



# Ifa lemvelo



*The newsletter of the Natural History Museum of Zimbabwe*

*Volume 3, Issue 1: Jan 2022*

## *Some of the stories in this issue*

### **Global Biodiversity Information Facility (GIBF)**

GBIF's main mission is to facilitate free and open access to biodiversity data worldwide that can be used by everyone for research, conservation as well as sustainable development.

The Natural History Museum of Zimbabwe was one of the 19 beneficiaries out of 215 grant submissions in a project that will help create databases for the museum holdings, adding 9000 records to and six datasets to GIBF (Story on page 1)



### **Know your Monuments**

The Victoria Falls is one of the seven greatest natural wonders of the world it was the first monument in Zimbabwe to be declared a National Monument

Introducing Wiki Loves Monuments for the first time in Zimbabwe

(Story on pages 1-2)



### **Save these dates**

Saturday 12 February 2022 for a Spider Walk at Mabukwene Nature Reserve



22 February 2022 for a free iNaturalist training at the museum.



(See full details on page 4)

### **Butterfly garden at the museum**



In honour of Mike Gardiner, Mrs Cathy Sharp has been coordinating plants and help to create a butterfly garden at the museum. Mike will forever be remembered for his deep chuckle, joyful personality and the wonderful butterfly collecting stories. (Story on pages 2-3)



Natural History Museum of Zimbabwe is home to valuable research collections and is the best museum in Southern Africa, ranked fourth in size among the museums in Africa.

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## OPENING HOURS

*Open  
everyday from  
9am-5pm*

## Entrance fees

### Locals

Adults \$3

Children (5-14 years)\$1

### SADC Countries

Adults \$7

Children \$5

### International

Adults \$10

Children \$5

All prices in US\$, local currency accepted, calculated at prevailing official rate.

## Message from the Regional Director

Hello and welcome to this issue!

We are hopeful now that we have seen the last of serious COVID-19 variants and we can settle back to a new normal. Our hearts go out to those that lost loved ones during this pandemic as your lives will be forever changed.

For the museum, it has been a very difficult period with very little income generated due to lockdowns, restrictions on holding events and school closures and we have now used up all our reserves. We thank those that have come forward to help where they can so that we can keep our doors open and safe guard our valuable collections. .

We wish you all a peaceful and wonderful 2022 as we go forward with less restrictions so we can start exploring our world again.

# Global Biodiversity Information Facility (GBIF) 2021-23

The mission of the Global Biodiversity Information Facility (GBIF) with its Secretariat in Copenhagen, Denmark is to facilitate free and open access to biodiversity data worldwide. The information available is primarily distribution data on plants, animals, fungi and microbes and as well as their up-to-date scientific names. This data can then be used by all interested parties for research, conservation efforts and sustainable development. A noble ideology but how can this be achieved?

Firstly GBIF supports those institutions with collections such as museums and herbaria to make the information locked up in their collections available by funding databasing efforts. There is a separate programme led by GBIF – Biodiversity Information for Development (BID) – funded by the European Union that aims at supporting the nations of sub-Saharan Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific.

And secondly, they have created a portal on their website that links all available biodiversity data on various internet platforms (such as INaturalist) and places it all in one place which then makes this data easily accessible and searchable. At the point of writing this, there are 1 911 762 201 occurrence records and 64 664 datasets available on this portal.

In 2021 The Natural History Museum of Zimbabwe received a very hotly contested grant from the BID program (19 projects funded out of 215 submissions) for their project entitled “Biodiversity data in support of climate action, life on earth and sustainable food and feed: Reptiles and arachnids found in Protected Areas and edible insect fauna in Zimbabwe” which will help us create databases of our holdings and will add about 9,000 records in six datasets through this project.

To date we have held a workshop on database management with our stakeholders and 8000 records have been digitised. More records will be added during this year and focus is now “cleaning” the data where identification and species names are correct. All locations need to georeferenced so that distribution maps can be reproduced.

This project runs for two years finishing in March 2023. See the link (<https://www.gbif.org/project/BID-AF2020-026-INS/biodiversity-data-in-support->

[of-climate-action-life-on-earth-and-sustainable-food-and-feed-reptiles-and-arachnids-found-in-protected-areas-and-edible-insect-fauna-in-zimbabwe#about](#)) for more information on this project.



