

NEWSLETTER 126 / SEPTEMBER 2024

1 – RHINO MAN

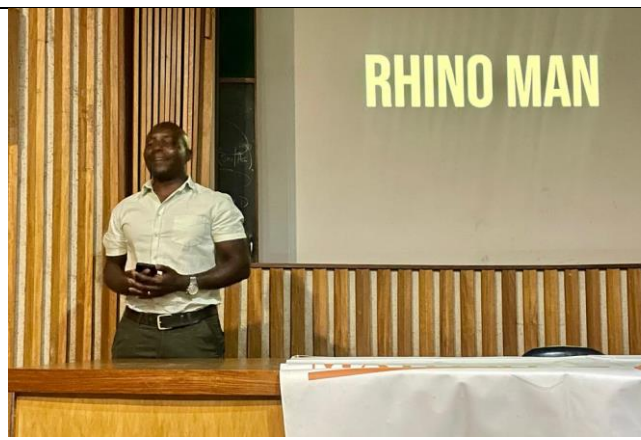
In conjunction with the British Embassy, Harare, we hosted two screenings of the documentary “Rhino Man” which was filmed in Kruger Park, South Africa and follows the training of game guards and the tragic murder of those defending our wildlife.

It was not only an emotional story, but one that should lead to much debate and thought.

Apart from thanking the British Embassy, we also thank Cheeseman, Lobels Biscuits, Skinny Cow and Waiters House for their support. Thanks to Black Rhino Safaris, Big Cave Camp, Camp Dwala and Rowallan Adventure Camp for donating raffle prizes and the Natural History Museum for use of the venue. Not forgetting ZETDC who thankfully restored power to the Museum just before the start! Great thanks to Dennis Chitewe for arranging the successful event.



Rangers arriving for the matinee



Mr Norman Tinarwo, British Embassy



Members enjoying a cheese and wine



Rangers, guests and members

2 - NEXT EVENT

Date	Sunday 6 th October 2024
Venue	Fort Usher
Meet	08:00am, Cresta Lodge
Travel	We will travel about 7km down the Fort Usher Road. This is quite passable in a sedan if taken slowly, though a truck may be preferred. We will then do about 4km's on a track, again not a problem if taken slowly.

Fort Usher was established in 1896 as part of the BSAC's efforts to contain the Ndebele within the Matopo Hills, and to launch attacks from there. Nothing remains of the Fort today as it was levelled to make way for the first BSAP station established in 1897. We will however visit some of the early surviving buildings from the little Matopos Village that followed.

We will visit Usher's Kop to visit the ruins of Usher's House (1860) and visit the site of the second Indaba held between CJ Rhodes and the Ndebele Chiefs in August 1896.

Don't forget your sunblock, hat, picnic lunch and drinks! Might need to come prepared for a hot day. There will be a talk at each point of interest.

3 – REPORT BACK – MANGWE PASS

Sunday 21st July saw us join with the Friends of the Museum and the Pioneer Society to mark the 170th anniversary of the first wagon passing through the Mangwe Pass on 8 July 1854. This lonely wagon making its way north was the herald of dramatic events that would unfold across the land we now call Zimbabwe. Over 55 members and friends were in attendance and we were regaled with numerous experiences and commentary. Amongst those, were three gentlemen who were at the original unveiling of the monument in 1954. Their recollections were most interesting.



	
<p>R Burrett sharing the history of the pass with members present.</p>	<p>J Rosenfels, G Melvill & R Greef who were all present at the unveiling of the monument in 1954</p>
	
<p>Fort Mangwe</p>	<p>How it started</p>

John Rosenfels spoke about the building of the monument, Ginty Melvill shared memories of the opening that he attended as a Plumtree schoolboy, and Roger Greef shared his recollections of 1954.

We were also able to visit Lee's house and cemetery, from about the same era, as well as Fort Mangwe. For Mangwe dates from 1893 and 1896 so not quite as old as the other sites.

Special appreciation to the Rosenfels family for hosting our picnic lunch, and for the work done in clearing the various monuments we visited.

