

Matobo National Park

The Matobo Hills are a special place. The landscape is spectacular; open wooded valleys are surrounded by huge granite outcrops, showing off their famous balancing rocks. The fantastic hill shapes are entirely due to the slow natural processes of erosion which have operated here for untold millennia.

The area is rich in history and culture. Numerous Bushmen paintings, pottery scatters and old buildings give clues to the long human past in the area. Kings and leaders are buried here, amongst monuments, battlefields and historic sites. The hills also host the sacred Njelele shrine.

Woven into the scenery and history is the abundant wildlife. From the Giant Rock Scorpion to the endangered Black Rhino, the Park offers a variety of reptiles, birds and mammals. The area hosts the largest known population of the endangered Black Eagle. More species of raptor breed here than any other single place on the globe.

Over 260 species of tree are found here, 100 species of grass, 24 types of rare orchid and several aloe species. Many plants are near-endemics.

The Matopos is the oldest protected area in the country, declared in 1926 (two years before Hwange), when 250,000 acres (1,012km²·A5) of land was proclaimed a National Park. In 1953, the size of the Park was reduced to only 112,000 acres (440km²·A5) with people being moved from the protected area into the areas immediately adjacent to the new Park boundary. The Park was then named the Rhodes Matopos National Park and is managed by the Rhodes Matopos Committee, which falls under the National Parks and Wildlife Management Authority.

A prime aim was to reintroduce wildlife into the Park and almost a quarter of the area was formally designated as a Game Park in 1963. Most important was the reintroduction of White Rhino in 1962; Black Rhino followed soon after. Many of the white rhino found in Zimbabwe's game reserves today come from the original families in the Matopos.

In 2003 the Matopos was declared a World Heritage Site, because of its cultural significance, diverse environments and because it's a special place that needs all our effort to protect it.



