

Detailed Final Report

APRIL 2013

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Summary

It has been quite some time since a round-up of Matobo Hills activities was compiled and circulated. In September 2010 and May 2011, at workshops hosted by Dambari Wildlife Trust, the "Conservation Across Boundaries" programme was introduced to local stakeholders. The goal of the programme: to encourage participation and communication among stakeholders to avoid duplication of effort and to work towards the common goal of a healthy Matobo Hills ecosystem. At those meetings, Dambari Wildlife Trust was nominated to take the lead in developing the programme. However, it was (and is) intended that "Conservation Across Boundaries", as a concept, is adopted by the stakeholder group; projects, intellectual property and funds remain with the participating organisations, but information is shared with others so that the programme's goal can be achieved.

This newsletter, the second circulated since the last workshop, is an attempt to collate and distribute information about activities and developments to those interested in the Matobo Hills. With the exception of information provided by individuals or organisations (included intact and attributed to relevant authors), data have been gleaned from multiple sources; any errors or omissions are accidental. The intention is to send out a newsletter at least twice a year, so please send any tidbits, reports or updates to Nicky Pegg (antelope@dambari.com) for inclusion in future editions. It's a great opportunity to showcase your activities, give your sponsors some free advertising, and share successes and challenges with other stakeholders. And in between times, we hope that lines of communication will remain open between stakeholders.

There's a lot happening in the Hills, and 2013 is a landmark year for several organisations and events:

- The 50th "Matopos 33 Miler" race was held in early April;
- This is the 50th consecutive year of the Black Eagle Survey (the longest-running (continuous) raptor monitoring project in the world);
- The Dassie Survey has been running for 21 years;
- Matobo Conservation Society's 20th AGM will be held this year;
- The Matobo Hills celebrates its tenth year as a World Heritage Site (Cultural Landscape) in August;
- The third Matobo Hills World Heritage MTB Challenge was held in March.

I look forward to any feedback or comments concerning this newsletter, and hope that together we'll continue to consolidate and develop projects to the betterment of the Hills: its landscape, people and biota!

Nicky Pegg, Senior Researcher, Dambari Wildlife Trust

1 World Heritage Site News

The Matobo Hills World Heritage Site (Cultural Landscape) was proclaimed in August 2003. Spearheaded by **Parks and Wildlife Management Authority** (PWMA) and **National Museums and Monuments of Zimbabwe** (NMMZ), a review of progress to date, and compilation of the next 5-year Management Plan is underway. A current, achievable and effective management plan for the area is critical for the retention of World Heritage Site status.

To celebrate the tenth anniversary of the Heritage Site and its own 20th anniversary, **Matobo Conservation Society** (MCS) is planning a special weekend at Maleme in November.

1.1 Activities of National Museums and Monuments of Zimbabwe

The "Friends of the Museum" initiative is still going strong, and membership provides many benefits. Membership runs from 1st May to 30th April, so if you're already a member, be sure to pay your dues for the coming year. Contact Moira FitzPatrick (natmuse@netconnect.co.zw) or visit the Museum for more details.

The following summary of Museum activities in the Matobo Hills was provided by Paul Hubbard (Associate Researcher, Monuments and Antiquities Department, Natural History Museum, Bulawayo)

***National Museums and Monuments** have embarked on an ambitious programme to revamp various heritage sites in the Matobo Hills World Heritage Site. Pomongwe Site Museum has been re-thatched thanks to a generous grant from the **Beit Trust** while plans are well-advanced to create new displays within. The existing displays have been tidied up with new materials added and new labels provided in anticipation of completely new displays. Quotes have been sought for the repair of the ablutions at the museum as well.*

Site management plans specific to each of the public NMMZ sites within the World Heritage Site are in the process of review and will hopefully be in effect by the second half of 2013. This includes Nswatugi Cave, View of the World, Silozwane Cave, White Rhino Shelter, Historic Railway Terminus, Pomongwe Cave and Site Museum, Bambata Cave and Inanke Cave. Such plans are important because they guide heritage managers and researchers on procedures regarding development, repairs and maintenance, research and visitor management at each site with an aim of preserving the sites. Monument Inspections for sites in Matabeleland have been done and most are in a satisfactory condition, though minor, ongoing maintenance is needed at many.

*In mid-February a team from the Natural History Museum began the large task of clearing dead vegetation, burnt in a veld fire two years ago at View of the World. There was an unsightly mass located along the main path to the top of the hill which also served as a litter trap. Most of it was removed in a single day while **NMMZ staff** conducted a general litter clean up across the entire site. The braai places at View of the World have all been repaired while six new litter bins have been donated to help ease the litter problem. A recycling programme for the refuse at each NMMZ site in the Matopos is being investigated to reduce the pollution and environmental impact from visitors.*

A new guidebook to View of the World was published in February, written by Terence Ranger, with contributions by Paul Hubbard, Rob Burrett and Anthony Chennells.