4 – MCS PROJECTS

Your Committee has been busy these past few months, and our next Newsletter will be able to share the various completed projects. These include fencing and grids to secure the northern part of the Park for wildlife, though the cattle are likely to be allowed access until the rains come, and finalisation of the Nswatugi site museum. The Matopos Tour operators funded the grading of all the dirt roads within the Park, making the Park more accessible to visitors.

5 – MATOPOS HERITAGE TRAIL RUN

This year, the 9th annual Matopos Heritage Trail Run, was held in almost perfect conditions. 26 competitors took to the hills, with 2 completing the "Challenge" run (a marathon and a half!) and the rest opting for the "Heritage" run at a mere 50kms. This year the Brachystegia were not quite in full leaf, but surprisingly there were one or two streams with just a little water still flowing. Appreciation to those who manned the water-points and to those who assisted in the smooth running of the event.

6 – REHABILITATE BULAWAYO TO KEZI ROAD SEEKING INVESTMENT

With acknowledgement to Southern Eye, September 10th, 2024.

Former Speaker of the National Assembly during Zimbabwe's government of national unity Lovemore Moyo has challenged the Matobo Rural District Council and other relevant authorities to prioritise the rehabilitation and maintenance of Bulawayo-Kezi Road to attract investments in the area. Moyo made the call in a paper titled The Matobo Voices from the Rocks, noting the sorry state of the road between the late former Vice-President Joshua Nkomo's home district, Matobo, and Bulawayo. He said authorities in the district should engage the Transport and Infrastructural Development ministry to prioritise the rehabilitation and maintenance of Bulawayo-Kezi Road

7 – ZANU PF CONDUCTS RITUALS AT MATOPO, GREAT ZIMBABWE

With acknowledgement to NewsDay, July 18, 2024

The ruling ZANU PF party has invited King Munhumutapa, born Timothy Chiminya, and three other chiefs to conduct rituals at Matopos and Great Zimbabwe monuments. In a letter to the Zimbabwe Parks and Wildlife Management Authority (Parks Authority) dated July 10, ZANU PF asked the Parks Authority to allow the chiefs to conduct the rituals at the two sites. The letter does not specify why the ruling party needed to conduct the rituals. "The ZANU PF party's department of gender and culture is recommending the following traditional leaders to be given clearance referral letters to conduct national rituals at Matopos and Great Zimbabwe monuments," party secretary for gender and culture Stephanie Mkusha wrote. "They are Timothy Chiminya as Mambo Munhumutapa, Masimba Rubatika [Chief Seke], Claudius Nyashanu Choga and Amos Jacha. "Accordingly, we refer them to your good office for assistance." In response, Parks Authority director-general Fulton Mangwanya granted the chiefs the right to visit the two national monuments for the rituals.

8 – NDEBELE KINGDOM TUSSE PARTLY SOLVED

With acknowledgement to Southern Eye, September 11th, 2024.

Ndebele King Bulelani has received a huge endorsement that could put to rest a raging debate on the rightful owner of the throne when he got a rousing ovation from people attending the late King Mzilikazi's commemorations at Mhlahlandlela last week. Several people have claimed the Ndebele kingship, with Stanley Raphael Khumalo Tshuma, Peter Zwide Khumalo and Mcijwana Khumalo also claiming to be title holders, but on Saturday, only Bulelani was received with the crowd shouting "Bayethe" to him, a Ndebele term which means "Hail the King". King Mzilikazi died on September 5, 1868. Bulawayo Mayor David Coltart paid tribute to King Mzilikazi and said the city owes its existence to the monarch after he set up his kingdom in the country's second largest city. He said the late king has not been honoured enough. Bulawayo Residents Association chairperson Winos Dube paid tribute to the king and said it was an important event to revive the Ndebele culture.

9 – HUNGER STALKS ZIMBABWE'S RURAL POPULATION AFTER DROUGHT

With acknowledgement to Bloomberg Thursday July 18, 2024

Harare - More than half of Zimbabwe's rural population faces food insecurity by the first quarter of next year after an El Nino-induced drought slashed crop output, a new report showed.

