

# The Livingstone Weekly

27 January 2013

Dear All

My header is the view from Ngoma Lodge. In the distance you can see the bridge over the Chobe River – this is the border with Namibia.

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## Comic Relief in Town

During the coming week, a 6-member Comic Relief contingent will be canoeing and rafting the Zambezi River.

Chelsee Healey



Dara O'Briain



Greg James



Jack Dee



Melanie C



Phillips Idowu



Sadly, most of us in Livingstone will not recognise these people but they are well-known in the UK.

Chelsee Healey acts in a soap called Waterloo Road; Dara O'Briain is a comedian, appearing on QI; Greg James is a radio presenter; Jack Dee is a comedian – Live at The Apollo fame; Melanie C is a singer with the Spice Girls; Phillips Idowu is a Triple Jumper – Olympic, European and Commonwealth medallist.

It is hoped that the team will raise over £1million during the week of their exploits, a proportion of which will go to girls' education in Zambia.

I am hoping to keep tabs on their journey during the week and, if I am lucky, will be able to bring you a report next week. So far all I have managed is a pic of the camera crew unloading at the Waterfront, the nerve centre of the operations ...

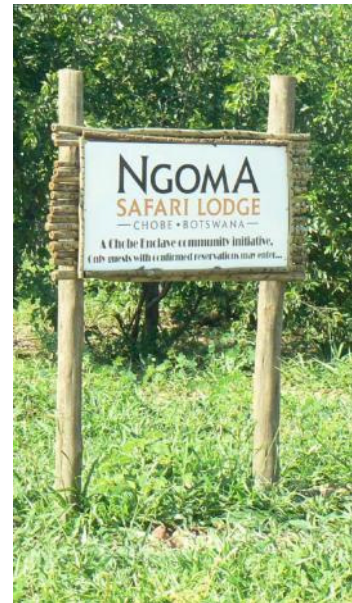




Here is the first bit of my travel trip ...

### Ngoma Lodge

Our journey started from Livingstone. We headed for the Vic Falls Border, crossed into Zimbabwe and then took the road to Kazungula where we crossed into Botswana. The borders were all quite painless. After going into Kasane for some small shopping essentials we took the Ngoma road through the Chobe National Park. Taking the Kachikau road at Ngoma we soon found Ngoma Lodge along a dirt road. We were to stay at Ngoma Lodge for two nights and enjoy their hospitality.



We were met by Cathy, the manager, and wowed, of course, at the view. The main building of the lodge sits high on a ridge overlooking the Chobe floodplain. The Chobe River was not flooded and we could see it meandering through the flat landscape below.

There had been rain and still rain was threatening so it was green either side of the river and looked so unlike the Africa we know in the movies of dry yellow parched land. Nearby the lodge are two old baobab trees, one of which has its branches overhanging one of the decks for the lodge. In the tree a bunch of buffalo weavers had made several homes of scraggy nests and were busy feeding their chicks inside and making a right mess of the deck below – fallen leaves and twigs ... and poo ... littered the deck. They were noisy too ...



The rain came while we were enjoying the view with mist/clouds covering the view. From the sanctuary of the lodge the rain did not bother us and this is how I love to see Africa – rainy. The African environment is so forgiving. It may experience no rain for 8 months of the year but as soon as the first drop of rain falls it bursts back into life.

Below the lodge there is a waterhole which attracts the wildlife. We could see impala, kudu, warthog. Elephants are constant visitors but we did not see any



while we were there. Cathy told us that two weeks ago a pack of wild dog had arrived and stayed around the lodge for a couple of days, but they too did not honour us with an appearance while we stayed. One



lone buffalo did us the courtesy of taking possession of the waterhole – he plonked himself down in the water and sat there for an hour enjoying a wallow.

Guests at the lodge can spend the whole day just watching the view and the wildlife as it comes to visit the hillside, waterhole and floodplain, but, like us, most guests spend the day investigating Chobe National Park which is just next door.

The following day we were booked for a whole day's drive and cruise through the Riverside section of Chobe National Park. Shumi, our guide, arrived with the safari vehicle early the next morning so, after breakfast, we climbed aboard and set off for Kasane to catch a cruise.

We joined about 10 other people who were already on the boat from other lodges and set off into the river. Shumi joined us and continued to entertain us with stories of the wildlife around. There were quite a few other boats on the river and lots of animals to see.

Elephants, of course, were the big attraction – they were all over - drinking, playing and swimming. Lots of little ones too. Other animals on show were lechwe, hippo, crocodile, puku, sable, impala and kudu. We found one



young male lion fast asleep under a bush – he only showed us his rear end and back paws – he must have heard the boat arrive but he didn't move.



After some great viewing we returned to the jetty and got back on the vehicle for a drive through the park.

Shumi was very knowledgeable. Josh and he swapped bush stories. Shumi told us about the flying chilli peppers – red-billed hornbills – and the flying bananas – yellow-billed hornbills. Josh told Shumi how to tell the difference between male and female zebras – female zebras have black stripes on a white background whereas the male ones have white stripes on a black background. And many more similar silly stories were exchanged during the drive.





The old campsite, Serondella, was the place to stop for lunch. Shumi pulled out of the vehicle a table, some chairs and a picnic. After lunch we climbed back on the vehicle and started off towards the lodge watching and chatting as we went. At this time of year the bush is thick vegetation so viewing was limited for animals. Only those which came close were visible. The trees and flowers were showing off, though, as were the butterflies. The brown-veined whites were on a massive migration, all flying in the same direction in order to spread their range. Dung beetles too found that rolling their ball of dung was easiest on the road. Shumi had a mission to try to avoid squashing them, driving off-road many times.



