



Dear All

The streets of Livingstone continue to be awash with traders. It is almost impossible to walk along the pavements these days. Here is a sample of wares sold on the street – kapenta, mopane worms, beans, rice and onions.

The town centre market has been demolished and although I have noticed a tin fence go up around the site there seems little building going on. It is unlikely that the market could possibly be completed before the UNWTO so our traders will have nowhere to go. How we are going to make Livingstone look clean and tidy for the event I cannot imagine.

I know there have been lots of meetings by committees for the UNWTO. I have heard comments from participants at the meetings and comments on the radio. I listened to Harold Mweene on Zambezi FM tell us that we have a national committee based in Lusaka; a local committee based in Livingstone. I have heard about lots of subcommittees at the local level.

On the action side, there have been auditions for arts and culture performers and there has been a tremendous response. I know we will be really proud of our cultural activities. I just hope that government gives them some money so that they can get brand new costumes to wear. We have excellent artists in the region so I hope that we have a great art exhibition to show off. ...



Livingstone has been quiet this week. The lull before the Easter storm, I expect. All the lodges and camps are full up for Easter and there are lots of things going on.

If you want to get out of town don't forget the Fishing Competition at Kariba Bush Club or the Music Festival at Eagles Rest.



## Kasanka Cycle Challenge 24 – 26 May



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### Two spillway gates opened in Kariba ... amidst concerns about the stability of its plunge pool

From the Zambia Weekly

The Zambezi River Authority has opened two spillway gates in the Kariba Dam – after a bit of confusion about the timing of the event. The spectacular opening, which is a bit of a tourist event, had first been advertised to take place on 17 March, but was later postponed to 18 March due to the referendum on a new constitution in Zimbabwe, leaving hundreds of tourists staring at some very closed spillway gates.

This year's opening took place unusually late to allow for major structural maintenance of the plunge pool below the dam wall. The spilling water has over the years eroded the plunge pool, and concerns are ever-present that the erosion develops backwards to undermine the dam's foundation. Last year, it was revealed that the plunge pool's scour-hole (picture) had deepened beyond expectations to a depth of more than 90 metres into the rock. Apparently this is unprecedented in dam history.

Accordingly, the Zambezi River Authority engaged the Subtech Group of South Africa to seal off all the huge erosion cavities: Subtech closed off the cavities with a wall of sandbags, filled them with rock, and finally pumped grout into the voids. All in all a pretty straightforward job, if not for the fact that it took place at a depth of about 50 metres.

The two gates have only been opened halfway to not damage the repair works. They are discharging a total of about 1,500 m<sup>3</sup>/s. If all six gates were opened to full capacity, they would discharge 9,000 m<sup>3</sup>/s. However, due to the concerns about the plunge pool, it is recommended not to open more than three spillways, and to never open gate 6.

The good news is that the restrained spilling will only result in minimal flooding downstream. The river is expected to rise less than a metre in its narrow parts.

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## **KWACHA: Will it go up or down?**

From the Zambia Weekly

That the Kwacha is slipping is no longer news – this week it weakened to 5.43 per dollar, and overall this year, the Kwacha has dropped about 3.5%. The interesting question is whether it will recover or not.

Barclays had a lot of opinions on this:

Currency Strategist Mike Keenan at Barclays' Absa Capital unit in Johannesburg estimated that the Kwacha will drop to 6.20 per dollar by the end of the year. "The central bank has spent a considerable amount of its reserves to defend the Kwacha, and it may not be in a position to do that aggressively," he told Bloomberg in the phone from Johannesburg.

He said the Kwacha was weakening due to fundamental reasons such as a growing current account deficit and political uncertainty.

His colleague, Absa Capital Head of Research Jeff Gable, told Barclay's clients in Lusaka that the Kwacha is under pressure due to some exporters failing to remit money earned back into Zambia (government is currently pushing for stricter control of financial in- and outflows). He added that the weakening was worsened by reduced interest in Zambia's bond market.

