

THE ZAMBEZI SOCIETY'S HISTORICAL SERIES.

EPISODE 11: A generation of conservation awareness at Chisipite Junior School, Harare

November 2022

In 2022, The Zambezi Society (Zamsoc) celebrates 40 years of conserving the precious wilderness and wildlife resources of the Zambezi River.

To mark this important milestone in our history, our series of historical features highlights significant events and conservation achievements that we're proud of, spanning the four decades since the Society's formation in 1982. We are sharing these on our Social Media Instagram and Facebook platforms, with videos on You Tube, on our website and in a special Historical Series of Bulletin mailouts.

EPISODE 11: A GENERATION OF CONSERVATION AWARENESS AT CHISIPITE JUNIOR SCHOOL, HARARE

The Zambezi Society's 40 years of operation cannot pass without us highlighting the quite extraordinary achievements of a whole generation of 11-12 year-old schoolgirls at [Chisipite Junior School](#).



For 35 years, the head, teachers and Grade 6 students of this little school in Harare have set aside mid-year classroom and holiday time to creating awareness about the value of their country's vulnerable wildlife species, including rhinos, elephants and other wild animals, and to draw attention to the threats that these animals have faced for decades from poaching and the illegal trade in their body parts (horn, ivory, bones, scales etc).

Not only do the children learn about these animals and the threats that they face, but they are then encouraged during the winter holidays, to form groups and design creative ways to attract public interest and persuade people to make donations to help protect and conserve endangered wildlife.

Each year, for the past 35 years, the proceeds of their efforts have been handed over to The Zambezi Society and have made a very substantial contribution towards helping to protect Africa's precious wildlife resources into the future.

Below is a little collection of historic memories of the Chisipite Junior schoolchildren showcasing their fundraising efforts or presenting their proceeds to various members of The Zambezi Society over the years!



But it's not just about becoming aware and raising money. It's also about the extremely valuable life-skills that this kind of educational exercise fosters in a whole generation of young Zimbabweans. Whether it's organising and manning a stall to sell cakes, sweets or hand-made gifts, dog-walking, persuading companies to donate prizes for a raffle or an auction, selling the tickets, convincing your uncle to hold a golf day in aid of your cause, helping to organise it, accounting for the money all these are activities that involve important skills which you may not otherwise learn at school.

A whole generation of Chisipite Junior School students have benefitted from thinking outside themselves and devoting effort and time to a cause that they consider worthwhile supporting.

And now, some of those who were first inspired to support wildlife conservation at Chisipite Junior School are themselves seeing their own children become inspired to do the same thing at the same school!

We owe particular thanks to the many many years of dedication and commitment shown by Chisipite Junior School's former Headmaster, Allan Mayger (pictured below left leading a "Save the Rhino" assembly) Mrs Jenny Mann (below right) who introduced this wonderful initiative in the late 1980s and the Grade Six teachers (some of them pictured below over the years). Zamsoc looks forward very much to a strong and continued relationship with Chisipite Junior School's new Head – Miss Kirsten Lightfoot, the teachers and the girls in the years to come.



Here (below) are a few highlights and historic images which may bring back memories for the Chisipite Junior fundraisers.

In 1997, a group of Chisipite Grade Six students made a trip with their parents to the Matusadona National Park to visit the first young rhinos introduced into the Park which had been declared a Black Rhino Intensive Protection Zone. The Zambezi Society visited while they were there and photographed the girls with the rhino babies and Park Warden at the time, Zephaniah Mukatiwa (see below).



This was the start of a long relationship between Chisipite School Grade 6 and the rhinos of the Matusadona. For more than 16 years the students supported the efforts of the Zambezi Society to assist ZimParks in protecting a small population of rhinos in this park. This included several which were born at Imire Game Ranch near Harare and translocated into the Matusadona where, after spending some time in specially-built bomas, being monitored carefully, they were then released into the wild.

Some of these introduced rhinos went on to have babies themselves and in 2007, in small recognition of the substantial contribution that Chisipite Junior School had made to the rhino conservation project for the previous 20 years, the Zimbabwe Parks and Wildlife Authority and Zamsoc decided to name one of the rhino calves CHISI and asked them to choose a name for another one. They chose MURUME – he is pictured below with his mother, Mvura, in 2007 and 2009.



Several more calves were born to black rhino mothers in the wild in the Matusadona, but very sadly the deteriorating economic situation in Zimbabwe meant that protecting the population of these animals in the wild became more and more difficult. With the help of funding from Chisipite Junior and other donors, the remaining few rhinos were ear-notched for identification purposes and the Zambezi Society used camera traps to monitor their movements (see the images below). But in the end, the battle against rhino poaching was tragically lost.



In the next few years, until November 2019, when international conservation organisation [African Parks](#) entered into a partnership with ZimParks to co-manage the Matusadona National Park, The Zambezi Society continued to provide support for protecting the remaining elephants and other wildlife resources in the Park by assisting the [Matusadona Anti-Poaching Project \(MAPP\)](#), and [Flying for Wildlife](#) which started aerial monitoring of wildlife populations.

Zamsoc funding (including that provided by Chisipite Junior School) helped to provide rewards for information leading to poaching arrests, fuel and vehicle support for anti-poaching ranger deployment, operational support, ranger food supplies and fuel for accessing camera traps.

Significantly, the continued funding provided by committed Zimbabweans (included Chisipite Junior) helped to unlock international funding for Zamsoc to purchase an earth-moving machine which helped to open up internal roads in the Matusadona National Park for ranger anti-poaching access.

To this day, Chisipite Junior School continues to raise funds for the Zambezi Society's conservation activities, which have moved focus to other areas of the Zambezi Valley including Mana Pools and the Charara Safari Area east of Lake Kariba. In November 2022, the Zamsoc team was delighted to visit the school to receive the proceeds of their annual fundraising and to show the Grade 6 pupils a new Virtual Reality programme which is currently being trialled to foster wildlife awareness and appreciation among schoolchildren in rural areas living next to National Parks, where human wildlife conflict is a big challenge. They were fascinated!



The Zambezi Society cannot express its gratitude enough to the Head, teachers and Grade Six students of Chisipite Junior School for their incredible, long-term commitment to supporting our wildlife conservation programmes. We salute them and look forward to the next 35 years!

IF YOU ARE ENJOYING READING OUR ZAMBEZI SOCIETY HISTORICAL SERIES, AND WOULD LIKE TO MAKE A CONTRIBUTION TO HELP US ACHIEVE MORE IN OUR NEXT 40 YEARS, PLEASE MAKE A DONATION VIA THIS LINK:-

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