"At peak, 57% of the rural households, approximately 5,894,368 individuals, will be cereal-insecure" in the three months through March 2025, according to the Zimbabwe Livelihoods Committee report seen by Bloomberg. The document, compiled Zimbabwe's government, United Nations agencies and aid organizations, was confirmed by the Agriculture Ministry.

The El Niño weather phenomenon triggered a dry spell across southern Africa this year, leading countries including Malawi, Zambia and Zimbabwe to declare states of national disaster because of

crop failures. Zimbabwe produced 744,271 tons of corn in this year's harvest, almost 70% less than a year earlier.

The southern African nation requires almost 593,000 tons of cereals between July and March 2025, the committee said. Quarterly cereal requirements from the National Strategic Grain Reserve will be 175,125 tons for the July-to-September period; 199,516 tons for October to December; and 218,092 tons for January to March 2025.

"There is a need for the ministry responsible for agriculture and the private sector to ensure that staple cereals will be available on the market for cereal-deficit households with the means to purchase to do so throughout the consumption year," the committee said.

10 – ZIMBABWE CONSIDERING FIRST ELEPHANT CULL IN ALMOST FOUR DECADES

With acknowledgement to Bloomberg, September 11, 2024

Harare - Zimbabwe is considering culling elephants for the first time since 1988 and using the meat to feed people who have been affected by a crippling drought, a cabinet minister said.

"Zimbabwe has more elephants than we need" and more than its forests can support, Environment Minister Sithembiso Nyoni told lawmakers in Mount Hampden, north of the capital Harare, on Wednesday. Discussions are under way about culling some elephants and providing the dried meat "to some communities that need the protein," she said.

Zimbabwe has 100,000 elephants, the world's second-largest population after neighbouring Botswana. The minister didn't specify how many of the pachyderms may be killed.

Adult elephants consume about 300 kilograms (660 pounds) of vegetation a day and usually strip trees of their bark, which kills them. Zimbabwe's large elephant herd was destroying large tracts of the southern African nation's natural habitat, to the detriment of humans and other animals, according to Nyoni.

International regulations prevent Zimbabwe from selling its ivory stock, which currently stands at about 130 tons, a situation the government would like to rectify, the minister added.

Zimbabwe has recorded its worst food shortages in four decades this year due to an El Nino-induced drought that has withered essential crops.

11 – UNESCO AND PARTNERS CELEBRATE GREAT ZIMBABWE PROJECT MILESTONES

UNESCO Regional Office for Southern Africa and its partners handed over essential equipment and strategic documents to the National Museums and Monuments of Zimbabwe (NMMZ) as they celebrated key milestones achieved under the Great Zimbabwe Development project in Masvingo on 27 June 2024.

The handover event marked a major step in the preservation and sustainable development of the Great Zimbabwe World Heritage Site.

Speaking at the event, the guest of honour, Zimbabwe's Permanent Secretary for Home Affairs and Cultural Heritage, Ambassador Raphael Faranisi, appreciated the French Government for partnering with the Government of Zimbabwe in helping with efforts towards preserving, conserving and sustaining of the Great Zimbabwe national monument. He stated that the Government of Zimbabwe stands ready to continue mobilising resources for the continuous improvement of facilities at the national monument, calling on the project partners to continue demonstrating best practices in sustainable heritage management and inspiring partners across the country to come together for the benefit of similar sites and communities dotted across the country.

This project provides us with best practises in terms of sustainably managing other heritage sites in the country and I, therefore, urge the NMMZ team to fully utilise the equipment to advance its mandate which is both at national and international level.

Ambassador Raphael Faranisi, Permanent Secretary for Home Affairs and Cultural Heritage. UNESCO and its partners handed over a range of specialized documentation and conservation equipment, including a tractor, mower and the latest generation geospatial and surveying kit. These tools will be crucial in preserving the heritage site for future generations and will assist NMMZ with technology-based heritage conservation and preservation. NMMZ also received an assortment of computers to facilitate onsite data processing and storage.