On a positive note, Barclays predict that copper prices will hit \$9,500 per tonne by 2014 on the back of supply and demand, which would bolster the Kwacha. Copper is currently trading just below \$8,000 per tonne.

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## **National airline still on the agenda**

From the Zambia Weekly

Government has finalised its plans to re-establish a national airline. Transport, Works, Supply and Communications Minister Christopher Yaluma told the Times of Zambia that a proposal would be tabled before Cabinet soon – but he revealed no details of the plans. He only explained that the technical committee appointed to oversee the formation of the airline has looked at all possibilities as to whether or not government will partner up with an already established airline in its quest to revive Zambia Airways. Most African governments either fully own or have shares in their national airlines, including South African Airways (100%), Ethiopian Airlines (100%) and Kenya Airways (23%).

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## **Proflight introduces Boeing 737**

From the Zambia Weekly

Proflight Zambia has introduced a 108-seater Boeing 737 to its fleet – to nearly double its capacity. The Boeing is expected to arrive in time for United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) General Assembly in Livingstone in August.

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# **WORLD WATER DAY**

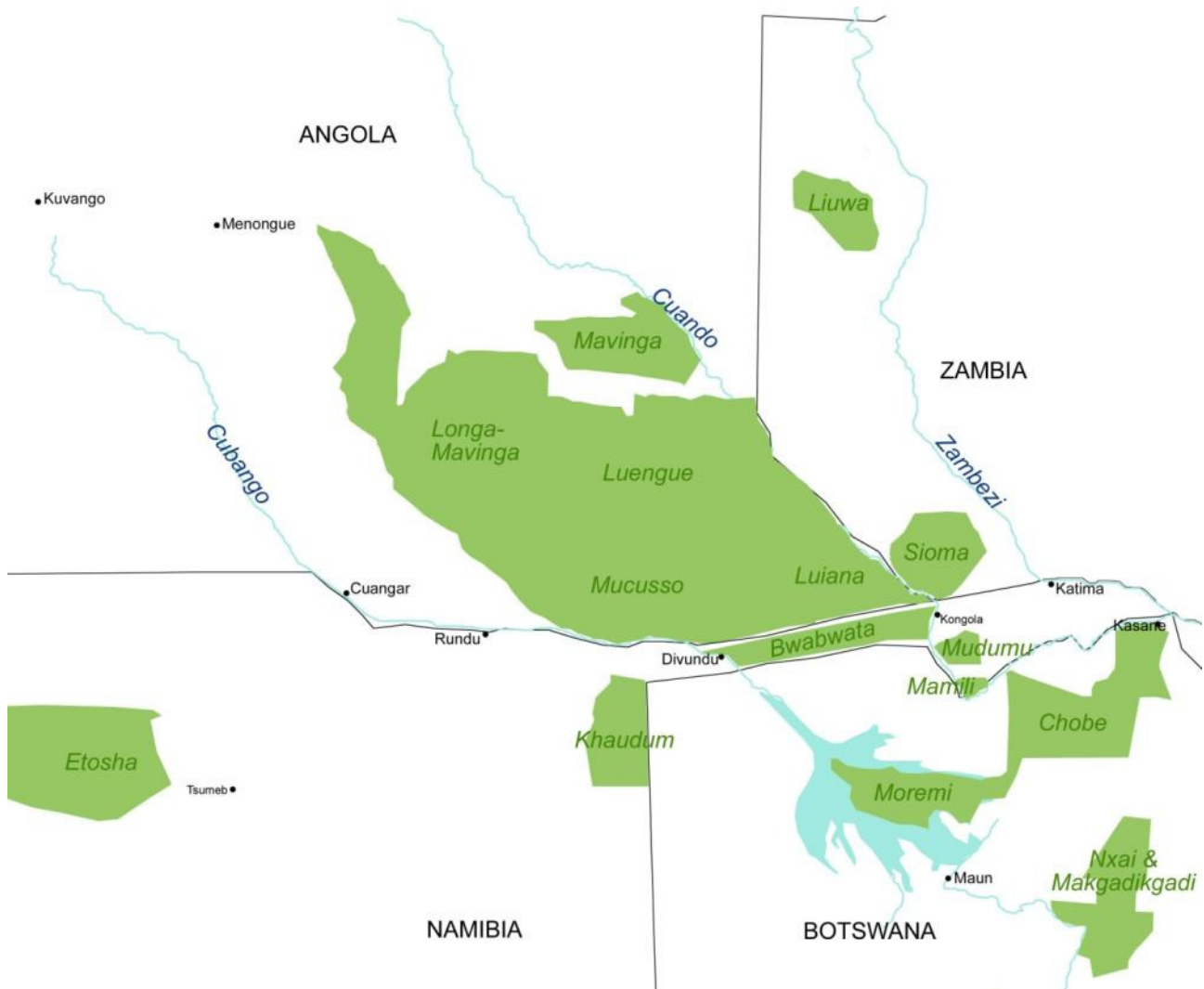
They say that the next major war will be about access to water. We have lots of water in our region which is dominated by the Zambezi River. Without rivers there is no life for people, for the environment and for our wildlife. As we have just celebrated World Water Day, it seems an opportune time to look at our rivers.

