



ORTHOLOPHA

The Newsletter of the Aloe, Cactus and Succulent Society of Zimbabwe

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Hi Everyone,

A bit of a bumper issue to welcome in the New Year and to make up for the lack of a newsletter in December. Sadly in the interim since we last met we have said goodbye to Malcolm Thackray who has done so much for the Society in the last many years. Fortunately he will not be lost to Zimbabwe and his expertise on cycads and palms is always eagerly sought by members. Thank you Malcolm and Colleen for all your efforts for the Society.

This monthly meeting will be at the home of Ros and Wayne, staunch members, with Ros taking the lead role in efficiently organising venues for monthly visits. They will be going to live in Bulawayo and we wish them all the best as they step out of the fast lane! With the beauty of the Matobo Mountains right on their doorstep in future, we look forward to them helping to host the Society when times are better. We hope that Malcolm and Ros will continue to contribute material to Ingens going forward. Cheers, Mafungi.

Your Committee

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Monthly Meeting January 27 2019

This month's **Meeting** is being held at Ros Houghton's Emerald Hill house

The time: 10 for 10.30am start. Gate will open from 9 am.

Directions: Easiest way is to take The Chase out of Mt Pleasant, cross the Mazowe Road at Ashbrittle and go down past Gateway Primary school. Turn left into Belfast and Ros and Wayne are on the left in No. 21. It has a red-brick wall and the Society's banners will be flying outside. You can park in the street, there will be a guard.

Ros is downsizing her house and garden and will be offering various plants and pots and in these difficult times she would obviously prefer to offload for hard currency. She will kindly donate 10% of any proceeds to the Society so big spenders will be very welcome!!!

Flowering Plant: November

What is this, on the right?

Send your knowledgeable and considered opinions to bo.hoom52@yahoo.com.

The respected judge's decision is final and the winner will get a box of choice Belgian chocolates, provided they are shared.

The lucky winner in January will be announced at the monthly meeting on the Sunday 24th February 2019



You can win a box of chocolates!!!

Send your entries to Mafungi at
bo.hoom52@yahoo.com

The plant above is the January entry.

What is it?

A clue, it is not an aloe.



January is a wonderful month for the diversity of plant forms that spring up all over the place. Personally I find the fungi an interesting group and they never fail to delight and surprise with the speed at which they appear, the diversity of form and the specificity of their substrate material upon which they feed. The mushrooms we find under the old cypresses are very different from those growing on the leaf and pod detritus in the Miombo woodland. And the bracket fungi emerge from deep underground, feeding off the root systems of dead and dying *Brachystegias* (Musasa) or *Julbernadia* (Munondo) trees. The camera often fails to capture the richness of colour and the vibrancy of the individual plants or colonies and certainly time of day will affect whether the photo appeals in reproduction as it does in real life. With many fungi the difference between

life and death can be measured in hours, days and perhaps months for a few. Enjoy them and remember the first infection between your toes is the beginning of your end-so live life to the full every single day! Photos: Mafungi, Rockyvale, Harare.



Annual Membership: Are due in January each year, the end of the year is just about here, please can your start making payment of your 2019 membership.

Membership is \$20 per person/couple per year. Children \$5 per year. Foreign membership \$40 per year. Make payment to a committee member, the CABS account, or through EcoCash: 0774 247 791 (Doreen Richards) **Note this is a new number.**

CABS Platinum: Aloe, Cactus and Succulent Society Acc #: 1002616336 Reference: kindly include your Surname as the deposit reference.



*Gona re Zhou:
Place of elephants and aloes*



We recently went to stay at Simulwini in the southwest of this amazing National Park. A family of Nyala antelope spent the better part of each day inside the area of the luxury chalets and being browsers they invariably had their heads deeply embedded in the foliage of bushes and shrubs. They could not reach the lower leafy branches of the largest succulent of them all, see left, but a newly born foal found the grey folded bark of the tree comforting.

This grouping of baobabs is the focal point of the chalets and virtually all have one of these giant trees within a few metres of the patios outside the comfortable bedrooms and dining areas. The whole area is protected by a low electric fence and the local baboon population has not yet learnt the tricks of the trade of their unruly cousins in the east of the Park around Chipinda Pools.



We look forward to seeing the game populations recover in both number and diversity and hopefully they will become more habituated to human contact as the effective game management plan of the Frankfurt Zoological Society takes effect. The lizards have adapted quickly to the new regime.





Of course our Society is mostly concerned about the succulent type plants, but I am sure that almost everyone has an interest in the other flora and almost all fauna to be found in a National Park. There is no doubt that everything is interlinked and perhaps if you decide to visit this Park you might opt to go in June or July when many of these aloes will be flowering.

The first left is *Aloe zebrina*, one of the commonest and most widespread aloes of this region of Africa and it is found from the west coast of Angola in a broad swathe across the continent from low altitudes right up to 1 800 masl. There is naturally a huge range of localised conditions involved and the aloe can spread through suckering especially in grass-denuded areas and the result can be spectacular during flowering in January and February. The brighter-coloured inflorescences come from specimens found in the west and lower altitudes of Zimbabwe, but unfortunately these plants are susceptible to rust so domestication is not easy to sustain.



In the second photo left we see a colony of *A. cryptopoda* found sheltered among the rocky pinnacles decorating the eastern bank of the Mwenezi river. Nestling amongst the aloes are recently-flowered *Scadoxus* (Fireball) and the leaf of the Arrow-leaf plant. Here and there were leaves of the resilient *Sansevierias* that frequent these parts. Of course the trees reflect the harsh dry environment, with *Sterculias*, paper-bark *Commiphoras* and Baobabs in abundance. *A. cryptopoda* flowers from May to July and these cooler months are probably the best time to visit this little known area of Zimbabwe.



