



Dear All

My header is a piece of the Namib Desert. In forefront are quiver trees, a species of aloe indigenous to southern Africa. More about our travels later ...

LIVINGSTONE

Livingstone Airport

I had to go and visit the airport during the week and I took a pic of the building going on. It's getting there ... I just hope it is finished in time for August. Work is also going on in the car park.

The car park is small and, to me, it wasn't well designed. If we do get busy, even with the present extension, the car park will not be big enough. There are however, huge problems in the shape of some wonderful Zambezi teak trees which cannot be removed (I hope). So, let's just see how we get on with the present extension.



Whitewater rafting

The river is high, higher than usual for this time of year. Whitewater rafting from Rapid 1 will cease from today and will move further down the gorges.



Road Traffic & Safety (RTSA)

RTSA has moved offices from the house by New Fairmount Hotel to Falls Park Shopping Centre. A great improvement.

Zambezi River Challenge

Following on the success of the Red Nose Comic Relief expedition down the Zambezi River last month, Charity Challenge is to replicate the experience in October, November and December this year for volunteers. Check out their website: www.charitychallenge.com

A PARADISE IN YOUR OWN BACKYARD

By Alina Mateke

On Saturday, 16th February, 2013, members of the Wildlife and Environmental Conservation Society of Zambia paid a visit to Stuart and Meamui Norman's residence in Highlands, Livingstone, to see the forest they created in their own backyard.

The group of 16 comprised of nature lovers of all ages. Stuart Norman started off the event with a brief history of how the forest came to be. The Normans bought the plot in highlands with the aim of regenerating the natural forest, so they picked out certain indigenous trees and made sure they weren't ploughed to the ground when their house was being constructed so as to conserve them. The yard is mainly Kalahari woodland and when the Normans started building in 2004, most of the trees were barely knee-high. There has been no fire or burning of the area for about nine years, allowing the growth of a number of fire-sensitive trees.

The largest tree on the property is an *Acacia polyacantha*, which is a pioneer species and has only been around for seven years. It is larger even than the Mungongo (*Schinziophyton rautanenii*) trees that were there when they arrived and therefore, is a good example of rapid growth. The yard has over 45 species of trees on just 70 by 70 metres of land.



In the forest, the trees grow very close together and as a result grow thin and tall, which gives it a woodland feel. The trees also form a canopy above which provides a lot of shade and moisture within the forest and as a result, on the forest floor, are a large variety of mushrooms, moss and fungi, among which are chanterelles (*Cantharellus cibarius*), which are edible. Walking along the paths in the forest, one gets the feel of having fallen down a rabbit hole and entered wonderland. Its fresh, cool air, lush vegetation, numerous butterflies, and of course the lovely singing of the birds is enough to put even the crankiest of people in a good mood.

In terms of wildlife, there have been sightings of duiker, elephants, gerbils and slender mongooses in previous years but not recently. This may be as a result of more and more people building their houses in that area. Reptiles and amphibians love the forest as well and are quite happy to live there. About 10 species of snakes reside there, among which are boomslangs, puff adders and cobras such as the Mozambique spitting cobra. These reptiles can be very dangerous but Stuart and Meamui say that if you don't bother them, they won't bother you, and so far there have been no cases of snake bites. In fact, the snakes can be quite entertaining.

Apparently they once witnessed the rare sight of a cobra swallowing an entire toad! The boomslangs have also been known to eat chameleons and other snakes eat striped skinks.

Due to the lush environment over 160 bird species have been sighted in their forest, which include robins, brown hooded kingfishers, paradise flycatchers, thrushes, tropical bulbuls and a guinea fowl that has made their garden its home. A few of these birds even have nests in the trees, like the robins and paradise flycatcher which are nesting presently. They love to fly through the trees and drink and bathe in

the bird baths, even though there is sometimes an argument over who gets to take the first bath! Not all the birds are pretty, innocent things; there are some predators that also reside there. African hawk eagles, snake eagles, kites and falcons sometimes decide to disturb the peace and give the little birds a run for their lives! All this activity can be viewed from the lovely outdoor seating area the couple have created.



