

MATOBO



SOCIETY

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www.matobo.org

Welfare No: W/0 30/94

NEWSLETTER 120 / NOVEMBER 2022

1 – END OF AN ERA

The death of HM Queen Elizabeth II certainly marked the end of an era. HM visited Zimbabwe (then Southern Rhodesia) during the Royal Tour of 1947, and visited our magnificent hills. To mark the passing of HM we share some pictures from her visit to Rhodes Grave – where she gave her shoes to her Mother, the then Queen, and walked up in her stockings! That’s really getting a feel for our special rocks!



2 - NEXT EVENT

Date Sunday 20th November 2022
Venue Inungu Farm
Meet 08:00am, Cresta Churchill Hotel
Travel Trucks are preferred and if you have a 4x4 that may be helpful but not essential.

Don't forget your picnic lunch and drinks!. Might also need to come prepared for rain.

We will be holding our ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING at John Sullivan's Inungu Farm at 10:00am. We are unsure if Park fees are to be paid so please come prepared. For those eager members, a climb to the summit of Inungu is possible (weather permitting) after lunch and there are lots of good walking options. For those not joining the convoy, please request directions by Whatsapp message to Jean +263 77 216 8136 or email to matoboconservationsociety@gmail.com.

3 – REPORT BACK

Members braved a short trip on the Old Gwanda Road to travel to Morning Glory Farm, just beyond Matopo Mission, where we visited a local conservation project aimed at rejuvenating and protecting wetlands. It was a perfect spring day – clear skies and not hot, with surprisingly green valleys. The clear running water at the end of the vlei was a delight to behold. This project is being supervised and rolled out by Dambari Wildlife Trust on behalf of the USAID funded multi-national Limpopo Valley resilience programme. We were accompanied by Tafadzwa, the project supervisor who explained the work being undertaken and objectives. A number of these protected vleis have been established with local community participation in an effort to secure the wetlands of the Matopos – the benefit for the local folk is obvious in better water supply security. Tafadzwa's talk, and subsequent visit to the site with us were greatly appreciated and it was a most beneficial and interesting visit, before retiring to Camp Dwala for a picnic lunch. During the walk a number of especially rare and important plant species were identified.



4 – RAINFALL

The rains appear to have started early this year, and the forecast is good, so here's hoping for a good year. The hills have been surprisingly green this autumn – partly the fresh foliage but also the water that has kept the vleis green through winter and up to the first rains.

Eastern Matopos 105mm , Central Matopos 69mm, Western Matopos 125mm.

5 – MATOBO MISSION WINS THE ANNUAL WEZ QUIZ

The annual WEZ Wildlife Quiz was won by Matopo Mission School, sponsored by your Society. This has been a wonderful project over some years and the Matopo Mission School have steadily improved their position. Hopefully these youngsters will become our conservation leaders in the future! Congratulations to the Matopo Mission team, and their mentors Patson Mpofu and Surrender Sibanda!



6 – MATOBO HERITAGE TRAIL RUN

The annual Matopos Heritage Trail Run was held over the weekend of 18-20 August 2022. This year the turn out was low, clashing with a delayed Comrades Marathon. However, for those who participated it was again a successful event. This year we introduced a 42km on day one and a 21km on day two option, and two runners completed this particular event – congratulations to Yolande Watson and Raymond Grant. The balance of the field ran the 30km route on day one, and 20km route on day two. The Brachystegia were out in the myriad colours and the conditions were superb. Once again, the weather on the second day was much cooler than the first. The event started at Silobi School and the first 12 kilometres was a new route for the runners and was a terrific addition.

The 2023 event is scheduled for 25-27 August 2023. Once again, we are appreciative of the support provided by members in manning waterpoints and helping with the administration.



