



Dambari Wildlife Trust's Matobo Biodiversity Monitoring Project Newsletter

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Editorial

Dear Conservation Partner

I sincerely hope this newsletter finds you in good spirits as you look forward to the spring season in which the days are warmer. Consequently, animals which were in hibernation will emerge, giving us more sightings of these beautiful creatures, and trees will begin to flower again, decorating the earth with their beautiful colours. The biodiversity monitors (pupils) who are now in form four will be leaving our conservation club now, in order for them to concentrate on preparing for their Ordinary Level public exams. I would like to take this opportunity to remind them what my Deputy Headmaster at high school always used to say, "If the Jacaranda tree blooms before you begin serious study for your November examinations, you will be in serious trouble!" As such, they should "make hay whilst the sun shines" and make us proud with good results! This newsletter details the activities and artistic contributions of the biodiversity monitors in the second term of 2015. I hope you enjoy reading it.

Cedric Maforimbo

Field Education Officer

We are now in the fourth year of the Matobo Biodiversity Monitoring Project (MBMP). We continue to work with five 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 500 pupils have participated in the project.



The Field Education Officer and staff from the Museum show biodiversity monitors some birds.



Biodiversity monitors at Silozwe High scavenge for invertebrates to classify.



Dambari attachment student Lorraine Tokwe explains to biodiversity monitors how to fill in bird sighting charts.



Biodiversity monitors at Matopo Mission High proudly hold up the following materials from left to right; Wildlife and Environment Zimbabwe's Bushbeat Magazine, the Ecological Methods Manual, the 1st term 2015 newsletter and the feedback poster.

Birding

As the second school term of the year is traditionally our birding term, we kicked off this season by giving the biodiversity monitors an introductory talk aided by powerpoint slides on birds. This talk encompassed topics on the importance of birds in our ecosystem, how birds are identified, and gave more detail on some invasive, threatened and culturally-significant birds. Thereafter, with the assistance of Boneface Magwizi of the Natural History Museum's ornithology department, we took the biodiversity monitors on bird nature walks with an emphasis on birds.

Workshops on Biological Classification of Organisms

We held two workshops in the second term in which we trained the biodiversity monitors on how living organisms are classified. We gave them an introductory talk on the subject then sent them out on scavenger hunts for living organisms which they later had to identify, with reasons, and classify with justifications. This initially challenged the monitors' intellect as they, for example, had to justify why they said a butterfly was a butterfly and not any other organism. With some guided examples, they soon grasped the concept.

Biodiversity Data Collection

As the biodiversity monitors have conventionally done in the birding term of their year, sightings of 7 species of threatened, invasive or culturally significant birds were recorded on bird charts. The monitors also administered questionnaires to homesteads in their communities on the livestock disease situation as influenced by the current status of ox-peckers. Over and above this, the monitors continued to make their recordings of ad-hoc sightings of living organisms.

Learning Aids and Awareness Material

In order to inform the Matobo communities on the outcome of their efforts in collecting biological data since the inception of the programme, we designed a feedback poster which detailed the status and trends of some of the natural resources in their areas. We also produced an awareness poster which had information on various methods which the pupils can employ to make their school yards and domestic gardens bird-friendly, which would be doing good for their ecosystem and enabling them to learn more about birds at the same time. Also, because of the challenging nature of distinguishing raptors and the importance of waterbirds, we developed pocket-sized identification cards for the biodiversity monitors in order to hone their skills in bird identification. These cards highlighted 16 raptor species and 12 waterbird species.

Art Corner



Grey lourie by Ndimiso Mhlanga, Bazha Secondary



Toucans by Nhanisi Maphosa, Matopo Mission High



Bird by Mlungisi Ngwenya, Bazha Secondary



Lilacbreasted roller by Ndimiso Mhlanga, Bazha Secondary



Raptor by Admire Tshalibe, Bazha Secondary



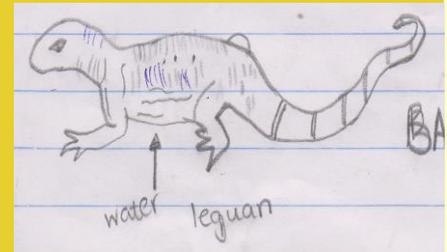
Parrot and sunbird by Ndimiso Mhlanga, Bazha Secondary



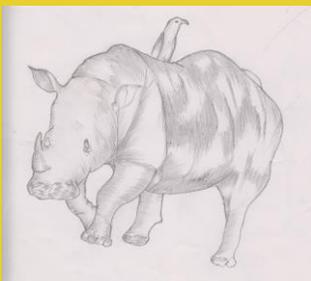
Frog by Langelihle Sibanda, Matopo Mission High



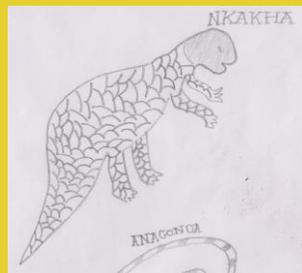
Bee on flowers by Nomandla Tshuma, Matopo Mission High



Water leguan (monitor) by Sanele Sibanda, Bazha Secondary



White rhino with oxpecker by Admire Tshalibe, Bazha Secondary



Pangolin by Mlungisi Ngwenya, Bazha Secondary



Snake by Nkosinathi Ngulube, Bazha Secondary

The picture on the cover of this newsletter was produced by Gabriella Makandidze of Matopo Mission High School.

