



Dear All

This week has been dominated, for me, by the lack of water. It is not just me, it is most people in town ... although interestingly not everyone. From a report on the radio Wisdom Chibbonta from the water company said that two pumps were burned out by ZESCO power cuts and they were therefore operating on only two pumps at the river.

If this is the case, then it would mean that everyone would have the same 'water shedding'. Why is this not so? I have been having 1-2 hours of water on some days and none on others. I have had to stop watering the garden, hence the sad state of my surroundings.

I have written to NWASCO to complain and hope that others will do the same. Email them through their website: <http://www.nwasco.org.zm>

We are always allowing SWSC, our water company, to give excuses, but it is about time that they learned to run their company efficiently. With millions of gallons flowing past us in the Zambezi River every day, we should no longer tolerate their lackadaisical attitude towards providing us with a reasonable service. The Council, as shareholders in the company, should also start to wonder what SWSC is up to. At this time of year when money should be rolling into SWSC coffers for supplying water they fail to supply it and therefore fail to earn much-needed income.

Birds in the garden



There is one advantage of no water in the taps ... and no water from leaking pipes (because there is none to leak) and that is the birds in the garden are great.

There is one concession which I make to not putting water on the garden – I make sure that the bird baths are full. The birds are flocking into my garden for a drink and a bath. It is such entertainment.



I have had a few unusual visitors too. Plum-coloured starlings, a black cuckoo and a striped cuckoo. My usuals include paradise flycatchers, brown-hooded kingfishers, waxbills, mannikins, drongos, laughing and emerald-spotted doves, bulbuls, prinias, weavers, boubous, babblers ... and lots more ...

I must admit to spending a lot of 'Weekly' time with camera or binoculars in hand watching the antics in the birdbaths.



Scams

I received a letter through the post telling me that I was needed to help to get money out of South Africa by using my bank account. It is, of course, a scam.

I also received a text message telling me that I had won a prize and to contact a certain number. I looked it up on the internet and here is what it said:

Here is the Coca-Cola Corporation Prize Winner scam claiming that you have won a large sum of cash. They then try to get personal information from you including your bank information. After that, you'll have nothing.

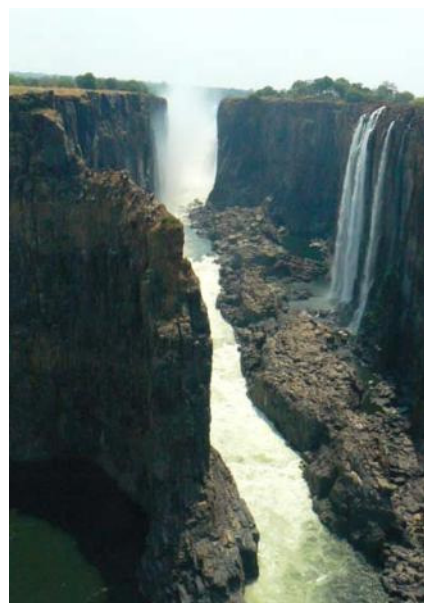
I also note that Agnes Yombwe, our artist, has had her email hacked; it is now sending out messages about how she is stuck in Greece and needs money. This is another scam.

Please ignore all these communications! It is obviously the silly season for scams ...

Victoria Falls



I went for a walk around the Falls during the week. We are almost dry but still worth a visit. It won't be long now before we will have no water at all on our side of the Falls.



From the Zambia Budget for 2013

I have gone through and picked some bits which I found interesting. I have kept the numbers so that you can have a look for yourself:

<http://www.zambian-economist.com>

30. Improve forest management systems; introduce forestry extension services; provide tree seedlings and enhance private sector participation in the sector. *(Allocation in this budget is K74.2b; last year K31.2b)*

Government admits that the cost of tourist operations is high.