7 – ZIM SEALS FORESTRY PROTECTION POLICY

With acknowledgment to The Herald, 6th August, 2022

Zimbabwe is committed to the protection of its vast forestry resources, with government implementing interventions geared to restore degraded forest areas and safeguard the integrity and biodiversity of woodlands, President Mnangagwa has said. Addressing a high-level regional meeting on the protection of indigenous woodlands at Joaquim Chissano International Conference Centre in Maputo, Mozambique, the President said there was need to scale up coordinated conservation and sustainable

management of forests for posterity. He said expansive fire protection systems and taxation of those responsible for exploiting forests for commercial purposes were being rolled out to engender and safeguard the integrity of forest areas. President Mnangagwa was attending the two-day high-level session of the Regional Conference on the Sustainable and Integrated Management of Miombo Forests, hosted by Mozambican President Filipe Nyusi. The conference culminated in the adoption of the Maputo Declaration on the Sustainable Management and Conservation of Indigenous Woodlands, a transnational declaration by nine African countries to protect and conserve Miombo woodlands along the Zambezi Basin. Miombo woodlands are tropical and subtropical grasslands, savannas, and shrubland biomes located primarily in Central Africa.

8 – MIOMBO TREES THE HEARTBEAT OF ZIM

With acknowledgment to The Herald, 6 August 2022

Millions of Zimbabweans live in rural communities and depend primarily on wood for their energy requirements, but land degradation, climate change and population growth have exerted unbearable pressure on Miombo woodlands. The woodlands are not peculiar to Zimbabwe, but are common in the Southern African region, and their management is vital to sustainable development. President Mnangagwa, along with his regional counterparts, attended the High-Level Session of the Regional Conference on the Sustainable and Integrated and Integrated Management of Miombo forests, in Maputo, Mozambique yesterday to agree on ways to protect the forests. In Zimbabwe, 262 000 hectares of forests are burnt down every year. Environmentalists say the Miombo woodlands are a tropical and subtropical grassland, savannas, and shrublands biome located primarily in Central Africa. They are essential to the livelihoods of many rural people who depend on the resources available from the woodlands. The wide variety of species provide non-timber products such as tourism, fruits, honey, fodder for livestock and fuel-wood. Miombo woodlands can be classified as dry or wet based on the per annum amount and distribution of rainfall. Dry woodlands occur in those areas receiving less than 1 000 mm annual rainfall, mainly in Zimbabwe, central Tanzania and the southern regions of Mozambique, Malawi, and Zambia.

9 – ZAMBIAN NATIONAL PARK JOINS UNESCO BIOSPEHERE NETWORK

The Kafue National Park in Zambia is the latest reserve in Africa (of 89) to join the UNESCO World Biosphere Network.

The addition of Zambia, along with Georgia in Eastern Europe and Chad in central Africa, was announced recently by Audrey Azoulay, Director General of UNESCO, who said: “I am delighted to see three new member states joining this useful and powerful network this year. With these new designations, UNESCO’s biosphere reserves now cover a protected area of more than 1.3 million square kilometres worldwide.”

Covering an area of approximately 22 400 sq km, the Kafue Marshes Biosphere Reserve passes through several districts of archaeological and historical importance, as well as a Ramsar site (Kafue Flats) and an important birding area.

Located in the west of Zambia, Kafue is the oldest and largest national park in the southern African country. It is home to over 400 bird species and several mammals, including zebra, buffalo, hippo, and the endemic Kafue lechwe.

Biosphere reserves are a cornerstone of UNESCO’s mandate as the United Nations’ scientific agency. They are at the heart of UNESCO’s research and advocacy work to encourage innovative practices in sustainable development and to promote the understanding, appreciation and safeguarding of the living environment by the organisation’s communities and member states.

10 – RHINO LOSS

We have suffered significant losses at the Matobo National Park. This is especially sad after so much hard work – and apparent success. Matobo NP has lost seven rhino – four black and three white - between January and August this year, one of which was a natural death. The other individuals were poached in four separate incidents.

