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## NEWSLETTER 117 / MARCH 2022

### **1 – ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

We held our Annual General Meeting at Mtsheleli Dam on Sunday 12<sup>th</sup> December. The current committee were returned with a vote of confidence, and Mr Rob Burrett re-joined the Committee.

Chairman	Gavin Stephens
Vice-Chairman	Neil Rix
Treasurer	Jean Whiley
Secretary	Gaynor Lightfoot
Members	Verity Bowman, Rob Burrett, Moira Fitzpatrick and Cindy Sellick

### **2 – MATOBO HERITAGE MTB CHALLENGE**

Our annual Matopos Heritage MTB Challenge is scheduled for the end of March, and again has had a resounding entry. We are once again calling for members to volunteer to assist with the staging of the event, especially in the transport of vehicles from Maleme Rest Camp to Camp Dwala on the morning of Friday 25<sup>th</sup> March. Without you it would be very difficult to stage such a popular event, and the participants always appreciate the smooth logistics! Please contact Jean if you are able to assist.

### **3 – STUDY SAYS INVASIVE SPECIES ARE COSTING AFRICA \$3.5 TRILLION A YEAR**

*With acknowledgment to BBC World Service*

New research says invasive species of weeds, insects and worms are costing Africa more than \$3.5trillion (£2.5trillion) every year. Researchers based in Ghana, Kenya, Britain, and Switzerland have highlighted the catastrophic effects of species introduced by human activity.

Nigeria, where losses are estimated at \$1trillion a year, is much the worst affected country.

The majority of the costs are from weeding - work primarily carried out by women and children - but damage caused by insects is estimated at almost \$40bn. The research authors noted that the findings may be underestimating the true cost of invasive species to Africa's agriculture - as they did not consider the costs of herbicides for disease and pest control.

*Editorial – we are all too familiar with the invasion of lantana, eucalyptus, guava, cactus, and other species in the Matobo region. Efforts to get action from the authorities remain futile. However, we can play our part if on every visit we either remove exotics or report their location.*

*EDITORIAL – this topic is covered in different articles within this newsletter.*

### **4 – ELEPHANT VISIT**

During the period starting 4<sup>th</sup> February, three elephant entered the National Park from the west, travelled across the Park, past Maleme and via the Circular Drive before existing into Gulati Communal Land. They eventually ended up at Camp Dwala, before turning south to Dopi School near Sotcha. By the 13<sup>th</sup> February they were reported to be back at Fort Usher, and hopefully will find their ancestral route down the Umzingwane to continue their journey! Whilst unusual, it is not unknown for elephant to appear in the Matobo Hills.

### **5 – RHINO LOSS**

It was reported that a black rhino from the Matobo National Park had been shot and dehorned on 7<sup>th</sup> February. The animal had broken out of the Game Park and had been shot in the Makhothama Resettlement Area. Investigations are ongoing and so we are unable to report any further details.

*Editorial – Tragically, since this was written, a second black rhino has been killed by poachers.*

## **6 - NEXT EVENT**

Date	Sunday 3 <sup>rd</sup> April 2022
Venue	Gulati Hill
Meet	08:00am, Cresta Churchill Hotel
Travel	Trucks are preferred and if you have a 4x4 that may be helpful but not essential.
Details	The intention is to visit the Gulati Communal Land, and to climb the peak after which it gets its name. It is one of the highest points in the Matopos, so the views will be splendid. We'll also enjoy a look into rural life in the Matobo Hills.
Reminder	Don't forget your picnic lunch and drinks!

## **7 – REPORT BACK**

Our Annual General Meeting went ahead on 15<sup>th</sup> December at Mtshelili Dam. Though it was a warm day, we found a perfect picnic site at the southern end of the lake, where under the shade of trees, and with a breeze down the valley we were more than comfortable. The backdrop to the meeting was superb, as the lake is surely one of the most attractive in the Matopos, if not Zimbabwe.

Following the meeting, Verity Bowman gave us a most interesting update on the rhino management plan in Zimbabwe, its successes, and failures – though there were far more successes than failures. The Matopos National Park continues to be an important rhino sanctuary and represents the highest reproductive rate in the country. Your Society has been engaged in the erection of a new game fence along the Kezi road to protect the northern rhino population and has contributed to repairs of the Game Park fence in the west to protect the western population.

Following lunch members went for a delightful walk to the wall and back. The veld is looking at its best, even if the rains have been a little late and erratic. The drive to and from the dam, through the Park, was a delight, spoilt only by large numbers of cattle grazing and very little wildlife!

## **8 – RAINFALL**

The hills enjoyed a wonderful start to the season, but cyclonic activity in February has disrupted the moist NW air flow and no rain has fallen since the 7 February. We are now looking at a season that could fall below 75% of normal, and crops are looking very stressed!

Western Matopos 487mm and Eastern Matopos 521mm as at 28 February, 2022.

## **9 – ZAPU TO HOLD ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATIONS AT NKOMO'S VILLAGE HOME**

*With acknowledgement to New Zimbabwe, Wednesday December 15*

Bulawayo - ZAPU will this Friday hold its 60th anniversary celebrations at the late Vice President Joshua Nyongolo Nkomo's homestead in Matobo district, Matabeleland South.

ZAPU was formed on 17 December 1961 at the Cold Comfort Farm in Harare, ten days after the Rhodesian government banned the National Democratic Party (NDP).

