4, pp. 33–37) and "Notes on the habits of a young genet" (Ibid, 1907, Vol. 7, pp. 25–28) reflected his deep interest in natural history.

At about this time, Eyles found his attention gradually shifting to botany, writing and presenting a paper on "Ferns and fern allies of Southern Rhodesia" in April 1906. (Proceedings, Vol. 6, pp. 87–91). The following year he announced that he was compiling a catalogue of Rhodesian plants, to which end he had put together an extensive herbarium. Indeed, for the remainder of his life he concentrated on Rhodesian flora, culminating in the publication of "A record of plants collected in Southern Rhodesia", issued in the Transactions of the Royal Society of South Africa (1916, Vol. 5, pp. 273–564), laying the foundation for study of the Zimbabwean flora. He also published two papers in the South African Journal of Science: "Constituents of the flora of Southern Rhodesia" (1920, Vol. 17, pp. 181–184) and "Ecological notes on the flora of Salisbury commonage" (1927, Vol. 24, pp. 289–298). [4] In 1923 he was appointed Department of Agriculture botanist and mycologist, spending six months at the University of Stellenbosch where he studied mycology and plant pathology under P.A. van der Bijl. Back in Rhodesia he published a list of plant diseases in 1926. The following year the mycological side of his work was transferred to John Collier Frederick Hopkins, while he carried on as the departmental botanist. While working for the Department of Agriculture he edited the Rhodesia Agricultural Journal, producing articles such as "Diseases of cotton in Southern Rhodesia" (1924) and "Some diseases of tobacco in Rhodesia" (1924).

In 1928 he became curator of the Queen Victoria Memorial Museum and Library in Salisbury. During the period 1901 to 1937 he collected some 9 000 botanical specimens which were lodged in the Government Herbarium and the National Botanic Gardens, with duplicate sets at Kew, the British Museum and the National Herbarium in Pretoria. [5] His collection of fungi were kept at the Department of Agriculture in Salisbury, and at the Mycological Herbarium at Pretoria. His 1932 list of Rhodesian fungi was later incorporated in a list by J.C.F. Hopkins in 1938. [6] EYLES, FREDERICK, of Bulawayo, Rhodesia, and of the Bulawayo Club, and member of the Anthropological Institute, Folk Lore Society, S. A. Philosophical Society, and Rhodesia Scientific Association (formerly Hon. Sec.), was born at Wick, near Bath, May 10, 1864; is the author of a work on Zulu Grammar, "Zulu Self-taught" (Juta & Co., 1900), and is the editor and founder of the "Bulawayo Observer." Mr. Eyles was married May 17, 1893. The Anglo-African Who's Who and Biographical Sketch-book Species named in his honour include *Digitaria eylesii* C.E.Hubb, *Indigofera eylesiana* J.B.Gillett, *Barleria eylesii* S.Moore, *Isoglossa eylesii* (S.Moore) Brummitt, *Rhus eylesii* Hutch., *Afroscidium eylesii* (C.Norman) P.J.D.Winter, *Euphorbia eylesii* Rendle, *Aspidoglossum eylesii* (S.Moore) Kupicha, *Pavetta eylesii* S.Moore, *Streptocarpus eylesii* and *Gutenbergia eylesii* (S.Moore) Wild & G.V.Pope"

12 - RAINFALL

The rainy season opened at the end of August – which presented the unusual spectacle of spring leaves and green resurrection plants! To date the eastern Hills have received 18mm, (with as much as 2mm in the SE), 15mm in the mid Hills, but only 3mm in the western hills.

13 – NORMAL TO ABOVE NORMAL RAINS EXPECTED

Acknowledgement; The Herald, August 2020; Rebecca Manzou, Elita Chikwati Senior Reporter

Most of the central and southern parts of Southern African Development Community (SADC), including all of Zimbabwe, should receive normal to above normal rains throughout the coming season, while a belt across the north of SADC is likely to have normal to below normal in the first half, predicts the Southern Africa Regional Climate Outlook Forum (Sarcoc 24).

Sarcoc groups all regional climate experts and they managed to meet virtually for their recent 24th meeting where, after looking at all factors, they predicted that the bulk of SADC is likely to receive normal to above normal rainfall for the most of the first half of the summer season from October to December this year.