11 - RHINOS HAVE BEEN BROUGHT BACK FROM THE BRINK OF EXTINCTION IN ZIMBABWE

With acknowledgment to; Foreign Correspondent, (Australia), ABC-TV, October 1, 2022

In Zimbabwe, the mighty rhino is making a comeback. In southern Africa, the animal was poached to near extinction in recent decades. We visit a wildlife sanctuary, with an elite anti-poaching team, to see how the animal is being bought back from the brink. It's one of the most successful rhino conservation projects in Africa. In south-eastern Zimbabwe, a private wildlife sanctuary is working hard to bring endangered rhinos back from the brink. In decades past, the mighty Black Rhino was poached to near extinction in southern Africa. Its horn, almost worth its weight in gold, makes it a target for organised poaching gangs. In 1998, the privately-funded Malilangwe Trust had a population of 28 white and 28 black rhinos, imported from South Africa.

Today its rhino population numbers in the hundreds. Reporter Michael Davie, an Australian born in Zimbabwe, returns home to witness this extraordinary wildlife success story. He spends time with the sanctuary's highly trained anti-poaching team, the Malilangwe Scouts, the tip of the spear against the ever present poaching threat. "Individually you can't win against poaching and we need every one of us to fight against poachers," says Patrick, a Sergeant in the Scouts. "You have to be a team, a strong one." Davie captures all the incredible action of the hectic "rhino ops" where specialists dart the animals from helicopters then move in on 4WDs as they dash across the park.

Led by ecologist Sarah Clegg, the rhino ops team collect vital data on the herd. "They've got this reputation of being bad-tempered and dangerous and they are, but I think it's mostly that they're just such emotional creatures," says Sarah, who's studied the animal for more than two decades. "They're just insecure, you know? And so they need more love." Malilangwe increased its rhino population to such an extent that last year, it relocated some of its Black Rhino herd to nearby Gonarezhou National Park — a former killing ground for rhinos. "It's what we all aim for in our careers as conservationists," says Sarah. "It's a wild park, so being able to put the rhino back into that park is like waking it up again." This visually stunning story has a powerful message of hope. "Everyone needs to know the rhino is special," says Patrick.

12 – ZIM NEEDS TO REVAMP TOURISM INFRASTRUCTURE

With acknowledgment to Newsday;September 12, 2022 1:29 PM

ZIMBABWE'S tourism industry needs to continuously engage in infrastructure development in order to remain competitive, a Cabinet minister has said.

This comes as the tourism sector has an investment requirement of US\$44,48 million this year which is expected to rise to US\$48,78 million next year, according to the National Development Strategy 1. Before the advent of COVID-19, in 2019, Zimbabwe's annual tourism receipts were US\$1,24 billion, a peak at the time. With restrictions in domestic and foreign travel, annual tourism receipts fell to US\$359 million in 2020 and US\$397 million in 2021.

"Nation branding is key for the destination to be competitive: We need to continuously collaborate and benchmark with other destinations to improve on our tourism offerings. The tourism sector needs to continuously improve on tourism infrastructure so as to remain competitive through affordable lines of credit," Tourism minister Nqobizitha Mangaliso Ndhlovu said in an interview with NewsDay Business.

"There is a need to streamline our licensing regime. Maintain ongoing engagement with tourism players to reassure prospective investors of opportunities available in Zimbabwe. Develop new tourism products, as the sector firms up new international and regional trends such as the rise in travel for the millennials post-COVID-19 pandemic."

According to the ministry, domestic travel has rebounded through the ZimBho/IZimYami Campaign since 2020 which is promoting domestic travel and has seen an increase in the number of people entering national parks and other recreational facilities.

Since the inception of the campaign, entries into national parks increased to 251 088 in 2021 compared to 173 714 in 2020.

The minister disclosed that revenue in Zimbabwe's tourism industry rose by 121% to US\$337,5 million during the first half of this year, compared to US\$152,8 million during the same period in 2021.

Ndhlovu also said aggressive destination marketing needed to be pursued to increase visibility locally and abroad.

The minister was speaking ahead of the 'Sanganai/Hlanganani World Tourism Expo, an annual event meant to attract investors both locally and internationally to be held from October 13 to 15 in Bulawayo.

Over 150 exhibitors have registered to participate at the expo, including from Rwanda, South Africa, Zambia, Botswana, and Malawi, among other nations.

