

MATOBO



SOCIETY

matoboconservationsociety@gmail.com

www.matobo.org

Welfare No: W/0 30/94

NEWSLETTER 121 / FEBRUARY 2023

1 – MCS COMMITTEE 2023

After our AGM and subsequent first committee meeting, the following members were elected as follows:

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

We were unable to appoint a Treasurer, and still hoping that a member may yet come forward. Given MCS increasing project activity, and the need for managing project finances, this is most important. Jean is holding the fort pro-tem.

Mrs Cindy Sellick did not stand for re-election, and we record our appreciation to her for her many years of service to the Society.

We would welcome any volunteers to join the committee.

2 – RAINFALL

We had a good start to the season, with a great December. This saw the rivers start to flow and the Maleme dam spill. But whilst we enjoyed the sunshine over Christmas, it in fact heralded a three-week period of dry weather. Thankfully, February has seen a return to the good rains, and so the promise of a good season has been rekindled.

As of 10 February, rainfall recorded amounted to Eastern 542mm, central, western 575mm and Bulawayo 400mm (Harare 640mm)



3 - NEXT EVENT

Date	Sunday 12 March 2023
Venue	Inugu Battle Site and Matobo Hills Lodge
Meet	08:15am, Cresta Churchill Hotel
Travel	Trucks are preferred but cars will certainly be suitable.

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

We will travel out to Matobo Hills Lodge. En route we will stop at the Inugu Battle Site of 20th July 1896, commonly called Laing's Graveyard, or "Maciti e'breakfast". The original spelling missed an 'n' in the word Inungu. This error also applies to the name of the Fort on the Mamelongwe River. Major Tyrie Laing's mission was to march on Inungu Hill on the 19 July 1896 to outflank the Ndebele and then on the next day to cut off the retreat of any of Babayan's forces from the Nkantola Mountain up the Chilili valley. After a talk and the obligatory tea, we will continue to Matobo Hills Lodge for a picnic lunch and visit. After lunch, some folk may want to travel onto Maleme Dam.

For those who have not been to Laing's Graveyard before, and will not be joining the convoy from Cresta Churchill:

- After Sandy Spruit Gate, follow Circular Drive in the anti-clockwise direction (i.e. right fork) for about 2 kms
- At the Arboretum memorial, turn left following the signpost to Matobo Hills Lodge (MHL) and keep on Circular Drive for about 10 kms
- At the next MHL signpost, turn off to the right onto a dirt road. Some rock art can be seen on the right hand side of a big boulder without getting out of your car. This road will eventually join the Maleme road, if you plan to visit Maleme in the afternoon
- At the next T-junction, with another signpost to MHL, initially drive straight (i.e. do not turn off towards MHL) to go to Laing's Graveyard. We will backtrack later to visit MHL which is just outside the National Park boundary
- Laing's Graveyard plaque is on a big round rock on the right hand site of the road a few kilometers further along

Please note that Zimparks Conservation/Entry fees will apply. These are the RTGSS\$ equivalent of US\$4 per person, with pensioners half price and over-70's free, The fee per vehicle is the equivalent of US\$5. Swipe facilities are available at Sandy Spruit gate

4 – REPORT BACK

Thirty members travelled out to John Sullivan's Inungu Farm on 20th November for our Annual General Meeting. On arrival we enjoyed our tea before proceedings began. After the formalities, John spoke about the property and developments. He also spoke about Mt Inungu, its giant 11m cross (the tallest in Zimbabwe) and the late Rev Fr Odilo Weeger (a Hon Member of the MCS)

The Chairman introduced Mr Roger Genge who was invited to address the members. Mr Roger Genge was the son of the late Peter Genge and he spoke about the life and work of his father in the Matobo Hills, especially focused on the rock art. He introduced his late father's long-time friends, Nellie, Wesley & Gugu Ngwenya, Gugu being the youngest at the AGM. Peter Genge passed away in 2021 at the age of 96 years and his ashes are resting in the Matopos. All his works are currently being digitalised at a university in Perth, Australia. His works on rock art sites are not going to be published as he requested that they be kept private to protect the sites, but the data will be made available to the MCS and NMMZ in due course.

The Chairman thanked Roger for attending the AGM and speaking to us. He pointed out that there had been an effort to establish a Rock Art Research Institute in Bulawayo with Peter Genge as the first Director. This did not materialise but was the precursor to the Matobo Conservation Society that followed shortly afterwards.

