

The Livingstone Weekly

24 November 2013

Dear All

My header is a monitor lizard at Wildlife Camp in South Luangwa. Story later ...

ZRA Changes Everything

During this past week (and the week before), many of us who headed towards the Zambia Revenue Authority (ZRA) to pay our dues had a bit of a shock. It was *all change* at the office. Not only had all our numbers changed but the forms had changed too. I was told by one of the officers that businesses had been informed through the newspapers and on TV, but judging by the number of people who, like me, had come clashing our old forms, the newspapers and TV advertising had not been effective.

ZRA has changed from having a mass of different numbers for VAT, for PAYE, for Turnover Tax, etc. It now works on one number – the TPIN. And, to make things more interesting all businesses had had their TPIN changed too. What a fun time it was.

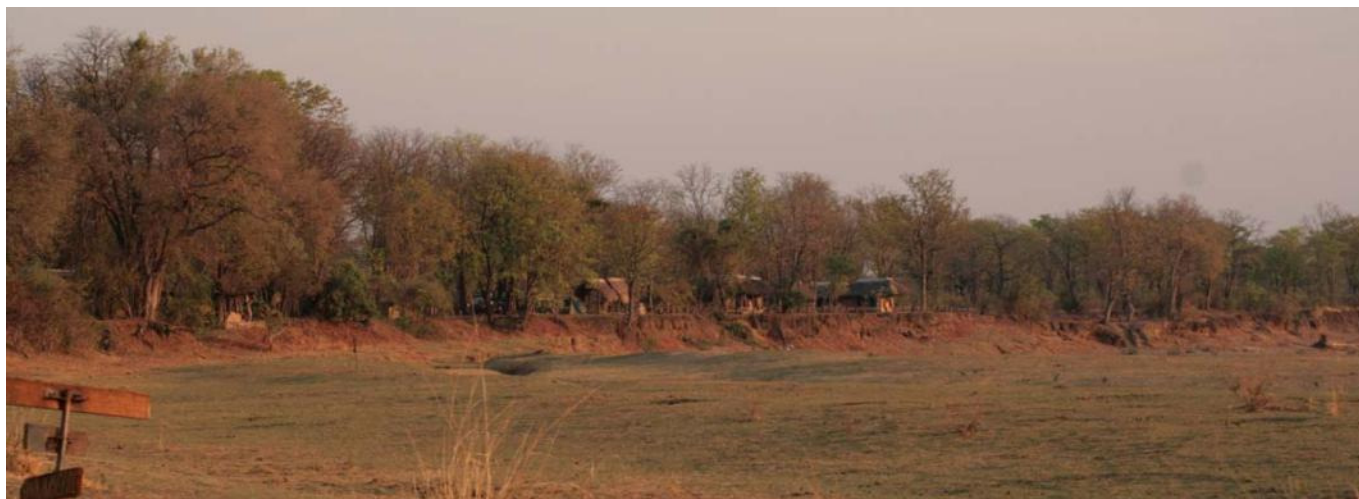
Anyway, the ZRA officers at Livingstone were not responsible for the changes so there was no point venting any frustration on them. The changes had come from 'high up' in the exulted towers of ZRA Lusaka. The changes do make sense but the forms are long and complicated and why, oh why, did we not get a bit of customer service? Every time I fill in one of ZRA's forms I have to enter my email address. I have also corresponded with ZRA through email. Would it have been too much to ask for ZRA to send me an email outlying the changes? Obviously it was ...

ZRA's plan is that all payments can be made through bank transfer and all forms can be submitted by email. It does make sense but I think ZRA is going to have to give us all a bit of help with these new forms which are, to put it mildly, rather complicated for anyone who is not an accountant with a PhD.

A Visit to Wildlife Camp

I left you last week with my story about Chichele Lodge. I had been royally treated, toured the park and met lions, leopards and porcupines. On my last day there, Godwin, driver and mechanic, transferred me to Wildlife Camp. We took the main route through the park past several lodges, notably Mfuwe Lodge which had the muddiest pool in front of it crammed with crocodiles and hippos. I felt very sorry for the birds and animals which came down to have a drink as their chances of becoming lunch must have been very high.