Not only is the wildlife lovely but the actual trees are pretty amazing. Some have pretty flowers while others have a variety of fruit, both the edible kind and the non-edible. The combretum has small red four-winged fruits that bring a splash of colour to the mainly green forest. A lot of the trees are also quite useful.

Mukwa, for example, is mainly used for timber. The Sand Camwood or Jasmine Pea Tree (*Baphia massaiensis*) is leguminous and helps fix nitrogen back into the soil, which is good for the other plants. The Wild Rubber Tree, (*Diplorhynchus condylocarpon*), locally called Mulya in Lozi, has been known to be used widely in the villages for hunting. The hunters collect the fruit and squeeze out the milk, which they put into sticks and use it to trap birds. The Munyelenyele or Peeling Plane Tree



(*Ochna pulchra*) and Mungongo have fruits from which oil can be obtained for cooking. Some of the fruit trees there are Oranges, Mangoes, Muchingachinga and Granadilla or Passion fruit vines. Among the smaller plants are wild basil, which has a bittersweet smell that is quite pleasant when one takes a walk through the forest. (*Bauhinia petersia*) shrub can be quite problematic in that it grows too fast and tends to strangle the other plants so it has to be controlled by trimming.

If birds singing, beautiful smells, peaceful walks, edible fruits, pretty flowers and interesting wildlife aren't enough for you, you could have a treasure hunt for the little kids who would spend hours running through the trees and looking under shrubs and bushes for clues.

The trip was very enlightening and it just goes to show that if you care enough about the environment and put in a little effort, you too can have a piece of paradise in your own backyard!

Onward for miles in Namibia

It was January and we had reached Outjo in Namibia and were on our way to Skeleton Coast. Josh wanted to go via the Brandberg – the highest point in Namibia – so off we went after packing up our camp at Sophienhof. The plan was to get to the coast and find somewhere to stay, but that didn't quite happen ... it was to be a very long day of driving ...



As we drove west the land got sparser and sparser. The trees got less and smaller. At the Brandberg the grass looked like it had been planted with a mealie planter – dotted across the landscape almost in rows. Tough plants to survive in such a barren environment. Rainfall in this area of Namibia is variable, but probably around 50mm in a year. In Livingstone we expect about 500mm in a year.





We drove on west towards the coast. The landscape continued to get drier with even less vegetation until there was virtually nothing growing. It was getting colder too. The road stretched before us and just seemed to disappear on the horizon. The roads were all dirt but in excellent condition.



Finally we reached Henties Bay (Hentiesbaai) and 'civilization'! What a contrast from the sandy landscape of the dirt road to a mini-metropolis on the edge of the Atlantic Ocean where everyone, it seemed, was intent on fishing.

The plan had been to stop over in Henties Bay but it was very bleak; it was cold and windy and, for me, it was too busy.



We decided to travel further. The road now became a salt road, but still in perfect condition and easy to drive along.

Some distance from Henties Bay we saw a sign for a shipwreck and stopped to have a look. This one, we were told, was only about 5 years old and was an Angolan Ship. The coastline along Namibia is treacherous. Not only does it experience severe fogs but there are shifting sandbars under the water. Since man has been exploring this stretch of ocean there has been accident after accident which obviously



continue to this day. In the 'early' days when shipwrecks occurred and the people managed to get ashore, they found the desert. There was no drinking water, no food. Many died which is the reason for its name – The Skeleton Coast.

While looking at the ocean we were approached by several men wanting to sell us trinkets, so we didn't stay there long. After the obligatory paddle in the sea we took off again south.

The road took us to Swakopmund; we should have stopped but we didn't. We continued on to Walvis Bay along the only tar road we used the whole day.

Along this road there are some pretty good sand dunes; a couple of jackals prowling too.

