



Dambari Wildlife Trust's Matobo Biodiversity Monitoring Project Newsletter

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Editorial

Dear Conservation Partner

After a bleak start to the 2016/17 rainy season, we are thankful for the sudden positive shift of the situation which gave us plenty of rain in the Matobo Hills. Some water bodies, which had been virtually empty, filled up again and even overflowed, giving our wildlife and people ample water to drink. The rains also facilitated the abundance of vegetation for our wildlife and enhanced the beauty of our beloved Matobo Hills. However, there was some excessiveness to this rain, which brought with it some challenges. Many roads and bridges were damaged and were sometimes overflowing with water, presenting us with difficulties in accessing the communities in which our participating schools are located, but in spite of this challenge, we strove hard to reach the biodiversity monitors and managed to visit each school as scheduled. I hereby present to you the 1st issue of the 6th volume of our newsletters. Happy reading!

Cedric Maforimbo

Field Education Officer

Now in its sixth year, the Matobo Biodiversity Monitoring Project (MBMP) works with five rural schools close to Matopos National Park, with the aim to encourage long-term, community-driven biodiversity monitoring through raising awareness and providing pupils with the necessary skills set to take into their communities. Since 2012, more than 930 pupils have participated in the project.



MBMP Field Education Officer Cedric Maforimbo shows biodiversity monitors at Bazha Secondary School a compass and explains how it works.



Matopo High School biodiversity monitor Minenhle Khumalo explains the functionality of a Six's Minimum/Maximum thermometer.



Biodiversity monitors at Tohwe Secondary School label woody plant specimens which they had mounted onto card.



Biodiversity monitors measure the distance of a young tree from a transect point during the use of the PCQM at Silozwe High School.



Another teaching method we use is the screening of wildlife documentaries. Above, biodiversity monitors at Silozwe High School watch "Cheetah Kingdom".

Recruitment

On the first visit to each of our participating schools in January 2017, we delivered a talk that was aided by visual slides to all form 3s which detailed the objectives and activities of our biodiversity monitoring and conservation clubs. Thereafter, we invited all interested pupils to register for our club, and 236 pupils signed up across all five schools. They form the 2017/18 cohort which joined 144 pupils remaining in the clubs from the 2016/17 cohort. The latter cohort are in their final year of being in the club.

Biodiversity Monitoring Methods

With the aid of a handbook for ecological monitoring methods which we custom-made for the biodiversity monitors commensurate with their ages, we delivered a lecture, which was tied in with a discussion, on the various methods that are used to collect biodiversity data. We then took the biodiversity monitors into the field (their school areas) to show them, demonstrate the use of and give them the opportunity to practice using various biodiversity monitoring equipment which included Geographical Positioning System receivers, compasses, binoculars, thermometers, soil augurs and biodiversity field guide books.

Herbarium Project

Since 2013, the biodiversity monitors have been collecting and pressing specimens of leaves, flowers, fruits, bark, pods and seeds of various woody plants using plant presses that we donated to each school. Thereafter, they mounted these specimens onto card and the specimens form a herbarium collection which is currently housed at Dambari Field Station. This work, whose aim is to generate a species inventory of the different tree species that are found in the communities that surround their schools, was continued into the first term of 2017.

Woody Plant and Insect Monitoring

The biodiversity monitors have also, since 2015, been collecting data that has been used to determine tree density, diversity and dominance along transects in or near their schools using the Point Centered Quarter Method (PCQM). They collected this data again in the first term of 2017. The biodiversity monitors at each school also continued pitfall trapping which they had been using to monitor insects and other invertebrates throughout the each rainy season since 2012 in a Joint Dambari Wildlife Trust/Natural History Museum of Zimbabwe Project.

Learning Aids and Awareness

As we have done in each school term since 2014, we produced attractive and informative species identification cards which were themed upon vegetation (particularly grasses and trees) as they were the focus of the 1st term of 2017. These cards, which had pictures accompanied by text, featured 12 species of trees and 12 species of grasses that occur in the Matobo Hills, highlighting their key identification features, ecology and uses. We have also produced a poster in celebration of World Pangolin Day (18 February 2017) which conscientises the communities of the Matobo Hills on the plight that pangolins face and encourages these communities to conserve them, given their important role in the ecosystem and the stringent legal repercussions of taking them out of nature.

Art Corner

Cover page drawing produced by Bhekisipho Nyatumbu of Bazha Secondary School.



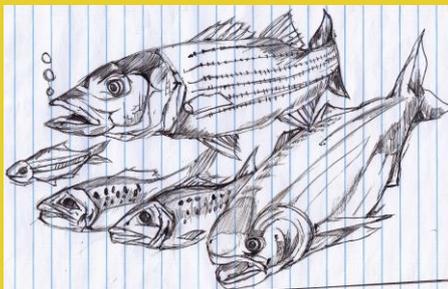
Snake on tree by Ntokozo K Hadebe, Tohwe Secondary School



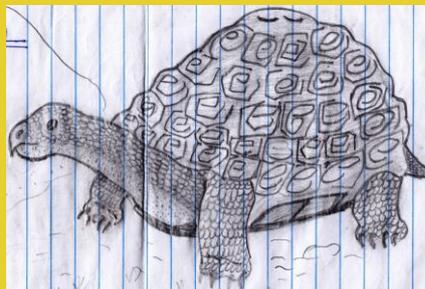
Secretary bird by Shawn E Moyo, Bazha Secondary School



