



# Dambari Wildlife Trust's Matobo Biodiversity Monitoring Project Newsletter

VOLUME 4 ISSUE 1

April 2015

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## Editorial

Dear Conservation Partner

I hope you had a fantastic Easter holiday. Just as we thought the rainy season was over, we finally got rains after the long dry spell and we are thankful for them. At least our wildlife and livestock will get some foliage to browse and graze on. I also hope you have kept yourselves warm from the cold that has come along with the rains. I hereby present to you the first issue of this year's newsletters which reports on the activities of our five conservation clubs in the first school term. Happy reading!

*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.*



Pupils proudly hold up the Ecological Methods Handbook. The green card held by the pupil who is second from left is a species identification card highlighting *Azanza gackeana*.

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*Did you know?*

*Once some species of trees such as Acacia karoo are attacked, they can "signal" to other nearby trees to also start their self-defence before they are attacked such as by producing chemicals that make them distasteful.*

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Field Officer Cedric Maforimbo refreshes the conservation club members about quadrats and how they function.



Pupils arrange their pressed plants on bond paper in preparation for mounting it on.

## Recruitment

We recruited a new cohort of form 3s to join the old members who are now in form 4. Two hundred and six pupils from all 5 schools signed up for the club. This half of the year is therefore a mix of old and new club members, which assists with skills transfer from the old hands to the new recruits.

## Learning Aids and Awareness

We updated the Ecological Methods Handbook for Schools, which we had developed in 2012, by including more methods that the pupils learn about and use and also by expanding on the methods that were initially included. We also produced a set of identification pocket cards highlighting 12 tree species and 12 grass species commonly found in the Matobo Hills. The cards are A6 sized, double-sided and laminated and bear a colour picture of the species, key identification features and ecological information on the plant species. In observance of Africa Environment Day (which fell on the 3rd of March) as well as the life of Wangari Maathai, a Kenyan environmental activist, we created an awareness poster.

## Introduction to vegetation

We gave the pupils an introductory talk on vegetation. In this talk, which was aided by a powerpoint slides beamed on the wall, we spoke about the importance of vegetation, characteristics of plants, the features which distinguish trees from grasses and spoke about some common tree and grass species found in the areas of the pupils' schools.

## Data collection

In preparation for the term's data collection on vegetation, the pupils were taken through a refresher of the methods used to collect ecological data. Thereafter, we taught them in class how the Point Centre Quarter Method, which collects dominance and diversity data on trees, works. We then provided them with a tape measure and pegs and assigned them to put into practice what they had just been taught, under our supervision. The pupils did one transect at each school. In-between our visits, we assigned them to do another transect in their extra time. The pupils were keen to do so. We are yet to take the pupils at Tohwe Secondary School through the exercise as we constantly encountered timetable clashes.

## Herbariums

In the duration of the term, the pupils collected leaves, seeds, barks, fruits and flowers of various trees which they encounter in their areas and pressed them in plant presses in order to make herbariums.

## Pitfall trapping

The pitfall trapping project was continued into this year and has come to an end as the rainy season is ending. Staff from the Natural History Museum's entomology department, who have assisted us on the project, have identified insects collected late last year and are currently working on identifying those that have been collected this year.

**Art and Literary Corner**

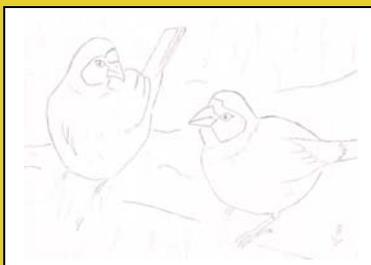
**Konke Kuhle loba Kwehlukene  
(The Beauty of Biodiversity)**

Muhl'umhlaba lo  
Izihlahla ziluhlaza tshoko  
Lotshani butshokozile buhle  
Amaluba lawo mahle  
Ngemibalabala yawo ehlukeneyo  
Wonke mahle lob'ehlukene

Ngaphandle kwezihlahla  
Kulenyamazana lezinanakazana  
Lazo ngokwehlukana kwazo  
zinhle

Abansundu labamhlophe  
bayawubuka umhlaba  
Abamhlophe uzwa bethi,  
"Oh! A beautiful and wonderful  
world,  
full of animals, grasses and  
trees"  
Abansundu bathi bona,  
"E! UNkulunkulu walithanda  
ilizwe lakhe  
waze wali cecisa ngezihlahla,  
utshani  
lenyamazana."