Reaching Walvis Bay we really needed to find somewhere to stop over. It was late-ish in the afternoon (about 4) and we had travelled quite a distance – about 450km. The road did not go through Walvis Bay, just skirted the edge, so we took the road east towards Windhoek,



hoping to find somewhere along the way. The road was dirt but we didn't mind. The other roads had been in such good condition that we assumed that this one would be the same.

It wasn't ... and there was nowhere to stop before heading into the Namib Desert. Well, what to do? We continued; there was plenty of daylight left – we could, we thought, reach the other side of the park before nightfall and find somewhere to stay. It was not possible to stop inside the park as we were not booked. I

am not sure how one books a campsite in the park but assumed that we would have had to find a booking office in Walvis or Swakop, but as it was Sunday, there was little hope that the offices would be open. Anyhow, we had passed both towns.

The road started off very flat with little vegetation and then the hills appeared in the distance. And then the road navigated through the hills. We drove for hours over a corrugated nightmare of a road. There were some amazing stretches through narrow passes; we saw animals occasionally. But the overriding memory was of being rattled to bits on a horrid road.

We left the park and it was dark; we had to keep driving. I was just about to say that we should stop and camp on the side of the road when we saw a sign for a lodge – Namib's Valley of a Thousand Hills. In the dark, it didn't look too inviting but we knew that we had to find a place to stop. We travelled down a narrow track in the dark, finally arriving at some buildings; there was not a light to be seen. Oh no. I was just turning round intending to drive out when a torch light appeared from one of the buildings. Thomas arrived at the vehicle and said "Why have you arrived so

late?" He told us that the campsite was just 'down there', jumped on the back of the car and directed us down another narrow twisty track. *Stop*, he told us. *Camp here*. There was a small ablution block nearby – Thomas showed it to me. And then he left us to put up our tent.

There was a wind blowing and it took a while to get the tent up and the bedding inside. We were too tired to eat anything, just collapsed in a heap in the tent. It was past 9pm.

We awoke to the most memorable sight of our whole trip ... what a stunning view ... I'll show you next week ...



Kariba Music Festival

Over the Easter weekend – 29 March – 1 April, there will be a Music Festival in Kariba – Bongwe's Big Beach Festival. Check out the website: <http://www.bongwefestivals.com/>



2 arrested with pair of tusks

From Zambia Weekly

The Zambia Wildlife Authority (ZAWA) has arrested two men in Chiawa, Southern Province, for being in unlawful possession of a pair of tusks. The duo had bought the tusks from others, who had poisoned an elephant. They had resisted their arrest, by biting one of the arresting game scouts, explained the Daily Mail.

Zambia Sugar pays surprisingly little tax in Zambia

From the Zambia Weekly

ActionAid has unveiled that Zambia Sugar has paid less than 0.5% in corporate income tax since 2007 – despite recording overall pre-tax profits of \$123 million. In fact, the company paid no income tax at all between 2008 and 2010. To back its claim, ActionAid has spent a year digging through the complicated structure of Zambia Sugar's owner, the Illovo Group, Africa's largest sugar producer, 51% owned by Associated British Food (ABF) of the UK.

Zambia Sugar admitted it has paid "virtually no corporate tax" in recent years due to capital allowances and reliefs granted to it in Zambia in return for its \$230 million investment in doubling its production capacity at Nakambala, creating the largest sugar mill in Africa. However, ActionAid claimed ABF had found legal ways to move about \$13 million a year – a third of pre-tax profits – "out of Zambia, into and via tax haven sister companies". As a result, it accused Zambia Sugar of having avoided paying \$17.7 million (KR78 million) in tax in Zambia since 2007. ...

Gill Comment:

There are many multinational companies in Zambia – all the big ones. And these big companies have excellent accountants who work within the law and shuffle money around the world to make the best profit. The good news is that this had become a worldwide concern. From the BBC:

G20 finance ministers meeting in Moscow have pledged to crack down on tax avoidance by multinational companies. The final communique said members were determined to develop measures to stop firms shifting profits from a home country to pay less tax elsewhere.