34. To reduce licensing procedures for tour operators

35. To create 300,000 jobs in the tourism sector

Many of the licensing procedures, for me, are unnecessary. Some of our hotels/lodges are acclaimed worldwide; they therefore adhere to worldwide standards. To add a Zambian 'standard' through licensing is merely a way for the government to earn money while taking up valuable time of the hotel/lodge personnel. There is also a new SI on the government books to increase the cost of business for tour operators by the introduction of a Tourism Levy. So although we should see a decrease in costs from reduced licences, there will be an increase in costs by the levy ... The tourism sector never wins ...

Our trains have been known for often coming off the rails. They don't run on time and, like the train to Mulobezi, have no lights working during the night when thieves are free to roam the carriages and steal at will. Trains are the most efficient form of transport for people and cargo, but only if they function properly.

43. Terminate the Concession Agreement for the Railway Systems of Zambia.

44. Revamp the rail transport system with support from the private sector.

75. Government proposes to spend K32.2 trillion. This will be raised through: Domestic revenue = K24.7 trillion, K1.5 trillion = Grants from our Cooperating Partners, K5.9 trillion = External and Domestic Borrowing

(Last year the Government budget K27.7 trillion. K24.7 trillion = Domestic Revenue; K1.5 trillion Grants from Coop Partners; K5.9 trillion External or Domestic Borrowing.)

108. Tax allowance for pensions will be increased to K255,000 per month.

120. Value Added Tax registration threshold to K800 million per annum from the current K200 million.

(This is for those companies on Turnover Tax. All companies on turnover tax pay 3% of turnover in tax. It saves a lot of time in administration for small/medium companies)

124. VAT claims for expenses can only be submitted latest after 6 months instead of the present 12 months.

126. The Minister of Finance admits that the cost of doing business in Zambia is 'prohibitively high' and that this is holding back any entrepreneurial spirit. In order to reduce the cost of business government will reduce import duty on various items.

129. Remove customs duty on wind powered engines, gas stoves and electrical capacitors.

133. Remove customs duty on locomotives and carriages, and rail traffic control equipment.

134. Remove duty on refrigerated fishing vessels, canoes, cruise and ferry boats, dredgers, pontoons and other water vessels.

135. Remove customs duty on both motor cycles and ambulances.

136. Remove duty on devices and imported modified motor vehicles as provided for in the Persons with Disabilities Act.

(There is no mention of electric vehicles. These vehicles are environmentally friendly and will cost a lot less to run than conventional vehicles.)

137. Suspend duty, for three years, on equipment used for physical exercise, gymnastics, athletics and other sports.

142. Amend the Zambia Development Agency Act, the Income Tax Act and the Customs and Excise Act, to make the realisation of employment pledges by investors an essential trigger for them to access the incentives.

147. Suspend duty on the following goods:

- a) New motor vehicles for tourism enterprises that offer transport services; and
- b) New articles and equipment needed to furnish or refurbish accommodation and catering facilities for businesses licensed as tourism enterprises. This measure will come into effect immediately.

149. Zero rate tour guide services. Zero-rate adventure tourism applicable to foreign tourists and local tourists.

Cycling Swimmers

The British swimmers who came to Zambia to raise money for Sport in Action have completed their cycle tour from Livingstone to Lusaka. They raised £20,000, money which will be used for Sports facilities in Zambia.

Photo from Daily Mail



Kasanka National Park

From Robin Pope Safaris

As the Musuka and Waterberry trees of the region begin to fruit, up to 10 million straw colored fruit bats make their way from the DRC to this one particular patch in Zambia. This is a key wildlife event and when in full swing, provides the highest mammal concentration in Africa, probably the highest concentration of mammalian biomass in the world.

Let's break this down into something that may put it all into perspective for you. Each bat weighs little over 1/2 of one pound and as numbers reach up to 10 million this would equate to 5 million pounds. Now for the scary part – elephants weigh approximately 7,700 pounds so this is the equivalent of 649 elephants flying around! All I can say is “poor trees” as the bats all come in to roost! This year the first bat arrived on 27th September, two days later there were 6 and by 1st October numbers had reached 2,500. This was an early arrival from the norm by two weeks. However, yesterday they had all disappeared. Anyone seen 2,500 bats? ...



