



Dear All

Mist on the Kafue River ...

Early Burn

The rainy season finished a few weeks ago and the bush is getting dry. Already I have seen a few bushfires and more, we know, are on the way as it seems to be a popular pastime just to set our environment on fire whenever we can.

From research it is found that land burned early has a better chance of regeneration than land which is burned late in the dry season. In fact, a bush fire late in the season can have devastating effects on the environment. An ideal situation would be that land was only burned as nature dictates, but with the prevalence of people setting fires for one reason or another, it is best just to burn it early.

While on a visit to the Mosi-oa-Tunya Park this week the Game Scouts were concerned about the need to undertake an early burn, saying that the people moving around the park were already intent on setting fires. This week too there is a notice from Kariba saying that early burns will begin soon.

The fire season begins ... as does the hazy atmosphere and dusty skies over Africa ...

ZAMBIA

Gwabi Lodge

Last week I told you of our trip to Mongwe on the Zimbabwe side of the Zambezi River. Having suffered the slowness of Chirundu One Stop Border Post we were free to get on with your trip. We were heading for Gwabi Lodge on the Kafue River.

We missed the turning which is very close to the border post but it had been bunged up with big bollards to stop the trucks and we didn't see any sign. I realised after a short distance that we had missed it and went back to



relook. This time we saw a discrete but beautiful sign to Lower Zambezi National Park, surrounded by other signs. We squeezed through the bollards onto a dirt road.

I don't know how strangers to our country are going to see this sign. So I have made my own:

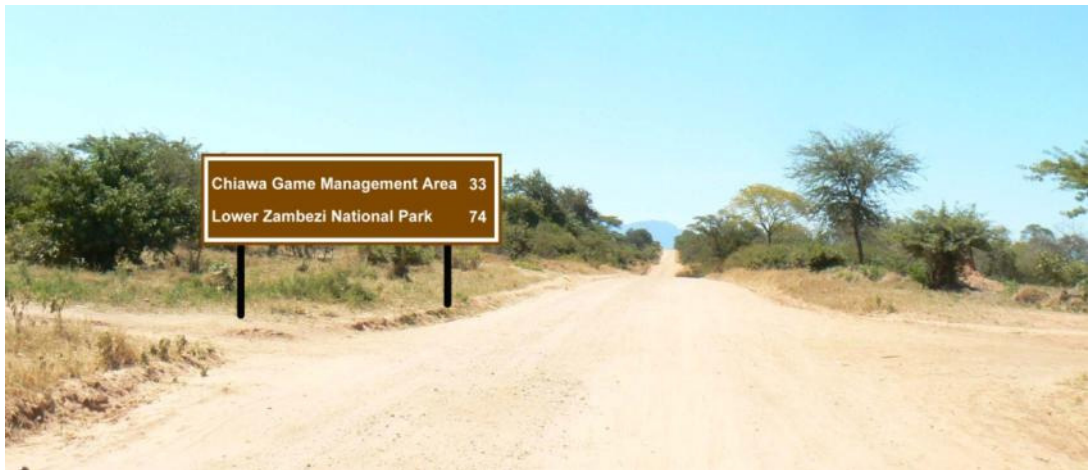


It's big and 'in your face' which is what we need all around Zambia to blast our tourism facilities.

Further down the road from this junction, there should be a sign like this:

Enough complaints ...

The road to Gwabi is one of the 'new' tar roads on Link Zambia 8000. For now it is still a bad bit of dirt, but manageable.



We arrived early at Gwabi, on the Kafue River, and booked in for camping. We were the only ones on the campsite so could choose our spot. Gwabi Lodge has been there, it seems, forever. It is one of those lodges which is part of Zambia's furniture. The architecture is very dated and the walls must have lots of stories to tell.

The campsite had a canopy of ancient trees with soft lawns underneath. Each site had its own barbeque, electrical point, bench and table. Guinea fowl, sheep and monkeys provided the entertainment. There wasn't much to do in the afternoon so we lazed around listening to the villagers over the river. One chappie was



singing – I think that is what you call it. To me it was just a noise, but I am sure his friends were enjoying it. Being on the river the sound seemed to bounce around and echo. We decided later to forgo the pleasure of the singing and take ourselves off to the bar for a sundowner and supper of fish and chips.