We thank John for his kind hospitality in hosting us.



5 – GOOD RAINFALL FORECAST FOR ZIMBABWE

With acknowledgment to Newsday Zimbabwe, December 21, 2022

Zimbabwe has received above normal rainfall in what is being described as a promising start to the 2022/23 agricultural season while some central parts of the country received normal rains, a new report shows.

In its latest food security and markets monitoring report for November 2022, the World Food Programme (WFP) said according to the Meteorological Services Department of Zimbabwe, the country had mostly received accumulated rainfall ranging between 80 and 150mm.

Meanwhile, eastern, and central parts of the country received above 150mm.

“Most parts of the country have received above average-to-average rainfall for the October-November period, while the region of Matabeleland North received below normal rainfall,” WFP said.

WFP said since the start of the rainy season, most parts of the country had received above normal rainfall, with the exception of some central parts of the country that received normal rainfall.

“Land preparation and planting activities have intensified across the country; however, some farmers have reportedly not yet accessed agricultural inputs for the season. By the end of November, over half of the planned crop inputs to be provided by the government had reportedly been distributed,” WFP said.

According to the report, there has been an increase in both pasture for grazing and water sources for livestock as a result of the recent rains.

It has been reported, however, that not all areas of Matabeleland North have received adequate rainfall, hence water shortages persist in certain of the region’s districts.

With better pasture and water, livestock conditions should improve, which in turn should lead to more favourable trading terms for animals, higher wages and easy access to food for people who rely on livestock for subsistence, and a larger supply of livestock products.

“It has been reported that 94% of the area planted for winter wheat has been harvested amounting to 359 000MT (metric tonnes), which is 92% of the expected production of 390 000MT,” WFP said.

“The quality of the wheat which was still to be harvested at the start of the rainfall season, has now reportedly been compromised by rain. During the current season, the country is targeting 1 940 969ha (hectares) under maize and by end of November about 369 724ha had been planted.”

Despite this, for the month of November, WFP’s HungerMap LIVE estimated that 5,8 million people did not eat enough, while 7,6 million turned to food for “crisis and above” coping.

This is mostly owing to increased market prices as the annual inflation rates remains in the triple digit. Resultantly, there has been a significant rise in inadequate consumption in Matabeleland North, Mashonaland Central and Matabeleland South provinces.

The annual inflation rate was 255% last month, down from 269% in October.

“Prices of basic food basket commodities were stable between October and November in both urban and rural markets but remain significantly higher compared to the same time last year,” WFP said.

WFP said in November, the price of Compound D fertiliser decreased by 1,6% while the price of AN fertiliser increased 3,4% compared to October.

“When compared to the same time last year, the prices of the two commodities increased by 360% and 495%, respectively,” WFP said.

6 – UN’s LANDMARK NATURE PROTECTIONS A “PARIS MOMENT” FOR BIODIVERSITY

In what is being hailed as an historic moment for the environment, world leaders at the UN’s Biodiversity Conference COP15 in Montreal have reached an agreement to ramp up protections of the planet’s precious natural ecosystems. The Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework commits countries to safeguarding 30% of land and water considered important for biodiversity by 2030.

With wildlife declining at catastrophic rates and scientists sounding the alarm over a sixth (or seventh) mass extinction event, this month’s COP15 biodiversity conference was seen as a pivotal moment in our relationship with the planet.

“The 15th Conference of the Parties (COP15) of the United Nations has been billed as the event that will determine the fate of the entire living world,” said Professor Sarah Bekessy from RMIT University’s School of Global Studies, Social Science and Planning. “Given that we are experiencing a global biodiversity crisis, there’s no doubt that genuine commitment by the world’s leaders is very much needed.”

World leaders spent the last two weeks at the conference hashing out the details of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, before it was approved and finalized by representatives of 188 governments, 95% of the 196 parties to the UN. Where currently only 17% of terrestrial areas and 10% of marine areas are protected, the agreement calls for nations to step up and protect 30% of land and water by 2030.

Hailed by Canada’s Environment minister Steven Guilbeault as a “Paris moment” for biodiversity, in reference to the landmark UN commitment to tackle rising global temperatures, the agreement lays out goals and targets for nations to work toward. These including cutting global food waste in half to reduce the strain on planetary resources, tackling risks posed by pesticides and hazardous chemicals, preventing the introduction of invasive species, and reducing the loss of high biodiversity areas to near zero.