The Zambezi starts life in the northwestern corner of Zambia, passes through a section of Angola, re-entering Zambia to fill the Barotse floodplain. It forms the border between Zambia and Namibia, then between Zambia and Zimbabwe, continuing on to the Indian Ocean in Mozambique.

The Cuando (becoming Kwando, Mashi, Linyanti, Chobe) drains into the Zambezi after giving life to Bwabwata, Mudumu, Mamili and Chobe National Parks. As you can see too it gives life to parks in Angola of which we know very little.



The other major river is the Cubango which starts its life in the highlands of Angola, with many rivers draining into it. The river forms the border with Angola and Namibia, crossing the Caprivi Strip as the Kavango and then becoming the Okavango River which spreads out forming what is known as the Okavango Panhandle and finally, spreading even more, into the Okavango Delta. Most of the water in the Okavango Delta is lost through evaporation or by seeping into the sand.



A small amount of the water has, since 2008, filled the Boteti River to Nxai & Makgadikgadi, giving renewed life to the park. Some also has filtered down Taughe River and into Lake Ngami.

In Zambia we take the Zambezi River for granted. There is so much water; how could it possibly not be there one day? It will only be there in the future if we take care of it.

In Botswana they are very serious about the life of the Okavango Delta. It brings water which feeds the land with water and nutrients which in turn feed the people and the wildlife. But it is a very fragile river basin. In 2008 the Boteti River filled, as did the Selinda Spillway (off the Linyanti near Mamili) and Lake Ngami (through the Taughe River). No-one is really quite sure how the rivers filled after being dry for over 20 years. Some say it was because of excellent rainy seasons; others say there was a slight movement in the tectonic plates in the earth's crust. Whatever the reason, for now, the Boteti, the Selinda Spillway and Lake Ngami now have water. But for how long?

In order to bring the Okavango Delta to the world's attention, a team of scientists will travel the length of the Cubango, Kavango, Okavango this year. The team will consist of Dr. Steven Boyes, National Geographic

grantee and wildlife biologist, Dr. Kirsten Wimberger, Primatologist and Wildlife Researcher and wife of Dr. Steven Boyes, Dr. Karen Ross, Ecologist and Activist, working primarily in the Okavango Delta and Chris Boyes, Marine Biologist and brother of Dr. Steven Boyes.