We had a pleasant evening chatting to the barman, Moses, finding out all about the area.

Moses told us that the bridge to replace the Kafue pontoon was being worked on and that the road to Lusaka would happen up the escarpment. He thought that the road, which was going to be an expensive one, was being tarred so that the people from Leopard's Hill, Lusaka, could easily get to Lower Zambezi. For myself, I thought that the road will make it easier for visitors to travel between Lower Zambezi and South Luangwa – our two top National Parks.

On returning to the tent, our friend from across the river was still 'singing'. We went to bed with earplugs ...

The morning dawned with mist on the river. Canoes were putting out onto the river to see what was to be found in their nets

overnight and, yes, our friend started singing again ... along with a lot of chatter from his mates ... We packed up our tents and headed back to Chirundu and the Zambezi Escarpment towards Lochinvar.



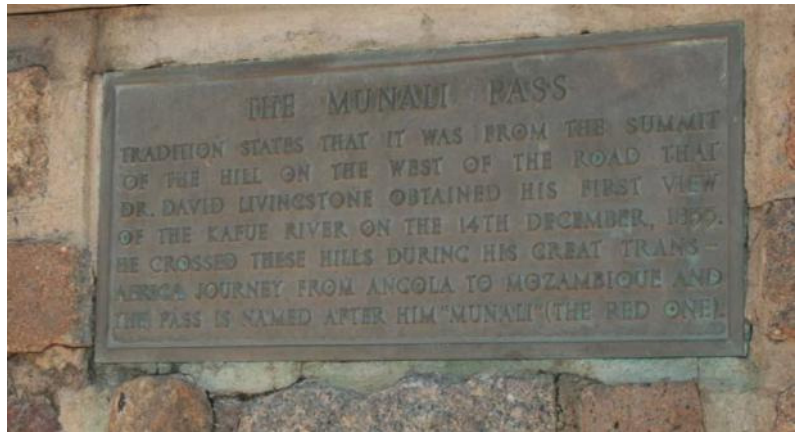
As a bit of a detour we went to check out the site of the new bridge across the Kafue River. The construction team was already there and working. It will certainly make a lot of difference for access to Chiawa Game Management Area, Lower Zambezi National Park and all the villages on that side of the river.



The Escarpment road had lots of heavy traffic. The roads had potholes, but it was a pretty drive and I always enjoy the scenery ... apart from the Abnormal Vehicles plying the route.

We stopped off at Munali to take a look at the NHCC sign.

Off we trundled to Lochinvar, but that is a story for next week ...



Here is a map of the area around Chirundu.

I always find it sad that borders get in the way of tourism. Were the governments to agree to develop the area and allow free movement of visitors from one side of the river to the other without passport controls, everyone would benefit.

In the news this week there was the announcement in Zambia that it is to set up a wing of the armed forces to be trained as 'marines'. They will be responsible for protecting our borders where they are formed by rivers. I really hope that does not mean that our rivers will become military zones.



I have always wondered why we have not followed the example of Botswana and Namibia and trained our armed forces to help in the fight against poaching...

Suni update from Zambia

Andrew White

From David Shepherd Foundation

“It is amazing how much one little elephant can cope with in such a short amount of time” Rachael Murton (Elephant Orphanage Project)

Rescued a year ago this April, at only 8 months old, Suni represents everything that is amazing about an elephant and at the same time why we must do something right now to stop the cruel and senseless act of poaching.

At just 8 months old, Suni was found dragging herself along, after somehow surviving an axe attack. No family to protect her and with wounds to her chin and a deep laceration to her back (affecting her spine and leaving her right hind leg paralyzed), it was a miracle she was alive!

However when the Game Rangers International (GRI) rescue team arrived, what they had in front of them was an elephant that was full of fighting spirit, keen to feed and the courage to trust those who wanted to help. From the Livingstone area of Zambia, she was transported to the very new Lilayi rehabilitation facility in Lusaka and the long and anxious road to recovery was about to begin.