Wildlife Camp is outside the park in Lower Lupande Game Management Area. It stretches for about a kilometre along the Luangwa River with chalets, safari tents and camping. It is probably one of the most popular destinations for visitors to the park and has a relaxed atmosphere with lots of activity.



The day I arrived I joined some other guests on a tour of the park with Conrad, enjoying the sunset over a floodplain which, of course, was dry, but covered with wildlife nibbling away at the grass. Surely the rain had to come soon as the grazers were looking very thin.



The following two days I spent talking to people and finding out as much as I could about South Luangwa National Park. Wildlife Camp has been there since 1992 so they had all the stories at their fingertips. Gavin from Jackalberry Safaris spent time with me telling me about Guide Training and taking me on a trip to Chipembele Education Centre.



In between all the research I enjoyed the wildlife which came to visit me and had time to enjoy some of the little things which often go unnoticed or ignored.

The monkeys and baboons were the usual terrorists coming to visit the bar and restaurant when no-one was looking. The baboons are yellow baboons, different from our chacmas in Livingstone. The vervet monkey girls were clutching new babies. A group of banded mongoose came to visit then hurried off back into the bush. A monitor lizard waddled along the wall looking for something to eat, or maybe he was just going somewhere.

Wildlife Camp has recently put in a waterhole near to the bar which is attracting all the wildlife in the area. Bushbuck, warthog, giraffe, elephant were all constant visitors. In front of the lodge, in the bed of the Luangwa River, an elephant had died. I was told that she was an old lady and was so tired that she just could not make it across the riverbed, giving up life in the sand. Vultures and storks were on her body, cleaning up the environment.





I am ashamed to say that I declined the offer of a walking safari. But when I saw a group of walkers return to the camp, I knew I regretted it. They all looked as if they had had a great time.

Walking safaris are conducted by guides who have passed strict training so that guest walkers are kept safe. Many guides are qualified to take drives into the park but it is seen as the highest achievement to become a walking guide. A ZAWA scout also accompanies each walking safari – he is the one with the gun.

The only walking I did was between the restaurant and my chalet. Even that had to be done with care as wildlife often walks through. No walking between the main areas and chalets is allowed at night and drivers are on hand to ferry guests to and from rooms. The wildlife is ever present.



Wildlife Camp is open throughout the year and has accommodation to suit most people. I didn't get to see the Safari Tents, but was assured that they were top notch. The bar and restaurant are open to all-comers and the food was excellent, the bar well-stocked.

The Camp is on land which is owned by the Wildlife Conservation Society of Zambia so, by staying there, you know that part of your money is being given to the Society

for education of local children. Having seen the Camp in the driest time of the dry season, I know it will need another visit in the rains – it will look so different and yet still be very welcoming ...

National Airline

There were a few reports this week about Zambia planning to re-establish a national airline; some reports stating that it will happen next year. Definitely it would be good to have another airline to give Proflight some competition, but I doubt that it will happen. According to one report the government is looking for a private investor. As we know, Proflight prices are very high; also we know that British Airways has recently stopped flying to Zambia. There has to be a financial reason for this. Unless the government subsidises a National Airline as Zimbabwe does, I cannot see that it is really on the cards.

African skimmers

Photo from Royal Chundu

It is so good to see these birds. They used to live near to Livingstone but have long-gone because of the speed boats and the waves they create. Skimmers nest on sand banks close to the water's edge, so the waves from speedboats destroy the nests.



From Conservation Lower Zambezi

They just had to help when a buffalo was found stuck in the mud ...



ZIMBABWE

From the Painted Dog Foundation

Makwandara Primary School is the newest school to be added to our free of-charge Children's Bush Camp programme. All because of a goat!

In my last update I told the story of dogs killing a goat. Rather than seeking compensation or retribution for his lost goat, the villager, Mr. Nyathi, accepted his loss because he understood how PDC has helped his community at large with projects such as the HIV/AIDS programme and the construction of bore holes to provide fresh water.