The drive had been a real treat and one to remember. It has been a few years since I have driven through that section of Chobe.





In the morning I found Cathy telling some guests a big fish story ... I didn't hear what it was about, ...

We left after breakfast, down the hill to the Ngoma border with Namibia ... and that is the next part of the story ...

Many thanks to Ngoma Lodge for our stay.

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## LIVINGSTONE

### **The Airport Cat**

From a Livingstone Resident

I was at the airport last week and the Resident Cat has had yet another litter of 3 kittens. They are approximately 3 weeks old so should be ready to go in about another 3 weeks. Please could you put something in the Livingstonian as Cathy who feeds her would like them to go to loving homes.

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## ZAMBIA

### **Water Levels in the Zambezi**

From Zambezi River Authorities

#### **NANA'S FARM**

This station is located about 33km upstream of Victoria Falls. Since there is no major tributary between the site and the falls, flows measured at this station can be considered as flows passing over the falls.

Flows on the Zambezi River at Nana's Farm have continued to rise steadily. The end of week flow on 20th January 2013 was 931m<sup>3</sup>/s which is about 17% higher than the flow recorded last year on the same date.

#### **VICTORIA FALLS**

Flows at Victoria Falls have continued to rise. The flow at the end of the week on 13th January 2013 was 855m<sup>3</sup>/s, which is about 24% higher than the flow recorded last year on the same date.

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## Kabimba (not) appointed to ZAWA board

From the Zambia Weekly

Minister of Tourism and Arts Sylvia Masebo has appointed a new nine member board of the Zambia Wildlife Authority (ZAWA) – and was immediately criticised for including PF Secretary General and Justice Minister Wynter Kabimba.

When revealing the new board, Masebo explained that Kabimba had been appointed in two capacities, as “a renowned lawyer in wildlife policy and law”, and as the ruling party’s custodian of the PF’s vision to include traditional leaders in wildlife management. Critics were not amused. They alleged that this was the first time ever that a cabinet minister had been appointed to serve on a parastatal board, and the Young African Leaders Initiative wondered whether “there is a serious shortage of competent human resource in the ruling PF”, pointing out that Kabimba is also serving on the boards of Zamtel and the Energy Regulation Board.

Kabimba explained that his presence was valuable: “I sit on the Zamtel board and when it comes to explaining the party manifesto and policy, these people have always found my contributions to be helpful and not intimidating,” he told the Post.

Later in the week, however, the PF clarified that Kabimba had not been appointed to the board in his personal capacity, but as a representative for the Ministry of Justice. As such his seat could be occupied by any person from the ministry, depending on the issues under deliberation.

The new board comprises chair Guy Robinson (chairman, Food Reserve Agency and farmer/hunter), Timothy Mushibwe (accountant, former ZAWA director and former chairman Zambia Tourism Board), Yonous Mitta (Lusaka businessman, owns fishing camp), Senior Chief Inyambo Yeta (Lozi people of Sesheke), Chieftainess Mwape (Nsenga people of Petauke, with interests in Nyamvu Game Ranch), Anita Balletto (Operations Director, Sanctuary Retreats), Charity Mwansa (Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Tourism and Arts), Chasiya Kazembe (Economist, Ministry of Finance) – and a representative from the Justice Ministry.

Speaking during the board’s installation, its new chairman said it would look into the allegations of corruption and mismanagement at ZAWA immediately.

“You have constituted a board of high integrity and balanced knowledge, and you can rest assured that we will do our utmost (...) to steer the way forward in the wildlife sector,” Robinson said.

He did however call for “full backing for our officers, who face poachers head on in the field, [are] shot at frequently, and are unable to return fire for fear of prosecution by the law and [being] imprisoned for murder. When poachers are apprehended, courts are extremely lenient and sentences are absolutely non-deterrent” – awakening memories of President Sata’s pardoning of 76 poachers right after assuming office in 2011. Back then, Sata dissolved the ZAWA board, apparently for having more respect for animals than humans. He had looked at the inmates in Zambia’s crowded prisons – and reached the conclusion that too many of them were jailed for poaching.

... one of the new board’s first assignments will be to advertise for a director general. The institution has been run by a temporary management team led by Xenophon Vlahakis, former permanent secretary and current tourism consultant, since Masebo fired the earlier management on corruption allegations.

Masebo also set up five committees, including finance (chaired by Mushibwe), audit (chaired by Mitta), policy, legal and administration (Kabimba – or his representative), technical and operations (Senior Chief Inyambo Yeta) and community and wildlife resources (second lady Charlotte Scott – who is one of six co-opted board members).

### **Furniture for Sale at Fawltly Towers - from K1.00!**

We are selling wardrobes, ottomans, curtains, metal  
pedal bins and lampshades  
– discounts available.

Please ask at Reception to view  
Monday - Saturday between 08.00 – 17.00.

## Hunting ban clarified

From the Zambia Weekly

Minister of Tourism and Arts Sylvia Masebo has clarified that the suspension of hunting only applies to the 19 hunting concessions up for tender towards the end of 2012. "There are concession licences that didn't expire and are still running and they will continue hunting," she explained according to the Post. "But [the ban on] hunting of big cats will apply to everyone, including those with active licences and private game parks, since we don't have actual numbers of these species", she added.

In short, hunting has been suspended in 19 concessions – so far for the 2012 season only – while big cat hunting has been banned completely.