From the website: [www.okavangofilm.com](http://www.okavangofilm.com)

*The objective of Okavango is to ensure that the world understands the importance of the ecological services provided by the Okavango wetland ecosystem before it disappears, and to activate its audience to help achieve UNESCO World Heritage Status. Declaration will not ensure the Okavango Delta remains untouched with the entire catchment vulnerable to development. The film will celebrate the intrinsic value of the vast untouched catchment in Angola that sends down the annual floods to this globally important ecosystem that is visible from space – an emerald gem in the middle of the Kalahari. The campaign linked to the film will advocate for a tri-nation (Angola–Namibia–Botswana) World Heritage Site, proper legislative protection, and a commitment to ecotourism as the economic driver for the region.*

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## NAMIBIA

### Drones to help protect wildlife

The World Wildlife Fund will start testing a new drone surveillance program in Namibia next month that aims to coordinate data from the air and ground to give park rangers an edge over poachers, according to Crawford Allan, director of the Fund's TRAFFIC North America project.

"It will be a great advantage to protect both wildlife and the rangers," Allan said. "We will know where the animals are, the (drone) relays the location to ground control, and you can mobilize rangers on the ground to get in between the animals and form a shield. We see this as an umbrella of technology."



Crawford said it's the first time that such technology has been used in the field. It's a three-year project at two sites in Africa (the second is being negotiated) and another two in Asia. The project is funded by a \$5 million grant from Google Global Impact Awards. Eventually the goal is to use cellphone (GSM) technology to connect to the drone flights.

A group called Conservation Drones has also been working with independent researchers at 15 to 20 sites around the globe to help them track wildlife better and develop information that could help them stop poaching. They have worked to monitor rhinos in a national park in Nepal and count orangutan nests in the dense jungles of Sumatra, Indonesia.

#### WHAT ARE CONSERVATION DRONES?

##### *ConservationDrones*

*Conservation Drones are inexpensive, autonomous and operator-friendly unmanned aerial vehicles for surveying and mapping forests and biodiversity. Non-technical operators can program each mission by defining waypoints along a flight path using an open-source software.*

*Our Conservation Drones are able to fly pre-programmed missions autonomously for a total flight time of up to ~50 minutes and over a distance of ~25 km. Depending on the camera system*

*installed, these drones can record videos at up to 1080 pixel resolution, and acquire aerial photographs of <10 cm pixel resolution. Aerial photographs can be stitched together to produce near real-time geo-referenced land use/cover maps of surveyed areas.*

*We believe that Conservation Drones have great potential for environmental and conservation applications, which include near real-time mapping of local land cover, monitoring of illegal forest activities, and surveying of large animal species.*

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## BOTSWANA

### Botswana to seek bids for P88.7 billion desert railway

Botswana, the world's largest producer of diamonds, plans to seek initial bids for the construction of a P88.7-billion railway line connecting its biggest coal-mining region to a port in Namibia. It is also considering building a P32.2-billion coal port on Namibia's coast. Botswana may list tenders by September to build a 1 500km railway from the Morupula coal fields in the east to Walvis Bay in Namibia, Botswana Chamber of Mines chief executive officer Charles Siwawa said this week in an interview in Goa, India, with the international business news agency, Bloomberg.

Demand from China, India and Japan for coal from Africa is fueling development of mines and construction of rail lines and ports necessary to ship the fuel to buyers. Botswana is betting that neighbours Namibia and Mozambique will work with it to expand transportation capacity for commodities as the country seeks to reduce its dependence on revenue from diamonds. "Despite large reserves of thermal coal, Botswana doesn't feature in the radar of importing nations," Siwawa said. "We are opening up in a big way and in three to four years, I am hopeful there will be a shift."

Coal will come close to surpassing oil as the world's top energy source by 2017, the International Energy Agency said in a report in December. In that period, coal usage will increase in every region of the world except in the United States, where the fuel is being pushed out by natural gas, it said. The railway line and the port in Namibia would allow Botswana to export as much as 40 million metric tons a year of power station coal, about half of what South Africa exports a year, he said. Exports may climb to as much as 115 million tons in seven years, he said. Botswana currently produces 3 million tons annually of thermal coal and consumes all of it.