*Fig 1: Database workshop participants*

## Get to Know your Monuments

### Monument No. 1



*Fig 2: Victoria Falls*

In 1902 the Ancient Monuments Protection Ordinance was passed to protect the monuments as many had been ransacked and irreparable damage done as many of the ancient ruins had been found to contain worked gold in the form of beads, tacks and foils. The Monuments and Relics Act which provided for even better protection of ancient, historical and natural monuments was promulgated on 8th May 1936 and since then over 190 National Monuments have been proclaimed, the first National Monument to be proclaimed in 1937 was the Victoria Falls. The gravels in the area form one of the richest archaeological sites in the country and has evidence of continuous human occupation from the earliest times, with Stone Age sites along the banks of the Zambezi river close to the Falls. In 1989 The Victoria Falls was inscribed as a World Heritage Site. The Falls are also one of the seven greatest natural wonders of the world due to the largest sheet of falling water in the world.



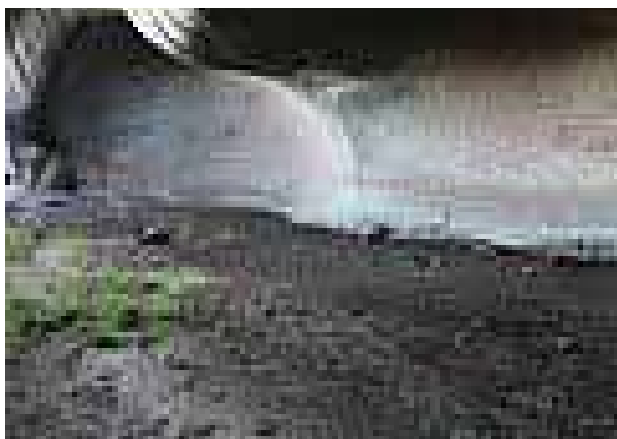
## Wiki Loves Monuments (WLM) in Zimbabwe 2021 (The world's largest photo competition)

Wiki Loves Monuments is an annual international photographic competition held during the month of September but due to the Corona virus it has been stretched up to October. It is organised worldwide by Wikimedia community members with the help of Wikimedia affiliates across the globe. The aim of the competition is to highlight monuments and cultural heritage sites in the world with the goal to encourage people to capture pictures of these monuments, and to put them under a free licence which can then be re-used not only in Wikipedia but everywhere by everyone.

In October 2021, WLM took place for the first time in Zimbabwe. 67 images of monuments in Zimbabwe were uploaded on Wikimedia Commons with 11 people taking part in the competition. The 3 best photos were awarded prizes. The top ten images were submitted to the international jury and the winners will be announced soon. The competition will be running again this year be sure to watch this space for more information. Below are the top three photos.



Winning photo by SpiderFitz



Second position photo by T Runganga



Third position photo by R. S Burrett

## Butterfly Garden at the Museum



Fig 3: Plaque on the garden bench



Fig 4: Work begins on the butterfly garden

Mrs Cathy Sharp has been coordinating plants and helpers to create a butterfly garden in the museum grounds in honour of Mike Gardiner, Bulawayo's lepidopterist, naturalist and friend of the museum for all of his life. Those who knew Mike will remember him for his deep chuckle, joyful personality and his wonderful stories of butterfly collecting across the continent. Next time you are at the museum take a moment to relax on the bench in the garden and watch the butterflies as they dance among the carefully chosen larval food plants.



Fig 4: *Lampides boeticus*

One such butterfly you will see flying low and settling frequently on flowers and leaves is the beautiful Pea

Blue, *Lampides boeticus*. This Lycaenid butterfly has tails on its hindwing and jewel like spots. When at rest these butterflies draw attention to the spots and tails by rubbing their closed wings backwards and forwards. Predators attracted by the movement, snap at the tails or spots leaving the butterfly to escape unharmed. The Pea Blue flies throughout the year, is a great migrant across Africa, and is particularly abundant wherever Lucerne is grown. The larva feeds on flowers, seeds and pods of legumes (Fabaceae species).