The UK, France and Germany were the main movers behind the drive.

Statues of Sata?

From the Zambia Weekly

A group of Zambians, the Consortium of Good Governance Supporters, has asked government for permission to erect five-metre high statues of President Sata in Kalabo, Kasama, Lusaka, Chipata and along the Great North Road. ...

**Throw Zambia out of
Commonwealth?**
From the Zambia Weekly

The Coalition for the Defence of Democratic Rights (CDDR), consisting of the opposition MMD, UPND, ADD, ULP and ZDDM parties, has held a press briefing in South Africa to call for a suspension of Zambia from the Commonwealth due to the “death of democracy”.

The coalition explained that it has filed a 39-page petition to the Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group, alleging that President Sata and the ruling PF party have violated the principles of the Harare Declaration, and requested the Commonwealth to carry out an independent investigation by an appointed envoy.

Government was appalled: “There is no truth in what they are saying. They are being childish and silly,” Chief Government Spokesman Kennedy Sakeni told AFP. He accused former President Banda, who previously has been linked to the coalition, to be behind “these immature and embarrassingly unpatriotic fruitless schemes” in an effort to avoid prosecution for corruption – and talked about pushing for Banda’s immunity to be lifted, which was supported by Transparency International Zambia. Banda responded by clarifying that, contrary to reports, he had not attended the press briefing. Present at the briefing were MMD president Nevers Mumba, UPND president Hakainde Hichilema and ULP president Sakwiba Sikota, flanked by international lawyer Robert Amsterdam, although the media could not seem to agree on this account. ...

Gill comment: *I looked up the full text of the petition. Here is the first paragraph:*

Executive Summary

In September 2011, Michael Chilufya Sata contested the presidential elections of Zambia on a populist mandate and won by a narrow margin over the incumbent President Rupiah Banda. Since taking over as president, Sata has embarked on an aggressive agenda to re-impose his vision of a one-party state, positioning his family and personal allies at the center of the economy while damaging Zambian democracy, human and civil rights, and rule of law. ...

You can find the rest on:

<http://cddr-zambia.org/2013/02/12/full-text-of-commonwealth-report/>

A vibrant poster for the Kariba South Tiger Tournament 2013. The background features a large, detailed illustration of a tiger fish with its mouth wide open, showing sharp teeth. The text 'Kariba South Tiger Tournament' is at the top in large, bold, orange and white letters. Below it, '2013' is written in large orange numbers. A blue banner with white text reads '28th – 31st March'. To the right, a man in a hat and blue shirt is smiling while holding a large tiger fish. In the center, text reads 'Competition Entries: Darren Walker - Tel: 0977 740 947 lakemail05@yahoo.co.uk'. Below this, in large bold letters, it says 'Entry will be done on a 1st come 1st serve basis'. At the bottom, there is a logo for 'kariba BUSHCLUB' and text for 'Kariba Bushclub Accommodation' with a phone number and email address. The bottom of the poster shows a glimpse of a hotel room with a bed and a desk.

The Zambia Weekly

This weekly newsletter is excellent. If you want to get your weekly copy, email: Camilla Hebo Buus - Zambia Weekly [cabuus@zambia-weekly.com]

Homenet needs Agent

We are looking for an agent for Livingstone. Someone, preferably with experience, their own car and laptop, prepared to work on commission basis.

Contact: Janet on janet@homenetzambia.com

ZIMBABWE

New Water Station for Victoria Falls

In the news this week was the approval by Victoria Falls Council to construct a new water station.

From NewsDay, the Mayor of Victoria Falls Town, Nkodilathi Jiyane states that the cost will run into millions of dollars. He also stated that it will be ready for the UNWTO – that is a tall order with only 6 months to go ...