An Ngami Times reporter writes that there has been speculation for years that Botswana wanted to construct a rail link to the Namibian coast. At one time there was talk of it going to Shearwater Bay, a deep anchorage south of Walvis Bay. The former Minister of Environment, Wildlife and Tourism, Kitso Mokaila, also disclosed that development of two large towns or cities in the Kalahari Desert would open the area to industrial expansion. It is thought these plans are still in the pipeline. Later, it was announced by the government that it was in negotiation with Mozambique for construction of a coal port on that country's coastline and a railway line from Botswana to the port.

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### Zone 7 cattle to be exported to Zim

From the Ngami Times

BOBIRWA - The principal veterinary officer responsible for Selebi Phikwe and Bobirwa area, Ofentse Odirile, says the export of live cattle from Zone 7 to Zimbabwe will start soon. Briefing the Bobirwa Sub-district Council, Odirile said farmers were advised to make the necessary arrangements with Botswana Meat Commission (BMC) in Francistown regarding the number of cattle they would want to sell to Zimbabwe. He said the BMC would select animals for export through the commission's normal selection procedures and conditions, adding that the department would monitor the selected animals for 21 days before these are exported to Zimbabwe. All animals would be subjected to clinical inspection for Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD) and other diseases before export.

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### KWS CONFISCATES BLOOD IVORY AFTER SHOOTOUT WITH POACHERS

Reports from Nairobi reached this correspondent late yesterday of a shootout between poachers and KWS security personnel near Kitui, outside the boundaries of Tsavo East National Park, which led to the confiscation of tusks and ivory pieces weighing nearly 100 kilogramms, a motor cycle used to transport the blood ivory and other items left behind when the poachers fled.

The information speaks of KWS laying a trap, with officers posing as potential buyers of the ivory, before attempting to overwhelm and arrest three suspects. At that stage a group of poachers hidden in the thick bush opened fire on the KWS team, injuring at least one before making away, but leaving the ivory and motorcycle behind as they ran off on foot into the wilderness.

The KWS management has of late recorded a series of arrests and recovered some major blood ivory hauls, the latest big catch dating back to January when nearly 700 tusks were seized at the port of Mombasa, but the killing of at least 5 rhinos over the past 10 days at Lewa Downs and the Solio Game Reserve have once again underscored the urgency of stepping up anti poaching operations, intelligence gathering and – as done now by Ol Pejeta – introduce airborne surveillance with UAV's and have rapid response teams standing by 24 / 7.

This development takes place as the CITES meeting in Bangkok nears its end with still no major breakthrough on slapping bans on those ivory trading countries 'misbehaving' with immediate effect, like China and Vietnam, to kill the trade by killing demand in those two countries help responsible by the entire conservation fraternity around the world for the massive surge in poaching in Africa. Watch this space for the final outcome of the CITES meeting and what resolutions will have been agreed upon to stem the tide of poaching.

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## OTHER STUFF

### From National Geographic Best Wildlife Photographs

Carmine colony, by guide Brendon Cremer. A Southern carmine bee eater flying through the nesting colony on the look out for potential mates. Image captured during a recent photo trip to Kalizo along the Zambezi River, Namibia where thousands of these beautiful birds return every year to nest. (Brendon Cremer / [brendoncremerphotography.com](http://brendoncremerphotography.com))



Python ambush, by guide James Haskins. "I came across this scene recently while on game drive along the Boteti River (Makgadikgadi Pans, Botswana). The python is suffocating a red-billed teal in shallow water. Over the years, I have seen pythons in similar situations, strangling birds they have caught on the edge of rivers – they submerge themselves to provide flawless camouflage, and lay in wait for the perfect ambush." (James Haskins)





## THE SMILE



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Have a good week

Gill