ZIMBABWE

Road Repairs

I drove through Victoria Falls Town this week and noted that they are working on the town's infrastructure prior to the UNWTO.

The border road is still being worked on. It appears to be sterling job – one to last several lifetimes!



And laterite is being dumped on the sides of the roads towards the airport for use on the hard shoulders.



Victoria Falls Tram

There is a new activity in Victoria Falls Town. A tram has been built in the style of the 1890s and will take people from town to the Victoria Falls and the Bridge. It can also take visitors up the line to the Private Game Reserve and over the border into Zambia.

It can carry 30 passengers in its open-sided carriage. Looks like fun.



BOTSWANA

Kazungula Bridge

Botswana has signed an agreement with Japan for a loan of P885 million (US\$113.3 million) for the construction of the Kazungula Bridge.

The bridge will cost US\$260 million and be shared equally between Botswana and Zambia. The report said that Zambia will be given the same loan by Japan. The balance required for the bridge will be found by the governments.

It is expected that construction will start in 2014 and be completed in 2018.

Chobe National Park

Elephant poaching has increased in and around Chobe National Park. This Saturday 3 elephants were poached near Lesoma close to the Zimbabwe border. The tusks had been removed. According to a report in the MidWeek Sun, in order to control the situation the Botswana Defence Force is sending a Battalion of 400 soldiers from Gaborone and Francistown to the area.

Let's hope they work with Zimbabwean authorities because, more than likely, these poachers came from Zimbabwe. Last year, I think, members of either the Army or Botswana Parks were arrested when they crossed the border following the tracks of poachers.

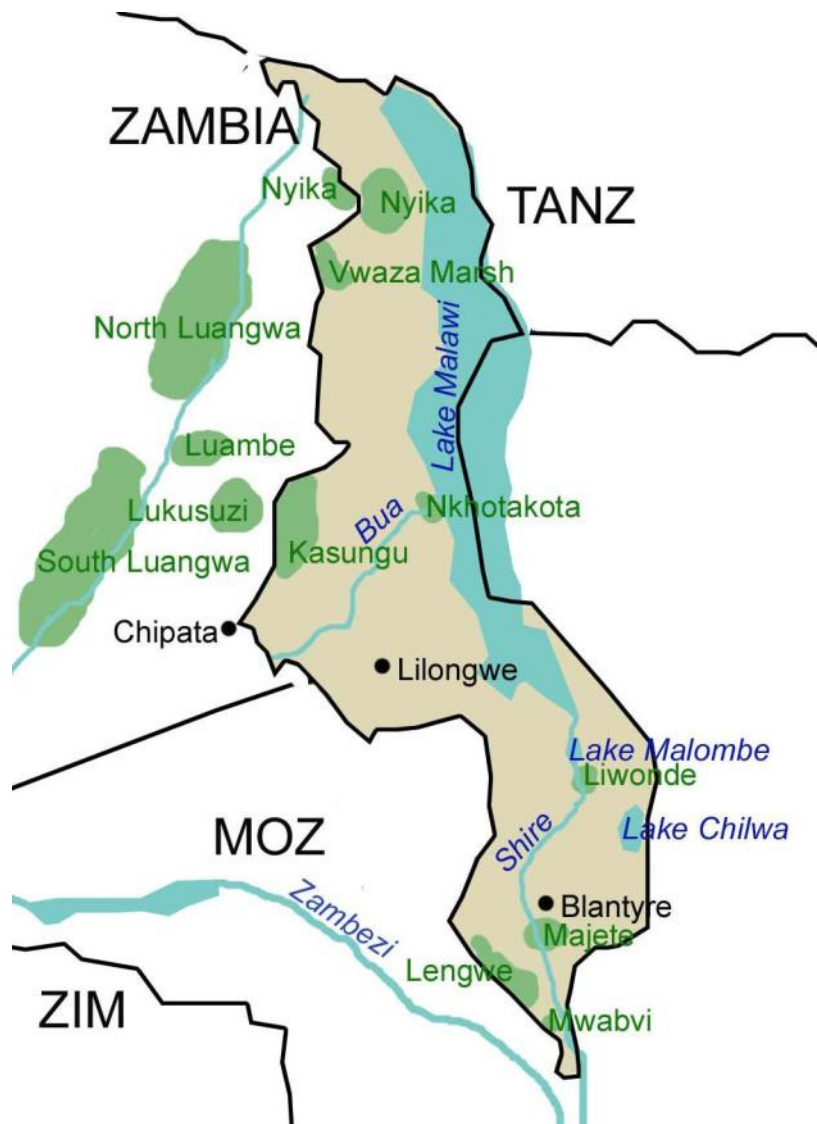
I was contacted during the week by one of my readers and asked to put more news in about Malawi. I have, unfortunately neglected Malawi because I know very little about the country. But, as Wolfgang does not cover the area it seemed natural for me to keep an eye open for stories.

