

THE ZAMBEZI SOCIETY

<http://www.zamsoc.org>

BULLETIN

JULY/AUG 2007

MATUSADONA BLACK RHINO WATERHOLE WATCH

As part of a Rhino Monitoring Management Plan for the Matusadona National Park, developed by the Zimbabwean Parks and Wildlife Authority in collaboration with The Zambezi Society, the Society was asked to assist in estimating the black rhino population in the mountains of the Park, which is an Intensive Protection Zone for these animals. In order to be able to achieve this during the dry winter months, when visibility is best, an intensive, and carefully-focused waterhole count in the Zambezi escarpment mountains above the Matusadona floodplain was organised by The Society during the week 11th - 19th August 2007.



The exercise formed part of The Zambezi Society's 25th year celebrations, and local Society members and their friends volunteered their time, knowledge, vehicles and fuel in extremely challenging circumstances to take part in this unique wilderness and wildlife opportunity.

A total of 98 people took part in the count: 51 Zambezi Society members (including our Director and Rhino Field Coordinator); 3 Zambezi Society trackers; 12 Parks rangers and 32 students from the Zimbabwe National Parks Wildlife Training College at Mushandike, who used the occasion as an important training exercise in bushwork, tracking, data collection and recording.

Zambezi Society teams crossing the Maronga River.
Photo © Duncan Purchase

Some 66 mapped waterhole points were monitored by 22 teams during the four-day period. Each team was accompanied by an armed Professional Hunter or a National Parks Ranger.

Funding to assist with provisions and fuel for the Parks rangers and Wildlife College trainees was generously provided by the SAVE Foundation of Australia, and the donation of a boat and the services of a driver from Marineland in Kariba were most gratefully received.

Although it was of interest to monitor all wildlife coming to drink, participants in the exercise were looking specifically for signs of black rhino - sightings, spoor, middens etc. A total of 27 different animal species, including all the so-called "BIG FIVE" (elephant, lion, leopard, buffalo and black rhino) were recorded (either seen, heard or their spoor identified).

The Society has followed up the exercise with briefings to the Zimbabwe Parks and Wildlife Management Authority and will be preparing a full report once all the data has been fully analysed. In the meantime, The Zambezi Society's rhino Field Coordinator and three trackers based permanently at the Matusadona Park headquarters in Tashinga will be conducting immediate follow-ups on all records of black rhino reported in the mountains during this event. The data indicates the presence of several rhino not previously recorded or tracked by The Zambezi Society in the Matusadona mountains.



Sable antelope in the Matusadona
Photo © Neil Greenway

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Looking for spoor: Matusadona rhino waterhole watch. Photos © Duncan Purchase and Neil Greenway

BRITISH EXPLORER RAISES FUNDS FOR RHINO

The well-known British explorer, Sir Ranulph Fiennes and his family visited the Matusadona Black Rhino Intensive Protection Zone as part of a fund-raising trip to Zimbabwe in August/Sept this year. The Zambezi Society's Field Co-ordinator, Godwin Vhurumuku and two Society trackers based at the Park headquarters at Tashinga spent time with Sir Ranulph, explaining the conservation project and accompanying him on a successful mission to track rhino in the Park. We are grateful to Jenny Nobes of Rhino Lodge for providing our team with accommodation and the opportunity to interact with the explorer during his visit.

At a post-trip fund-raising dinner held for Sir Ranulph in Harare, various donated items were auctioned and a substantial amount of money was raised for three local conservation projects including the Society's Matusadona black rhino programme. We are most grateful to the organiser, Jocelyn Hanssen of Celebrate Africa, to artists Guy Hammond and Wayne Stutchbury who donated a painting and a sculpture respectively, to Sir Ranulph who donated a copy of his latest book, and to Antelope Park who donated a holiday.