“Nature and biodiversity are two sides of the same coin – the two-go hand in hand,” said Simon Stiell, Executive Secretary of UN Climate Change. “Climate change is negatively impacting biodiversity, and biodiversity is part of the solution to climate change. After decades of ecosystem destruction and plummeting biodiversity, the agreement reached at COP15 provides the framework to halt and reverse these trends. There is no turning back, no excuses for inaction. The direction of travel is clear.”

Though the agreement is billed as a significant moment in the effort to preserve global biodiversity, it is also seen as imperfect by some, with experts bemoaning the lack of ironclad language that locks governments into important details regarding the commitment.

“There are also many weaknesses,” said Ralf Buckley, Emeritus Professor in the School of Environment and Science at Australia’s Griffith University.” It says little about protected areas or conservation, and nothing about wilderness or pristine ecosystems ... the preamble is full of get-out clauses saying that individual countries can do whatever they want. The goals are global, not country by country. Targets for reducing extinctions are two generations away.”

And although a consensus was reached eventually, it wasn’t an entirely harmonious result, with some African nations taking issue with how conservation efforts will be funded in developing countries. The agreement calls for raising of US\$200 billion by 2030, and for at least \$20 billion to be funnelled from

wealthy countries to developing countries from 2025. The Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) had called for a dedicated fund for these purposes but was ultimately overruled.

“The new funds go via the GEF, the Global Environment Fund,” Buckley explained. “But the main recipients of existing GEF funds are China, Brazil, Indonesia, India and Mexico, not African nations. Therefore, DRC wanted a separate CBD fund, but was overruled by the chair, and has therefore declared that it will manage its forests as it sees fit.”

7 – ZIM TREES BEAR THE BRUNT OF POWER CRISES

With acknowledgment to News Day, Wednesday 14 December 2022 page 5

Zimbabwe is among top 10 African countries with the highest deforestation rates, graphics by the World Population Review (WPR) have revealed. In its latest report, WPR said the country had lost on average 1 000 hectares of trees per annum as an electricity power crisis cripples the southern African nation. Other African countries in the deforestation top 10 list are Nigeria, Tanzania, Congo, Sudan, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ghana, Cameroon, Niger, and Ethiopia. Speaking on Monday at a tree-planting programme dubbed Urban Afforestation for Green and Smart Cities in the capital, Environment, Climate, Tourism and Hospitality Industry minister Mangaliso Ndhlovu said deforestation was on the rise due to an increased demand for wood energy as the country faces an electricity crisis.

8 – ZIMPARKS PARTNERSHIP WITH AFRICAN PARKS BEARS FRUIT

With acknowledgement to Langton Nyakwenda, Sunday Mail, 14th December 2022

Matusadonha National Park, situated on the southern shore of Lake Kariba, is undergoing some massive transformation, thanks to a 20-year agreement between Zimparks and African Parks.

A new administration block built less than a kilometre from the harbour, greets you as you enter the wildlife reserve park, which is home to hundreds of elephant, lion, and buffalo.

Builders are currently busy constructing new houses for staff, while some workers are erecting a perimeter fence, as brand-new Land Rovers roam around the place.

Most of these employees (about 85 percent of the total workforce) come from surrounding areas under the Nyaminyami Rural District Council.

There are mainly from communities under chiefs Mola, Musambakaruma, Nebire and Negande.

Matusadonha National Park is now run as a joint venture (Matusadonha Conservation Trust) between Zimparks and African Parks, in a bid to revamp the natural reserve and attract more tourists.

African Parks, a non-profit making organisation, will inject about US\$50 million to revamp the national park, which sits on a 1 470 square kilometre piece of land.

Over US\$3,6 million has been invested in the park this year.

“It has been three years since this joint operation started, and what you will see is a few African Parks personnel around, and a lot of Zimparks personnel.

“Covid-19 interrupted us a little bit, but we have put a lot of emphasis on building our capacity here,” said Mr Mike Pelham, the park’s operations manager.

“What we have got here is quite a lot of money going into infrastructure development. A lot of training going on, and recruitment of additional staff and resources, just to try and bring ourselves to a very modern level of operation.