My first step was to have a look and see what is on the ground. I found the following wildlife areas:

Nyika National Park
 Vwaza Marsh Game Reserve
 Kasungu National Park
 Nkhhotakota Game Reserve
 Lake Malawi Marine Park
 Liwonde National Park
 Majete Game Reserve
 Lengwe National Park
 Mwabvi Game Reserve

I have tried to put them on a map with some reference points in Zambia so that you can see where they all are. I hope the map is right; apologies if not and corrections well received.

I have put up some Google Alerts and hope that information will come to me, but if you have anything newsworthy, please send.



SOUTH AFRICA

iSimangaliso Wetland Park

There is a very interesting story about iSimangaliso National Park in South Africa. I have tried to read and understand and give a potted story below. I hope I have got it right.

iSimangaliso Wetland Park is a World Heritage Site and a Ramsar Site. It is a floodplain, inland lake and river system which lies on the coast of eastern South Africa. The rivers bring fresh water into the system and the sea brings salt water. The whole area is extremely fragile environmentally because of this phenomenon of the water being sometimes salty and sometimes not. The flora and fauna under natural conditions had always made a plan and adapted to the environment. Estuarine environments such as this are very important worldwide as the plant and animal life is different from either purely freshwater lakes or salty seas. Some of the sea animals need areas like this for breeding.

And then along came man with his interfering ways. Over the past 60 years man has done some pretty awful things. They have taken water from the five rivers which drain into the system for irrigation; made canals; dredged; bulldozed and generally made a complete mess of the environment. Climate change is having its effects too with less rain.



With a grant from the Global Environment Fund, the management of the park has taken on the challenge of trying to get some normality back into the environment and let nature take care of itself so that it can find balance again.

Their first play was to research. They brought together environmental specialists to look at the park, its history, to see what changes had happened over the years, and see what effects that had had on the area. Having done a proper analysis they then decided that nature knew best and that if the park was to retain its beauty and balance they would have to undo some of the previous interference to the river system.

The main problem the park faced was too much salt in Lake Lucia. The plant and animal life was not coping. There was therefore a need to bring more fresh water into the lake. This has been achieved by re-linking the Mfolozi and Lake St Lucia estuary mouths – this is how it used to be in the past. (Previously a separate channel had been dug for the Mfolozi River straight into the sea.)



The man-made channel to link these two river mouths was completed in September this year and I am sure there were cheers of relief as the fresh water belted down the channel and into Lake Lucia to relieve the salinity. Local rains also arrived to help.

Having put the environment back into its original state the management of the park now have to watch, monitor and wait. It may take many, many years before the health of the park is brought back to something like what nature intended.

Is it time for another tactic on Rhino and Elephant Poaching?