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## Hunters support ban

From the Zambia Weekly

The Professional Hunters Association of Zambia (PHAZ) supported the suspension of hunting. "We will bear with you in this trying moment to allow for a cleanup and sorting out of this sector so that we can start afresh with sustainable use of our resources," PHAZ chairman Gavin Robinson told Masebo, according to the Daily Mail.

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## Blue Lagoon National Park

*I wrote an article the other week about Blue Lagoon. I had tried to see what was available on the internet, which wasn't that good. I have recently been sent an article by the Blue Lagoon Trust which makes interesting reading.*

*Blue Lagoon and Lochinvar National Parks are suffering from the same fate of lack of decision-making by ZAWA. Both parks need private investors to bring them back to life. There are serious issues in both parks – poaching, invasive plants, lack of natural flooding by the Kafue River because of the Itezhi-Tezhi Dam. Now that ZAWA is being reorganised we can only hope that something will be done for this Ramsar Site which has tremendous possibilities for tourism and which Zambia has agreed to protect.*

## 'BLUE LAGOON NATIONAL PARK – CAN IT BE SAVED, OR WILL IT JUST DISAPPEAR DUE TO LACK OF INTEREST?'

Blue Lagoon National Park is the closest National Park to Lusaka, only 110 Kilometres, or one and a half hours drive from the capital, and so is perfect for day trips or leisurely weekends away from the hustle and bustle of the capital city.

It is the ideal venue for birders. You can see, within the swamps of the Kafue flats, very large concentrations of resident and migratory water birds occurring, as well as large breeding colonies. The species spectrum varies greatly depending on the season and the water level, but species which are often found in significant numbers include pelican, common Squacco heron, cattle egret, black egret, open bill stork, glossy ibis, Egyptian goose, and spur-winged goose.

This is also a great area for seeing the wattled cranes, which are a wetland dependent species. They are also an endangered species, which suggests serious implications for the health of our wetlands. The Park is also well known for its high diversity of breeding raptors. Vultures are particularly numerous, as are African fish eagles and tawny eagles.

Apart from the birdlife there are also the endemic Kafue Lechwe, which are found only in the Blue Lagoon National Park and its neighbour, Lochinvar National Park. They are semi-aquatic animals and are regularly seen grazing in shoulder deep water. At one time the Kafue Lechwe numbered in the tens of thousands, but there is no recent data and one wonders if today's figure would stand in the thousands. Usually, when

visiting the park, you can see Lechwe at a distance, where only a few years ago they were seen close to the lodge and the Causeway (a 5km raised road reaching deep into the flood plain).

Water Python and Monitor Lizards are commonly seen on the Causeway. If you are really lucky you can also see Buffalo and Zebra, Kudu, Bush Buck, Reed Buck and Oribi, as well as Hyena, Serval Cat and a myriad of raptors, the principal predators of the Blue Lagoon National Park.

Blue Lagoon National Park was established in 1976. It was donated to the nation by Ronald and Erica Critchley, who owned a ranch on the land, and who had, themselves, a great interest in preserving wildlife. For many years after its establishment, Nakeenda Lodge, the Critchleys' former home, was used as a hunting lodge, and the land became a training ground for the defence services. A landing strip was created for ease of access for both hunters and the military, which still has the potential to be opened up once more for the tourist industry.

In August 1991, the Kafue Flats ecosystem, including Lochinvar National Park and Blue Lagoon National Park, was declared a Ramsar site. The Ramsar convention's mission is "the conservation and wise use of all wetlands through local, regional and national actions and international cooperation, as a contribution towards achieving sustainable development throughout the world".

In accordance with Ramsar's mission, management plans have been drawn up to combat poaching and over-fishing, as well as the incursion of the invasive plant species *Mimosa Pigra*, which has its origins in South America. However, it would appear that these plans are still in their draft format, and while they await a concerted effort by the various stakeholders to put them into action, *Mimosa Pigra* flourishes in Lochinvar National Park and is already beginning to encroach into the Blue Lagoon National Park.

In addition to this there is also no coordination between Zesco and the Zambia Wildlife Authority to monitor the flow of water from the Itezhi-Tezhi dam to ensure that the wetlands maintain the unique balance necessary to conserve the ecosystem. One example of the negative impact a lack of water control has is the lack of nutritious grasses that the Lechwe feed on. This, in addition to the persistent poaching and general neglect, is endangering the endemic species of Kafue Lechwe as well as the other flora and fauna.

The local community has seen no benefit from investment in the local area and, due to a lack of education in environmental and conservation issues, has itself contributed to the decline.

In an attempt to redress the balance and save the park Blue Lagoon Trust (BLT) was established as a charitable, membership based, non-governmental organisation. Their aim is to work with the local communities bordering the Blue Lagoon National Park in order to raise the awareness of conservation and environmental issues within the local area, with particular emphasis on the National Park itself. They also wish to facilitate sustainable working practices within the local community, encourage the wise use of resources, and improve the local amenities and, ultimately, the lives of the local people. To work with the local communities will improve the National Park's chances of survival.

BLT is very keen to work with the stakeholders within the National Park as well, in order to ensure its rehabilitation. Today wetland habitat is the fastest disappearing ecosystem in the world and, as such, enormous and sustained efforts must be made to conserve it. This can only be achieved through strenuous and coordinated efforts between the interested organizations and stakeholders in the Blue Lagoon region.