Announcing the expo dates last week, Zimbabwe Tourism Authority chief executive officer Winnie Muchanyuka said the industry was showing signs of recovery as evidenced by the increase in arrivals from international destinations in the first half of 2022. Ndhlovu said tourism was vulnerable to non-productive taxation that essentially discriminated against travellers and or travel companies in relation to goods and services similarly offered in other sectors.

“COVID-19 pandemic demonstrated how countries with a stronger domestic component are able to weather storms in the event of diminished international travel compared to countries that solely rely on international tourism receipts,” Ndhlovu said.

“The National Tourism Recovery and Growth Strategy was born out of the hard lessons we learnt during this period.”

13 – ZIMBABWEAN ARTISTS TURN INVASIVE PLANTS INTO FANTASTIC BEASTS

Source: By Oliver Matthews; La Prensa Latina Media; 21 September 2022



Domboshava, Zimbabwe (EFE).- Along a dusty road in Zimbabwe flanked by small brick houses, round thatched huts, and crops, two giraffes remain motionless and their long necks extend towards the blue sky.

But these giraffes are not real: they are carefully woven from the stems of a plant that is an invasive pest in many rural areas of the country.

That plant, known as lantana, is now a source of income and creativity for a family of artists.

Lantana grows as a scattered bush with bright flowers, fragrant leaves, and long, twisting stems covered with small spikes and leaves poisonous to livestock, infesting fallow land with impenetrable thickets.

“Lantana is everywhere and people don’t want it. Therefore, I try to use lantana through art,” Joe Zata, 48, told EFE at his home on a rocky outcrop in Domboshava, a district about 30 kilometres north of Harare.

Zata, an artist for 25 years, works with his three brothers.

Although some communities in India use lantana to make furniture, the Zimbabwean creator came up with the idea of using it during a Covid-19 lockdown in Zimbabwe in 2020.

“I just experimented during Covid-19. I made an elephant and sold it at a fair. That’s how I started,” he said.

Today, he and his brothers sell two or three pieces a month. They can earn up to \$1,200 for a single entry.

That’s a small fortune in a country beset by economic problems, including 285 percent inflation that has badly eroded the value of the Zimbabwean dollar.

Lantana, known in the local Shona language as “mbarapati,” is native to tropical America and appears to have been introduced to the country from neighbouring South Africa, where it first arrived via the port city of Durban in 1883 and flourished.

Over the last century, it has spread and become an invasive species in southern Africa. In 2001, it was listed by the International Union for Conservation of Nature as one of the 100 worst invasive species in the world.

Thomas Marambanyika, Senior Lecturer in the Department of Geography and Environmental Sustainability at Zimbabwe’s Midlands State University, said lantana threatens biodiversity in protected and unprotected areas of the country.

“People like Mr. Zata should be applauded for having presented this initiative, which turns an environmental threat into an economic opportunity,” Marambanyika told EFE.

“This initiative, if scaled up, will go a long way toward reducing or removing lantana from the ecosystem, thus restoring some disturbed or degraded areas,” the professor said.

In addition to serving an environmental purpose, Zata sees his work – which he sells in Harare – as primarily creative.

But it takes a lot of work for the lantana to give in to his artistic vision. To begin with, the thorns need to be removed from the stems, which are left to dry before they can be bent and shaped.

That material can shape a giant rhino standing upright with a mighty upturned horn, a huge tortoise, or an elephant.

“I have lived my whole life in the village,” Zata said. “I grew up watching animals and really loved them. That’s where my inspiration came from.” EFE

14 – MAMBA KILLS THREE FAMILY MEMBERS

With acknowledgement to Newsday Zimbabwe, September 29, 2022

A HURUNGWE man, Tapiwa Musiiwa is appealing for financial assistance to bury three members of his family who succumbed to snake bites in Karuru village last week.

Musiiwa lost his wife, daughter and nephew after they were reportedly bitten by a black mamba while fetching firewood.