"ZAPU will be celebrating 60 years of existence on the 17th of December 2021. During this day, the party will take time to reflect on the journey that it has walked since then through the liberation war, Gukurahundi, Unity Government and through the pull-out from ZANU," the party's Matabeleland South provincial chairperson, Ndodana Moyo said in an interview with [Newzimbabwe.com](http://Newzimbabwe.com) Monday.

The provincial chairperson said the celebrations will be held at Nkomo's homestead in Kezi under the theme "Finishing the unfinished Business"

Moyo said transport will be provided through the province for party supporters who intend to attend the celebrations.

## **10 – ZIMBABWE EXPERINCES LIGHT EARTHQUAKE**

*Daily News, Thursday January 27, Pg 1*

The Meteorological Services Department (MSD) says it is assessing the impact of a light earthquake which was felt in Southern districts on Tuesday evening. The MSD yesterday said the light earthquake was at magnitude of 4.1 and its epicentre was in Matobo District, Matabeleland South. It was also felt in Bulawayo. "An earthquake was felt in Gwanda, Kezi, Plumtree, Matobo, some parts of Bulawayo metropolitan and other surrounding areas on the evening of 25 January "The epicentre was in Matobo District about 20km from Maphisa, 40km from Gwanda town, 100km from Kezi and 100km from Plumtree, but was widely felt in Matabeleland South Province and some parts of Bulawayo Metropolitan," the MSD said.

## **11 – PRESIDENT CALL FOR RHODES REMAINS TO BE REPATRIATED**

President Emmerson Mnangagwa has suggested that the remains of British imperialist Cecil John Rhodes can be removed from the Matopos National Park in Matabeleland South and returned to the United Kingdom. Mnangagwa told traditional leaders on Friday in the capital that the remains of the founder of the former British colony, Rhodesia, were of no importance to the country.

Rhodes, who was born in 1853 and died in 1902 was an imperialist, businessman and politician who played a dominant role in southern Africa in the late 19th Century, driving the annexation of vast swathes of land. He founded the De Beers diamond firm which until recently controlled global trade. Rhodes dreamt of an uninterrupted railway link stretching from Cape Town to Cairo, Egypt — the entire north to south controlled at the time by the British Empire.

Rhodes' remains lie atop a granite hill in Matopos. "We still have Rhodes' remains in Matobo. What do you think about it? If you go to the shrine, you don't know whether you are talking to Rhodes or our ancestors," Mnangagwa said. "His remains must be returned to where he hailed from, and we can also have our ancestral remains which are being kept in Europe."

In 2012, the late former president Robert Mugabe blocked ex-combatants and members of his ruling ZANU PF party from exhuming his remains, saying his legacy was part of the country's history. In May 2020, the Rhodes Stable located at the Matopos National Park was burnt down by unknown people. The stables, built in 1897, are one of the oldest buildings in the country where Rhodes used to shelter his horses.

In South Africa, statues and monuments of colonial-era leaders were once targets of the Black Lives Matter (BLM) protests. In 2015, South Africa's University of Cape Town removed the statue of the British colonialist and 19th Century figure, unveiled in 1934.

*Editorial – It should be noted that there are no 1893 / 1896 heroes remains in the British Museum. The South African Government has not removed the public statue of CJ Rhodes located in the Gardens, Cape Town, nor the Rhodes monument above Groote Schuur, both of which are National Monuments. The grave of CJ Rhodes is a both a National Monument, and the property of the Ndebele Chiefs, whose Fathers agreed to watch over the grave site in perpetuity.*

## **12 – CANADA'S RECONAFRICA OIL AND GAS EXPLORATION IN NAMIBIA AND BOTSWANA WORRIES WORLD HERITAGE COMMITTEE**

*With acknowledgement to Sheree Bega, 2 Aug 2021*

UNESCO's World Heritage Committee is concerned about oil exploration licences being granted in environmentally sensitive areas in the Okavango river basin in north-western Botswana and north-eastern Namibia, because spills and pollution will harm the Okavango Delta and the Tsodilo Hills.

The committee, which met for its extended 44th session in July 2021, is responsible for making decisions about the implementation of the World Heritage Convention. Canadian-based oil and gas company Recon Africa has acquired rights to explore for oil and gas in more than 35 000 square kilometres in the Kavango basin in Namibia and Botswana. The company has started with the drilling of test wells in Namibia.

The heritage committee urged Botswana and Namibia to ensure potential further steps to develop the oil project "are subject to rigorous and critical prior review, including a thorough environmental impact assessment [EIA] that corresponds to international standards."

It said this must include an assessment of negative social effects and a review of potential harmful effects on the World Heritage property "in line with the IUCN [International Union for Conservation of Nature] ... advice note on environmental assessment".

An analysis by the World Heritage Centre and the IUCN notes that while Recon Africa's licensed areas do not overlap with the property or its buffer zone, they are situated in environmentally sensitive areas of the Cubango-Okavango River Basin with a potential negative effect on the property and the areas important routes for elephants and other wildlife.

"While the current activities ... are not likely to have a significant direct impact on the property based on their restricted scope and location away from the property, this might be a first stage towards a larger project with significant risks to the interconnected water system of the delta and the outstanding universal value, in case reserves are found," it said.