For tourists the current facilities available to them at the park consist of Nakeenda Lodge, the concession for which was granted to a Zambian investor in July 2010. It would be interesting to know the terms of the concession, as, up to now, the only improvements made to the lodge are a rather poor paint job to the walls. No other form of investment seems visible. Nakeenda lodge remains in a sad state of disrepair and degeneration. There are apparently four staff employed to look after the lodge, who state they have not been paid since December last year, which appears to be the last occasion on which the concession holder



visited the lodge. This seems to be an abuse of trust and while nothing is done about it, the roads into the park continue to remain full of pot-holes, termite mounds and overgrown grasses and shrubs. The only way tourists can stay at the lodge is to bring their own camping equipment, along with everything required for overnight stays, including their own supply of water. The ablutions are not normally working as the small generator used to pump water into the tank is often broken down or without fuel. The tank leaks so any water pumped usually drains out over night.

It is imperative that ZAWA takes this responsibility seriously and ensures that a suitable investor be found to ensure the establishment of a fully working lodge and campsite, with the roads both to the park, as well as within it, improved and the loops and airstrip opened up once more. This in itself would bring opportunities to the local community and would raise awareness amongst the wider society of just what needs to be done to conserve this unique area. The park has the potential to provide a contrast to other parks and areas within Zambia, with its vast flat floodplain, and would create an opportunity for both the local and international community to appreciate the differences in both landscape and wildlife that exist within the country.

For more information about the Blue Lagoon National Park please visit [www.bluelagoontrust.org](http://www.bluelagoontrust.org)

*As an addition to this article I am told the Nakeenda Lodge has now been completely abandoned.*

*In Botswana and Namibia deserts have been made an attraction for tourism. In Zambia with its rivers, waterfalls and forests we seem to be failing ...*

*Namibia's tourism arrivals in 2011 was over 1.2million*

*Botswana's tourist arrivals in 2010 were over 2million.*

*Zambia claims to have around 800,000 tourist arrivals but people have commented to me that this figure is probably not correct and that the right figure is much lower.*

*If Botswana and Namibia can earn so much money through tourism when they 'sell' deserts, why can't we do better?*

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### **Kasanka National Park**

From Wildlife Extra

... November of 2012 saw the reintroduction of a total of nineteen Plains Zebra (*Equus burchelli crawshayi*) into Kasanka National Park in Northern Zambia, joining a remnant population which almost certainly numbered less than ten individuals. Prone to being caught in snares, and with their attractive coats fetching high prices from buyers ignorant of their origins, Zebra were hard hit during the years of heavy poaching that preceded the Kasanka Trust Ltd reaching an agreement with the Zambian Wildlife Authority to assume management of the once troubled park. ...

A total of twenty Zebra were transported up north from the Mazabuka area in Zambia's Southern Province. Although hailing from across the country, these animals belong to the same crawshayi subspecies that call Kasanka home, a prerequisite for reintroduction. Comprising thirteen mares and seven stallions of all ages, the group was divided over two holding boma's on the shores of Lake Wasa. Sadly, not soon after their arrival, a rather distressed caretaker discovered a foal deceased of injuries sustained during transport. After three weeks the decision was made to release the more restless of the herds to avoid further injuries. The second, calmer and rather habituated herd was kept in holding until one of the adult mares could be fitted with a VHF-transmitter to be tracked in the field - more easily said than done in this remote corner of the African wilderness! ...

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## **New Park Fees announced**

From Wild Zambezi

### **CONSERVATION FEES 2013**

#### **VIC FALLS/ KARIBA/ZAMBEZI VALLEY**

These cover entry into a Park.

Fees in US\$ at 3 levels as follows: International; Regional (SADC); Local Residents.

Children 6-12 years (under 6 FREE)

#### **Vic Falls Rainforest:** (NB per day)

Adult-US\$30; US\$20; US\$7

Child-US\$10; US\$8; US\$4

#### **Vic Falls Zambezi:**

Adult-US\$15; US\$12; US\$5

Child-US\$8; US\$6; US\$3

#### **Chizarira:**

Adult-US\$10; US\$8; US\$5

Child-US\$5; US\$4; US\$3

#### **Matusadona:**

Adult-US\$15; US\$12; US\$5

Child-US\$8; US\$6; US\$3

### **VEHICLE ENTRY FEES**

Cars/Pick-ups/4x4s: Foreign registered: US\$15; Local registered: US\$5

Trailers: Non-Resident US\$10; Resident US\$5

### **PARKS ACCOMMODATION FEES**

Fees (per night) in US\$ at 2 levels as follows: Non-Resident; Local

#### **Vic Falls Zambezi:**

Lodge 2 bedrooms 4 beds: US\$120; US\$80

Bushcamps per person: US\$15; US\$10

#### **Mana Pools:**

Special Lodge 2 bedrooms 8 beds: US\$160; US\$120

Standard Lodge 2 bedrooms 4 beds: US\$100; US\$75

Standard Campsite/site (Nyamepi): US\$100; US\$75

Exclusive Campsites/site: US\$150; US\$115 (6 pp max – extras US\$30 pp)

New Ndungu campsites per person: US\$30; US\$15

Chitake Exclusive Camps/site: US\$200; US\$150 (6 pp max – extras US\$30 pp)

Nyamepi Nos: 1,2,4,7,8,10,12,13 &14 per person: US\$20; US\$10

Other Nyamepi sites as per Standard Campsite per site above: US\$100; US\$75

#### **Matusadona:**

Exclusive Lodge 9 beds: US\$120; US\$75

Exclusive Campsites/person: US\$25; US\$15

Standard Campsite/person: US\$15; US\$10

#### **Chizarira:**

Bush Camp/person: US\$25; US\$10

Platform /person: US\$20; US\$10

From more details, go to: <http://www.zimparks.org/images/tariffs.pdf>

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**AFRICAN WATERBIRD COUNT**  
**JANUARY 2013**  
**SINAMATELLA AND ROBINS - HWANGE NATIONAL PARK**

**Is this the same place? Are we in HWANGE?**

We couldn't wait to get back into Hwange National Park after all the good reports we'd been getting about the rainfall and leapt at the chance of doing the January waterfowl count up at Sinamatella and Robins. We were absolutely incredulous at seeing the difference from the last time we were there in October. After all the heartache and stress of the last few months of last year, the park is looking magnificent – none of us had seen the park so beautiful, so lush, green and with water everywhere we looked. It is quite astounding to see how the veld has revived – Nature certainly is a wondrous thing and there was grass where there not normally is any – ever!