“We have found that the way we manage these parks has changed considerably in the last 20 or 30 years. A lot more people and resources are needed,” said Mr Pelham.

“This year we spent around US\$3,6 million. Next year, we are anticipating an increased budget.”

Government believes that the country’s national parks have the capacity to attract investors and tourists, create employment and grow the economy towards the attainment of an upper-middle-income economy by 2030.

With a decent population of elephants, lions and buffaloes, Matusadonha National Park is being primed to become a major tourist attraction.

“We are looking at around 900 elephants in the park, most of them on the valley floor. A third of the park is on the valley floor, two-thirds is on the hills.

“900 is a pretty healthy population. We also have about 900 buffaloes, 2 000 hippos and a decent number of leopards,” said Mr. Pelham.

Proclaimed a national park in 1975, Matusadonha was once renowned for its black rhino.

Sadly, the last rhino in the park was lost in 2019.

There are plans to re-introduce the black rhino in 2025, banking on funds that are being availed by African Parks.

In the meantime, tourist numbers have increased steadily.

“Numbers have been growing since the partnership between Zimparks and African Parks.

“We had about 4 218 in 2019, but we were already sitting on 5 045 as at end of November 2022,” revealed Mr Chris Chiparushe, the park’s tourism manager.

“When people hear that anti-poaching is effective and camping facilities like ablutions have been renovated, they gain confidence and come,” he added.

Chiefs who govern communities around the park also spoke positively about the benefits their subjects are getting from their proximity to Matusadonha.

Over 170 people from these communities work in the park.

Organised fishing camps are now the order of the day, thanks largely to a revived anti-poaching drive. At Kings Camp, which has a small population of about 500 people, there’s a vibrant economy that is being driven by the famous bream from Lake Kariba.

There are 27 permit holders who harvest about 30kg of fish each a day, a total of 810kg per day.

Given that they sell their fish at a price of US\$1,70 per kg, about US\$1 377 is realised per day, at the camp.

“As a result of less poaching, we now have access to the Lake and we can now enjoy the benefits of organised fishing,” a fisherman at the camp said.

Another said: “I have managed to send my children to school. Some are now working in Harare.”

Chief Mola also added his voice: “There are a lot of people who have benefited from CAMPFIRE-related projects.”

CAMPFIRE (Communal Areas Management Programme for Indigenous Resources) is a programme that helps rural communities manage natural resources for their own development.

“The coming in of African Parks has also seen more interactions between the park officials and the community. We now know that we can also mitigate human-wildlife conflicts, especially elephants that invade fields, by using chilli. “We have a chilli field down there, and we just burn the chilli around the field and the pungent that comes out scares away elephants,” said Chief Mola.

9 – ZIMPARKS HIKES FEES AT VICTORIA FALLS RAIN FOREST

With acknowledgement to Leonard Ncube Sunday News, December 18, 2022

ZIMBABWE Parks and Wildlife Management Authority (Zimparks) has increased entry fees into the Victoria Falls Rain Forest and Zambezi River, courting the ire of tourism industry players who are saying they were not consulted.

In a notice, Zimparks said the new conservation fees for entry into the Zambezi River and Victoria Falls are with effect from 1 January.

The wildlife authority has defended the move saying entry fees into the world’s natural wonder remains cheaper compared to other places in the region.

According to the new fees schedule, it will cost US\$10 for locals to enter through the ordinary gate up from US\$7 per person while SADC and international clients will pay US\$30 and US\$50, up from US\$20 and US\$30 respectively.

To enter through the VIP gate, locals will pay US\$30 per person, US\$75 for SADC and US\$150 for international clients, fees which the industry said is too exorbitant considering that fees schedules had already been advertised for the year 2023.

Locals who want to tour the rainforest under moonlight will be expected to part with US\$15 per person while SADC clients will pay US\$70 and US\$100 for international clients.

Visiting the Zambezi River will now cost US\$5 for locals while SADC clients will pay US\$12 and those from the international world paying US\$15.

Children above five years of age will pay half the adult fees.

Vehicles will be charged between US\$5 for small cars and US\$20 for buses and lorries while foreign registered vehicles will pay US\$30 each.

Tour of the rainforest is one of the many activities’ tourists embark on in Victoria Falls. Others are game drives, bungee jumping, white water rafting, cruise, gorge swing, zipline, and interaction with animals among others.