In the same fold, UNESCO presented three critical documents that were developed by the project.

The Great Zimbabwe Tourism Development and Marketing Strategy: This strategy aims to stimulate the local economy and boost tourism by leveraging the site's historical significance by providing a roadmap for enhancing visitor experiences and increasing both international and local tourist visits.

The Great Zimbabwe National Monument Interpretation and Storytelling Framework: Developed by UNESCO in collaboration with the Great Zimbabwe University and the International Centre for Interpretation and Presentation of World Heritage Sites (WHIPIC), this framework offers detailed guidelines for interpreting and presenting the site's rich history to visitors. By enhancing the educational experience, it ensures that visitors gain a deeper understanding of the cultural and historical significance of the Great Zimbabwe World Heritage Site.

The Great Zimbabwe National Monument Integrated Management Plan (2024-2028):

This Plan was developed by NMMZ with the support of local and international experts and outlines a holistic approach to managing the site, integrating conservation, tourism, and community involvement. It addresses risk management and resource allocation, ensuring sustainable site management.

The development of these documents followed an inclusive and participatory approach, maximizing stakeholder engagement and offering a comprehensive platform for creating new narratives, marketing perspectives, and actions for the conservation and preservation of the Great Zimbabwe National Monument World Heritage site. This approach ensures that all voices are heard, and no one is left behind.

By leveraging expert knowledge and fostering collaboration, UNESCO ensures that the documentation and conservation of sites such as Great Zimbabwe align with international best practices in the protection of the sites' Outstanding Universal Values, while also contributing to local sustainable economic development and enhancing the site's cultural significance. Such collaboration is especially important for Africa as the continent largely remains underrepresented on the UNESCO World Heritage list.

As communities in Africa, we need to come together to see which aspects of our heritage need to be protected, sustained and given world heritage designation. This is one sure way of ensuring that which is dear to our local communities remains valued, protected, and celebrated across the world.

Ms Nisha, UNESCO Regional Director and Representative.

Local community members and chiefs expressed optimism about the project's impact on their livelihoods, particularly in terms of the envisioned development of a cultural hub and community-based management of resources and risks.

This project is more than just preserving a site; it's about preserving our identity and creating opportunities for our people. We are proud to be part of this journey.

Mr Wellington Chindara, Ziya Cultural Arts Trust.

The celebratory event marked the beginning of community-based interventions aimed at improving conservation efforts at the site. Young people from communities around the site are already earmarked for a two-week-long on-site training in wall restoration. This training will equip them with critical skills, including stone masonry and heritage condition assessment. Additionally, local community members will benefit from practical tour guide training designed to enhance their professional skills in tour guiding and visitor management. This training will enable them to create lasting impressions, encourage

repeat visits, and convey current and diverse understandings of the Great Zimbabwe World Heritage site.

As the Great Zimbabwe Development Project progresses, it stands as a testament to the power of international cooperation and commitment to preserving Zimbabwe's rich cultural legacy. The newly acquired equipment and strategic documents mark a significant milestone, promising a brighter future for the Great Zimbabwe National Monument World Heritage site and the communities that live in its surroundings.

The Great Zimbabwe Development Project is funded by the French Development Agency (AFD) and managed by UNOPS. Implemented by UNESCO in partnership with the National Museums and Monuments of Zimbabwe (NMMZ) and other key stakeholders, the project seeks to enhance the conservation and management of the Great Zimbabwe National Monument World Heritage site in a sustainable manner, adequately interpret and present the site and its associated intangible cultural heritage elements, support the development of sustainable tourism practices, and develop community-based cultural programming and tourism offers, thereby contributing to the attainment of the 2030 Agenda with its international sustainable development goals.