We began our trip travelling through to Sinamatella from Main Camp. The roadsides were embroidered with wild flowers and there were clumps of bright flame lilies popping their head above the tall grass. The vehicle had quite a wade through water to get to the Nyamandhlovu platform where the water was almost up to the platform pillars. The little resident herd of wildebeest had several light brown calves afoot and the herds of impala we came across also had a good crop of babies.

On the way through, waterfowl counts were done at Guvelala, Shapi, Danga, Roan, Dwarf Goose and the various water spots at and around Shumba. All the pans were full to bursting with a lot of grass cover around the edges, making it difficult to spot the little waders sometimes. There was quite a storm brewing up as we were approaching Masuma so it was decided that we would carry straight on to Sinamatella as we were uncertain what the road conditions up ahead were like, having been warned at Main Camp that we might just not get through. Despite a few dodgy patches, we had no trouble getting through and, having booked into our accommodation, we watched in fascination as the rain we'd just been in, began sweeping across the vleis below us, eventually sending down a deluge on the camp.

The following morning, having coffee with a view and listening to the birds, a small band of friendly dwarf mongooses foraged past us, pausing in their search for breakfast to stand on their hind legs and give us a good stare with their little beady eyes and noses twitching. As we headed off for the day, we found one of the vleis teeming with white winged widowbirds, the black males sitting atop slender grass stems, fanning their tails and displaying, with flashes of bright yellow as they took off for another stalk. Crossing many of the little streams and rivers, we could see just how much water must have been going over at some stage, judging by the debris caught up in the bushes and amongst the branches of trees. We met up with Stephen and Sue Long at Mandavu to conduct a count there. The dam is full to almost spilling which none of us had ever seen before. Here again, most of the shoreline was grass covered with several little streams still seeping in, their sides covered with tall grass too, which made counting difficult but we did our best at the various accessible spots we could get to. An osprey, two glossy ibis, several yellowbilled storks and two nesting Goliath herons fussing over the placement of nest material while precariously perched atop a little bush, topped the bill here. We then moved on to Masuma. The pan there has been scooped but unfortunately, the job was not completed and when the workers came in, they had to breach the wall in order to get the heavy machinery in and had not repaired it. As the little dam was absolutely full, the water had just begun to flow back through the breach. However, there are plans underway to sand bag it up until it can be fixed properly. The back pan which has developed was also a little lake and a flotilla of fluffy Egyptian goslings with proud mum and dad was making its way across this when we arrived and a lone spoonbill spooning along the far bank. There was a competition on to see who could spot the most water dikkops as they hunkered down in the mounds of mud remaining from the dam scooping. While counting, two saddlebilled storks made an elegant appearance and there was one grey crowned crane sauntering around amongst the waterbuck. Once back in camp, another shower of rain approached and although it didn't quite get to us, it was quite breathtaking watching it sweeping along.

On Monday we set off for the Robins area and were delighted that Stephen and Sue Long, with their vast experience, agreed to join us for the day again. We didn't get to see too much at the Deteema Dam picnic

site as the grass was too tall but went on to the Mike Edwards picnic site. We were delighted to see the camp in such an orderly condition with the grass all slashed and everything clean. The dam was almost full with quite a puddle behind the wall where a few waterbirds were counted. There were two families of Egyptian geese, both with eight fluffy babies and the prize sighting here was of a black crowned night heron, skulking in the shade of a tree overhanging the water. As it always seems to happen, we moved on to Salt Pan in the heat of the day and were greeted by a young greater flamingo. The pan was fuller than any of us had seen before and not nearly as many birds as in our 2012 count. However, it was still a hectically busy count and the telescope came in handy for the far bank. Apart from the flamingo, we saw three long toed plovers which is a rarity and much discussion ensued as to which pratincoles were which and how many of each – collared and/or black winged!! Definitely both were present. There was a good count of Hottentot teal, a few red billed teal and only two Cape teal. Three giraffe galloped past at one stage, probably disturbed by one or other of us moving around to get a better sighting. With another storm approaching and several places along the road had been fairly sticky coming through, it was decided to return to Sinamatella. At the bottom of the hill, just before climbing up to the camp, we came across a most unusual sighting. We first saw a large, brightly coloured ginger cat with beautiful white markings way out in the bush and then saw that it was with an African wild cat, which was lying down right next to it. As we were watching, both cats got up and skulked off. We could only guess that the ginger had gone feral. As we sat with sundowners, we were treated to a gorgeous sunset, lighting up huge thunderheads with golden and pink light just in front of us. The next morning, after breakfast and packing up, we took a drive along the Salt Springs road and did a little waterbirding there before returning to Bulawayo.