Twenty-four hour a day TLC began... physiotherapy on her leg, wound treatment and much needed emotional support. Rachael and her team of keepers worked around the clock and when I arrived 3 months on after her rescue, an elephant greeted me that had a spring in her step and a swagger in her trunk. Yet her wounds were struggling to heal. The persistent infection in her spine would not go away and her leg was in a bad shape. Although battles had been won, Suni still had many hurdles to jump and her increasing size was putting more and more pressure on her leg!

During my visit Suni was receiving specialised care every 3 hours and on my departure I saw her enjoying the rare treat of a play time in water (due



to the importance of keeping her wounds clean) with her new buddy Zambezi, but with a concerned Rachael looking on. She knew only far too well that a huge improvement was needed for Suni to have a bright future!

In early November the vets were again called in and surgery was performed on her wounds, with bone fragments removed. This would be make or break and thankfully healthy tissue began to grow back and improvements were made in her leg. However full sensation had still yet to have been restored due to the severity of the nerve damage!

This led to one final problem, how would she be able to walk without damaging her leg. At the time of my visit and looking back today as I prepare for my cycle ride across Zambia to raise vital funds for this amazing project, I don't know how she managed to bound around the bush the way she did... pure courage.

Every brace that was applied to support her leg fell apart, often within minutes. However in flew Mark and Dan from Norway and USA and with help Nigel Goodman created an elephant boot! Their first visit was a frantic week of designing; manufacturing and fitting a unique leg support made of aluminium, PVC and leather, with various strappings and looking like an elephant snow board! The excitement and emotion from all involved when Suni finally walked normally for the first time in her brand new Elephant Boot was huge. Rachael's text with photo that day to me that week led to a cheer in my classroom. With the Boot fitted Suni's leg was supported and her pressure wounds could now be in the fresh air for the first time in months allowing the skin to harden again and start to heal.

The improvements were rapid and for a few weeks there was no stopping Suni, as she charged about the bush with her elephant friends, but her increased activity and vigour was too much for her boot, and wear and tear took its toll and she snapped it across the sole, leaving her bootless over Christmas... However thanks to the generosity of Suni's supporters, the boot team returned with an even better boot that continues to see Suni bound around Lilayi like every young elephant should, full of verve and



energy, a year on from her attack. She still needs constant care but thanks to her efforts and that of the all the people involved in her rehabilitation she has a chance.

In fourteen weeks time I will be in the presence of this courageous little elephant again and for me highlights why I am doing this cycle ride. Every day people across Africa are fighting for wildlife, each taking on the challenge of ending poaching. In Suni's case they have saved a life, with the teams work in park protection they guard precious habitat and with education and community outreach they search for a secure and sustainable future.

If you would like to know more about the work of Game Rangers International, the David Shepherd Wildlife Foundation or my cycle ride please explore the following Internet links: www.davidshepherd.org
www.cyclezambia.co.uk @CycleZambia

About Andrew White

With a teaching background in physical education and geography, based in Canterbury, UK, and as an education advisor for the David Shepherd Wildlife Foundation, he has been travelling around Africa for the past 10 years, taking opportunities to support education and wildlife projects in Kenya, South Africa, Namibia, Zambia and Zimbabwe. Some of his highlights include diving with hammerheads in the Red Sea, trekking to see gorillas in Uganda, helping with white shark research in South Africa, assisting with anti-poaching and education projects in Zimbabwe and, most recently, supporting the work of Game Rangers International in Zambia. Between these projects, he leads school groups on adventure tours to South Africa and Namibia. My biggest project to date takes place in August 2013, when I and two cousins will cycle through Zambia in aid of the Elephant Orphanage Project, part of Game Rangers International and supported by the David Shepherd Wildlife Foundation.

Yellow fever survey coming

From the Zambia Weekly

Government intends to conduct a yellow fever risk assessment survey in Northwestern and Western Provinces – in order to determine the yellow fever burden before the cohosting of the United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) general assembly in August.

In October 2011, South Africa decided that all travellers to and from Zambia (also those in transit) must carry a yellow fever vaccination certificate. The reason being that the World Health Organisation (WHO) earlier had changed its classification for Zambia from having “no” to “low” risk of yellow fever in Northwestern and Western Provinces.

This has had serious implications for the tourism industry according to stakeholders in the industry. The survey is supposed to be finished by mid-May, reported the Daily Mail.