His wife and daughter died last Friday at Sally Mugabe Central Hospital where they were battling for life. Musiiwa’s nephew died at Chinhoyi Provincial Hospital on Tuesday afternoon.

Moonlight Funeral Assurance donated three coffins.

“I am appealing to well-wishers to help me ferry their bodies to our rural home to be laid to rest,”

Musiiwa said in a telephone interview from Chinhoyi.

“The bodies must be ferried from Sally Mugabe Central Hospital mortuary and the other from Chinhoyi Provincial Hospital. This is a family tragedy and we are still yet to come to terms with it.”

Musiiwa’s Ecocash number is 0779 891 113

According to Musiiwa, the unfortunate incident occurred in Chikura part of Murimbika Village, near Mushangishe valley, Chief Kazangarare.

The area is about 60km north of Karoi town.

“The three were fetching firewood when the incident occurred. My daughter Nyarai (21) was the first to be bitten by the snake on the left leg. Her mother tried to assist her and she was bitten on the breast. Our nephew (Tawanda) aged 15, after sensing danger tried to flee from the scene, but the snake followed and bit him on the ankle,” said Musiiwa.

He added that efforts were made by some villagers to help the three to access medication, but it took long because the mountainous area was hard to reach by car.

They were later ferried to Karoi District Hospital before being transferred to Chinhoyi and Sally Mugabe hospitals.

Chief Abel Mbasera Chundu, who is also a Senator, offered 80 litres of fuel to the family.

“We need to help the Musiiwa family during this trying time,” said Chief Chundu.

The black mamba is a highly venomous snake capable of biting and killing 20 people in succession.

15 – ZIM TO HOST PAN AFRICAN ORNITHOLOGICAL CONGRESS

With acknowledgement to Sifelani Tsiko-Agric, Environment & Innovations Editor

October 10, 2022, The Herald.

Zimbabwe will next month host the 15th Pan African Ornithological Congress (PAOC15) which will attract scores of bird enthusiasts to discuss wide ranging issues on conservation, safeguarding and managing the most critical sites for birds and biodiversity.

Birdlife Zimbabwe CEO, Julia Pierini told the Herald on Monday that the congress will take place from November 21 – 25, 2022 in Victoria Falls which lies at the heart of the Kavango Zambezi Transfrontier Conservation Area comprising five countries – Zimbabwe, Zambia, Botswana, Namibia and Angola.

Birdlife Zimbabwe is the local organiser of the ornithological (birdwatchers) congress in partnership with the Pan African Ornithological Congress (PAOC) Committee and other sponsors.

“We have had an unprecedented response to the Congress and are currently expecting more than 275 delegates from 55 nations of the world,” she said.

“Of these, 33 African countries are represented, 16 from Europe and delegates from the USA, Australia, Canada, Columbia, Malaysia and India. Everyone is looking forward to the in person discussions.”

The congress will have 13 round table discussions, six plenary sessions, 221 oral presentations and a number of poster displays.

“Topics are wide ranging and diverse. We have arranged some exciting bird excursions on the excursion day for the delegates that include birding trips on the beautiful Zambezi River, game drives along the river and in the Chamabonda Vlei, a walk along the Masue River up to the gorge, and of course, a trip to see the magnificent Victoria Falls,” said Pierini.

“We are looking forward to a jam-packed week of learning and networking showcasing the beautiful birds of Africa and how critically important it is for all of us, that we ensure their survival!”

The congress was coming at a time when nearly half of all bird species are declining in Africa with many populations facing extinctions, according to the latest State of the World’s Birds report reveals. Published every four years by BirdLife International, the report showed that almost half of bird species in Africa and worldwide are in decline, with just 6 percent increasing.

Deforestation, poor regulation of trade and increased trafficking have led to the decline of some bird species on the continent.

Major drivers of the population decline include widespread habitat loss and degradation and the broad use of agricultural chemicals that eradicate insects vital to the diet of many birds.

BirdLife International says that the expansion and intensification of agriculture is putting pressure on bird species worldwide.

It also adds that logging, invasive species, exploitation of natural resources and climate breakdown are some of the other major threats.