12 – KEEPING CLOSE TABS ON ZIMBABWE'S RHINOS

With acknowledgment to Keeping close tabs on Zimbabwe's rhinos Save The Rhino



With more than 1,000 rhinos, Zimbabwe has one of Africa's largest rhino populations. However, despite reaching this milestone by 2022, rhinos were once found in far greater numbers. Amidst the 1980s and early 90s, guerrilla militants stationed in the Zambezi Valley deterred prospective poachers from illegally killing rhinos here. However, following the loss of black rhinos from the Luangwa Valley in Zambia, and following and Zimbabwe's independence in 1980, the militias moved out, making way for poaching gangs. By 1992, Zimbabwe's rhino population had reduced to below 450.

Protecting the survivors, the decision was made to translocate approximately 300 rhinos south. Living in heavily protected yet idyllic habitats, these animals prospered, and their numbers swelled. Unfortunately, this was not to last.

Land reclamation under the country's Fast Track Land Reform Policy was underway and with it came habitat clearance for agriculture and in turn, less rhino habitat and heightened poaching. Bubiana Conservancy, in the south-west of the country, became one such unsafe location and so, beginning in

2002, its rhinos were removed by the Lowveld Rhino Trust (LRT). Their destination? Buby Valley Conservancy (BVC), a former cattle ranch turned wildlife conservancy.

Since then, LRT has overseen the monitoring of these rhinos, keeping close tabs on each animal by using differing combinations of triangular notches cut into the rhino's ears. Each notch in a rhino's ears represents a number. How many notches and their precise location gives a rhino its unique ID number overall, something that will last throughout its life. Using these numbers, Rhino Monitors can record an accurate picture of the population's dynamics, which then help to inform wider management decisions.

Having a notching system to provide unique IDs might sound like a Rhino Monitors' job is simple, but that's far from the truth. Finding each rhino remains tough, particularly as black rhinos spend a lot of time in the dense bush of the Lowveld, making them hard to spot in general, let alone get an accurate sight of their ears. Nonetheless, LRT's team continue to do a great job.

Last year, despite particularly thick vegetation, the team achieved more than their 80 rhino IDs per month target. When incorporating camera traps and aerial IDs, the rhino monitors achieved an impressive average of more than 160 IDs/month!

So, how are ear notches given?

- Notches can only be applied when a rhino is immobilised, which means a vet needs to be present to induce general anaesthesia and to apply appropriate pre- and post-notching treatment and care
- The notches themselves are cut using a specific notching tool and bleeding is controlled using forceps. A topical antibiotic is also applied before a rhino is woken up and released, helping to avoid infections
- Once the notches have been applied, photographs are taken of both the rhino's ears in a 'front on' position as a record of the rhino's notch pattern
- Ideally, rhinos should be notched before they become independent from their mothers, so that their maternity is confirmed as part of their identification
- These photos and life history are then used in a personal rhino file, which is used by monitors to track sightings data over time

13– RAINFALL

Mixed rainfall forecast for Zim: The Southern Africa Regional Climate Outlook Forum (SARCOF) has predicted an increased likelihood of normal to below-normal rains in the October to December period in Zimbabwe. The forecast also highlighted that the central part of the SADC region, including Zimbabwe should receive normal to above normal conditions from the January to March 2024/25 period.

Currently the situation in the Hills is desperate and the rains are still some months away. Apart from very real shortages of water, there is little grazing left for the cattle.

14 – ANTHRAX KILLS 50 WILD ANIMALS IN GONAREZHOU

With acknowledgement to the Herald, August 31st, 2024.

An outbreak of anthrax in the Gonarezhou National Park on the southeast border has killed at least 50 wild animals, the Department of Veterinary Services has confirmed. At least 80 000 cattle around the park have been vaccinated against the deadly disease. Chief director in the Department of Veterinary Services, Pious Makaya, said the anthrax outbreak in Gonarezhou National Park was now under control, adding that no livestock deaths arising from the outbreak have so far occurred.