The IUCN and the World Heritage Centre identified “gaps and concerns” with the EIA such as the need for a more detailed spatial distribution assessment of species and the need to ascertain the connectivity of ecosystems. It says any future activities, including exploration stages such as seismic research and drilling of stratigraphic wells, must be evaluated critically.

Melissa Lewis, the policy and advocacy programme manager for BirdLife South Africa, welcomed the World Heritage Centre’s efforts to monitor the project, but added: “However we are deeply concerned by various shortcomings in Recon Africa’s EIAs to date — as identified by the World Heritage Centre and IUCN, as well as by BirdLife South Africa’s recent comments on the EIA for seismic surveys.

“Over the years, the World Heritage Committee has repeatedly called upon state parties to ensure that extractive companies located in their territories cause no damage to World Heritage properties, and numerous industry stakeholders have undertaken a ‘no-go’ commitment in this regard,” she said.

Although the project is only at the exploration stage, there is concern about the potential environmental effects of future extractive activities.

“We strongly urge the Namibian and Botswana governments to fulfil their obligations under the convention by demanding that such impacts are properly assessed and by refusing to authorise any activities that would negatively impact the outstanding universal value of either the Okavango Delta or Tsodilo Hills World Heritage site,” Lewis said.

Andy Gheorghiu, of Saving Okavango’s Unique Life (SOUL), an alliance of concerned Namibian, Botswana and Angolan citizens challenging Recon Africa’s planned oil and gas drilling activities, welcomed the committee’s decision, which he said “corresponds with our core demands”.

Recon Africa did not respond to queries from the *Mail & Guardian* but has previously said it was working directly with UNESCO. The company claims it is committed to minimal disturbances in line with international best standards and will implement environmental and social best practices in all its project areas.

In a recent statement, the Permanent Okavango River Basin Water Commission, which represents the riparian states of Angola, Botswana and Namibia, described how it had recently convened to discuss Recon Africa’s exploration activities in the transboundary Cubango-Okavango river basin, shared by the three countries.

The commission says it recognises the legitimacy of the petroleum exploration licences issued to Recon Africa by authorities in Namibia and Botswana, both of which are at varying stages. “Both governments, through the ministries responsible for mining and energy, have issued official statements stating that the explorative activities are well within environmentally safe boundaries and do not pose any harm to the basin.”

The Cubango-Okavango basin is internationally renowned for its significantly high biological productivity and biodiversity, making it one of the most important biodiversity conservation areas in the world and giving it its status as a wetland of international importance.

The commission reaffirmed its commitment to upholding a shared vision for the basin, which states that all efforts will be employed to achieve an economically prosperous, socially just and environmentally healthy development.

Key to this is to ensure that ongoing and proposed prospecting activities are done outside of the core and buffer zones of the delineated protected conservation areas, it says.

“Recon Africa will need to comply as indicated in their project plans. This is to be enforced through the respective ministries responsible for water and environment,” it said.

“The council agreed that an approved EIA report should precede any subsequent stages of the exploration work and if found at any stage that there is a threat to the integrity of the basin and the local communities, the process should be duly suspended.”

*Editorial; World Heritage Sites are under attack around the World, but more so in Southern Africa where commercial gain scores far higher in Government deliberations than Heritage. The Matobo Hills would be no different and there appear to be small scale threats, such as illegal quarrying and illegal mining threatening parts of the Hills. On paper, the Government response has been robust, yet the practices continue.*

### **13 – HWANGE ENVIRONMENTAL WARS, WILDLIFE SUFFERS THE MOST**

*With acknowledgement to Rutendo Mapfumo*

Human and industrial activities at the Hwange National Park and its surrounding areas are the major reason behind environmental degradation and animals migrating deep into remote parts of the park.

The Centre for Natural Resources Governance (CNRG) a Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) that deals with environmental capacity building say the development at Zimbabwe’s flagship national park is a clear lesson that mining and wildlife conservation are two opposites that can’t co-exist.

“What we are witnessing in Hwange is a lesson that mining and wildlife conservation cannot co-exist. Wildlife requires natural environments with minimum human activities. The increase in mining activities in Hwange has caused agitation of wild animals whose increased movements from their usual habitats in search of quieter places is resulting in so many cases of human-wildlife conflicts,” said CNRG’s programs officer Henry Nyapokoto. Coal is a major driver of Zimbabwe’s electricity generation. Despite importing power from other countries, the country’s thermal power stations constitute a great deal towards the national grid.

With coal reserves to last for the next hundred years or so and an export appetite from China, there seems to be an increase in coal mining activities at the Hwange National Park with newer mining concessions approved for other smaller coal suppliers.

That means, wildlife conservation a key part of Zimbabwe’s tourism packages will continue to be negatively affected. Animals often come into contact with humans and that leads to conflicts. “Mining is now competing for space, water, and forage with animals. The number of people killed by wild animals has been increasing every year, and we cannot rule out mining as one of the causes. It is so unfortunate that our largest wildlife-protected area lies on and adjacent to the country’s largest coal deposit,” he added.

In a recent incident, a 78-year-old Shangano man was trampled to death by a charging elephant while he was driving his cattle in the grazing lands.

Some of the elephants which interfere into people’s homes while running away from miners are killed under Problem Animal Control (PAC) when they are reported that they cause problems in the community when they are reported to authorities.