After hearing of Mr. Nyathi's reaction, Forgie, Wilton, Jealous and I discussed how we could acknowledge his trust in us and how we could show our appreciation to the entire village. The unanimous decision was to invite his community's school to become part of our world-class Children's Bush Camp programme. Wilton followed all the necessary protocols and the day came when the PDC delegation arrived at the school to meet the Headmaster, teachers and parents. Mr Nyathi was guest of honour. Speeches were made by all and a certificate handed over as the formal invitation for the grade six children to attend our Bush Camp in 2014. We then arranged a familiarisation tour of our facilities for selected parents and village representatives. The excitement and enthusiasm was evident and a delight for all of us here at PDC to witness. This small moment in the life of a village represented a truly significant breakthrough for us. Shifts such as these, from attitudinal change to behavioural change, will help pave the way to a brighter future for the dogs.



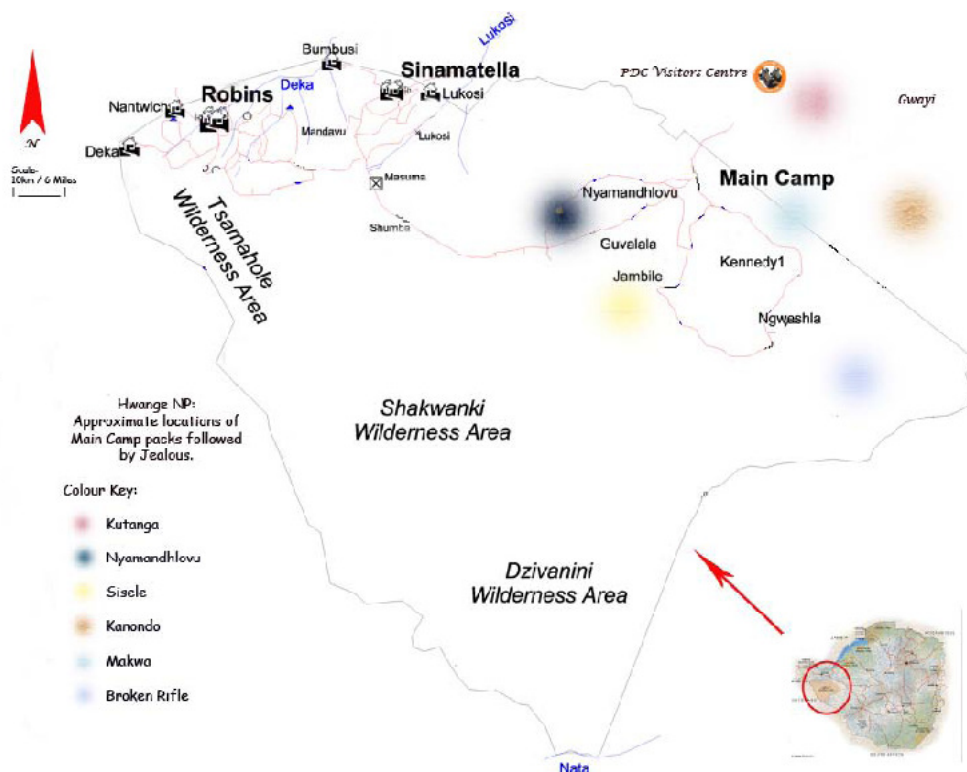
Hwange National Park:

Life on the front line of conservation has many ups and downs. Many of you have become all too familiar with the sagas that have unfolded over the years, often captured in these updates. This year has been no exception. Earlier in the year I wrote of our ultimately futile attempts to save the life of the Kutanga pack's alpha female, Ester. As I write this, the Kutanga pack is again in turmoil following the death of Shoulder Spot and the alpha male, BT, leaving only MK and Surf. But a ray of hope emerged recently when a new female, named Kerin, bonded with Surf, breathing new life into what we still refer to as the Kutanga pack.

Four packs (that we know of) in the Hwange Main Camp area had pups this year. The highest number we have recorded in a long time. We cling to these glimmers of hope. . The Nyamandhlovu pack had ten pups, bringing the pack total up to 15. Currently, however, only seven pups survive with the five adults. One of the pups almost drowned in a concrete water trough but was fortunately rescued by a park scout.

