

New Border between Binga and Namafulo

I had heard many years ago that Zimbabwe and Zambia were considering a border across Lake Kariba. So, when I saw a sign to Namafulo Border Post I was excited to think that it had actually happened.

However, on asking how the new border was going, I was told that it wasn't. The sign is there, that is all. According to gossip, the government is waiting for a boat which can be used to cross the lake. Also gossip says that they are thinking of using one of the pontoons at Kazungula when the bridge is constructed.

If government wants to supply a boat, the people will wait for many years. I just do not understand why government needs a boat. Once the border is manned, private boats will provide the transport. And the people, who own boats on the lake, know the lake and its moods. They will provide a safe service, as much as it can be guaranteed.

I am not sure where the border post is, because Namafulo is not marked on any of my maps. But it has to be across from Binga and there is a road to the place I have marked on the Google Earth map.

A Stroll along the Zambezi River

David Lemon has done all sorts of intrepid expeditions. He has cycled from Nairobi to Cape Town. He has rowed the length of Lake Kariba - there and back again, and he has walked the southern shore of Lake Kariba from Kariba Town to Binga. Now at 67 years of age, David is on another adventure – to walk the length of the Zambezi River.

David arrived with lots of media attention in Zambia last week and must now have started his long stroll of the Zambezi which he expects will take him about 10 months. The reason for the walk is a personal challenge and also to bring to the world's attention the plight of the African elephant which he fears may be heading towards extinction.

I am not sure how much we will hear of his journey as he walks the length of the Zambezi; he does not seem to be the sort of person who seeks media attention. David has written several books, mostly on the environment and about his strange exploits. His row of Lake Kariba is written up in a book called 'Hobo'.

His walk along the shore of Lake Kariba is described in 'Blood, Sweat and Lions'. According to his website, www.elephantlemon.com, David reckons he has finished his book-writing days and intends to concentrate on 'scribbling'. I really hope he has time to do some scribbling during the trip.

The Zambezi River is 2,700 km long although we seem to have a bit of a problem with its length. On Wikipedia it gives the length of the Zambezi as 3,540 km. I have checked and it is not. (This is a bit of a problem with information on the internet – it is sometimes wrong. I checked with the Bradt Guide and other good texts and all say it is 2,700 km long.) Even on David's website he states it is 2,400 miles. So, if someone meets up with him on his trip, maybe they can tell him that he has over 800 km less to walk.

David was born and brought up in Zimbabwe, but like many Zimbabweans they have left home. He now lives in England. I will leave you with a bit of text from his website:

My business card describes me as an Author, Journalist, Public Speaker, Adventurer and General Labourer, but with choice I would describe myself as an 'Elephant Man.' I was privileged to have been brought up in some of the remoter parts of Southern Africa which gave me the chance to study, learn about - as well as from - and generally enjoy these wonderful beings in their natural surroundings.

ZAMBIA

What tends to upset me somewhat is that though elephants are heavily persecuted in my own country (Zimbabwe) and are in real danger of extinction, nobody seems to care. I try to do my bit with my writing and public speaking but don't feel that I am making any progress. ...

Friends of Hwange Newsletter April 2012

Apologies for the silence over the past few months. Time has got away from us, but pertinent is that there is little to report during the wet months of the year. As we have reached the end of the rainy season it is time to take stock and see how we are placed to tackle the dry season ahead.

The rains this year in Hwange have generally been very patchy and sparse, although recently have been more widespread and plentiful. Most pans are holding some water, but are by no means full, an ominous sign this time of the year. Despite this, the bush is looking magnificent.

Teak trees are adorned with pretty pink flowers and as the grass slowly turns from green to gold, myriads of fluffy seed heads bob and sway in the breeze. The Acacia Erioloba are showing a bountiful harvest of fat ear shaped pods, and many pans boast clumps of gorgeous mauve water lilies.

ZIMBABWE

An isolated thunder storm in the pre-dawn flashes streaks of lightning, and a watery sun struggles over the eastern horizon, sending shafts of sunlight to pierce the bruised sky. Giraffe, ever curious, glide serenely through the grass, a Zebra stallion, resplendent in black and white, holds his head erect and regal, nostrils flaring. A pair of Egyptian Geese stand motionless, reflections mirrored in a pan. A male Steenbok with tiny spikes for horns, poses close to the road, huge ears pivoting, nose wet and black, twitching, coat a glossy sheen in the sunlight, dainty hooves that would doubtless fit into a thimble ready to dart into the brush. March is butterfly season, they flit in their thousands alighting on grass and elephant dung, no doubt for moisture and to deposit eggs. A Martial Eagle hangs suspended high above, soaring, effortless. Yellow crowned Bishop birds dart through the reeds like fluffy over-sized bumble bees, hovering, displaying to their mates. Such are some of the sights and sounds in the Park at this time of year. Gary has been busy repairing and servicing Lister engines and has made a start to scooping out excess soil from some of the pans to back fill troughs eroded by elephants. Thanks to our new tractor bought with generous donations from the Zimbabwe Wildlife Fund in Perth and a donor who attended our dinner/dance held in September, and the loan of a dam scoop, we can start to tackle this immense task, as well as to make rudimentary repairs to some roads while traveling to various pans. The solar pump at Kennedy 2 Pan will this year be aided by water from a new borehole drilled by WEZ Matabeleland. Although the solar pump produces good water, it is sadly not enough to cope with the hundreds of elephant that drink there at the height of the dry season. Windmills are being serviced and where necessary pipes repaired and re-laid.

Due to the early appearance of breeding elephant herds, Wilderness Safaris have already started to pump some of the pans on their concession. Beccs Ndlovu and Nic Polanakis of Somalisa have drilled several new boreholes which will help to alleviate pressure on existing pans in the area around Kennedy 2 Pan. Martin Pieters has built a magnificent new camp, Nehimba Safari Lodge, on a new concession near the Nehimba Seeps, north-west of Main Camp, and has plans to pump several pans in that area. Dave Carsons has built a new camp at Big Shumba, and as well as establishing permanent waterholes there, has re-thatched the structures at Shumba picnic site. He and his staff assist National Parks wherever they can as regards maintenance of the picnic site. We are grateful for all endeavours to help with water resources in the Park.

It has become apparent that FOH needs to establish a base near Main Camp. In this regard, we have joined forces with Hwange Lion Research, obtained a lease for a piece of land near Dete, and funds permitting, plan to build an office and several small lodges to house staff. More details of this will be made known as we progress down this path.

As usual, we extend thanks to the many people who support our efforts to sustain Hwange National Park and its Wildlife. We are constantly uplifted and humbled by acts of astounding generosity, and remain dedicated to preserving our wonderful heritage