Edward Muzizi a local former poacher who was jailed for 9 years told CITE that, new mines in the area have presented leverage for poaching activities to thrive. “Due to the existence of mines, the animals have migrated closer to our fields, so we use fire to confuse the already frightened animals, the animals then run berserk to our already set snare in the bush,” he said

Although, the Zambezi Gas and Coal mine, one of the mining companies exploiting coal together with Makomo Resources near the Sinamtela Camp in Hwange once killed two elephants after they were hit by a speeding truck in the concession area. The Zambezi Gas and Coal Operations Manager Eng Menard Makoti said they are working towards protecting wild animals in their area. “We are guided by the Environmental Impact Assessment EIA, which determines by what we are mining and where. The EIA requires us not to damage the environment including the waters which are in our vicinity. For instance, the water we use in our wash plant is a close circuit, it remains in the plant and we do not dispose it to the environment because it will be containing oils which can damage the plants and the wildlife that’s why we wash our coal and settle it within our plant.”

“We have also rehabilitated the land which we mined before through our backfilling programs, this way we will be making sure that wild animals do not get agitated by the degraded land. Thirdly to make sure animals do not fall in our pits, we have put up some safety barricades where we protect our animals”

### **Villagers, animal conflict and environmental degradation**

The latest national fire report says that most veld fires in the Hwange district emanate from areas that share a boundary with the national park. Poachers, locals that hunt wildlife for relish are the biggest criminals. Villagers in Shangano village blame poverty and hunger in the community. Besides food, they need money for other things such as paying for healthcare and education. As such, charcoal production is thriving.

Richard Mwembe a charcoal dealer says he has managed to pay school fees and managed to prepare for antenatal care for her wife. “I do get profit from my charcoal business. I sell my products for USD\$2.50 per 50 kilograms and I usually sell 100 bags every two weeks. With the money I have been able to pay school fees for my children and provide for my expecting wife” he says.

Charcoal has a ready market in bigger cities and towns such as Victoria Falls and Bulawayo due to the high electricity tariffs and load shedding. According to the Forestry Commission, Zimbabwe continues to lose indigenous trees to wood poaching. The Chief Conservator from Forestry Commission Armstrong Tembo says the forests in the Hwange district are under threat because wood poachers who are into charcoal production

“As Forestry Commission together with other agencies such as EMA, Zimparks and Hwange Rural District Council we are working towards eliminating such illegal activities,” he says. Daniel Sithole a Hwange-based Environmentalist from Green Shango Trust says communities should be educated on the importance of wildlife and forests.

“Charcoal production leads to the loss of vegetation and that results in desertification, soil erosion, land degradation, reduced agriculture outputs, increased natural disasters, and increased greenhouse gases in the atmosphere which cause climate change,” he says.

Communities also rely on forest resources for a range of livelihood activities such as the provision of essential nutrition, raw material, and medicines which cannot be substituted in the absence of trees. Under Statutory Instrument 116 of 2012 of the Forest (Control of Firewood, Timber and Forest Produce) Regulations 2012, charcoal is fuelwood, and anyone trading in this product without a license can be prosecuted and the equipment used to commit these offences will be confiscated by the State, the offenders continue to damage the environment through deforestation and compromising the homes of the wildlife. Although most offenders are reluctant to obtain the licence due to the processes and the duration of the licence, the licence is only \$ZW7000 per annum. Clement Mukwasi the President of the Employers Association for Tours and Safaris says the environment is very important to tour operators and there is need for the environment to be kept in the best conditions. “As tourism productive sectors of our economy, we should not blame each other, rather we should engage perpetrators, give them advise and help one another to correct the wrong. The duty of protecting the environment is not the government duty, it is a duty that should be taken over by every right-thinking citizen. Human activities also induce climate change with activities such as mining in tourism areas, therefore mining entities must be ensured that do under strict environmental management before they start operations” says Mukwasi.

Meanwhile, although the environmental wars continue to be a cause of concern in Hwange, the Minister of Environment, Climate, Tourism and Hospitality Industry Mangaliso Ndlovu declined to comment.

## **14 – STRICT GUIDELINES NEEDED TO BALANCE CONSERVATION AND MINING**

*November 13, 2021*

Strict guidelines must be put in place to balance conservation efforts and mining in wildlife parks, conservationists have said, noting that engaging different actors involved in and impacted by these sectors can reduce risks to people and nature.

This observation comes after ‘dubious’ mining contracts have been awarded to Chinese mining companies in protected areas in Zimbabwe while inconsistent mining policies have been blamed for causing chaos in communities.

In September last year, the government granted two Chinese coal companies – Afrochine Smelting (Pvt) Limited and the Zimbabwe Zhongxin Coal Mining group, licences to start mining for coal at the Hwange National Park – home to an estimated 40 000 elephants and many endangered species.

In Matabeleland South, another company Mazinahue Syndicate was given permission to prospect for gold at the Matobo Hills World Heritage Site, a move that incensed the villagers who chased the miners away but were allegedly assaulted by anti-riot police.

Mining reportedly accounts for 12 percent of Zimbabwe’s gross domestic product and is one of the country’s highest foreign currency earners.

Animal Wildlife Foundation (AWF) Vice President of Species Conservation and Science, Philip Muruthi, acknowledged countries had to carefully consider the merits and demerits of mining in conservation areas.