I would like to thank National Museums and Monuments of Zimbabwe for the chance to work with them and their excellent staff in the Matobo World Heritage Site, although no one from that organisation or any others mentioned can be held responsible for opinions expressed and information provided here.

1.2 Activities of the Parks and Wildlife Management Authority

1.2.1 Fencing the Whovi Wilderness Area, Matobo National Park

With the primary aim to improve rhino security, a Bonox® fence is being erected around the Whovi section of Matobo National Park. Funds for the project have been sourced from donor agencies, tourism operators, local and international individuals and businesses. The project involves the Park's neighbouring communities, who are providing labour and who will assist with fence patrols once the fence is up. Paul Hubbard, the full-time Project Manager until the end of 2013, provided the following report:

A hundred metres of fencing was erected at the Whitewaters entrance together with a refurbished gate. We have also repaired the main entrance gates as well as the gates to the warden's house at Whitewaters. Exactly 900 m of fence was erected in the Whovi Wilderness Area starting at 35K0642985 / UTM7731087, the six figure reference being 642-310. This is located at a north-western boundary of the Whovi Wilderness Area, close to Bambata Cave. The area was chosen as one of great vulnerability since there was practically no wire or fence left along the valley floor. We collected all the old wire as well as 7 tons of old wooden fence posts, most of which are destined to be used as firewood, donated by National Parks to the surrounding local communities.

Happily, two adult white rhino walked through the middle of our camp while we were on site which was amazing, although almost everyone was asleep at the time! At present the project has been paused while we wait for authorisation and verification of the whole project from the Ministry of Environment and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Please note that the entire management of Parks and Wildlife Management Authority, from the Acting Director-General to the Area Managers are fully supportive of this initiative but there are procedures to be followed in the parent ministry(ies) that were incorrectly completed. With the submission of all relevant material by the Regional Manager, Mr Arthur Musakwa, we should be compliant and able to proceed soon. Just when exactly is not certain at this stage but we shall win through. We have not stopped planning and collecting materials and we need your support and positivity. Please do not stop believing we can and will do this and do it well.

I would like to thank the Parks and Wildlife Management Authority for the chance to work with them and their excellent staff in the Matobo National Park, although no one from that organisation or any others mentioned can be held responsible for opinions expressed and information provided here.

2 Wildlife research and conservation

Activities both within the National Park and in the Matobo Hills as a whole, are ongoing. The projects that DWT is aware of are summarised below.

2.1 Rhino

A priority project for the Matobo National Park (MNP) is monitoring and protecting its black and white rhinos. The Park is not immune to poaching, but the dedication of management and rangers has resulted in relatively few losses in the past couple of years. Support for this important project is provided by a variety of organisations. **SAVE African Rhino Foundation** (SAVE) has entered its 26th year of supporting rhino support in Zimbabwe, and continues to provide field kit, help towards the maintenance of several vehicles, provide funding towards rhino management operations and fund the camera trap survey (see below).

In mid-2011, Parks and Wildlife Management Authority (**PWMA**) and Dambari Wildlife Trust (**DWT**) initiated a project to monitor rhinos using Bushnell TrophyCam® camera traps. Now in its second year, the project has generated invaluable data for MNP management, not just for rhinos but for other mammals present in the Park. There're currently 22 cameras, supplied by **SAVE** deployed in the Game Park and Recreational Section of the Park. So far, 51 species of mammal have been recorded, including 19 species of carnivore and 12 species of antelope.

2.2 Carnivores

2.2.1 Leopard and Brown Hyaena Research

Chipangali Wildlife Trust and **PWMA's** large carnivore project, which seeks to understand the biology of these species in the unique Hills environment, is ongoing.

2.2.2 National Leopard Spoor Survey

PWMA in partnership with **Zambezi Society** and **WildCRU** has been determining leopard population sizes and densities across the country. Matobo National Park will be surveyed this year by **PWMA**, **Chipangali Wildlife Trust** and **DWT**. We look forward to the results, as the Matobo Hills are reputed to have an unusually high density of these large cats.