Surely an example, if ever there was one, that anything can and does happen to the pups and that the fate of the lost three is for speculation or a wild guess. Jealous saw the pack only yesterday and they are very fit and healthy. Our optimism for their survival remains high as calving season begins soon and will provide the adult dogs with a relatively easy and abundant source of prey to feed the hungry pups.

Jealous is busy. He has recently tracked down the Broken Rifle pack, which had been sighted first at the Broken Rifle water hole during September and then again at Ngweshla water hole. This pack of seven adults and four pups is new to us and a real pleasure to watch. The elusive Kanondo pack spends most of its time in the Gwayi Conservancy to the East of us and, as a result, is rarely seen. A recent sighting, followed upon by Jealous,



confirmed that the pack consists of four adults and five pups.

This Sisele pack typifies the problems in Hwange. On average the pack sizes are still small and so pup survival is not great. The simple equation is that the more adults in the pack, the more pups survive. How the dogs are able to reach those magic numbers like we see in Mana Pools, where packs of 20+ exist, provides us with many sleepless nights. Still, we cling to any positive news, no matter how small, and for now we are celebrating seeing more dogs in and around Hwange Main Camp.

Greg has spent time this year in the Sinamatella / Robins region of Hwange, which is to the west of us and indicated on the map. He reports seven packs there. He estimates the Hwange National Park population to be 30 packs numbering approximately 120 dogs. Fewer than would be expected in a National Park that is almost 15,000 square kilometers (5,700 square miles) in size. Still it is the best it's been for many years, so it brings out that famous big smile of Jealous!

Below is a map illustrating the approximate locations of the six packs in and around Hwange National Park that Jealous will search for on any given day. You can follow his daily Notes From the Field on our Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Painted-Dog-Conservation/189193720940>

Hwange Elephants

From SW Radio came the following report:

Five more people have been arrested in Zimbabwe in connection with the poisoning of elephants, as part of an ongoing crackdown that followed the deaths of 100 elephants in the Hwange National Park.

The five are reported to have been involved in the cyanide poisoning of 10 elephants in Ngamo Safaris in Lupane. They were arrested along with five other people accused of poaching game at the University of Zimbabwe farm in Harare last week.

This brings to 22 the number of people who have been arrested following the deaths of over 100 elephants in Hwange National Park in August this year. ...

It seems that authorities are really working hard to bring the poachers to book for the poisoning of waterholes in Hwange National Park and surrounding areas. I have not heard, though, of any breakthrough in finding out who supplied the cyanide or who was organising the transit route for the ivory. I wonder if we will ever know ...

BOTSWANA

A missed opportunity on elephants

Editorial in the Ngami Times

When word started getting around that Botswana is to host an emergency African Elephant Summit on December 2-4, 2013, residents of Chobe and Ngamiland naturally started rekindling hope that finally the elephant problem is being addressed.

Looking at the provisional programme for that summit, clearly such optimism turns out to be misplaced. The emergency elephant summit is exclusively about illegally killing of elephants and the illegal trade in ivory, and its objective is to adopt a commitment and accompanying urgent measures to that effect.

The elephant burden of over-population that Botswana carries is nowhere covered in the summit agenda. Yet the country has the highest population of African elephants in the world, with Chobe and Ngamiland being home to more than 90% of the Botswana's 207 545 elephants.

These numbers are not only growing exponentially annually but have also surpassed the elephant habitat's carrying capacity. As a result, elephants are expanding their range to encroach on settled areas, leading to the otherwise avoidable human/wildlife conflict.

In its report in August this year, the Department of Wildlife and National Parks (DWNP) rightly called for the necessity “to balance the elephants’ role as a contributor to the maintenance of biodiversity on the one hand, and ecosystem degradation on the other.”

It, therefore, comes as a shock that the Botswana government has missed this rare opportunity to include the concern of over-population into the agenda of the forthcoming emergency elephant summit. We strongly feel this issue is equally important as those of illegal killing of elephants and illegal trade in ivory; and should have been included in the agenda.

Strangely though, the Botswana government together with the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) were charged with developing the first draft of the urgent measures to be considered at the summit. Is it perhaps because our government does not regard the over-population issue as a crisis? Conclusively then, Botswana’s stance on the elephant over-population issue remains as clear as mud.