He said countries must “choose, as they cannot say no to development yet could not allow mining in places that are important for biodiversity and for natural areas.”

“We have to say, ‘there is no mining here.’ For example, if you discover an important mineral on a world heritage site, my personal opinion is you leave it like that. In some areas, you don’t mine, and that’s what some countries are doing by the way. Some countries have very rich deposits of oil but are not mining yet because they are saying these areas are also important for certain species,” he said while addressing journalists on conservation science on African species recently.

However, Muruthi, said there could be solutions to conduct mining in conservancies.

“You can do infrastructure since mining is a platform because we are facing this challenge here in this region, it’s something to be discussed by the planners, the MPs in Parliament and this is where scientists can come in. If we forgo this process, we are foregoing the future development of this country and if we mine, we are putting jeopardy for the future of this country,” said the conservationist.

“Say you have discovered uranium or gold then all the dirt from mining goes into the Zambezi River, you are killing your people downstream and killing agriculture. If there’s no mining that can be done in an area, that is important for our biodiversity but my personal opinion is some mining can be done compatibly because you know there are ways you can manage.”

Muruthi highlighted mining could be done in conservancies if miners covered the land and managed the after-effects.

“Then you should go ahead and do it, but the debate should not be biology only but should be biology and other economies in the country,” he noted.

Zimbabwe Parks and Wildlife Management Authority (Zimparks) spokesperson, Tinashe Farawo, added there should be co-existence between conservation and mining practices.

“I think there is a reality that we need to live with that our country is not expanding, human population is expanding, animal population is expanding. I’m saying from experience because the problems of mining were not there 50 years ago,” he said.

“If people continue to see elephants roaming freely for no benefit obviously, they would think of other alternatives for survival. How much are elephants worth and this debate about mining 50 years from now I can guarantee will still come back long after some of us are gone or too old to be useful.”

Farawo noted that debate should be what benefit people are receiving from conservation.

“Are people getting value from the wildlife, as long as they are not getting value for wildlife, they think of other alternatives, so the issue is to make sure people get something from wildlife that we have, the rich resources that we must attach value to. We have all these elephants – how much are they worth, can you forego mining so you can benefit from wildlife? Can we do mining because the elephants are not benefiting us, they are killing us and those are things we must discuss,” the Zimparks spokesperson challenged.

## **15 – \$30 BILLION FOR DDF ROADS REHAB**

*November 8, 2021, The Herald Walter Nyamukondiwa*

Government has set its sights on accelerating infrastructure projects, including upgrading roads, airports and drilling of boreholes at a cost of about \$30 billion.

Through the District Development Fund (DDF), major projects including the Karoi-Binga Road, would now be worked on by three teams.

To achieve impact in communities, DDF intends to set up fully equipped road construction units in every province to accelerate maintenance of its 32 000km road network and other special roads.

The first team on the Karoi-Binga Road will work from Zvipani towards Siakobvu, the second team works from Siakobvu towards Zvipani and the third one from Binga towards Siakobvu.

Other roads include the Monte Casino, Chapoto-Kanyemba, Nyakasikana-Karanda roads.

Airports and airstrips such as Buffalo Range International Airport, Bumi Hills, Chivi, Murehwa and Kanyemba would be completed in 2022.

DDF Permanent Secretary Mr Christopher Shumba said they were gearing for massive projects in communities next year.

“We want to make sure that we have sufficient equipment including graders, dozers, tippers, rollers and pneumatic rollers, among others,” said Mr Shumba.

“These will quickly move into each district to repair roads. We want people to be happy everywhere. That means there should be some activity being undertaken by DDF in every district.”

Mr Shumba said at least \$30 billion was needed to undertake the projects.

DDF acting roads director, Engineer Goodwill Mapako, said DDF got \$690 million from Zinara which would see at least one project being undertaken in every province.

This will see surfacing of at least 10km of roads in each province, while work on 12 bridges across the country progresses.

Eng Mapako said work was progressing well on the upgrading of the Buffalo Range Airport with the contractor expected to be on-site to do asphalt concrete overlay.

Roads in national parks such as Mana Pools, Gonarezhou and Hwange are set to be worked on too. DDF is targeting to reshape the entire road network in line with the Second Republic’s aspiration for excellence.

In terms of clean water provision, the DDF is expected to drill at least 35 000 boreholes, one for each village while big ones are expected to get two boreholes to improve access to water and sanitation.

Finance director Mr Wilfred Kachitsa said DDF wanted to complement disbursements from Treasury through maximising returns from its assets such as boats, accommodation facilities and aircraft.

“We need to innovate and generate more revenue to undertake projects from our assets,” he said.

“We need to boost equipment including drilling rigs, road equipment and geophysical equipment.”

*Editorial – a number of roads in the Matobo Hills were DDF roads, and when maintained were in excellent condition. Sadly, they are largely impassable now, so we can only hope that this materialises.*

## **16 – BULAWAYO TRIO NABBED OVER RHINO HORN**

*With acknowledgment to Newsday, Mr Nizbert Moyo, October 18, 2021*

Three Bulawayo men are in trouble after they were found in possession of a rhino horn without a licence.

The trio is set to appear in court soon.

Bulawayo police spokesperson Inspector Abednico Ncube yesterday confirmed that police had arrested Mpumelelo Moyo (44) from Morningside, Bongani Gazi (32) from Barham Green and Mbonisi Ndlovu (49) from Montrose.