2.2.3 Small Carnivore Research

In February this year, **DWT** embarked on a survey of the little-known small carnivores (genets, mongooses and the like) in the Matobo Hills, with funding from **The International Foundation for Science**. Historical data of species richness and distributions are currently being collated; to this end, if you have any records of sightings of carnivores in the greater Matobo Hills region, please contact Nicky Pegg (antelope@dambari.com). Project fieldwork will commence in May, and will consist of a questionnaire survey to harness indigenous knowledge about carnivores, corroborated by a camera trap survey. The survey will cover a 70 km by 10 km transect from the Shashani River to the Mtshabezi River and is the first detailed survey of small carnivores in the Hills.

2.2.4 National Cheetah Survey

Cheetah Conservation Project Zimbabwe is carrying out a countrywide survey of cheetahs. In addition to maintaining a database of cheetah sightings and carrying out surveys, the project involves identifying individual cheetahs from photographs, to assist with population estimates. If you have any sighting information or photographs of cheetahs from the Matobo Hills (or elsewhere), especially in the last 5 years, please contact Esther van der Meer (esther@cheetahzimbabwe.org).

2.3 Birds

Bird-associated projects in the Matobo Hills generally fall under the umbrella of the Matabeleland Branch of BirdLife Zimbabwe. The branch is very active, so join up if you wish to become more involved in projects or learn more about birds. Contact Karen Learmonth (afspect@yoafrica.com) for membership details.

2.3.1 Black Eagle and Dassie Surveys

This is the longest-running raptor monitoring project in the World, and is in its 50th year this year! Members of **BirdLife Zimbabwe** (BLZ), Matabeleland Branch monitor nest sites and record chick survival, primarily in the National Park. As part of this project, an annual dassie (hyrax) survey is undertaken to determine the prey base available for the eagles and other predators in the National Park. This is the 21st year for the dassie survey, and the seventh carried out by BLZ members. The dassie count, which entails staking out kopjes frequented by dassies from dawn until mid-morning, is coming up at the end of May.

2.3.2 Raptor Survey

The Matobo Hills have an extremely rich raptor assemblage. **BLZ** maintains a database of any and all raptors sighted in the Hills. If you see (and identify) raptors, please send sightings – complete with GPS locality if possible or a detailed description of the site – to John Brebner (brebnerj@acolchem.co.zw).

2.3.3 Waterfowl Counts

A key **BLZ** project is the monitoring of waterfowl across the country. In January and July each year, the Matabeleland Branch censuses waterfowl at water bodies throughout Matabeleland, including the Matobo Hills.

2.3.4 Southern African Bird Atlas Project (2)

Under the **Animal Demography Unit** of the **University of Cape Town**, a second round of bird atlasing is underway. There is a web portal through which to upload data. For more details and to obtain the “starter kit”, contact sabap2zim@gmail.com and / or have a look at the website (www.sabap2.org). **Note that you do not need to be a member of BLZ to take part.**

2.4 Fungi

2.4.1 School Children’s Indigenous Knowledge Concerning Mushrooms

In an ongoing (and countrywide) project, **Cathy Sharp** is assessing the indigenous knowledge about mushrooms and fungi through getting schoolchildren to “draw a mushroom”. With many thousands of drawings already collected from across the country, the Matobo Hills are to be included in the survey this year. Fascinating data are already evident from the project, indicating that basic species lists can be generated through harnessing indigenous knowledge.

2.5 General Biodiversity

2.5.1 Biodiversity Monitoring Project

In 2012, **DWT** commenced a project to teach secondary school pupils in the Matobo Hills to monitor biodiversity in their areas. This project received sponsorship from **Rufford Small Grants Programme** and **Edgars Stores, Zimbabwe**. Part funding for 2013 has been received from **Edgars Stores, Zimbabwe** and **MCS**. At five schools close to the National Park (Bazha, Matopo Mission, Silozwe, Tohwe and White Waters) conservation clubs were established and children have been given

training in standard, basic biodiversity monitoring techniques. More than 170 pupils were involved in the project in 2012, and with the new intake in 2013, conservation clubs continue to expand. Monitors recorded species they encountered during their daily activities (such as walking to and from school). From this, 15 types of invertebrates, nine bird species, 25 mammal species, seven reptile groups and one amphibian species were recorded by children.

In 2013, we intend to provide materials to children to assist with identification of flora, fauna and fungi. If you have any field guides, booklets or posters that you'd be willing to donate to school libraries, please contact Faraimunashe Mavhiya (education@dambari.com). The focal group for the second school term will be birds, and DWT hopes to partner with volunteers from **BLZ** to teach children about bird identification.

A more detailed study of terrestrial invertebrates (via pitfall traps) was undertaken in partnership with the **Natural History Museum, Bulawayo**. In the four months of sampling over the wet season, more than 2000 specimens, representing 104 species of insect, millipede, arachnid, reptile and amphibian, were collected.