The decline of bird species is widely seen by birdwatchers as a worrying sign of wider upsets to nature. Birds are among the best researched of all wildlife and are a barometer of the environment, experts say. Zimbabwe has an impressive biodiversity collection that includes 59 30 plant species, 674 bird species, 270 mammal species, 156 reptile species, 120 amphibian species and 150 fish species found within and outside protected areas.

Its bird species are found in the miombo and mopane woodlands as well as the Eastern Highlands including major protected wetlands.

The destruction of wetlands as well as the accidental poisoning and death of critically endangered white-backed vultures is of major concern to Zimbabwe and most other southern African countries.

Vultures feed off carcasses laced with poison and die in huge numbers. Birdlife experts say one poisoned elephant carcass can cause the death of up to 500 critically endangered vultures.

Birdlife report said safeguarding and protecting important sites for nature, restoring damaged ecosystems, and tackling key threats to birds and biodiversity are all critical.

16 – MP’S WANT ZIM TO QUIT CITES: GOVT UNSURE

With acknowledgement to NewsDay; October 10, 2022

LEGISLATORS are calling on the government to quit Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) in order for the trading and eating of wildlife animals to go on unencumbered, owing it to increased human-wildlife conflict.

According to statistics from Zimbabwe Parks and Wildlife Management Authority, this comes as the country’s elephant population stands at over 100 000, against a capacity of 45 000.

During a recent Senate session, Senator Morgen Komichi of Harare East asked the Environment, Climate Change, Tourism and Hospitality Industry minister, Nqobizitha Mangaliso Ndhlovu, why the government couldn’t abandon CITES.

CITES was enforced on July 1, 1975 to protect endangered wildlife animals globally.

Komichi said :“My question is directed to the Minister of Environment, Climate Change, Tourism and Hospitality Industry; in Zimbabwe, human-wildlife conflict is escalating mainly due to overpopulation of animals in the respective areas,”

Further adding: “It has been the desire and wish of Zimbabweans to benefit from these animals in ivory trade and meat consumption so as to control the herds. We are aware that there is an organisation called CITES which does not allow us to do so. Why do we not quit CITES so that we can manage our animals without anyone managing us from afar?”

Zimbabwe’s Parliament is split into two bodies, the Senate and the National Assembly, with the former being the upper house and latter being the lower. Senate consists of 80 members while the National Assembly consists of 270.

The reason why legislators are seeking to abandon CITES is based on the commercial value of wild animals and their resources as well as it being a potential meat source.

For example, concerning the nation's 130-tonne ivory stockpile, the government of Zimbabwe estimates the value at US\$600 million.

But, based on prices of ivory in a report from the Dutch organisation, the Wildlife Justice Commission, Zimbabwe's ivory stockpile could be worth in the region of US\$10,4 million.

This is based on an average price of US\$80 per kg for wholesale raw ivory sold in two unnamed southern African countries referenced by the organisation in a 2020 report titled 'Rapid Assessment of the Illegal Ivory Trade'.

"Could the minister apprise the nation of the benefits which we are getting from CITES — that will be very useful because I think it is now common cause that CITES does not serve our national interests," senator for Masvingo Tichinani Mavetera queried.

He said the world over is putting their nation first, you can go to the United States and it is the United States first.

"Why should Zimbabwe be affected by policies that benefit other countries because we are not poachers? We have managed our resources and we should benefit from it.

The honourable minister (Ndhlovu) said we want to save for the world. I think we should save Zimbabwe first," Mavetera said.

In response to the two senators, and others, Ndhlovu agreed that the country stood to benefit a lot from the wildlife in dealing with what he reported as rising human/wildlife conflict.

"It was for the first time three years ago that within the CITES convention, a country deposited a dispute and that was Zimbabwe. It was on the basis that we felt that the issues of Zimbabwe were not being given the attention they deserve and this also applied to the whole southern African region which holds more than 85% of the world elephant population," Ndhlovu said.