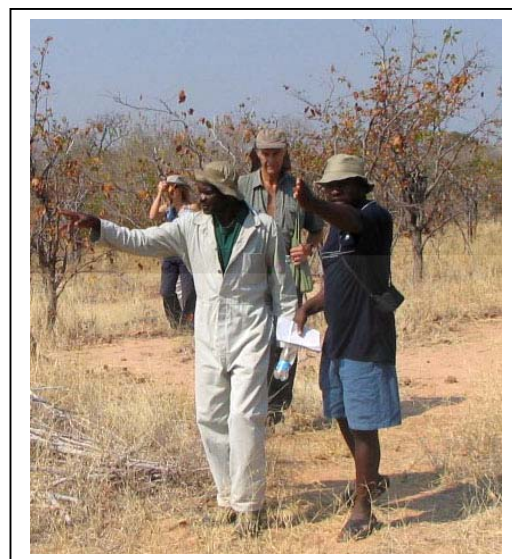


Photo courtesy of Jenny Nobes, Rhino Lodge

RHINO-SUPPORTING SCHOOLTEACHER RETIRES AFTER 20 YEARS

The Zambezi Society would like to pay tribute to Mrs Jenny Mann, Deputy Head Teacher of Chisipite Junior School in Harare, Zimbabwe, who, for more than 20 years, has inspired a generation of schoolgirls to raise funds for and understand the conservation needs of the endangered black rhinoceros in Africa.

Mrs Mann, who is leaving Zimbabwe to join her family in New Zealand, will be sadly missed by the Zambezi Society. Her school environmental education programmes have, since 1987, encouraged every Grade 6 (11-year-old) child in the school to learn about endangered species and to set up their own fund-raising projects to raise money during the holidays specifically for conserving rhinos. Each end-of-year, her Grade 6 classes organise a special school

assembly and rhino open-day to which The Zambezi Society is invited to view a magnificent display of the girls' rhino work and to receive the funds collected. And every year, the sum raised is greater than the last!

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Thanks to Mrs Mann's commitment and efforts, Chisipite Junior School, has consistently given The Society more funds in support of black rhino conservation than any other donor in Zimbabwe or the region.

We wish her well and hope that her colleagues at Chisipite Junior School will continue to be inspired by her example and will maintain the extraordinary conservation education tradition that she developed over so many years.

Mrs Jenny Mann (right) and colleague, Mrs Joylene Malenga, at Chisipite Junior's Rhino Assembly Day 2006

SOCIETY AGM 2007

The Annual General Meeting to celebrate the 25th Anniversary year of The Zambezi Society will be held alongside the Zambezi River at RIFA Educational Camp near Chirundu, Zimbabwe. The date scheduled is Saturday 3rd November 2007. We plan a morning meeting, followed by afternoon/evening special interest walks/talks and activities for that day, followed by a celebration dinner and slide show/presentation in the evening.

We are grateful to the Zimbabwe Hunters Association for allowing us the use of the camp from the Friday afternoon before to the Sunday afternoon afterwards. This means that if members wish to take advantage of a 2-night trip which includes the AGM event on Saturday, they may do so.

However, because of limited space and facilities at RIFA, we will only be able to accommodate about 30 self-catering members either camping or in RIFA's basic "dormitory-style" accommodation. We encourage all local members who have contacts in Chirundu to make use of these to arrange alternative accommodation. (RIFA camp is only a short 5km drive on dirt from the main road turn-off at the Chirundu Hotel.) This way we will be able to welcome more people on the day of the AGM but will not overstretch the camp's overnight facilities.

A formal AGM notice will be e-mailed to you shortly, once we have finalised arrangements. This will include a Booking Form to be completed by everyone intending to attend. Those needing accommodation at RIFA will need to return their completed forms quickly, as the 30 available accommodation places will be allocated on a "first-come-first-served" basis.

SPECIAL NEWSPAPER SUPPLEMENT: CELEBRATING 25 YEARS

To mark The Zambezi Society's 25th Anniversary, we will be publishing an informative, illustrated supplement in The Standard newspaper, outlining our work and acknowledging that we could not have achieved anything for such a sustained period without the loyal support and encouragement of local companies, friends, and colleagues in the environmental field. A Press Release will also be sent to other local and international newspapers.

We would be delighted if you or any company you are associated with would show your support for our conservation work by purchasing advertising space in our supplement.

Please encourage any of your friends and colleagues who have an interest in the future of our magnificent Zambezi natural heritage to come on board with sponsorship.

For more details on advertising rates, please contact Silent Kamambo at The Standard in Harare: E-mail: silentk@zimind.co.zw Tel: (+263 [0]4) 773930-8 or Cell: (+263 [0]9)12 672 374

PLEASE CELEBRATE WITH US AND HELP KEEP THE ZAMBEZI WILD!