These photographs left were all taken along a stretch at the top of the rocky cliffs that adorn the northern bank of the Mwenezi River at a viewpoint known as Rossi Pool. The rocks themselves are a fascinating study in geological diversity and are much-frequented by hyrax, (rock-rabbits) monkeys, baboons and a huge number of lizards and monitor and large, fat plated-lizards.

Far below the river stretches in long lines of perennial pools with much evidence of crocodiles and game coming down to drink and relax. We saw only one elephant, but I am sure at night the area would be rent with their screaming and trumpeting.

Left we see a colony of the ubiquitous, for Zimbabweans, *Aloe chabaudii* often found like this growing in tight, vegetatively-propagated colonies. Visiting in May or June again, is likely to see some brightly flowering racenes with the scenic backdrop of the Mwenezi River and its pools.



Of course along the way if you sit tight and still, many little brown unknown feathered visitors will come to you. I was lucky enough to capture this little guy, whom I am sure is a gal, and whose preferred food source judging by the beak shape, is undoubtedly nectar sucked deep from the depths of aloe flowers. However it is captured with an unfortunate insect about to be swallowed.





On the way down and back from the Park you pass through these large areas of mopane scrubland that once were subjected to huge elephant pressure and the resultant trees are no longer tall and cathedral-like (see left). In the Park itself, see above the elephant pressure is still high and larger trees continue to be pushed down to provide browse for hungry pachyderms. There is widespread devastation near to permanent pools in the river systems but further away the veld looks quite healthy.

Of interest to a student of ecology in the future may be to see what happens to these almost hedge-like vast stands of mopane woodland, covering vast areas in the Park and the adjacent communal lands where the current pressures are completely different. In the

Park, they are feeding on the mopane from the top down with elephant joined by kudu, nyala, eland and giraffe all working in unison to prevent taller mopane from emerging from the hedge-rows. Grass-feeding antelope are not present in sufficient numbers, yet, to have a detrimental effect of the grass and herbaceous groundcover. Rain will therefore infiltrate and be effective.

In the Communal Areas the opposite is happening. There are no large herbivores feeding from above, but the domestic cattle and goats have long since eaten every blade of grass and their only food is to trim the trees to a well-defined browse-line. Rainfall of any sort is almost certain to result in large-scale sheet erosion and loss of effectiveness, further impoverishing the inhabitants of these arid areas. Time will tell.





The Health Column

One of the great things about the Festive Season is the chance to meet new friends and try new health-boosting activities. At ACSSZ we always encourage our members to buy local and support home-grown, sustainable industries. A world-class product that we recently were introduced to is the now famous Dr. Trouble chilli sauce. This is prime nectar in a bottle. Fixing any glitches in the kitchen, it takes gastronomy to new levels. We also found that when you get down to the last 10 to 15mm of sauce in the bottom of the bottle, you are well advised to refill the bottle with a high alcohol content spirit of your choice, shake vigorously and leave in a hot warm space, like on the lawn in the hot African sun and let Nature take its course. The result is nectar from Heaven. Specially designed to make womenfolk more mellow and appealing and guaranteed to take the rambunctiousness out of the most obnoxious of men. Fashion-gaffes like the battered headgear on the Irishman in the photo left and the lily-white legs cruelly exposed to

the hot African sun will soon be replaced by images of age-less maidens taking sip after sip of the youth-giving nectar. These tough economic times have also forced us to reconsider the wonderful advice we have been providing you through our columns these past few months and for the record we reiterate:-



1. Use *Bulbine frutescens* gel for every ailment known to man. Skin problems, burns, eye ointment, spider and scorpion bites and stings, tooth-ache, limb loss, bullet holes and the rest, this is the ultimate panacea. It works equally well on mastitis whether in cows, womenfolk or even men in these gender-insensitive times. As a shaving gel it has no equal and is absolutely neutral on the environment. Works intermittently as an underarm deodorant, i.e on the left armpit but not always the right. Use sparingly in other less-scented regions.
2. Rub the inside of a banana skin twice a day vigorously on the exposed portions of your skin that you want to shine with healthy radiance, especially faces and bald pates. You can use them also on your leather or patent leather shoes and accessories but you would be advised to do your face first and then the accoutrements. Black or brown boot polish in stripes, across your face, is not high fashion.

3. If you feel like moisturising, use ripe avocado flesh and rub it into your face and hands late at night just before going to sleep. Be sure to arm your spouse/partner with salt and vinegar spices in case they get hungry. Remember to wash it off in the morning before going to work. People have been arrested for far lesser crimes than green faces in these trying times.
4. Remember we are trying to keep our score for people who have passed on at 1 since we started our health column so if you feel your are about to depart please have the common decency to resign from the Society at least one month in advance of the departure date. This will keep the rest of us safe and healthy and fully confident in the health advice we offer so freely.
5. If all else fails, find out from the fungi fundis the mushrooms that seem to encourage huge village-wide orgies and brew up a batch for selected friends. These sorts of occasions are usually best left out of tight family circles. Enjoy life to the fullest!

I leave you with this late afternoon shot of a Nyala family on the banks of the Mwenezi River. Remember in these trying times in Zimbabwe that although the older generations may be looking left for the way forward, it is the youth who are the new drivers of the economy and politics and the high road may be to the right!!! Keep both eyes open, your feet firmly on the ground and be prepared to jump at the first available opportunity!!! Regards, Mafungi