For instance, the selection of the location for the hosting of this important summit could be indicative of government’s apparent confusion on the matter. Why would one choose Gaborone for such an important summit on elephants while Kasane in the Chobe could have been the most appropriate venue?

What a missed opportunity to take summit delegates on a short tour of the nearby Chobe National Park to witness first hand the devastation wrought by elephant over-population! As we have previously pointed out in this newspaper, this is another glaring evidence of government’s appalling lack of communication and lobbying skills.

Government cannot continue to wish this problem away. Chilli peppers and wildlife corridors approaches cannot be the only solutions. By the time government awakens to this reality it will be too late for the country’s conservation, including the elephants themselves.

NAMIBIA

Conservation and tourism intersect

From Informanté

Uamunikaije Tjivinda squat-ted in the sand and threw a few strips of dried giraffe meat into a pot of boiling water. Like many Himba women in the arid, north-western part of Namibia called Kaokoland, she wore sandals, a goatskin skirt and little else. Her skin and long, plaited hair were a striking rust-red, rubbed with ocher dug from the earth.

From nearby hills, other women with young children converged, standing quietly around Tjivinda’s domed hut, their eyes downcast. Remy Scalza and his wife, tourists to Namibia unpacked gifts brought on the advice of their guide - corn-meal, tea, sugar and other supplies hard to find here.

Though no longer a novelty for these women, these sorts of encounters with tourists are still new enough to be awkward. Only when the food came out did they smile and start to talk.

“The conservancy has been good for us,” Tjivinda said in the local Otjhimba dialect, which our guide translated. “Wildlife are cared for like our own livestock, and money from tourism goes into our conservancy bank account.” Goats wandered by as the women sat down to braid hair.

For nearly two decades, Na-mibia residents, has been part of an ambitious experiment in both community tourism and wildlife conservation, known as commu-nal conservancies. “The idea was to fight poaching by restoring control over wildlife to the local people,” said John Kasaona, the director of Integrated Rural De-velopment and Nature Conserva-tion, the primary NGO behind the initiative.

In 1996, groundwork laid by the organisation paved the way for new laws giving tribal communi-ties - who previously had limited rights to resources on communal lands - the ability to form conserv-ancies and self-manage their wild-life. “We wanted to show them that they could benefit financially from keeping these animals alive, in

particular from wildlife tour-ism,” said Kasaona, who would spend years canvassing the coun-tryside, explaining the model vil-lage by village. “Try convincing people who were made these same promises years ago by a colonial regime and then robbed of their land,” he said. “At first, no one trusted us.”

In the years since, the plan has been a resounding - and rare - suc-cess story for African wildlife. Seventy-nine conservancies now cover a full 20% of Namibia. Populations of desert lions, de-sert elephants and black rhinos, all threatened with extinction in the early '90s, have increased several times over, while poach-ing has plummeted. (One rhino was poached in Namibia last year, compared with 668 in neighboring South Africa.) Meanwhile, con-servancies throughout the country have teamed up with international tourism operators, giving ordinary travelers unprecedented access to both animals and local culture. ...

SOUTH AFRICA

Biodiversity Stewardship

Recently the Chief Executive Officer of Kwa-Zulu Natal (KZN), Bandile Mkhize, has announced that 100,000 ha (1,000 sq km) has come under the Biodiversity Stewardship Programme. It also seems likely that another 300,000 ha will come under the same programme – discussions are underway with landowners. It made me find out more about the programme, so here are details from Conservation South Africa with a map I have borrowed from the web.

