

THE ZAMBEZI SOCIETY

BULLETIN

DECEMBER 2005

HAPPY NEW YEAR!

The Board of Trustees, Executive Committee and staff of The Zambezi Society wish you a peaceful and happy year in 2006. The task of conserving the Zambezi basin's unique natural values is a constant challenge. We thank you for your support and hope that you will continue to find the information we send you of interest and, through our Society, to play an active role in helping to promote the conservation of valuable Zambezi biodiversity and wilderness through holistic, basin-wide planning and sustainable development mechanisms.

NEW ZAMSOC UK ONLINE CREDIT CARD PAYMENT SYSTEM

Zambezi Society members and friends, those in the "diaspora" will be pleased to hear that at long last people can now join the Society or spontaneously donate in support of our work, using an International Credit Card, with a simple push of a button on our website. The money is administered through the Zambezi Society's Charity in the UK. Our Projects Director, Duncan Purchase is to be thanked for his tireless work in setting this system up through the reputable and well-established British-based Charities Aid Foundation, an organisation which, we believe, provides the security and accountability that such transactions require. Please have a look at this easy-to-use facility and tell your relatives, friends and colleagues that it is now available on www.zamsoc.org We need support from the outside world more than ever before.

ZAMSOC ACTIVITIES TO FOCUS ON THEMES

At a strategic planning meeting held in the Matusadona National Park in October 2005, it was agreed that the Society's existing objectives encompassing biodiversity and wilderness conservation and the promotion of basin-wide planning and sustainable development for the Zambezi Basin will be retained for the next five years. However a new thematic approach to Zambezi Society fund-raising activities was agreed to complement the Society's traditional advocacy, communication and interpretive roles. In order to focus our fundraising and make it more effective, six project conservation themes were chosen: Black rhino; Elephant; Carnivores; Wilderness; Water/Wetland biodiversity and National Parks Support. Our fundraising will be specifically targeted in these areas and we encourage members and friends to follow our progress on the website at www.zamsoc.org/html/activities.html and to help us with fund-raising by encouraging well-wishers to target donations, through the website, at whichever specific theme is attractive to them.

PROJECTS: NEW OFFICE & RHINO RESEARCHER

The Society has set up a new Projects Office in Bulawayo from which Projects Director, Duncan Purchase will directly administer funding and logistics for the Society's various field projects. As a result, he will be spending more time in an office and less time in the Matusadona National Park overseeing the Black Rhino conservation programme, a task which he has tackled admirably for the past few years. His black rhino fieldwork has been taken over by Godwin Vhurumuku who previously assisted with the Society's research in 2004/5 to monitor the introduced cheetah population in the same park. He will be based at the park's headquarters at Tashinga and will oversee the work of the three specialist trackers employed by the Society to record black rhino movement.

RHINO NEWS

Monitoring: The Society is currently undertaking an intensive rhino monitoring programme in Matusadona National Park in an attempt to visually locate all the rhino in the Park. This is in preparation for a management project where we will immobilise rhinos, ear-notch them and fit radio transmitters in their horns. The monitoring programme is generously supported by Save The Rhino International, who have also made a commitment to contribute to the management project.

Horn implant: In December last year, The Zambezi Society responded to an emergency when one of the male black rhinos (formerly named Shungu) which had been released into the wild from the hand-rearing project, strayed out of the back of the Matusadona park. The rhino was captured and returned to the park and the Society organized for Wildlife Vet, Dr Chris Foggin, to insert a radio tracking transmitter into its horn. Shungu will now need close monitoring to ensure that he does not stray again.

Madonna has child! "Madonna", one of the female black rhinos which also passed through the hand-rearing programme has had her first calf. The two have been sighted on several occasions by the Society's specialist rhino trackers, who have

THE ZAMBEZI SOCIETY

yet to determine the gender of the infant. This is the second new black rhino calf to have resulted from the experimental programme which, during the late 1990s and early 2000s returned a dozen captive-born black rhino to the wild. The first calf was born to “Cleopatra”, another of the programme’s hand-reared animals. As black rhino do not breed easily in captivity, this latest news is a strong indicator that the “return to the wild” experiment has been a success.

CHEETAH NEWS

The Zambezi Society was invited to participate at a regional Global Cheetah Forum meeting in Namibia in December 2005. Unfortunately the rhino horn implant emergency mentioned above meant that we could not attend. Through post meeting correspondence, The Zambezi Society has agreed to assist the World Conservation Union (IUCN)’s Cat Specialist Group with developing a cheetah database from existing information and reports from Mozambique and Zambia. The Society will also contribute information to the Zimbabwean database.

NATIONAL PARKS SUPPORT

The Zambezi Society has been approached by the Zimbabwean Parks and Wildlife Management Authority to provide financial assistance for a meeting to explore the possibility of a Mana Pools/Lower Zambezi Trans-Frontier Conservation Area (TFCA). The Society is now in the process of raising funds for this.

ZAMBEZI SOCIETY IN MOZAMBIQUE

As a result of the Society’s long-standing friendship and association with the Directorate of Tourism in Tete Province, Mozambique, we are about to form an associate branch of the Zambezi Society based in Mozambique. This move is timely and will ensure that we can play a major role in planning and decision-making for the Tete Biosphere Reserve, a major conservation initiative which includes important biodiversity and wilderness areas of the Zambezi basin within Tete Province, Mozambique, and which is funded by a number of international organisations including the Ford Foundation. Members will recall that our four 2005 delegates to the 8th World Wilderness Congress included three Mozambicans. Their participation at this Congress provided some of the inspiration that has resulted in the formation of this new branch which will be based in the town of Tete.

LOCAL DONATIONS AND FUND-RAISING – THANK YOU

The Society wishes to thank its many local members – both individual and corporate, who, despite facing considerable economic challenges, have added generous donations onto their annual membership subscriptions this year. We would also like to thank Harare-based companies *Rooneys* and *Europcar* who very generously funded the reprint of our visitor information leaflets for the Mana Pools National Park, and *Shearwater Adventures* and *Off2Africa* for making donations towards the redesign and reprint of our general Zambezi River visitor information leaflet which should be available later this year. We are very grateful to *Feredays* who made alterations to rucksacks we donated to National Parks anti-poaching scouts in the Doma Safari Area and have not charged us for their efficient service. And we would like to thank both *Lake Crocodile Farm* and *Ume Crocodile Farm* for the generous logistical support that they have given and continue to give to the Society in support of our work in the Matusadona National Park.

Special thanks are also due to:-

a) The girls of Chisipite Junior School in Harare who, faithful as ever (for nineteen years running now!) have once again raised a magnificent sum to help us with our black rhino conservation programme in the Matusadona National Park. Just before Christmas they handed the Society a cheque for Z\$ 83 million (about £600).

b) The 4 x 4 Off-road Sponsored Rhino Rally, conceived and organised by local Zimbabwean member, Pete Jenkins, an avid Land Rover rally driver who, despite the challenges of fuel shortages managed to persuade sponsors to part with a total of Z\$44 million (more than £300) in December 2005 in aid of the Zambezi Society’s black rhino conservation programme.

Visit our website at: <http://www.zamsoc.org>