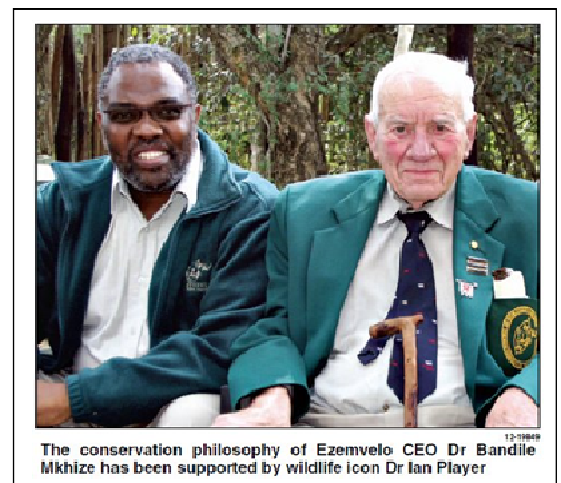
In the run-up to the next Cites meeting in November this year, conservationists in South Africa are considering whether the sale of ivory and rhino horn legitimately may solve the crisis on poaching. There are feelings that the ban on trade of rhino horn and elephant ivory has not worked; that the poaching problem is now completely out of control and that alternative tactics should be considered.

The basic philosophy behind this about-face is that the trade in these animal products is increasing and there seems no way it will ever be stopped if we continue with the same strategies. Although Asian governments pay lip-service to calls for control in their countries on the use of the products, in reality they do little or nothing. The expectation is that they will continue in the same way for years to come and that, by the time they decide to do anything, our elephant and rhinos will be extinct.

It is pointed out that Asian traditional medicine and ornaments have included rhino horn and ivory for thousands of years; that the culture is entrenched. It is also pointed out that by having the trade in ivory and rhino horn banned makes these items more valuable to the owner as there is an 'exclusive' appeal in their ownership.

As African governments are losing the battle against patrolling hundreds of square miles of parks and reserves they are drowning in costs and bad publicity. Money which should be spent on development of African countries is being spent on protecting our precious animals.

Dr Bandile Mkhize, CEO of Ezemvelo Nature Reserve organised a 10,000-man march in Hluhluwe this week in order to raise awareness of the problem of rhino poaching. Ezemvelo is 80km east of Pretoria. Dr Mkhize wants us to reconsider how we are working to stop rhino poaching.



Will the sale of our stocks of ivory and rhino horn halt the mafia-like gangs who know all the tricks of poaching, smuggling in this horrid trade?

Ian Player the renowned South African conservationist has sided with this new tactic. Ian Player led the fight to save rhino in the 1960s. There have been many documents circulating during the week about whether this idea is a good one or not. The general feeling from many is that 'something has to be done' before we lose them all.

The basic proposal from some conservationists is that a body is set up and that the rhino horn and elephant ivory is bought from African governments and kept in one place. This body would then oversee the marketing/sale/disposal of them. The money accrued by African governments can then be used on conservation. This takes away the continuing requests by African governments to sell these products – a process which takes up valuable time and effort at each CITES meeting.

In the case of rhinos it is suggested that a rhino-horn-free 'medicine' is developed to gradually take the place of the real thing. Asian governments may take this new 'medicine' on board and promote its use instead of the actual rhino horn.

There has to be more awareness in communities surrounding parks/reserves on the value of their wildlife. The communities must also benefit more from the keeping the animals alive rather than assisting gangs to poach.

There are, finally, calls from conservationists to the world that this is a global problem, one which has to be solved for the benefit of everyone on the planet. African governments are trying their best to keep their rhinos alive but they need help. They need help with protection and finding a solution. It is all very well CITES laying down rules for African governments to follow, but unless CITES offers more assistance our rhinos are doomed.

WOLFGANG'S COLUMN

TANZANIA'S NEW ATTEMPT TO SELL BLOOD IVORY DRAWS INSTANT OBJECTIONS

'This time we want to get absolute support from neighbouring Kenya, unlike in the past' was part of Tanzania's deputy minister for natural resources and tourism Lazaro Nyalandu opening salvo when he announced that they would once again apply to CITES for a one off permission to sell stocks of ivory presently held to the tune of nearly 140 tons, 100 of which Tanzania intends to sell on the open market. Expected to raise some 55 million US Dollars, the Dar government will like two years ago be hard pressed to make a case to CITES, which upon receiving the previous application, then voted down at the Doha meeting, carried out a series of investigations and found Tanzania wanting in terms of anti poaching, monitoring of illegal shipments and enforcement.

