

THE ZAMBEZI SOCIETY

INTERNATIONAL

BULLETIN

JANUARY 2003

HAPPY NEW YEAR!

The Zambezi Society wishes all its members, friends and associates a peaceful and positive 2003.

CHISIPITE SCHOOL DOES IT FOR RHINOS AGAIN

One of the most enjoyable dates on the Zambezi Society calendar is the annual Chisipite Junior School end of year "Rhino Assembly" in Harare. Last December, two classes of eleven-year-olds presented the Society's Director with a cheque for Z\$316 000 in support of our Black Rhino conservation programme in the Matusadona National Park.

But the thing about all this is that it's not *just* about the money. Thanks to the vision of this delightful school, its headmaster and very dedicated Grade 6 teachers, another 60 young girls were given the hands-on task of focusing on the black rhinoceros as a threatened species, and learning in a very practical way about how to make a difference by spreading awareness and raising money for a conservation need. For 17 years now, the Grade 6 classes have benefited from this experience. This adds up to a very significant contribution by a whole generation of Chisipite Junior schoolgirls to the survival of one of the Zambezi region's most endangered species.

Can any other schools outside Zimbabwe match this achievement?

MONITORING THE MATUSADONA RHINOS

The school's contribution supplements major rhino project funding sourced largely in the UK to employ and equip specialist trackers as part of the Zimbabwean Parks & Wild Life Management Authority's programme to monitor the black rhino population in the Matusadona National Park. Duncan Purchase handles logistics and liaison between the Society and the Management Authority and efficiently oversees the smooth running of this project.

The Zambezi Society (UK) has just purchased a motor boat for use by the Society in implementation of the rhino conservation project. The boat will form a key element in the ability of the Society to meet its support targets. The UK branch is also engaged in renewed fundraising to sustain the gathering momentum of the IPZ project.

However, the killing of several rhinos in the Sinamatella IPZ - and the removal of their horns - sounds a warning we would do well to heed. Though poaching virtually halted during the 1990s, the trade issues involved have never been addressed, and the market for rhino horn is still alive and well. Current levels of rhino protection may prove inadequate to counter a resurgence of poaching driven by growing economic hardship.

FOUR CORNERS WORK BEGINS

The Society has begun work on its contribution to the African Wildlife Foundation (AWF)'s Four Corners Heartland project outlined in our last Bulletin. While our BFA partners are busy collating sources of biodiversity data in this trans-boundary area centred on Victoria Falls, the Society is designing and distributing a questionnaire to assess existing levels of knowledge about biodiversity and its significance among relevant policy-makers and planning authorities in the four countries involved. We are compiling a database of relevant public authorities, NGOs, donors, consultants, scientists, educational institutions and media which we will use to disseminate information and news about the biodiversity of this vast area which roughly includes

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Hwange, Chobe, Moremi, the Caprivi Strip, Kafue and the Zambezi River itself. Members with current regional contacts in the above categories, are encouraged to send us names and address details (preferably with e-mail) for inclusion in the database.

WILDERNESS MANAGEMENT TRAINING

Thanks to generous sponsorship through the South-African based Wilderness Action Group (whom we met at the World Wilderness Congress in 2001), the Society's Executive Officer, Fanuel Mugadza and two community natural resource managers, Alfred Mufunga from Muzarabani and Jonah Chikuni from Guruve were able to benefit from a two week Wilderness Management Training Course held at Lapalala Wilderness in the Northern Gauteng Province of South Africa in November 2002. This course proved to be inspirational for all three participants, who became instant converts to the wilderness conservation cause. The benefits of this course will, we hope, go a long way in spreading awareness about wilderness and its values in the Zambezi region, particularly among communities living in or adjacent to wild areas. We hope to be able to send more participants on future courses in the coming year. Fanuel Mugadza is now working with Society Wilderness Coordinator Sally Wynn to capture community perceptions about Zambezi wilderness and its values as an important adjunct to the Society's 2000 research about how visitors feel about wilderness. The results of this research will form an important base on which the Society can begin to advocate for wilderness conservation legislation and management guidelines.

THE "LIVING WATERS" PROGRAMME

The World Wildlife Fund (WWF)'s Harare office has invited the Society to be its partner in an exercise to identify priority conservation issues within the Zambezi Basin for WWF's global "Living Waters" programme.

The Living Waters programme is focused on issues and problems to do with the world's freshwater resource. These include increasing water scarcity, pollution, and the loss of habitats and biodiversity.

In the Zambezi Basin, rapidly-growing populations combined with forecast declining runoff are likely to present major problems in coming years. Hydroelectric dam management, possible pollution from pesticides, fertilisers, human waste and industrial activity may also pose threats to water quality and aquatic ecosystems, while the degradation of catchments and tributary systems is ongoing in many areas. However, one of the major issues may be inadequate monitoring of key factors such as pollution, river flow and ecosystem health, and thus a lack of information on which to base future conservation actions. These and other topics will be evaluated during the prioritisation exercise.

RESTRUCTURING

The Society still focuses to a considerable extent on Zimbabwean issues. The Matusadona rhinos are one example; the GEF project on biological sites is another. However, recent years have increasingly seen us operating in other Zambezi basin countries. We have worked in Barotseland in Zambia, and in the Zambezi Delta and Tete Province in Mozambique; and our participation in the "Four Corners" project means that our interests now extend into parts of Namibia, Botswana and Angola as well.

We have a professional staff, which seems likely to grow and partnerships with FFI, BFA, AWF and WWF. At the same time, The Zambezi Society (UK), which has charitable status under UK legislation, plays an increasingly crucial role in issues such as fundraising, the development of interest groups in countries such as Japan, and representation in appropriate fora in Europe and elsewhere.

Our operational strategic planning reflects this expansion, but our constitution and structure are still those of a small, voluntary society focused solely on issues within Zimbabwe and established 20 years ago. The Society has changed out of all recognition, and we may need to modify our structure accordingly.

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The AGM endorsed the creation of a Task Force to examine this need, and to recommend any changes it feels may be necessary. The Task Force will consist of Executive Committee members, representatives of Zambezi Society (UK), senior members of staff, and technical representatives, and will be led by the Society's Director.

NEWS FROM ZAMSOC (UK)

With the restructuring of the Society an opportunity arises for head office and the UK to harmonise processes such as book-keeping, membership, and record keeping. The Zambezi Society (UK) has invited the Society's Financial Administrator, Evelyne Sithole, to visit during March in order to develop common systems which satisfy our legal and management needs as well as those of a growing regional and international conservation agency.

UK members know of course that their subscriptions rise in September this year – the first time in over ten years – as part of this harmonization process, and to keep pace with contemporary costs and commitments. We are taking a long term view of the future for conservation in the basin, and continue to depend on your generous support. Thank-you for sticking with us at this time. We remain positive; we know it is worth it.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The Society's AGM was held at the Mukuvisi Woodlands in Harare on 26th November 2002. The Director reported that although the operational and economic environments had been difficult at times, the Society had been able to maintain and continue all its field and other projects, and that the accounts showed a small surplus for the financial year ending March 31 2002.

Some confusion arose over the nominations for the Society's Executive Committee. The nominations received by the Society prior to the AGM were: Anthony Williams; Glyn Jermyn; Rob Blair; Sally Wynn; and Adrian Wilson, with the Director sitting *ex officio*. The nominees were duly elected unopposed. The AGM also supported the creation of a Task Force, as noted above, to examine any possible Society restructuring that may be required in the light of its continued growth and development.

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