Poems

Conservation Saved my Soul

Such beauty the world used to hold
Lush of green forest untouched by man
A nation was born but eliminated
I had an ice-block for a heart
I slashed every species
Shot every animal to perfect aim
I delighted when cutting their limbs
I shivered in satisfaction when they screeched
Destruction was my motto
I eliminated what came my way

Conservation became my motto
My heart has learnt to melt
Evil is being eradicated
Dambari saved my soul
Don't judge me for my past actions
But judge that monster that was in me

By Lizzie Zikali, Silozwe Secondary School

Mother Nature

The back-bone to life
The fountain of life
The river of life
The absolute perfection
It's hard to think what we could have done
What we could have lived for
Mother nature, the mother of all creations

The wind blowing to and from all directions
The waters flowing to unknown destinations
The clouds swaying from different directions
The trees swinging, how beautiful!!
You call it beauty, but I like to call it beauty
PLUS!

By Nothabo Nonhlanhla Ndlovu, Matopo Mission High School

The Reason to Smile

A reason to smile
Birds chirping and twittering
A melody in the morning

A reason to smile
Black bees buzzing
A cheerful song

A reason to smile
The waving trees
Bowling greens at the sun

A reason to smile
Clouds swimming in the sky
Clumps of cotton candy

By Lizzie Zikali, Silozwe High School

Nature

I wonder how it all happens
The wind blowing invisible
The flowers blooming on their own
The sun shining in a magnificent manner
All are the beautiful wonders of nature

Butterflies fly in the wonderful, scented lands
Birds flap their wings high up in the clear sky
With no feeling of intimidation
Summer, Autumn, Winter and the most beautiful
Spring take turns
To display their beauty without being remote
controlled

Nature is medicine to the heart, hope to our souls
and most importantly the beauty of our own world

By Beverly Komani, Matopo Mission High School

Poems

Trees

Trees, trees, trees
 Oh! How nice you are
 Our world is made beautiful
 Because of you trees
 Today many species of wild animals
 Feed on you

We humans get fruits such as *Matohwe* and
Musekesa from you
 And we get foreign currency because of you
 Foreigners are now coming to see you
 beautiful trees
 During my leisure time
 I always go and rest under your shade
 Trees, trees, trees
 I like you trees

By Magret Katsande-Dube, Bazha Secondary
 School

Animals

What can we do without animals
 Animals make this earth beautiful
 Not forgetting plants
 They are also beautiful
 They give us oxygen and food

Plants, plants, plants
 We breath oxygen that you give us
 Without you we cannot live
 Plants and animals,
 You are a good blessing to us

By Nomandla Tshuma, Matopo
 Mission High School

Prose

Keeping our Environment Clean at All Costs

Most human beings are totally unaware of the issue they are causing themselves by being irresponsible. So many human activities such as shifting cultivation pollute the air as it requires the clearing of land by burning. Most humans may take this as a method that is quicker and easier but it is also a disadvantage because the deforestation and burning causes soil erosion and the killing of decomposers which recycle nutrients back into the soil and this also results in the land being infertile.

Deforestation leads to global warming resulting in sea levels rising as polar ice is melted resulting in flood. Also, since carbon dioxide is no longer used up by the plants as they will have been cut during deforestation, there is excessive carbon dioxide in the atmosphere. People should therefore try to replace (afforestation) each tree they cut down to reduce the rate of air pollution.

I could go on and on but the main thing people should be aware of is that actions speak louder than words so they should start showing how much they care for the future of mankind. As a youth in this generation, I would like to encourage fellow humans that even though you have made these mistakes of polluting our special land, it does not mean that you can't try to make a better ending.

By Tatenda Nyambara, Matopo Mission High School

Our Pride as Africans

A vulture, an African bird. A symbol of us, Africans. Let's keep it safe for the future Africa. The long nails represent our long lasting life and its black colour represents us, the black people. It takes me and you to be a role model worthy to be emulated by others. It is part of me and you so let's keep it, protect it and conserve it for the next generation. It is our PRIDE.

By Gugulethu Moyo, Matopo Mission High School

Prose

The Owl's Plea

Help! I'm tired because people say I am a witch. How can I show them that I was a bird that was created by God? I'm here also to balance the ecosystem. I can't loiter in the afternoon because even the small birds chase me away. When children see me, they pull their catapults towards me to chase me away. Hooting at night seems to be a crime as people then use salt and other charms to chase me away. When I hoot near a house, they say I have come with witches. I thank conservationists, maybe I can be protected.

By Yolanda Ncube, Whitewater High School

The Beauty of Wildlife

The beauty of wildlife can be viewed from a number of perspectives. Some see the beauty in the co-habitation of wild animals. Others appreciate wildlife in the graceful birds that rule the sky. Many others are grateful to nature for the existence of aquatic life, flowers and trees which satisfy man's thirst for giving pleasure to the eye. Wild animals have, since time immemorial, attracted the attention of man. Apart from the antelope family which has graceful beauty, there are other land animals which display characteristics that are fascinating to man.

Birds have also staked a claim on man's attention. Various kinds of birds, especially those which have exceptional physical features, draw hundreds of tourists to watch them. Bird viewing has become such an interesting sport that some people with an uncanny interest in birds have come to be known as ornithologists. The variety of birds in Africa alone have a wide spectrum of colour. The most celebrated are the vivid colours of the Kingfisher and the soft pink colour that is characteristic of the Flamingo.

By Faith Ngwenya, Silozwe High School

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Thanks to the MBMP donors and supporters!