“On October 12 at around 9am, police received a tip-off to the effect that the accused persons were in possession of a rhinoceros horn, and they were looking for a buyer. Acting on the information, the police investigated and found Gazi with a grey plastic paper bag with ivory. He was in the company of Ndlovu,” Ncube said.

“Police searched the two and recovered a rhino horn inside the plastic bag. Upon further questioning, the pair failed to produce a permit allowing them to be in possession of ivory.”

Ncube said the pair implicated Moyo, saying he was the owner of the horn and he had given it to them so that they look for buyers. This led to Moyo’s arrest.

## **17 – CAPE TOWN’S DAY ZERO: WE ARE AXING TREES TO SAVE WATER**

*By Andrew Harding, BBC News, Cape Town, 10 November*

Cutting down trees to save a city from drought might seem like an unlikely plan, but that is exactly what the South African city of Cape Town is doing, soon after it became the first global city to come close to running out of water.

It is three years since it edged dangerously towards what was described as "Day Zero" - the moment when some four million inhabitants would be left without water.

Its existential crisis was triggered by a severe and unanticipated drought that turned all the local reservoirs into dustbowls.

Today, dozens of teams armed with chainsaws are seeking to protect those reservoirs in an unusual manner - by chopping down tens of thousands of trees on the mountains surrounding them.

It is a furiously ambitious, and oddly counter-intuitive battle to limit the impact of climate change.

On a recent morning, high above a thick layer of mist, two workers abseiled down a steep ravine to remove several isolated pine trees in an area that was littered with stumps.

"The pines are not indigenous to this area. They use up so much water - much more water than indigenous plants. This is the green infrastructure that we need to fix," explained Nkosinathi Nama, who is co-ordinating the work for The Nature Conservancy on behalf of the Greater Cape Town Water Fund.

The non-indigenous pine trees, initially brought into the region for the timber industry, have spread fast across the mountains, crowding out the local, far more resilient, and less thirsty flora in Cape Town's catchment areas. The pines, and other alien species like the eucalyptus, are now responsible for consuming an estimated 55 billion litres of water per year - equivalent to two to three months of the city's annual consumption.

"One of the lessons of Day Zero is that our water catchment areas need to be rehabilitated and restored so that they are resilient," he said.

### **People got scared**

The initial five-year project is just one of many responses to Cape Town's 2018 water crisis, as scientists and administrators seek to learn from the experience.

As well as protecting and diversifying the city's water sources - including tapping into underground aquifers and installing desalination plants - experts have also been studying how humans responded to the threat of Day Zero in terms of water-usage.

"We underestimate the ability of citizens to adapt to a crisis," said Dr Kevin Winter, an environmental expert at the University of Cape Town.

He points out that the city's water consumption nearly halved in the space of just three weeks in early 2018, from 780 megalitres per day to under 550, before sinking even lower. An extraordinary display of public unity.



**"People got really scared... And it had the desired effect," he said.**

Siyabonga Myeza, a community activist working for the Environmental Monitoring Group in the Khayelitsha township outside Cape Town, agrees: "Fear works.

"That thought of running out of water as a city was quite tragic and very scary and the city did quite well at preaching the message of saving water, and we halved our water use.

"But in the long term we probably need a more holistic shift of mindset."

### **Halting irrigation**

In the years since then, inevitably, water usage has increased in Cape Town.

But it remains far below the peak, set back in 2014, of 1.2 billion litres per day.

The experience of being forced to save water, or face fines or other penalties, has clearly left a lasting impression on many households.

The main supplier of drinking water to Cape Town, all but dried up in 2018 - today it is full

Other lessons include a greater appreciation of the role of agriculture in water management - in South Africa, as in many parts of the world, approximately 70% of water reserves are used to irrigate farmland.

Around Cape Town, farmers agreed to stop using municipal water completely for several months.

The Day Zero crisis also emphasised the increasingly unpredictable nature of weather patterns in an era of climate change.

By the end of 2018, Cape Town had received more rain than average. Just not during the usual seasons.

### **Seven-year drought**

But while there is growing confidence that the Western Cape province is now in a much stronger position to cope with future droughts, there is little evidence that other parts of South Africa have learnt the same lessons.

In the far poorer Eastern Cape province, where farmers are struggling to cope with their own devastating seven-year-long drought, the heavily populated Nelson Mandela Bay area is facing acute water shortages that are widely blamed on years of mismanagement and corruption, and a failure to maintain vital water infrastructure.

"Fortunately, the leadership of Cape Town rose to the occasion. They did everything and... carried the people with them and as a consequence it helped them to overcome the problem," said Mkhuseleli Jack, a businessman and opposition politician in the city of Gqeberha.

"Here it's the other way round because this place is led by very mediocre leaders. People have reached a stage where they won't believe anything politicians are saying here."

Gqeberha is now trying to focus minds by warning that its own Day Zero may arrive within months, while the taps have already run dry in some smaller towns in the province, and many neighbourhoods are dependent on irregular water truck deliveries made by a local charity.

"We've had no water for two days. I'm worried about the future because it's going to be worse and worse. Because [the government] doesn't look after us," said Elsie Hanse, 53, who lives in a shack in a township on the edge of Graaff-Reinet, a town in the Eastern Cape.