Although we didn't see many animals all the time we were in the Park, those that we did see, certainly seemed much happier and definitely fatter. It was lovely watching a small breeding herd of elephants, wading through tall green grass up to the top of their legs with the smaller ones almost obscured. The dung beetles were out in full force with their perfectly rounded spheres of dung and we came across several tortoises, some minute fellows, plodding along. There were several large sounders of warthog with varying sizes of piglets and we came across the biggest boar we've ever seen with the most exceptionally large tusks. Although we didn't see any lion, we heard them every morning. There had been reports of sightings near camp as well as several sightings of wild dog. Birding, generally, was excellent.

So.....for those of you out there who thought that poor ol' Hwange would never come right again, get to the Park at the first possible opportunity – its BEAUTIFUL!!!! Just be sure, though, that you have a sturdy vehicle and better still a 4x4!

John and Jenny Brebner  
Cecilia Hubbard



*Sinamatella River in flood below camp. (Stephen & Sue Long)*

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**From Wild Zambezi**

**TEST OF THE BEST - CATCH AND RELEASE TIGERFISH TOURNAMENT**

**8th and 9th March 2013**

**MARSHALS WANTED!**

This two-day fishing tournament pits the top ten teams from the annual KITFT (Kariba Invitation Tigerfish Tournament) against each other in a catch-and-release contest.

The organising committee is looking for marshals to help run the event.

Anyone interested in offering their services should contact :-

Allen Robinson robinsonallen112@gmail.com

Or call: +263 772 269712

**KARIBA HALF-MARATHON**

**DATE: SUNDAY 11 AUGUST 2013**

**MAKE IT A LONG WEEKEND!**

The date of the increasingly popular Kariba Half-Marathon has been announced.

The event will take place on Sunday 11 August 2013.

This is Zimbabwe Heroes weekend, with Monday 12th and Tuesday 13th August being Public Holidays.

So make a weekend of it, but sort your accommodation arrangements early, as this is usually a busy weekend in the resort town of Kariba.

Why not take a houseboat trip after the Marathon?

This is not just a serious runners' event – it's a whole family day. A Family Fun-Run/Walk and Kiddies Race takes place at the same time as the proper Marathon and a whole day's fun and entertainment is laid on.

The weather in August in Kariba is balmy and beautiful.

Half-Marathon registration can be done via email from 1st March or in Kariba the day before the race, Saturday 10 August.

Contact: [karibahalfmarathon@gmail.com](mailto:karibahalfmarathon@gmail.com)

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**BABY ELEPHANTS RELEASED - HWANGE**

Following extensive negotiations between the ZNSPCA and the Zimbabwe Parks and Wildlife Management Authority we are pleased to announce the release of five elephant calves that were held in bomas within the Hwange National Park.

Animal welfare inspectors and a veterinarian from the ZNSPCA inspected the holding facilities located at Umtshibi within the Hwange National Park and were satisfied that the elephant calves had been held under satisfactory conditions.

The released elephant calves were loaded under the supervision of veterinarians, animal welfare inspectors, animal transportation specialists and ZPWMA game specialists. Travelling through Friday night they reached their new home in Umfurudzi National Park early on Saturday morning. The elephant calves will undergo rehabilitation and integration with other elephants within the secured national park.



The ZNSPCA remains opposed to the capture of any wild animals for the purpose of being transferred to zoos and similar habitats, irrespective of location. We commend the ZPWMA for agreeing to this release and we expect that such actions will not be repeated.

This incident has led us to question the credibility of CITES assessment criteria in granting permits which condone such transactions. Such criteria would appear not to prioritise animal welfare.

Furthermore, we challenge Chinese establishments that have previously acquired such animals to improve conditions across the board and to ensure that all animals under their care are treated humanely and in a dignified manner.



The over-population of elephant within the Hwange National Park makes these animals vulnerable to exploitation by unscrupulous operators. A special forum is urgently required to address this matter.

We would like to acknowledge the valuable contribution made by The Tikki Hywood Trust during these negotiations.

The Zimbabwe National Society for The Prevention of Cruelty to Animals is funded entirely through donations. Zimbabwe's largest animal welfare organisation continues to face severe financial constraints. ZNSPCA takes this opportunity to appeal to organisations and the general public alike to give generously in order that its work may continue.

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## NAMIBIA

### Namibia's fifth Ramsar site on the way From The Namibian

PLANS are underway to declare the Lower Okavango River in the Mahango Section of the Bwabwata National Park as Namibia's fifth Wetland of International Importance (Ramsar site), The Namibian has learnt.

Wetlands provide a number of goods and services to people around the world. Apart from providing fish, reeds and thatching grass, they help to prevent erosion, improve water quality, stabilise climate and recharge aquifers.

The Namibian has seen a Cabinet document in which the Ministry of Environment and Tourism made a submission seeking permission to list the Lower Okavango River as a Wetland of International Importance.

Namibia is a party to the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands of International Importance of 1971.

The Ministry of Environment and Tourism said the Lower Okavango River has been identified as a potential wetland of international importance. The area falls within the Bwabwata National Park and comprises the river itself and the adjacent floodplains and forest.

The area contains the highest diversity of bird species in Namibia, which includes rare species such as the slaty egret and Pel's fishing owl and there are also several endemic plant species in the wetland.





The ministry said listing the area as a Ramsar site would once again demonstrate Namibia's commitment to conservation, especially the conservation of its wetlands, and would add additional status to this part of the Bwabwata National Park.

Reliable sources said the ministry had been given the green light to declare the area a Ramsar site. The ministry made the submission on November 23 last year.

It costs nothing to list an area as a Ramsar site, but monitoring and managing the wetland will require funding.