Zimbabwe is among the countries that are expected to receive normal to above normal rainfall for the full six months from October this year to March next year. But the regional body said a northern belt territory — north western Angola, most of Democratic Republic of Congo most of eastern Madagascar, northern Malawi, northern Mozambique, Seychelles, Tanzania and north eastern Zambia — was likely to receive normal to below normal rains.

Above normal rainfall is defined as rainfall lying within the wettest third recorded during the 30 years from 1981 to 2010. SADC experts, who participated in the meeting, said the forecast implies that there are better chances of an increase in dam levels, potential for good harvests while the growing period will be longer with the good rains. They said the region will also experience heavy rainfall, flash flooding, storms, flooding and diseases such as cholera.

In the agriculture sector, the experts said water-logging can result in food insecurity, increased pests and diseases that affect livestock, and increases in crop pests such as locusts.

They advised that Governments in the region should stock up on dipping chemicals and promote regular dipping of livestock, rehabilitation of water storage facilities to take advantage of the rains, and invest more on soil conservation given potential for water-logging or flooding.

Farmers in flood-prone areas, they said, should plant upland and undertake good land management. Farmers need to take advantage of good production potential and maximise production.

“Governments and development partners need to provide support for agricultural inputs for farmers affected by previous recurrent droughts, improve harvest storage facilities and encourage medium to late maturity varieties,” they said.

Meteorological Services Department director, Mrs Rebecca Manzou told stakeholders attending the annual agribusiness conference at the Exhibition Park on Wednesday, that the national forecast will be released next week.

“Once Sarcoc is given, we downscale and localise our forecast. The national forecast is going to be issued on the first Wednesday of September,” she said.

President Mnangagwa, who headlined the event, urged the weather experts to take into consideration indigenous knowledge systems.

“Besides scientific evidence, we have our own ways of forecasting such as the movement of ants and these should also be considered,” he said.

He urged farmers to prepare well since the prospects for a good agriculture season are bright.

“With the summer cropping season approaching let us make 2021 season a resounding success. Zimbabwe had circles of droughts and good rains. This season we have good rains,” he said.

14 – NEW ZIMPARKS BOARD NAMED

With Acknowledgment The Herald, 8 September 2020; Talent Chimutambgi Reporter

Government has announced a new board for the Zimbabwe Parks and Wildlife Management Authority (ZimParks), with members from diverse backgrounds. The new board members include Professor Prisca Mugabe, Mrs Linda Mhlanga, Mr Fortune Sambo, Miss Ginnel Mabiza, Mr Mlamuleli Mhlanga, Mr Nkosiyabo Sibanda, Ms Sithembile Ncube, Mr Khumbula Moyo, Ms Mabel Buzuzi and Ministry representative Mr Tafadzwa Mundoga. The chairperson and vice chairperson of the board would be announced in due course.

Speaking during the board's inauguration yesterday, Environment, Climate Tourism and Hospitality Industry Minister Mangaliso Ndlovu said the appointment was in line with normal corporate governance procedures.

"Government has seen it fit to appoint a new board to preside over the affairs of Zimparks," he said. "In this context, it became necessary and relevant to appoint a board drawn from tried and tested senior public servants, captains of industry and the academia with proven track records. "There is balance and a good mix of skills and experience in the new board which is important for ZimParks."

The new board has a mandate to discharge its duties effectively to tackle a litany of challenges ZimParks is facing. Minister Ndlovu bemoaned reduced funding as the major obstacle to curb poaching. "You take over as the new board, at a time poaching remains a major challenge, especially of elephants and rhinos and the lack of resources to deploy effective surveillance and prevention, which have affected the ZimPark's ability to effectively discharge its mandate," said Minister Ndlovu.

15 – SOCIETY CALENDAR OF EVENTS FOR YOUR DIARY

22 nd November 2020	AGM
27 th – 29 th November 2020	Matopos Classic MTB
24 th – 28 th March 2021	Matopos Heritage MTB Challenge
20 th – 22 nd August 2021	Matopos Classic
27 th – 29 th August 2021	Matopos Heritage Trail Run

16 – EVENTS

We successfully hosted both the Matopos Heritage MTB Challenge, and the Matopos Heritage Trail Run at the end of August and early September respectfully. Whilst numbers were down, with no foreign competitors, it did not diminish the quality of the events. Starting early morning and riding through the Park at sunrise was a delight for the riders – staggering up long hills in the mid-day heat was possibly not as enjoyable! But new routes and very competitive head to the race produced another memorable event. In all cases the response was positive and we look forward to the 2021 events, when hopefully our foreign guests will be able to participate again. Once again, our appreciation is extended to all those members who volunteered their assistance to make these events possible, and successful!