The article also states that the new station will provide for an expected population of 750,000 ... as Victoria Falls Town is said, at the moment to have a population of around 35,000, I think an extra zero has been added by mistake.

Twitter Blanket Drive

I have just received news of the Twitter Blanket Drive. I don't know much about it yet as the website is still under construction. It started in South Africa in 2010 and is a way for people to give blankets to the poor. According to information, it is to extend its operations into Zimbabwe (and Zambia) this year. I hope to find out more and will keep you posted.

BOTSWANA

Okavango in trouble

Ngami Times

Will Botswana still be able to have a second World Heritage Site if the proposed mining of iron ore takes place at Shakawe and Sepopa? That's a question that amateur environmentalists are asking these days as there are fears that the attempt to have the Okavango Delta declared a World Heritage Site may come to nought.

The former Minister of the Environment, Wildlife and Tourism, Kitso Mokaila, announced last year that plans were in place for the delta to be declared as such a site. He even predicted an announcement would be made in the first six months of this year. However, with the likelihood that iron ore will be mined on the west bank of the Okavango River, those plans could scupper that whole process because of the likely impact mining will have on the river, the underground water table, vegetation and wildlife.

We already have a World Heritage Site at the Tsodilo Hills.

MOZAMBIQUE

Zambezi, River of Life From International Rivers

The Zambezi River is Southern Africa's "River of Life." The fourth largest river system in Africa, it drains seven countries and supports millions of people, who make use of its rich fisheries, forests, water, and rich

floodplain soils. The lower Zambezi in Mozambique is the most productive and biologically diverse tropical floodplains in Africa.

Yet the Zambezi is also one of the most heavily dammed rivers in Africa, with at least 30 large storage reservoirs holding back its flow. Four of the world's largest hydroelectric dams—Kariba, Itzhi-Tezhi, Kafue and Cahora Bassa—have stopped most of the river's annual floods with their huge reservoirs. These reservoirs are unsuitable habitat for most river species. The changes to the river have brought great hardships to the people and wildlife of the Zambezi basin, especially in the lower Zambezi valley of Mozambique. For 25 years, erratic and mistimed flooding below Cahora Bassa Dam has adversely affected the living standards of hundreds of thousands of downstream households and decimated one of the most productive and diverse wetland ecosystems in Africa, the Zambezi Delta.

Significant work is currently underway to restore the lower Zambezi by improving how water is released from Cahora Bassa. Water release patterns that more closely mimic natural flows will improve the richness of the degraded downstream environment.

Yet those efforts could be undermined by new dams planned for the river, including Mphanda Nkuwa, just downstream of Cahora Bassa. International Rivers is working with local groups to stop the worst new dams, help restore justice to dam-affected communities, find better alternatives to hydropower, and press for restoration of the river through better dam management.

WOLFGANG'S COLUMN

KENYA'S TOURISM SECTOR NAMES CHINA AS 'ENEMY OF WILDLIFE CONSERVATION

The tone is getting sharper and the message louder and clearer whom Kenya's tourism industry who is who consider the main culprit in the growing wave of poaching incidents witnessed in recent months across Kenya. A demonstration organized by the Mombasa and Coast Tourist Association yesterday in Mombasa, befittingly kicking off under the famous tusks which span across Moi Avenue in the centre of the city, raised support and approval from across society at large as well as the political spectrum, where candidates for various elective offices – Kenya is having a general election on 04th March – voiced their support for demands to strengthen anti poaching measures.