Namibia's existing four Ramsar sites are the Orange River Mouth, Sandwich Harbour, Etosha Pan and the Walvis Bay Lagoon.

At the 14th conference of parties to the Ramsar Convention in July last year, the convention celebrated its 40th anniversary and contracting parties were requested to mark the occasion by adding more wetlands to the list of wetlands of international importance

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## BOTSWANA

### Raindrops keep falling on my head . . .

From Ngami Times



These three pictures show the extent and damage of the heavy rains that swept over Maun, Ngamiland, Gweta, Nata and Sowa Town over the past two weeks. In Maun, huge potholes formed at the vehicle exit from Maun airport, and in a bid to prevent serious damage to car tyres and suspensions, an enterprising businessman placed two signs in the holes! Motorists, including drivers of police vehicles, gingerly negotiated the potholes which were filled in on Thursday by the Roads department. Main roads between Francistown and Nata as well as from Nata to Gweta, were inundated as floodwaters spread over the tarred surfaces. The Semowane River on the Francistown road burst its banks, flooding the road for 10km. The Sowa Town turnoff near Dukwi was also underwater. In Maun, Boseja houses were also flooded and residents had to wade to their front doors to gain entry. (Flooded road picture by Peter McClelland. Flooded house picture by Edith Sebati).

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# SOUTH AFRICA

## Chemical Treatment of Rhinoceros Horns

By: Maj Gys van Staden and Cpl Ally Rakoma

Over the past few years there has been a shocking increase in rhino poaching for their horns. The horrific figures of rampant poaching indicate the urgent need for proactive and preventative measures to fight the current severe poaching threat.

On 20 December 2012, AFB Hoedspruit conducted the DNA sampling and Chemical Treatment of Rhinoceros Horns. AFB Hoedspruit was assisted by Lt Col Phillip Oosthuizen who initiated the project, Protract, Rhino Rescue Project who sponsored the treatment, the Green Kids, the Department of Environmental Affairs, the Veterinary Doctor Dr Van Niekerk and the Directorate Animal Health SAMHS.

During the last two months Five Rhinos have been poached and killed at Umhlametsi Private Nature Reserve on the farm Boston (North) adjacent to AFB Hoedspruit. In addition, prior to this there were recently three incidents of the breaching of security and an attempt to track and kill rhinos on Suikerkop (AFB Hoedspruit Buffer zone). This obviously calls for desperate measures to proactively implement strategies in order to safeguard the rhino population at AFB Hoedspruit. TOPS Regulation Section 27 dd refers. The mentioned legislation necessitates that all rhinos in South Africa be micro chipped and included into a National database. Currently there are only two units within the SANDF that possesses white rhino populations.

AFB Hoedspruit also investigated the various options of safeguarding the rhinos and acknowledges the responsibility with regards to the sound management of this species. Various security aspects were addressed and frequent patrols and informal exercises are carried out on an adhoc basis to discourage and prevent potential killing or poaching of these animals.



As there are very little additional options, AFB Hoedspruit proposed that the horns of all the SA Air Force (SAAF) rhinos be treated rather than dehorned in order to endeavor and stop any further attempts to kill these magnificent animals.

The horn treatment strategy as opposed to the dehorning of the rhino has the following advantages:

### Durability

- Longer lasting (3-4 years as opposed to 1 year when dehorned)
- Visible internally when used with dye
- Horn becomes redundant and unusable when treated
- Proactive if made well known (signs, publicity etc)
- To date – no killing/poaching of rhinos with treated horns

When the rhino is temporarily immobilized for treatment DNA sampling is conducted to ensure sound management of this precious species in the SAAF. Although there are normally significant costs involved in such project, AFB Hoedspruit liaised with other researchers working on different challenges affecting rhino population and engaged with Dr Lorinda Hern from the Rhino Rescue Project who approved and supported this project and gave their consent to conduct such program free of charge on both the SA Air Force (SAAF) units who owns rhino's.

The idea of poisoning the horns was circumvented by the need to treat the horn. The treatment of the horns with a mixture of ectoparasitacides coupled with an indelible dye would go a long way to helping

achieve the goal of protecting rhinos from poaching. It is also believed that the treatment could potentially neutralize a dual threat of rampant poaching and reduce the cruel reality of poaching.

In the ongoing war against rhino poaching, a holistic and multi-pronged approach is necessary to contribute significantly to reducing the poaching scourge and deter the poachers. 19 Squadron supplied a helicopter to spot the rhinos, then the veterinarian darted the rhinos. The ground crew and veterinary team of experts stabilized the rhinos after the treatment.

The Green Kids Initiative (GKI) consisting of school children from rural areas assist to raise awareness about rhino poaching provides environmental education for schools, encourage sustainable environmental living practices and help to create environmental consciousness in communities.

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### Beitbridge border closed for a while

During the week the Limpopo River burst its banks, flooding the access road to the Beitbridge border post between South Africa and Zimbabwe. The border was not closed for long but there were accidents and problems all along the road as vehicles tried to get through.

There was also a lot of flooding of homes and fields, with three children dying when a house collapsed.



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## WOLFGANG'S COLUMN

### OL PEJETA BUYS UAV TO LAUNCH AIRBORNE SURVEILLANCE IN ANTI POACHING FIGHT

High tech is now entering the fight against poaching in Kenya as the Ol Pejeta Conservancy has announced they raised the funds needed to buy an UAV, aka Drone, to have eyes in the skies over the sprawling 90.000 hectares estate, which serves as a combined cattle ranch and a wildlife conservancy.