While the industry feels hard done by Zimparks’ short notice, the wildlife authority says the fees’ structure remains relatively low compared to other destinations in the continent.

Victoria Falls has over the years been tagged as an expensive destination compared to other destinations. Zimparks spokesperson Mr Tinashe Farawo said the wildlife authority does not get funding from Treasury, yet it needs money for anti-poaching and conservation activities as well as improving conditions of service for workers.

“The fees will be effective January and I think the prices are fair if we do a comparison with our competitors in the region. We have a sensitive Government which wants people to access these things which is why we always try to maintain at affordable rates.

“This is our most prized asset, Victoria Falls and as our premier tourist destination, I don’t think US\$10 is too steep for locals because the asset must generate its own income. Compared to other destinations around the world you find that viewing gorillas in Rwanda is between US\$750 to US\$1 500 while park entrance fees in Tanzania is US\$30 while visiting the rainforest is the cheapest thing that a person can get in Victoria Falls,” said Mr Farawo.

He said funds raised from entry fees are used to maintain game parks and cater for other operational costs, research and conserving wildlife and environment.

“Let’s encourage our people to pay so that we create a country that we want. We need to make sure that we visit our resorts and also build our country,” said Mr Farawo.

Tourism players are concerned that Zimparks did not consult the industry which had already advertised fees for 2023 hence it will be difficult to start engaging agents and clients about the new fees.

Operators said Victoria Falls is a national asset and decisions should be based on consultation.

Tourism Business Council of Zimbabwe president Mr Wengayi Nhau said while the industry fully understands the predicament of Zimparks in as far as raising conservation fees is concerned and that the authority has discretion to increase fees as and when it sees fit, it was important to consult stakeholders considering that the fees are levied on clients.

“We are actually shocked and very surprised to say the least. Looking at the amount of increase from US\$30 to US\$50 for international tourists, that’s about 50 percent increment and by any standards this is on a higher side.

“What worries more is not about the amount but the short notice that they gave us. The tourism industry packages in advance and our quotations had already gone and some payments have been made at the current rate. This means we have to go back to the client and ask for more money and that will not go down well with the clients as they will feel cheated,” said Mr Nhau.

He said such scenarios will not be good for the image of the country.

10 – GOVERNMENT LOOKS TO SALVAGE WETLANDS

With acknowledgement to Newsday, December 19th, 2022

Government is targeting ecological restoration of 350 000 hectares of degraded wetlands in a bid to bring back the integrity of the ecosystems. Zimbabwe is endowed with diverse flora and fauna species, soil and agricultural biodiversity that are of immense conservation value to its national economy, with biodiversity being the cornerstone of the country’s economy and the livelihood of most locals. Environment, Climate, Tourism and Hospitality Industry minister Mangaliso Ndhlovu is leading the Zimbabwe delegation which is attending the 15th Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity in Montreal Quebec, Canada. The conference began on the 7th of this month and ends on the 19th. This is an international meeting bringing together governments from around the world focusing on protecting nature and halting biodiversity loss around the world.

11 – ZIMBABWE ANNOUNCES PLAN TO PROTECT WETLANDS

With acknowledgement to Newsday Zimbabwe, December 23, 2022

Government says it is targeting to restore the ecology of 350 000 hectares of degraded wetlands across the country, as part of a broad strategy that has been underway to save the delicate ecosystem.

Zimbabwe is endowed with diverse flora and fauna species and good soil for agriculture.

But wetland management has recently become a huge cause for concern due to several reasons.

New settlements that have been established in the past decade have been on wetlands, while some economic developments, such as mining activities, have also encroached onto wetlands.

Environment, Climate, Tourism and Hospitality Industry minister Mangaliso Ndhlovu disclosed the plan during a United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity meeting in Montreal, Quebec, Canada, last week.

It is an international meeting bringing together governments from around the world focusing on protecting nature and halting biodiversity loss around the world.

“Improved financing, continuous engagement of stakeholders including local communities; gender mainstreaming; enhanced law enforcement and establishment of Transfrontier Conservation Areas with neighbouring countries have all contributed significantly to biodiversity conservation,” Ndhlovu said.