"They built us some toilets here, but we can't use them because there's no water."

*EDITORIAL – The long-term sustainability of the Matobo Hills will depend on a successful wet-land management policy, which will require measures similar to those outlined above. A daunting task!*

## **18 – MEMBERS NOTEBOOK**

### **Subscriptions**

Subscriptions for the year 1 October 2021 to 30 September 2022 are now due. Please ensure that your subs are up to date. Only paid-up members will be permitted to vote at the MCS annual general meeting. There has been no increase in rates.

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

The last AGM resolved that 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 further information, please contact [matoboconservationsociety@gmail.com](mailto:matoboconservationsociety@gmail.com)

### **MCS Branded Apparel**

The Society has a small stock of sleeveless fleece jackets, in olive green with orange MCS logo, available at US\$20 each. They are ideal for the cool mornings and evenings. We also have stocks of hats and caps at \$10

each. CD's and shopping bags are also available at \$5 each. Additional branded apparel (such as khaki shirts, fleece jackets, golf shirts) can be ordered on request. Please contact the Secretary via WhatsApp +263 71 240 2341 for further details

### Website

The MCS website [www.matobo.org](http://www.matobo.org) is updated whenever new material is available. A recent innovation has been the “**Newsletter Archives**” page, which now has every newsletter since the Society's inception. The “**Resources**” page has the following available for download:

- MCS Constitution
- Matobo Bird C/L
- Matobo Butterfly C/L
- Matobo Aloe/Grass/Orchid C/L
- Matobo Tree/Shrub C/L
- Matobo Herpetofauna C/L
- Matobo Mammal C/L
- Map of Rhodes Matopos National Park
- MCS Project List
- Bibliography of Matobo World Heritage Site (prepared by Paul Hubbard)

Member suggestions and contributions for the website are welcome.

Please email to [matoboconservationsociety@gmail.com](mailto:matoboconservationsociety@gmail.com)

### Facebook

We have 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

This MCS publication is available at the Natural History Museum, or from the Treasurer for US\$30. Arrangements can be made to send by registered mail anywhere in Zimbabwe for an additional US\$5, or outside Zimbabwe for an additional US\$10. Please email [matoboconservationsociety@gmail.com](mailto:matoboconservationsociety@gmail.com)

### 19 – SOCIETY CALENDAR OF EVENTS FOR YOUR DIARY

25 <sup>th</sup> March 2022	Matopos Heritage MTB Challenge
3 <sup>rd</sup> April 2022	MCS Field Trip
18 <sup>th</sup> August 2022	Matopos Heritage Trail Run

### 20 – GONAREZHOU GAME PARK TO RECEIVE US\$15 MILLION FROM WILDLIFE FUND

*New Zimbabwe, Monday January 10*

Harare - One of Zimbabwe's biggest wildlife reserves is to receive US\$1 million annually from a brand-new fund to help sustain its operations and fight poaching, German conservationists said.

The money, which will extend for at least 15 years, will help pay for ranger patrols, equipment maintenance and other everyday needs, the park's partner, the Frankfurt Zoological Society (FZS), told AFP by email.

Zimbabwe's second largest reserve, the Gonarezhou National Park covers 5,000 square kilometres (2,000 square miles) in the country's remote southeast.

It is home to at least 11,000 elephants — its name means “the place of the elephant” in the local ChiShona language — as well as to black rhinos, whose numbers are kept secret for security reasons.

The money will come from the Legacy Landscapes Fund (LLF), a brand-new international initiative that provides funds to help wildlife havens in poor countries.

“The idea of the Legacy Landscapes Fund is to provide a reliable funding for basic operations in a protected area,” said the FZS's head of communications, Dagmar Andres-Bruemmer.

The donation to Gonarezhou is “funding ‘to keep the lights on’ in difficult times, so to say,” she said in response to questions emailed by AFP.

National parks that depend on tourism income have suffered during the coronavirus pandemic, she noted.

“In some parks in Africa, even basic work such as ranger patrols could not be done due to budget cuts. So poaching picked up significantly.”

The LLF, set up in 2021, is a public-private fund established as a charity under German law to help close the funding gap for biodiversity conservation.

Participants include the French and German governments, Germany's KfW Development Bank, France's Agence Francaise de Developpement (AFD), the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF).

"Protected and wild areas remain the mainstay of biodiversity conservation and our best tool at mitigating climate change across the globe," said Hugo Van der Westhuizen, director of Gonarezhou Conservation Trust. "Managing these areas effectively requires long-term commitment in funding."

## **21 – GOVERNMENT URGED TO IMPLEMENT DAM SAFETY PLAN**

*Southern Eye, Tuesday November 16*

A Matabeleland-based human rights organisation has urged government to implement the National Dam Safety Plan as envisaged in section 185 of its National Development Strategy One (NDS1) to alleviate water problems in the region. The call was made yesterday by the Matabeleland Institute for Human Rights (MIHR) during its #MondayWaterAction campaign that seeks to push government and local authorities to address water challenges affecting the region, especially Bulawayo. MIHR co-ordinator Khumbulani Maphosa said communities in the region were still experiencing water shortages, especially in rural areas. "#MondayWaterAction seeks government indulgence to implement section 185 of the NDS1. "It asks how far government has gone in terms of implementing the National Dam Safety Plan. "Last year, we had incidents of a number of dams spilling due to too much rain, and this year we have already been advised that we will experience excessive rains," Maphosa said. Maphosa said lack of a proper national dam safety plan could affect livelihoods of communities –,

*Editorial – There are a number of dams in the Matobo Area that are showing a desperate need for maintenance. Currently water is lost to leaks but in time the walls themselves will go.*

## **22 – EMA OPENS OFFICES IN ESIGODINI TO IMPROVE EFFICIENCY**

*January 10, 2022, by Silas Nkala, Newsday*

Government last week officially opened new Environment Management Agency (EMA) offices in Esigodini and Umzingwane districts in Matabeleland South to curb environmental degradation caused by illegal gold mining activities in the area.