Baboon by Seagirl Ncube, Bazha Secondary School



Fish by Melusi J Ndlovu, Tohwe Secondary School



Tortoise by Diligent Sibanda, Silozwe High School



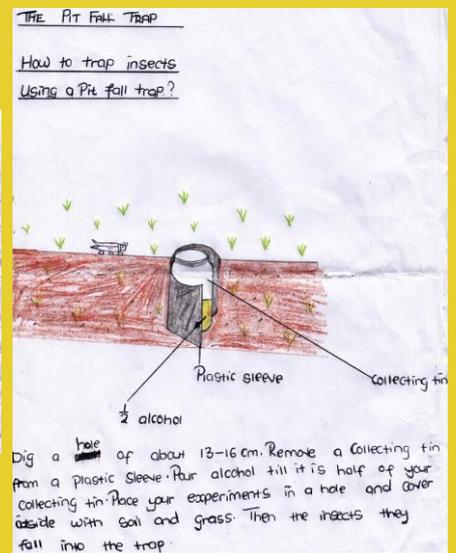
Grey Heron by Mthulisi Ncube, Bazha Secondary School



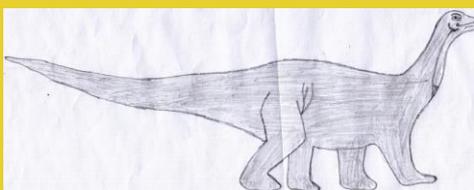
Bateleur Eagle by Eric Nkala, Bazha Secondary School



Nesting bird by Nicholas Nkomo, Bazha Secondary School



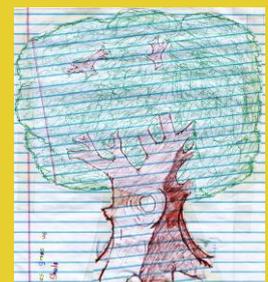
Lindiwe Sibanda, Bazha Secondary School, illustrates what she learnt from the just ended pitfall trapping season.



Dinosaur by Felicity Tshuma, Bazha Secondary School



Rhino by Ndimiso Mhlanga, Bazha Secondary School



Tree by Melody Ncube, Bazha Secondary School

Literary corner

What is a Tree

A tree is everything that is good
 Food and drink, free for the taking
 Wood that smells of the forest to build
 your home
 Shade for the hot days of summer
 Fire for the cold winter nights
 But more than that, trees are the most
 beautiful

Langelihle Ndlovu, Bazha Secondary School

Stop Poaching: Let us be Proud of our Wildlife

Why are some people so unwise? They want our country's tourism to be attractive and they want foreign currency for the country but they poach and destroy wildlife. If people continue poaching, surely how many animals will be available after 30 years? If there are no animals, what will be there for people to see and enjoy? Let us conserve our wildlife so that different people from different countries visit and bring development, for example, more hotels and restaurants will be opened.

Nicholas Nkomo, Bazha Secondary School

Indaba Ekhuluma Ngemvelo (A Poem About Veld Fire in the Local IsiNdebele Language)

Maye! maye! bantu bakithi maye!
 Maye! maye! ngikhalela inyamazana
 zikaThixo elizitshiselayo zisencane
 zingakwazi umlilo lokutsha. Zingakakwazi
 ukubaleka lokudla. Lina liqala ukuzitshisela
 ngenxa yenyama lezihlahla. Lifuna ukubona
 obhejane egcekeni lithathe impondo zabo
 kodwa kaliboni ukuthi libulala ilizwe lethu,
 libulala indawo yethu, umhlaba wethu wonke.

Bantu beAfrica, beZimbabwe, akelizwele
 izinyamazana zikaThixo wazidala laye ebona
 kufanele ukuthi zibekhona.

**Sibusiso Khumalo and
 Sisa Ndlovu, Silozwe High
 School**

Vegetation

Without vegetation we are nothing
 Genesis 1:29-30 says,
 “²⁹Then God said, ‘Here I have given you
 every seed bearing plant that is on the entire
 earth and every tree with seed-bearing fruit.
 Let them serve as food for you.

³⁰And to every wild animal of the earth and to
 every flying creature of the heavens and to
 everything moving on the earth in which there
 is life, I have given all green vegetation for
 food.’ And it was so.”

The scripture clearly stated the importance of
 vegetation. So why do people destroy this
 vegetation? Let's use it wisely and preciously
 conserve it, because all living organisms rely
 on vegetation.

Bhekisipho Nyatumbu, Bazha Secondary School

A Bush Fire

Imagine a bush fire
 Listen to the flames
 Crackling as they consume the grass
 Smell the burning bush
 Watch the curling smoke
 And feel the fierce heat on your cheeks
 Then think, think of the tiny creatures trapped

Michelle Mpfu, Silozwe High School

A Short Testimonial

Everytime I saw the Dambari Wildlife Trust vehicle arrive at Bazha Secondary School, I watched in confusion as my friends went there for meetings. I asked them what Dambari was, and all they said was that it was about conserving wildlife. I then asked myself why we should conserve wildlife when our forefathers were hunters. But now I thank Dambari people because I now understand. Thank you Dambari.

Contact us:

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**Nicholas Nkomo,
 Bazha Secondary School**

Thanks to the MBMP donors and supporters!