15 – SOCIETY CALENDAR OF EVENTS FOR YOUR DIARY

22 September 2024	World Rhino Day
6 October 2024	Field Trip – Fort Usher
17 November 2024	Annual General Meeting
24 – 25 November	Matopos Classic MTB
26 – 30 March 2025	Matopos Heritage MTB Challenge
22 – 24 August 2025	Matopos Heritage Trail Run

16 – MEMBERS NOTEBOOK

Subscriptions

Subscriptions for the year 1 October 2024 to 30 September 2025 are now due. 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

Visit our website, and make use of the RESOURCES tab for maps and information.

Please email to matoboconservationsociety@gmail.com

Facebook

Don't forget to join our Facebook page, with nearly 700 members now.

The Natural History of the Matobo Hills

This MCS publication is available at the Natural History Museum for US\$30.

17 – MATOPO MISSION FIRE

The Matopo Mission, founded in 1898, is appealing for support and assistance for the rebuilding of their boys' dormitory on Saturday 6th July. Please contact the Chairman if you are able to assist.

It's a double blow for the Mission which is also facing severe water shortages following the poor rains earlier this year.

18 – IN MEMORIUM

Julia Duprée 20 Feb 1940 – 16 July 2024

Julia, the daughter of a medical doctor, spent her early years in Nigeria and recalled her life as idyllic as much of the wild areas were just that. Married life took her back to England and then to Kenya where she worked as a marketing manager. Her two boys grew up in Kenya, although schooled at Peterhouse, Marondera. On leaving Kenya, Julia and David moved to Botswana and finally chose Bulawayo as their retirement city. Almost immediately Julia involved herself in the dog club with her dachshies, BirdLife (where she coordinated the Black Eagle survey in the Matobo Hills, the National Waterbird survey and the Bulawayo Garden Bird survey) and the ornithological department of the Natural History Museum. She went on many museum ventures over two decades to find specimens for photographs for Michael

Stuart-Irwin. Julia knew the value and importance of the museum's collections and in her later years taking care of these collections turned into a passion of hers.

Julia was known for her incredible sense of humour and ready wit, her generous nature and keen interest in the lives of those around her. Always ready for an adventure, always inquisitive and wanting to know more. She would drive fast when asked, and she declared that she had driven in a Dakar Rally once! Her picnic lunches were always a feast and involved much humorous banter with Julia complaining her legs wouldn't get her where she wanted to go but always did, even up Silozawane Hill to the cave.

With her meticulous attention to detail and understanding of journal and book layouts from her working experience Julia became the editor and layout designer of Honeyguide, the Journal of BirdLife Zimbabwe. Later she became heavily involved with publications for the museum including many of Rob Burrett's historical booklets and the guide for the museum. Due to her professional output, she was allowed to use the illustrations from Roberts Birds of Southern Africa to produce a Roberts Waterbirds of Zimbabwe, which was an amazing honour for her to work with such an important legacy. Julia also took up the mantle of co-editing the book on the Natural History of the Matobo Hills and was made an honorary life member of the Matobo Conservation Society for her efforts.

Julia's love of the museum led to her becoming one of the first to offer support and fund-raising efforts when the Friends of the Museum was launched in 2012 to bring the museum back to its former glory. She helped raise money to replace the carpet in the geology gallery, for the revamp of the Site Museum at Khami Ruins, many of the temporary displays and finally for the resuscitation of the Hall of Man. This included a trip to the Cradle of Mankind in South Africa to gather information and bring back a number of skull replicas for the display. It was a pleasure and great humour to work with her. Julia was always working in the background and always a supporter. Her efforts were acknowledged by the Friends of Museum when recently she was made an Honorary Life member.

Julia always engaged with others, always wanting to know their story, always having time to share a conversation. This made Julia an amazing networker, bringing people together that would not normally get together or know each other. She used that to her advantage in all her various projects. Julia, however, was a private person herself, never giving too much away, the guard only coming down sometimes after a glass or two of wine, and many were shared with her friends over the years. Hers was a life lived to the full and she will be sorely missed by so many. Heartfelt condolences to her two boys Jonathan and Jeremy and their families. Fly High, Julia and thank you for the good time and wonderful memories.