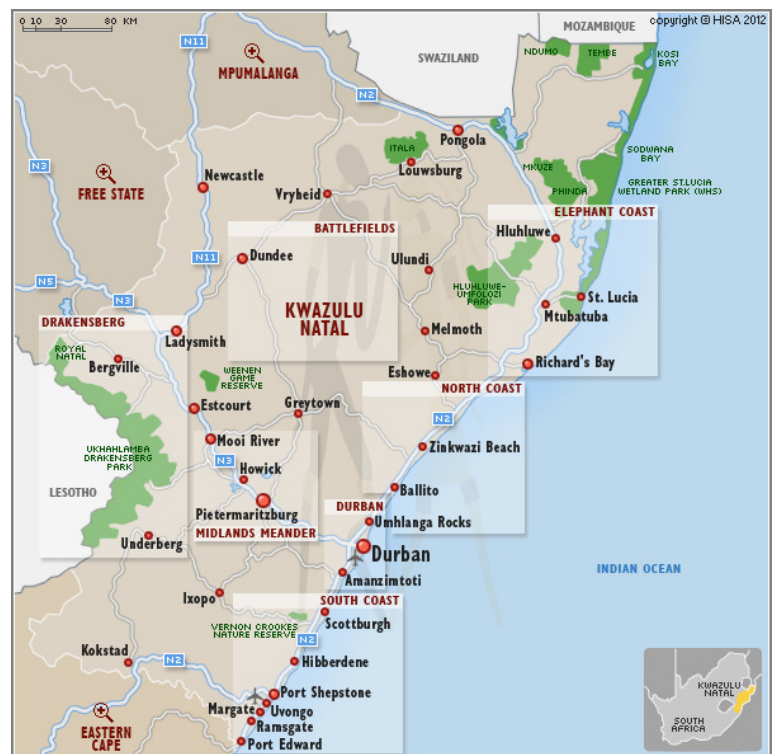
Biodiversity Stewardship as a mechanism for adaptation to climate change

It has become a priority in conservation organisations across South Africa to develop projects that will ensure the maintenance of an environment that can enable biodiversity to adapt to changing climate. The Biodiversity Stewardship Programme, begun by Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife and now managed by Wildlands Conservation Trust, aims to achieve just that by securing core conservation areas and employing Biodiversity Stewardship as a tool for improving the conservation management of these sites.

How it works

Stewardship processes identify land of critical importance for biodiversity conservation and/or the provision of ecosystem services and encourage private and communal landowners to engage in biodiversity conservation and other sustainable land use practices. They maintain ownership of their land, receive guidance and management assistance, and are supported to diversify their land-based activities to create sustainable livelihoods, all the while protecting the country's unique biodiversity against the threat of climate change.

KZN is home to a rich diversity of plant and animal life. Currently, at least 80 percent of the important biodiversity lies outside formally protected areas, on privately or communally owned land. The Biodiversity Stewardship Programme helps to secure some of these areas for long-term biodiversity conservation while maintaining the productivity of the landscape for landowners as well. A further, central aim is the creation of a network of protected areas linked as corridors across the landscape in order to improve the ability of species to adapt to climate change. Biodiversity Stewardship involves formal, legally binding agreements with landowners for a minimum of 30 years. ...



THE GLOVES ARE SET TO COME OFF AS KENYA'S TOURISM GURUS TAKE ON GOVERNMENT

Unease and frustration are growing among the Kenyan tourism fraternity over the intransigence shown by government to their plight, especially in the light of yet another drop in occupancies at the Kenya coast. The initial warm welcome given to the Kenyatta government, considering that President Uhuru Kenyatta once was chairman of the Kenya Tourism Board, is progressively giving way to increased frustration if not outright disillusionment by the stakeholder community over a range of what the sector thinks are actions by government inconsiderate if not outright hostile to the industry.

Singled out as key issues are the introduction of VAT on a range of tourism services, which has rocked relations of Kenyan safari operators with overseas tour companies which are unable to pass on such price increases to their clients, who are protected under European consumer protection laws when it comes to advertised rates and tariffs. Also mentioned are plans to merge the Kenya Tourism Board with other, non tourism related departments, a recipe for disaster as some stakeholders have put it to this correspondent, and a definite own goal which will benefit other countries, in the region and the continent – Tanzania and South Africa were cited as examples – where the tourism boards are better facilitated and/ or left as standalone units with the sole task to promote their respective tourism attractions. ...

THE SMILE

I will leave you with some pics of my friendly brown-hooded kingfisher. He has decided to attack his reflection on the window all day. I am sure he is giving himself quite a headache.



Have a good week

Gill