“Zimbabwe has also embarked on a five-year nationwide wetland restoration initiative targeting ecological restoration of 350 000 hectares of degraded wetlands in a bid to restore the ecological integrity of the wetland ecosystems and their dependent flora and fauna species,” Ndhlovu said.

The minister added that the loss of biodiversity was worrisome.

He said nations had to take practical measures to stem an imminent catastrophe.

“The loss of biodiversity is extremely worrying and calls for nations to take practical measures to stem this imminent catastrophe.

“This rapid decline of biodiversity has serious implications for humanity ranging from the collapse of food production, economic decline, and compromising of health systems, among others. We strongly believe that (economies) will provide parties with the necessary guidance and catalyse support for biodiversity conservation,” he added.

According to Ndhlovu, Zimbabwe recently completed its first-ever Biodiversity Economy Report which is the first step towards the economic valuation of its biological assets.

He said the ministry was taking steps to develop a natural capital accounting framework that will include measuring the flow of ecosystem services.

Ndhlovu added that financial resources; technology transfer; capacity building and knowledge management systems were vital in the achievement of targets.

The convention on biodiversity, which was adopted in Rio de Janeiro, is one of the most ratified treaties in the world. Zimbabwe ratified it in 1995.

It complements the efforts made by governments and development partners to scale up to mitigate climate change.

12 – SOCIETY CALENDAR OF EVENTS FOR YOUR DIARY

12 th March 2023	Field Trip – Inugu Battle Site and Matobo Hills Lodge
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

13 – 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 have recently upgraded our website which is now more modern and easy-to-use. It is intended to be more 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

The Facebook page “Matobo Conservation Society” has been re-started. Please LIKE or FOLLOW this.

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

14 – IN MEMORIUM

MICHAEL OSMOND WADDY 1935-2022

Mike Waddy sadly passed away in December from complications that arose from Covid. Mike owned the property Mhlahlandlela Farm, more commonly known as Big Cave Camp. The farm was acquired by his father in 1949, and today is managed by his son David who owns Big Cave Camp. It was Mike who sowed the seeds of the camp – the first of its kind in the Matopos, though it has grown and developed under David's hand. Mike spent his boyhood weekends on this property, and so learnt much about the bush in general, and specifically the Matopos.

Mike was a keen botanist and would spend hours hiking the Matopos in search of trees, aloes, orchids and the like, often with his fellow botanist Roy Stephens. As a result, he hiked throughout the Hills, and so had an exceptional knowledge of the Matopos. His great enthusiasm was well known.

Mike leaves his wife of 64 years, Yvonne, and his son David, with two grandsons. His daughter Sharon passed away 7 years ago, leaving three grandchildren and three great grandchildren. He will be sorely missed as a point of botanical reference and years of history in the Hills.

PROFESSOR PETER MUNDY 1941 - 2023

We were sad to hear of the passing of Peter in February this year. He was the only qualified Ornithologist in Zimbabwe, and at one time ran the Ornithology Department of National Parks & Wild Life Management, before moving onto NUST's Environmental faculty. He was exceptionally knowledgeable on all aspects of birds and very generous and patient in passing on this knowledge to us all, bird fanatics or not. He was not arrogant and called a spade a spade, and was humble enough to accept correction.

He attended numerous field trips, but two are worth recalling. The first involved visiting a Black Eagle nest in the Matopos. He wanted to demonstrate the placid nature of this large raptor. So, a rock climber friend went up the rock to retrieve the well grown fledgling from a nest, which was then lowered down in a sack. It was then passed to some of us to hold, where it remained quietly, completely calm and relaxed. Then back again in the sack to its nest, where it settled down happily, completely unfazed by all this unusual activity – and our fear that it might jump off, as it was too young to fly, was completely unfounded.

The second outing was to the old Matopos Railway terminus, a good birding spot, with a Black Eagle nest in the vicinity. We had walked about halfway along the embankment when one amongst us pointed out a big bird perched high up on the large rock next to the Police Station. The light was tricky, it was difficult to identify, until Peter became very excited and said it looked like a South American species, though he wasn't sure which one. So, we all peered at it for a while, and then someone said it had a golden crown. Well, egg on our faces, we realised it was a juvenile Black Eagle from the nearby nest! Peter was not humbled, as it was suggested that perhaps his binoculars needed a bit of a clean.

We extend our condolences to Verity and family at this sad time. Peter will be missed amongst the environmental community.