The reports, when published, caused some acute embarrassment to Tanzania's wildlife and tourism officials, when it became known that an estimated half of the global blood ivory actually originates from the country and a parliamentary report published a few weeks ago officially pegged the daily poaching of elephant in Tanzania to nearly 30, making an annual total of about 10,000 animals killed for ivory. Added controversy arose over Tanzania's general conservation policies and activities diagonally opposed to protecting the environment and biodiversity the country has been proud of for so long.

The controversial Serengeti Highway, the still unclear routing of a railway line to the lake side town of Musoma, plans for a soda ash plant inside the sole breeding grounds for the East African flamingos, plans for a new sea port in the middle of the Coelacanth marine national park near Tanga, plans for Uranium mining in the Selous combined with a massive dam at Stiegler's Gorge and the withdrawal of an application for UNESCO recognition as a World Heritage Site for the Eastern Arc Mountains, to open them for logging and mining, are just a few examples of how the values of the founding father Mwalimu Julius Nyerere are now being trampled upon, with a potentially very negative impact on the country's tourism industry. That sector depends on wildlife and nature being kept intact and all these plans, combined with yet another attempt to sell ivory, will only raise more concerns and opposition.

Ahead of the last round of the CITES meeting Tanzania also singularly failed to commit that should they be given permission to sell ivory stocks, ALL funds raised would be dedicated to anti poaching operations and poured into the wildlife management sector, as feeble explanations of the then minister opened the door wide to speculation that in fact only a tiny fraction of such funds would go towards such ends and the majority be used for other general funding gaps, or as a source overnight put it 'wasted on corruption and useless state companies like Air Tanzania which can swallow that amount in one go and still has nothing to show for' – in reference to other hot topics from Tanzania.

The coalition against selling ivory is already forming up again and unless Tanzania can this time make a compelling case and in particular show results against the commercial poaching in the country, they are likely once again to find stiff opposition at the next CITES meeting, risking to be decampaigned again as a tourism destination and losing goodwill around the world.

The UK based environmental investigation agency has already taken Tanzania's request into the cross hairs and instantly reacted by demanding the country first get their act together against poaching while also

laying into CITES itself for what was called 'profoundly flawed and, we believe, a major driver of poaching and the illegal international trade in ivory' a damning indictment of CITES past permissions to grant one off trading to mainly Southern African countries, as a result of which poaching instantly accelerated across Africa. In a statement the EIA reportedly said: 'Parties to CITES need to regain control of the destructive world ivory markets and end the damage done to undermine the 1989 ivory trade ban by firmly vetoing all proposals for ivory sales. They can start by emphatically rejecting Tanzania's proposal in March, sending out an unequivocal message that all ivory is blood ivory' before adding that Tanzania 'appeared unwilling, or unable, to exercise control of poaching and ivory trafficking'.

Harsh words ringing in the upcoming battle on principle and standing up for wildlife conservation, not impeding it. Will it in the end be Burn Ivory Burn as done in Kenya repeatedly in the past or selling for greed until the last elephant has been killed, driven by demand from countries like China which have failed to regulate and enforce on their domestic market while Africa's wildlife resources are being decimated? Watch this space as this saga unfolds in coming months ahead of the March 2013 CITES CoP in Bangkok.

OTHER STUFF

Do you know where your water comes from?

From The Nature Conservancy

Many people don't. In fact, a poll conducted by The Nature Conservancy has found that 77% of Americans not on private well water don't know where their water comes from.

There is not much for us in Africa, but it is an interesting idea which can only get better. Check out the map on:

<http://www.nature.org/all-hands-on-earth/water?src=e.nature>

THE SMILE



Have a good week

Gill