

THE ZAMBEZI SOCIETY

BULLETIN

NOV/DEC 2004

SEASONS GREETINGS

The Zambezi Society wishes its valued members and friends within the Zambezi Basin and all over the world a peaceful and happy festive season and all the best for the coming year.

HARARE AGM DELAYED

Due to a number of problems including delays in acquiring audited accounts and unavoidable absences on business, we have not been able to hold the Society's AGM in November as originally planned. Your Committee has therefore decided to schedule the AGM for Thursday 17th February 2005. We apologise for this delay. A formal notice will be sent to you in due course, but meanwhile please diarise this date.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

2004 has generally been a very positive year for your Society. We have successfully completed our component of the AWF "Four Corners" project, and also the GEF-funded Communal Lands Biodiversity Project. We have increased our commitment to black rhino conservation, mostly in the Matusadona Intensive Protection Zone. We have been able to initiate an evaluation of the introduced cheetah population, also in the Matusadona. Several participants from the Parks estate and from Zambezi Valley communal lands have been sent on Wilderness Management Courses in South Africa; and our partnerships and collaborations with FFI, WWF and the Wilderness Action Group have been highly productive.

Within Zimbabwe, we have obviously noted the issues associated with land reform, hunting quotas and the biodiversity scenario on some former commercial ranches and conservancies. On a broader front, however, it is pleasing to report several encouraging developments. In several areas, for example, rhinos are now overstocked and the emphasis has moved from halting declines to seeking secure areas into which animals can be relocated. Despite some media reports to the contrary – and some incidences of poaching – elephant numbers are also healthy to the point of overpopulation in most protected areas.

And, at a Zambezi basinwide scale, the year has finally seen the creation of the Zambezi Basin Commission, responsible for co-ordinating the integrated management of the river basin. The Commission, or ZAMCOM as it is widely known, is still embryonic; but we believe that its creation – and, hopefully, ongoing strengthening – is critical to the effective conservation and management of the basin.

As Director, I have been fortunate in being able to depend on dedicated and motivated staff. My greatest headaches, in common with virtually everyone else, have been the difficulties involved in financial management in a hyper-inflationary environment, in which costs have also doubled and even tripled in hard currency terms. We nevertheless remain financially viable at the time of writing, which is, I suppose, as much as anyone can hope for under the circumstances.

THE ZAMBEZI SOCIETY

PLANNING FOR 2005

The completion of the “Four Corners” project, which has been a major preoccupation for much of 2004, means we can now stand back a little and plan our activities for the coming year. As members will know, we prefer to build on our past track record rather than seek novelty for its own sake, unless there are exceptional reasons for doing so. The one field in which we have little or no capacity and experience, but believe we need to acquire it, is that of potential climate change and its implications for the Zambezi Basin’s natural assets. We are therefore seeking some initial funding to acquire this capacity, and therefore the ability to discuss and propose so-called “coping strategies” should they become necessary, which seems likely. Otherwise –

- We will continue and enhance our support for the Zimbabwean Parks and Wildlife Management Authority’s black rhino management activities. This support is aimed at improving PWMA’s management capacity in the Matusadona Black Rhinoceros Intensive Protection Zone. Our current monitoring programme will be continued; we will support an earnotching operation during the 2005 dry season; and we will also assist with a range of other activities including the improvement of the IPZ’s technical and research infrastructure.
- The results of the cheetah evaluation in Matusadona, whatever they may be, will be written up both as technical papers and for wider non-technical audiences as a contribution to cheetah conservation within the southern African subregion.
- We will develop our capacity to acquire, interpret and disseminate biodiversity information to appropriate stakeholders and planning authorities and hope, in addition, to implement several conservation programmes that have emerged as priorities from past work. These include Zambezi Valley “dry forests”; support for the management of the Zambezi Delta in collaboration with the International Crane Foundation; and zonation and land planning in the Cabora Bassa area.
- We will, subject to the success of funding proposals now with the Global Environment Fund (GEF), continue and develop the Society’s community-based biodiversity conservation programme.
- The Society’s Wilderness Maintenance programme, which appears likely to attract significant funding, will be developed as rapidly as possible and expanded to include protected areas of high wilderness value in several other Zambezi Basin states.
- Through the Zambezi Society UK’s exciting new fund-raising initiative for 2005 – the “Zambezi Action Challenge” - a 10-day canoeing and trekking adventure along the Zambezi River in Zambia (see www.zamsoc.org/html/actionchallenge.htm), the Society hopes to initiate protection assistance for key Zambezi areas such as the river’s source at Mwini Lunga and its delta in Mozambique.

At the same time, we will maintain the flexibility required to respond to urgent issues should they arise during the year. In short, we neither intend nor expect to be underworked during 2005.

THE ZAMBEZI SOCIETY

BLACK RHINO

Recent CITES proposals by southern African range states to initiate limited sport hunting quotas for rhinos aroused a good deal of hostility, mostly among the European and US-based NGOs that have consistently opposed all forms of utilisation of African wildlife. The issue was, as ever, compounded by a failure – whether deliberate or otherwise - on the part of several of these NGOs to differentiate between sport hunting and products trade, which are very distinct issues. As it happens, only the Namibian application was successful; but we can certainly expect further such proposals at future CITES conferences.

The technical issues may be complex, but the underlying principle is very simple: until and unless wealthy countries are prepared to make more than token financial acknowledgments of the “existence values” of large African mammals, range states are entitled to make whatever arrangements they see fit to ensure their conservation. It is already somewhat surprising, in view of the consistent history of antagonism surrounding their proposals, that these states have not as yet seceded from the CITES Convention.

Chisipite Junior School does it again for Rhino

The Grade 6 girls of Chisipite Junior School in Harare, Zimbabwe and their teachers have once again undertaken their annual fund-raising exercise and have this year presented the Society with an incredible Z\$11 million (roughly equivalent to about US\$1800 or £920) for black rhino conservation in the Matusadona IPZ. This is a truly extraordinary feat given the economic circumstances in Zimbabwe. We congratulate them on their sustained efforts and challenge schools elsewhere to match their dedication.

STAFFING

We have accepted, with regret, Fanuel Mugadza’s resignation from the Society with effect from December 31 2004. He intends to undertake private consultancies, focused largely on community-based conservation, and it is possible that the Society will continue to make use of his services on this basis as and when appropriate. We also congratulate him on his achievement of an MSc on Strategic Business Management through the University of Derby, an endeavour in which the Society has supported him during the past two years.

MEMBERSHIP SUBSCRIPTIONS FINAL REMINDER!

THIS IS A FINAL REMINDER TO ALL PAYING MEMBERS TO RENEW THEIR SUBSCRIPTIONS FOR THE 2004/2005 MEMBERSHIP YEAR. RENEWAL FORMS WERE SENT OUT WITH THE LAST BULLETIN. IF YOU HAVE NOT ALREADY RENEWED, PLEASE COMPLETE THE FORM AND FORWARD YOUR PAYMENT TO US BEFORE 31 DECEMBER 2004. IF WE DO NOT RECEIVE YOUR RENEWAL BY THIS DATE, WE WILL ASSUME YOU NO LONGER WISH TO REMAIN A MEMBER AND WILL REMOVE YOUR DETAILS FROM OUR MAILING LIST IN THE NEW YEAR. PLEASE E-MAIL IF YOU HAVE ANY QUERIES.

HONORARY MEMBERS PLEASE IGNORE THIS.

LIFE MEMBERS, PLEASE FEEL FREE TO MAKE A DONATION. THANK YOU.

Visit our website at: www.zamsoc.org