3 Social Projects and Recreational Events

3.1 The Mother Africa Trust Projects

The following summary was provided by Paul Hubbard (Former Project Manager, The Mother Africa Trust (Reg. No. MA172/2011))

The Mother Africa Trust continues to work closely with various schools and charities in the Matobo Hills area. At Fort Usher Primary School a new set of shelving for a library as well as four cases of books, including novels and language texts suitable for children and adults were donated. The school had lacked such materials and the donations were made under the auspices of the Ground Hornbill survey. Whitewaters Primary School received a similar donation. As of March 2013, every window at Whitewaters Primary School has been repaired after damage inflicted by the overly territorial Southern Ground Hornbills, who often attack their reflection as seen in glass. Once repairs were completed, 60 litres of paint were donated to the school with which to apply a light coat of paint to the lower rows of windows in the classroom blocks to reduce the reflection from the glass while still allowing light to pass through. At least 100 litres of paint has been donated to Whitewaters Secondary School for the same purpose. This seems to be a workable strategy to stop the birds from breaking the glass since no avian-induced breakages have been recorded at Whitewaters Primary school since November 2012 when the first windows were painted.

The Trust continues to support Ethandweni Children's Home with both cash inputs as well as work parties to assist with larger projects. The Trust actively collects donations on behalf of the home.

*The Trust and **Camp Amalinda** have donated the cement necessary to make bricks at Matobo Rural District Hospital. The authorities are building a waiting mothers shelter, where pregnant women about to give birth can wait in comfortable surroundings right next to medical attention. Members of the local community are making the bricks and building should start soon. The Trust has also donated wheelchairs for patient use at Nathisa Clinic, Matobo Rural District Hospital and Maphisa Hospital.*

In 2012 several small scale archaeological surveys were carried out in the Matobo Hills. Several new rock art sites were located and recorded in the Matobo Hills World Heritage Site; many that were already known were re-visited and condition surveys performed. All of this information is handed to the National Museums and Monuments of Zimbabwe for inclusion in the National Archaeological Survey.

I would like to thank the Mother Africa Trust for the chance to work with their projects in the Matobo World Heritage Site, although no one from that organisation or any others mentioned can be held responsible for opinions expressed and information provided here.

3.2 Sporting events

3.2.1 3rd Matobo Hills World Heritage MTB Challenge

From 13th to 17th March, 60 cyclists (including several from South Africa and Botswana) took part in this 200 km mountain bike ride that covered the World Heritage Site from its western to its eastern edge. Several of the cyclists reported that they considered it to be the best single-track route they'd ever been on. Look out for this event next year, via **Matobo Conservation Society's** website (www.matobo.org). Funds raised from the event will go towards conservation within the Matobo Hills.

3.2.2 50th "Matopos 33-miler"

After a break of a few years, this ultra-marathon was held on 7th April. A major contributor to the race organisation was **PPC**, as part of its 100 year celebration. A number of other organisations sponsored waterpoints and helped with registration and marshalling. More than 200 runners took part in the marathon, half marathon and fun-run.

3.3 Education and information sharing

3.3.1 Collation of Literature

Information pertaining to all topics that refer to the Matobo Hills is continually databased under the auspices of **MCS**. For more information, use the "contact us" address on the MCS website (www.matobo.org). In addition, **Cathy Sharp** is assisting Geoff Calvert with scanning his literature collection (much of it relevant to the Matobo Hills). Literature pertinent to wildlife / ecology research and conservation is databased by **DWT**. Contact Nicky Pegg (antelope@dambari.com) for more information.

3.3.2 Rowallan Park Education and Adventure Centre

The lease for Rowallan Park has recently been secured by a not-for-profit company, **Later Moved P/L**. At present, the buildings and water facilities are being renovated. The Park will be used for environmental education purposes. The company directors welcome any suggestions on how best the area can be used (for education) to the benefit of the surrounding communities and the Bulawayo public; to this end, please contact Rob Burrett (rburrett@gmail.com).

4 Newsletter Contributors

Thanks to those who provided material for this newsletter:

- Mrs **Adele Edwards** (on behalf of Birdlife Zimbabwe, Matabeleland Branch and Matobo Conservation Society)
- Mrs **Cathy Sharp**
- Mr **Faraimunashe Mavhiya** (Dambari Wildlife Trust's Biodiversity Monitoring Project)
- Dr **Moira FitzPatrick** (Natural History Museum, Bulawayo)
- Mr **Paul Hubbard** (on behalf of National Museums and Monuments of Zimbabwe, The Mother Africa Trust and The Whovi Wilderness Area Fencing Project)
- Mr **Rob Burrett** (Rowallan Park Education Centre)