The opening of the EMA offices came at a time when Bulawayo City Council rangers and the police have launched a joint operation to flush out gold panners in Greater Bulawayo and Esigodini district.

During the blitz which has netted in 323 offenders, 61 shovels, 29 crowbars, 45 picks, three detectors, four axes, one wheelbarrow, one machete and one hammer used in illegal mining activities, were recovered.

"The initiative gives Umzingwane the much-deserved facelift, which is crucial for enhancing EMA's corporate image.

"The milestone achievement also fits perfectly into the devolution agenda, which promotes development of sustainable and resilient infrastructure, not only in cities such as Harare or Bulawayo, but also at a local level," Ndhlovu said.

The Umzingwane EMA offices were officially opened by Environment minister Nqobizitha Mangaliso Ndhlovu on Thursday.

In a statement at the weekend, Ndhlovu said the construction of the new EMA offices signified government commitment towards promoting sustainable utilisation of natural resources.

## **23 – 'ESTABLISH COURTS THAT GIVE URGENCY TO BREACH OF ENVIRONMENTAL LAWS'**

*June 7, 2021, by Staff Reporter, Newsday*

The Zimbabwe Environmental Law Association (ZELA) has urged government to establish courts that accord urgency to cases pertaining to breach of environmental laws.

Such courts will ensure the protection of the environment and address problems such as air pollution, deforestation, plastic pollution, illegal wildlife trade, climate change, and food insecurity, among others.

Last Friday on June 4, Zimbabwe joined the world in commemorating World Environment Day.

ZELA said government should balance national economic development needs with sustained actions to conserve the natural environment upon which biodiversity thrives and millions rely on for their livelihoods.

"Government must restate that management of wetlands needs to involve and accommodate views and needs of a wide range of stakeholders. Stakeholders need to be engaged in a transparent and equitable manner in pursuit of negotiated solutions that encompass a fair distribution of benefits and incentives even in the ongoing discussions on development of a wetland policy," ZELA said in a statement at the weekend.

“There is urgent need to address urban environment’s worsening solid waste management problem confronting urban authorities throughout Zimbabwe. High population densities and sprouting of unplanned settlements as well as changing consumption patterns and public attitudes compound the challenge.

“This has created an environment where disease causing vectors can thrive; contributing to air, soil, and water pollution; and emitting greenhouse gases with potential for global warming.”

The lawyers also called on industry and relevant entities to comply with emission standards in order to ensure that the country works towards a low-carbon economy.

“There is need for continuation of multi-stakeholder dialogue on strengthening legal and policy frameworks on climate change to enhance monitoring compliance. All stakeholders also need to adopt a child rights-based approach to environmental management. This entails ensuring that the substantive and procedural elements of the children’s right to a healthy environment are taken into consideration,” ZELA said.

## **24 - GOVERNMENT PLEDGES \$200 MILLION TO SUPPORT WETLANDS**

*October 1, 2021, Precious Manomano Herald Reporter*

The Government has pledged \$200 million to support the restoration of degraded wetlands in the country to enhance water provision and livelihoods of various communities.

In an interview Environment Management Agency (EMA) director for environmental services Mr Steady Kangata said they are grateful to the Government for making efforts to restore wetlands saying they have the capacity to increase growth in the agriculture sector to meet the food demands.

“Now that we have certain wetlands that are degraded because of the various activities which are mainly human activities or anthropogenic, those degraded wetlands need to be restored and EMA has since submitted to Government the rolling plan that will lead to the restoration of such wetlands.

“We are happy that we are ready to restore such wetlands and it’s going to roll over to 2025. One of our priority areas in the NDS1 is to ensure sustainable management of wetlands. We will do our best to ensure that wetlands are restored,” said Mr Kangata.

He said that EMA has completed the mapping of all wetlands in the country saying this is crucial as it would assist in programming as well as decision making.

“We have successfully come up with a wetlands map of Zimbabwe. We have provisional maps as well as district wetlands maps that are web-based. We also have interactive maps which any person can use to see whether their area is a wetland or no.”

Mr Kangata said poor planning and illegal developments in wetlands coupled with poor stormwater drains on land suitable for building has seen 250 houses hit by flooding in Harare, another 1 500 in Chitungwiza and others in Mutare and Gweru.

Twenty-one percent wetlands in the country are stable, while 18 percent are severely degraded, and 61 percent are in between or moderately degraded.

## **25 – MATOPOS DAM SAILING REVIVAL**

There is an attempt to revive the Matopos Sailing Club at Matopos dam. This has resulted in sailing boats being seen again on the surface of the dam – evoking tranquil memories of old. We wish the initiate every success.