'Our government should listen to us, the people, when we tell them to name and shame China, Vietnam and others in Asia. Those are responsible for the slaughter of our prime tourism resource, our wildlife. Across Africa poaching is at an all time high for ivory and rhino horn. These countries are doing nothing to help us because they covertly tolerate the greed of their citizens for our ivory and rhino horn. China has many Kenyans on death row for drug offenses, crimes those fellow citizens of ours should not have committed. I am saying that smuggling, processing and possessing blood ivory is as bad an offense. Those responsible for wiping out our natural heritage too should meet such harsh measures. China may give us a lot of assistance and has helped to build infrastructure but there is a limit for us. Let me be candid, they siphon away Africa's mineral resources at laughable prices because our politicians are corrupt. Now, wherever they are, wildlife is getting poached, stray dogs disappear and last week several Chinese were arrested in Naivasha for cooking a snake. My colleagues and I are clear, this has to stop or they should pack up and go home. We demand from our government that when Kenya goes to CITES they mince no words. They must expose the culprits and have their ivory trading licenses cancelled to make it impossible for them to even legally trade or import ivory. It is time to name and shame them, because if we do not, our wildlife will be gone just as fast as our mineral resources and oil and gas. If China cannot behave like a friend, I am sorry to say, they are our enemies, enemies of conservation, enemies of our wildlife and enemies of our tourism industry. We want their tourists to come and see our wildlife alive and go home and advocate for us. But we can no longer tolerate that their government metes out harshest sentences if one of their Pandas is poached inside China but allow tens of thousands of elephant and hundreds of rhinos slaughtered in Africa every year' said a regular source from the Kenya coast, who on second thought then requested the comment to be treated without giving a name as was initially agreed. ...

A Hippo Roller

Here is a great idea from South Africa.
Just roll the water home! Check it out on
www.hipporoller.org



Join INTERPOL and Partners at the Upcoming Side Event of the CITES 16th Meeting of the Conference of the Parties

Partnerships for Linking Countries and Regions to INTERPOL's Global Environmental Security Network
Thursday, 7 March 2013, between 12:30 and 14:00, CITES 16th Meeting of the Conference of the Parties,
Side Event (Meeting Room No. 1), Bangkok, Thailand

Confirmed keynote speakers in alphabetical order:

- Mr. Azzedine Downes, International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW)
- Mr. Jeremy Eppel, UK Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (UK DEFRA)
- Ms. Mary Melnyk, United States Agency for International Development (USAID)
- Mr. Keshav Varma, Global Tiger Initiative (GTI), The World Bank

INTERPOL will host a side event at the upcoming CITES 16th Meeting of the Conference of the Parties, where our Partners will be invited to share joint successes, experiences and recommendations for future collaborative initiatives.

During the event, INTERPOL representatives will showcase the Environmental Crime Programme's projects and activities that are bringing countries and regions together to fight the criminal threat to human security and the environment.

Initiatives such as Project WISDOM, for the conservation of elephants and rhinoceroses, and Project PREDATOR, for the protection of Asian big cats, are of particular interest to country delegations and specific regions, and thus provide an opportunity for their engagement.

Project LEAF, Law Enforcement Assistance for Forests, and Project SCALE, an initiative to combat fisheries crime, as well as other INTERPOL projects focused on maintaining environmental security at multiple levels, will also have a place on the agenda.

To find out more about the work of Interpol on Environmental Crime:

www.interpol.int/Crime-areas/Environmental-crime/

THE SMILE

IRISH LOGIC

Two Irishmen, Patrick & Michael, were adrift in a lifeboat following a dramatic escape from a burning freighter. While rummaging through the boat's provisions, Patrick stumbled across an old lamp. Secretly hoping that a genie would appear, he rubbed the lamp vigorously. To the amazement of Patrick, a genie came forth. This particular genie, however, stated that he could only deliver one wish, not the standard

three. Without giving much thought to the matter, Patrick blurted out, "Make the entire ocean into Guinness Beer!" The genie clapped his hands with a deafening crash, and immediately the entire sea turned into the finest brew ever sampled by mortals. Simultaneously, the genie vanished. Only the gentle lapping of Guinness on the hull broke the stillness as the two men considered their circumstances. Michael looked disgustedly at Patrick whose wish had been granted. After a long, tension-filled moment, he spoke: "Nice going Patrick!"

Now we're going to have to pee in the boat!

Have a good week

Gill