By Langelihle Ndlovu, Bazha  
Secondary School



Red bishops by Ndumiso Mhlanga,  
Bazha Secondary School



Kudu under a tree by Admire  
Tshalibe, Bazha Secondary School



Left, Swainson's  
spurfowl by Melvin  
Nyama and right,  
crocodile by Fiona  
Ndlovu, both from  
Bazha Secondary  
School



**Our Land and Our Vegetation**

Our land is our prosperity  
Our land is the life of the majority  
As we have the authority  
Let us protect it like our property

Those of us who live in rural areas  
I kindly encourage you to avoid deforestation  
Deforestation without aforestation  
Deforestate and aforestate

Let us unite and become one  
Make use of our land, build dams  
Not allow soil erosion and gully formation  
We as Dambari pupils will take the lead  
It is my duty, your duty, our duty to take the  
lead

Thubelihle Tshuma, Whitewater High School

**Trees**

Oh! How wonderful you are  
You play a great role in our society  
The world is made beautiful by all the natural  
resources  
Most of the tree species play a great role in the  
community  
As many of the species like dassies and wild  
herbivores feed on them  
We human beings get various fruits such as  
*uxakuxaku*, *umtshwankela* and the like  
Oh! How grateful we are to each and every  
one of you  
Because of you, foreigners give us money  
when they visit our territory

By Tinashe Mututwa, Silozwe High School

**Why the Dassie has no Tail and Lives in Rocks and Mountains (A Legend)**

Once upon a time there was no animal with a tail but their Master realized they were not beautiful without tails. Then He made some tails and called all animals to come and collect tails. Cattle and donkeys were the first but goats and hares found only short tails left. The dassie was told by other animals that there were tails available but he said he was sick. Eventually, he went to the Master on realizing all other animals now had tails but he was told there were no tails left. Ashamed, he ran into the rocks and mountains and that is why he lives there.

By Prince Chuma, Bazha Secondary School

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

### Art and Literary Corner

#### Red-winged Starlings

There are many birds in Matopo, but there is one type of bird that has a very good colour. Red-winged starlings.

They sometimes prefer to live in human buildings for security reasons. Red-winged starlings are found in some Silozwe High School classrooms (in the form two class and in the library).

Human buildings serve red-winged starlings in that they protect them from predators like eagles and harsh weather conditions.

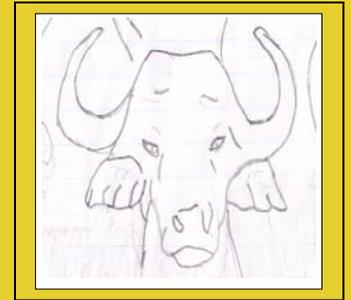
Red-winged starling birds are very responsible for their chicks. They wing up and down to and from the classrooms to find food to feed their chicks which they feed with insects.

It is our responsibility to good care of them. They make our environment beautiful.

By Precious Moyo and Faith Ngwenya, Silozwe High School



Left, elephant by Sijabulisiwe Nyoni, Tohwe Secondary School and right, buffalo by Mqondisi Ndlovu, Bazha Secondary School.



#### Our Biodiversity in our Mountainous Place

Let's preserve and conserve our natural resources  
Biodiversity beautifies our area  
Let's not cause danger in our resources so that they remain stable  
Mind you, this is a shelter and food for living things

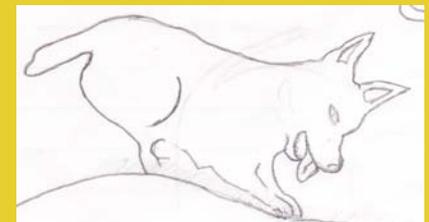
By Prince Tshuma, Whitewater High School



Above, bateleur eagle by Obvious Dube and below, bat-eared fox by Petious Furai, both from Bazha Secondary School



Left, bat by Mlungisi Ngwenya and right, young duiker by Antony Vundla, both from Bazha Secondary School.



### Project Sponsors

Thanks to the MBMP donors and supporters!

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