17 – MEMBERS NOTEBOOK

SUBSCRIPTIONS

Subscriptions for the year 1 October 2020 to 30 September 2021 fall due on 30 September 2020. Please ensure that your subs for 2020 are up to date. There has been no increase in rates.

US\$ 5	Pensioner Individual/Couple
US\$ 20	Individual/Family
US\$100	Corporate

The AGM resolved that from 2019 we will accept only US\$ but we will accept Zimbabwe Dollars at the bank rate on the day of payment. We would prefer the former if you are able to pay in US\$. However, we appreciate that the extraordinary rate of inflation may challenge many of our members and so we would ask you to please consult with the Treasurer if necessary. If you need any information, please contact the Chairman on matoboconservationsociety@gmail.com

MCS APPAREL

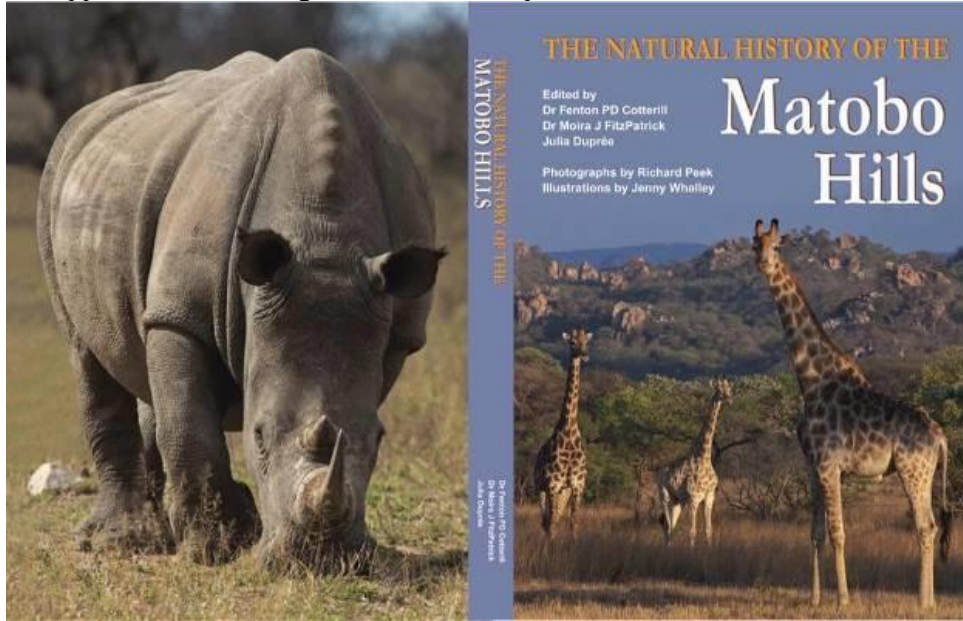
You are reminded that the Society has a stock of fleece sleeveless jackets, in olive green with orange MCS logo. They are ideal for the cool mornings and evenings. These are available at \$20 each. We still have stocks of hats and caps at \$10 each. CD's and shopping bags are also available at \$5 each.

WEB SITE & FACEBOOK

The website for the Society www.matobo.org has been updated, so make some time to visit the site. Contributions are welcome. We have also revamped our Facebook page "Matobo Conservation Society". 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. Over 1,000 people are following us on Facebook.

THE NATURAL HISTORY OF THE MATOBO HILLS

As Christmas approaches don't forget that we have copies of this valuable book for sale.



18 – NEWSLETTER COMMENT

This is the 112th MCS Newsletter, and the first to include pictures. Previously we had omitted pictures as we believed they increased file size and so imposed a burden on the email systems of many of our members. But with the advances in the internet and wireless systems, we believe that is no longer the case.

So once again, we appeal to members to submit articles for the Newsletter, to share their experiences, and to send in pictures of interest.

We have received numerous favourable comments on the content of the newsletters, and so we hope that the pictures will enhance our publication.

We do of course reserve the right to publish, or not publish, any material submitted to us.