"We have an option to walk out of CITES, but it is a position which we have to clearly consider with its merits and demerits whether it will solve the problems we have or not. The potential buyers of our products are members of CITES. They will not be in a position to purchase any if they are still within CITES. If moving out of CITES is a solution to our problems, we would have left CITES."

In light of this, he said efforts needed to become regional in influencing CITES to make considerations in allowing countries dealing with rising human/wildlife conflict to benefit from the resources from these animals.

"Aside that, the government is working on a policy which we are almost concluding and awaiting Cabinet approval. We believe that it is important as a government to consider options to compensate communities that are bearing the brunt of human-wildlife conflict," Ndhlovu said.

"We are, at the moment, perhaps the only country in the region that still has not brought that as a policy and that policy, as I said, is awaiting Cabinet approval. We believe it will go a long way because it also utilises proceeds from wildlife, particularly from hunting so that we are able to respond to the increasing human/wildlife conflict."

At the 19th meeting of the Conference of Parties in Panama City, Panama, slated to take place next month from November 14 to 25, the government is preparing to be more aggressive in pushing for certain CITES considerations.

"We will take a very strong position to advocate for CITES to consider strongly our position because the situation keeps getting worse from CITES to CITES and we know that as government, because of funding from certain so-called animal rights groups fail to consider reason and science," Ndhlovu said.

"We are in the process of engaging them so that when we go there, we will speak with one voice."

He, however, admitted that although the country had benefited from CITES, as CITES had also benefited from Zimbabwe, mostly through sharing best practices in conservation of different natural resources and best practices in terms of international trade.

17 – POACHING ACCOUNTS FOR MOST VELD FIRES – EMA

With acknowledgment to Lesego Valela-Herald Correspondent, The Herald, October 2022

EMA said poaching accounted for most of the veld fires as 17.5 percent of fire incidences that have happened in the country to have been started by poachers.

Poaching has caused most fire incidents out of the 774 reported cases that burnt 163 820,05 hectares recorded in the week ending October 6, the Environmental Management Agency (EMA) has said.

EMA said poaching accounted for most of the veld fires as 17.5 percent of fire incidences that have happened in the country to have been started by poachers.

Sixty percent of the causes of veld fires are still under investigation while 7.5 percent were caused by burning waste and snakes, 2.5 percent by arson and 12.5 percent was the result of land clearing.

“A total of 774 fire incidences that burnt 163 820.05 hectares of veld were recorded in the week ending on October 6. “Cumulatively, since the beginning of the fire restriction period, a total of 5 386 incidences burning 1 244 227.34 hectares were recorded. “The area burnt increased by 58.6 percent from 784 725.23 hectares that was burnt during the same period in 2021. “A total of 5 386 incidences have so far been recorded as compared to 3 410 incidences recorded in 2021 indicating a 57.9 percent increase. “The average burnt area in 2021 during the same period was 230.12 hectares per incident while in 2022 average area burnt is 231.01 hectares,” EMA said.

18 – GOLF & HOTEL COULD COST VICTORIA FALLS ITS HERITAGE STATUS

With acknowledgment to Jane Flanagan, Saturday July 16, 2022, The Times

The United Nations will deliver an ultimatum to the governments of Zimbabwe and Zambia to immediately halt unsanctioned development at Victoria Falls or risk losing its unique heritage status, according to documents seen by *The Times*.

UNESCO officials conducted a recent visit to the site to “assess the potential threat” to the natural wonder from plans for lodges, a golf course and a hydroelectric dam. The area’s wildlife migration routes and unique rock structures, as well as world’s largest sheet of falling water, earned its world heritage site status in 1989. An unusually punchy report for the next meeting of the world heritage committee warned that the southern African site is “facing increasing threats” from a number of developments inside the protected area which threatens its special status.