## Citizen Science, the Museum and You



## I support Citizen Science

One of the many outcomes of the GBIF project is to also get the support of the citizens of Zimbabwe to contribute to science and provide additional records. Citizen Science through involvement in iNaturalist for instance has resulted in a far greater understanding of species distributions and habitat preferences, has increased biodiversity information, assisted in many scientific publications, and produced volumes of excellent photographs for use in publications and excellent field guides.

It is really easy to get involved as everyone has a camera on their mobile phones and are already photographing the biodiversity around them. The really good thing about platforms such as iNaturalist is that you do not even need to know the name of the species that you have photographed because the scientific community are keeping a close eye on the postings and adding identifications where ever possible so you get to know what it is that you are photographing.

In South Africa there are so many people actively participating on a regular basis that they are able to track distributions of protected, rare or endangered species, alien and invasive species, and link animal distributions with plant distributions. By the end of 2021 on iNaturalist South Africa had logged 1 819 052 records with 17 322 individuals participating compared to 36 615 records and 742 individuals participating in Zimbabwe so we are lagging behind, although our biodiversity is as great as theirs, and we have a way to go before being able to use this as the powerful tool it can be.

By joining the iNaturalist community you can

get involved and help with the conservation and management of our environment. Please come join us at our iNaturalist workshop on Tuesday 22nd February and learn just how easy it is to get involved. We also have a museum grounds biodiversity project on iNaturalist (<https://www.inaturalist.org/projects/natural-history-museum-of-zimbabwe-bulawayo-grounds-and-gardens>) and from 29 April -2 May 2022 the City of Bulawayo will be Challenging the City of Harare to a competition to see who can record the greatest biodiversity over this period as we join the global City Nature Challenge (<https://www.inaturalist.org/projects/city-nature-challenge-2022-bulawayo>). These bioblitz's are a lot of fun, and a little competition is a great motivator and the real winner is science!

**Remember Covid19 is still with us and its real. Always -**

**-Wear your mask properly**

**-Avoid large gatherings**

**-Sanitise and wash your hands frequently**

**-Practise social distancing**



# Upcoming events



**Come join us for a**  
**Spider Walk**  
**at Mabukuwene Nature Reserve**  
Entrance on Chipping Way, Burnside  
**Saturday 12 February 8am onwards**  
**All ages welcome**  
**Bring hats and refreshments**  
**Contact Moira 0712 432506**



Find us on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/spiderclubzw>



**SANBI** Biodiversity for Life  
South African National Biodiversity Institute



**Free iNaturalist Training**

Photo: Suvarna Parthod

**Training Venue:** Natural History Museum of Zimbabwe

**Date and time:** 22 February 14.00-16.00

**Bioblitz:** 9.00-12.00 Bioblitz at Hillside Dams Conservancy, Banff Road. There is a US\$2/person entrance fee and US\$1/car.

**Requirements:**

Downloading the APP on your mobile and signing up

**RSVP to Moira 0712 432 506**

**Topics to be covered:**

- Signing up and setting up
- Using Explore to discover your area
- Uploading observations on your computer
- Uploading observations on your smartphone
- Using the ID curation tool
- Creating and contributing to projects
- Planning a bioblitz
- Participating in global events – City Nature Challenge and Great Southern Bioblitz



# Upcoming events(cnt'd)

Help us record the biodiversity of the Museum Grounds and the City of Bulawayo

## Museum Biodiversity Project

### Getting involved in Citizen Science

Citizen Science is a powerful tool for Biodiversity Conservation and Environmental Education.

**Taking part is easy**

Download and create an **Naturalist** account on your phone, tablet or computer via IOS, Google Playstore or website

**Find nature anywhere!**

Plants, Animals, Fungi, Insects, Arachnids or evidence (scat, fur, tracks, feathers etc)

**Take a picture of what you find**

Be sure to note the location of the nature using the location services on your phone

**Share your observation**

By uploading your findings to **Naturalist** on your phone or computer

<https://www.inaturalist.org/projects/natural-history-museum-of-zimbabwe-bulawayo-grounds-and-gardens>