The conservancy, home to over 100 rhinos including four prized Northern White Rhinos given to them for breeding by a Czech zoo three years ago, just recorded the wettest year since they started keeping weather records and the lush vegetation attracted a lot more game to the estate. The published game count for 2012 stood at over 13.000 animals, including over 300 elephant, over 200 giraffes, more than 4.400 zebras – and interesting here THREE species, Burchell's Zebra, the Gravy Zebra and hybrids only found here where the two species' ranges overlap – besides plenty of plains game. Predator concentration is among the highest recorded anywhere in Kenya, including a pack of wild dogs, aka hunting or painted dogs, lions, leopards, cheetah, hyenas and smaller predator cats and foxes.

Awarded the 'Conservancy of the Year 2012' accolade, Ol Pejeta truly constitutes THE complete safari experience in one place, in the opinion of this correspondent perhaps only rivaled by the greater Meru Conservation Area, and yet not overrun by tourists, though a well known 'secret' among Kenya's expatriate community.

The new of the first drone now being introduced by Ol Pejeta underscores the conservation commitment the managers of the conservancy have displayed for years, and it is hoped that combined with a rapid deployment unit of rangers, security officers and volunteers, supported by Nanyuki based Tropic Air's



helicopters, this will prevent the poaching now seen escalating in other parts of Kenya. Although the drone is not armed, in the eyes of some conservationists a serious omission – though this poses both legal as well as other questions – the nonstop surveillance will be able to direct ground and airborne teams to any given location, where suspicious movement of cars and people is being spotted. A control room at the conservancy headquarters will direct the flight path, surveillance zones and closer attention to suspect sightings on a 24/7 basis. At the cost of almost 4 million Kenya Shillings the investment is seen as justified and other conservancies in Kenya are already said to consider taking the same steps to prevent South Africa's rhino poaching wave reaching this part of East Africa too.

Visit [www.olpejetaconservancy.org](http://www.olpejetaconservancy.org) for more information on the work done on Ol Pejeta, the accommodation available, like the Pelican House, the camps and lodges found, where to eat as a casual day visitor and much more.

## TANZANIA'S SHADOW TOURISM MINISTER MAKES BLISTERING POACHING ALLEGATIONS

The member of parliament for the Iringa constituency Mr. Peter Msigwa, has yesterday made blistering allegations against unnamed top politicians and called for a fresh parliamentary enquiry into the true extent of poaching in Tanzania, when he claimed that over a quarter of all blood ivory now comes from Tanzania. He also put the figure quoted in a parliamentary report in the middle of last year of 10.000 poached elephant per year into doubt when he quoted a figure of over 23.000 of these animals having been slaughtered last year, which would raise the daily count to 67, up from the acknowledge 30 a day under the last such report.

Last week reports came from Arusha of senior police officials being nabbed red handed in a poaching ring, inflicting some serious damage to the credibility of government assurances that all in their power was being done to end the devastating assault on the country's wildlife, unprecedented in history as one source from Arusha put it.

Without tabling any solid evidence the MP made a wide range of claims against unnamed senior government officials and politicians to be involved in the racket and promised to raise the matter in parliament to launch a full scale enquiry into poaching, the financiers, and middlemen.

The fresh allegations come only weeks after Tanzania withdrew the application to CITES to be permitted to sell what they call legal ivory stocks, when it became apparent that the list of stringent requirements for such an application to be accepted by the CITES Secretariat in Lusaka could not be met, besides growing global opposition to the country's stand on wildlife conservation. Watch this space as the latest round of spats and public arguments over the scale of poaching in Tanzania now unfolds.

## THE SMILE

### From 4x4 Community Website

Driver of a vehicle was fined for having his elbow sticking out the window. Now I know a lot of (especially) Defender drivers assume this as a natural driving position.

**B** U word hiermee kragtens die bepalings van artikel 56 van die Strafproseduurewet, 1977 (Wet 51 van 1977), aangestel om voor die hof op die verhoordatum, wat in beide gevalle hieronder genoem word, om 09:00 te verskyn en teenwoordig te bly om te antwoord op 'n aanklagte van oortreding van die wet op 09:00 and to remain in attendance there to answer a charge(s) of contravention

Aanklag 1/Charge 1: **REG 302 (1) CIH-SEC 87 ACT 93/76**

Aanklag 2/Charge 2: **11/20**

Aanklag 3/Charge 3: **alternatiewe aanklag/alternative charge**

of enige ander aanklagte wat die Aanklaer teen u mag inbring op grond daarvan dat u op of onttrent die of other charge(s) as the Prosecutor may bring in against you on the grounds that upon or about the

te/het op/aftehoor op: **11 JANUARY 2013**

te/het op/aftehoor op: **BLOEMFONTEIN TO EDENBURG ROAD**

te/het op/aftehoor op: **BLOEMFONTEIN**

Lokaleiteitskode/Locality code: **9300**

die ondergenoemde distrik, wadmegielik opreter/district mentioned hereinbelow, you did wrongfully operate: **WHITE TOYOTA STALLION**

Aanklag 1/Charge 1: **DRIVER ALLOWED PORTION OF BODY TO PROTRUDE FROM VEHICLE**

Aanklag 2/Charge 2: **BTZ 598 FS**

Aanklag 3/Charge 3: **TOYOTA**

Aanklag 4/Charge 4: **LDV**

Aanklag 5/Charge 5: **11/20**

Aanklag 6/Charge 6: **alternatiewe aanklag/Alternative charge**

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Have a good week

Gill