19 – PRAZ DISOWNS VIC FALLS PROJECT

Independent, 5 August 2022

The Procurement Regulatory Authority of Zimbabwe (PRAZ) has dissociated itself from permits issued to two firms by the Zimbabwe Parks and Wildlife Management Authority (ZimParks) to set up commercial enterprises on the Cataract Island and Rainforest at the heart of Zimbabwe’s foremost tourism site, the Victoria Falls, emerging details show. As reported by the Zimbabwe Independent last week, ZimParks, who are the third respondent in a High Court application, is facing a lawsuit from Lawrence Benjamin Norton alongside nine other applicants for issuing permits to Adage Success and Scanner Investments who intend to set up commercial operations close to the Falls. The court case was filed in May this year at the High Court in Harare. The Environmental Management Agency (EMA) and PRAZ are cited as respondents in Norton’s application, who is seeking to “prevent the development of commercial interests at the Cataract and Rainforest sites.” In February, United Nations agency UNESCO noted that the Victoria Falls “is facing increasing threats from individual and cumulative infrastructure developments, whose footprints are inside the property.” At the heart of Norton’s application lies the question of the involvement of PRAZ and EMA in the issuance of permits to the two companies without going to tender. PRAZ this week told the Independent that they were not involved in issuing the permits. The two companies are cited as respondents in Norton’s application.

20 – FIREWOOD POACHING RILES ENVIRONMENTALISTS

With acknowledgment to Silas Nkala, Newsday, 25 July 2022,

Rampant firewood poaching, driven by the country’s increased power outages, has riled conservationist group, Isandla Esihle/Ruwoko Rwakanaka, which has called on authorities to intervene to stop the forestry plunder.

The organisation, led by the National Tree ambassador Never Bonde, aired its concerns in a petition to the Minister of Environment Nqobizitha Mangaliso Ndlovu and copied to the ministry’s permanent secretary, Environment Management Agency (EMA), Forestry Commission and Allied Timbers Company.

The concern comes as Zesa Holdings recently increased load shedding due to depressed generation at Hwange and Harare thermal power stations including loss of one unit that produces 125 megawatts at Kariba Hydro-electric Power Station.

The intermittent power cuts have resulted in urban residents resorting to firewood as the readily available and affordable alternative energy source.

“In recent investigations carried out in different towns and cities, this office expresses concern after establishing that there are mushrooming firewood and charcoal dealers in towns and cities. During this exercise, it was established that most firewood dealers have no licences while some hold expired licences, hence the need to make a follow-up by relevant authorities to ensure renewal of these documents,” Bonde said.

He further noted that some illegal dealers produce and sell charcoal not classified in the licences issued. “Firewood and charcoal find their way into towns where there is a ready market due to hiked electricity charges and other environmentally friendly alternative energies. We call for a combined effort from stakeholders to carry out checks on firewood dealers in their areas, asking for and validating licences held. Further, the government must review the schedule of fines for perpetrators of environmental crimes and the registration application fees for dealers,” Bonde added, appealing to the Forestry Commission to increase its visibility in small towns where some of these crimes go unabated. The minister is yet to respond to the issues raised.

21 – SOCIETY CALENDAR OF EVENTS FOR YOUR DIARY

20 th November 2022	Annual General Meeting
24 th November 2022	Matopos Classic MTB
February 2023	Field Trip - TBA
22 nd March 2023	Matopos Heritage MTB Challenge
4 th June 2023	Environmental Field Day (World Environment Day 5 th June)
July 2023	Field Trip - TBA
25 th August 2023	Matopos Heritage Trail Run
October 2023	Field Trip – TBA
19 th November 2023	Annual General Meeting

22 – MEMBERS NOTEBOOK

Subscriptions

Subscriptions for the year 1 October 2022 to 30 September 2023 are now overdue. Please ensure that your subs are up to date. There has been no increase in rates.

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

If you need any information, please contact 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 – www.matobo.org

We are currently upgrading our web-site and hope to shortly make available a more modern, updated, and easy-to-use site, attractive and informative to both members and the general public. Member suggestions and contributions for the revised website are welcome.

Please email to matoboconservationsociety@gmail.com

Facebook

We will be revamping our Facebook page “Matobo Conservation Society” in due course.

The Natural History of the Matobo Hills

This MCS publication is available at the Natural History Museum 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