Kangaluwi Mine

We were all happy when Zambia's Environmental Agency turned down the application by Zambezi Resources to mine in the Lower Zambezi National Park. We knew, though, that Zambezi Resources would appeal.

In a report this week in the Mining Weekly:

ASX-listed junior Zambezi Resources is looking to raise up to A\$15.4-million through an entitlement issue to complete the oxide bankable feasibility study (BFS) for its Kangaluwi copper project, in Zambia. ...

Zambezi executive chairperson David Vilensky said that the raising would enable the company to eliminate debt and simplify its funding framework as it sought to secure the environmental-impact statement (EIS) for its Kangaluwi copper project. ...

Vilensky said that he was confident that the company had addressed all concerns in relation to the EIS, and had been advised of Presidential and government support for the project to move ahead.

"We look forward to receipt of the required EIS approval and finalising the BFS at Kangaluwi. We are focused on what needs to be done to get this company into production and we are taking the steps required," he added. ...

ZIM-ZAM

Batoka Dam

In another report in the Herald of Zimbabwe, it states that a consortium of Zimbabwean, Zambian and Chinese businesses have shown interest in the building of the Batoka Dam. It mentions Khanyisa Energy of which there is no real mention on the internet except that it would appear to be from South Africa, Treasfin Securities of Zambia which is a financial services company and China Gezhouba Group, the company which built Three Gorges Dam in China.

The article then goes on to name Carmago Correa-Brazil, a Brazilian construction company, Sino Hydro-China, which is doing the Kafue Gorge project, China Water and Electricity Company, a Chinese government-owned company.

I always take articles in the Herald with a pinch of salt. It is a government newspaper espousing the desires of government and not necessarily giving a true picture. However the information was supported by HydroWorld.com.

The good thing about the report in HydroWorld is that we are told that a new Environmental Impact Assessment will be undertaken before the



dam goes ahead. The governments are looking for funding for the EIA and hope that the World Bank will come up with the support.

During the week I have been reading about Gibe III dam in Ethiopia. According to a recent report the consequences of the dam could be a major environmental disaster. I have written what I found out in OTHER STUFF.

ZIMBABWE

NOTIFICATION OF THE INTENSION TO CONDUCT EARLY BURNING IN CHARARA SAFARI AREA

From The Kariba Animal Welfare Fund Trust

The very good rains received this season have resulted in very good grass cover in most parts of the Charara Safari Area. This has however raised the potential for wild fires later in the season.

Fire, when used effectively, can be used as a management tool. Therefore it is our endeavour to take preventive action to control the negative effects of hot late burns through early burning. It is of paramount importance for all of us to appreciate that fire is being used as a tool for the following reasons:

- Create the patchwork effect of burnt and unburnt areas which will act as fire guards.
- The fire will promote regeneration.
- Fires remove the moribund material and thus reduce the fuel load.
- The fire will also kill the ticks that can contribute to the spread of diseases.

During this early excise, the targeted areas are:

- Kariba to Makande
- Nyamakate to Charara Game fence
- Kariba to Makuti
- Makuti to Chihambakwe
- Rukweza to Vuti

The early burning excise will stretch from April to end of June because the favourable weather conditions where both day and night temperatures are relatively low. Any fires observed after the early burning period should be reported.



Gache Gache

Just round the lake from Charara is the popular fishing spot of Gache Gache. Private businesses there have formed the Gache Gache Wilderness Anti-poaching Project for Fish and Wildlife and work in partnership with ZimParks. The cost of undertaking patrols, apprehending poachers and taking them to court is becoming too much and they are appealing for help:

ATTENTION ALL FISHERMEN & CONSERVATIONISTS

Whilst we are very grateful to our regular sponsors, and those of you who DO pop into the lodge when fishing in the Gache Gache River to drop off a donation, and to those who donate in kind, we need to bring the following points to your attention:-

1. We need a total of \$4000-5000 per month to run this operation efficiently.
 2. Currently we have 3 Companies who donate by monthly stop order. Total of these 3 stop orders is \$1450 per month.
 3. We get several donations dropped in at the lodge that range between \$0 and \$400 per month depending.
 4. We (Chapungu Safaris, Ray Townsend) cannot sustain subsidising the project any longer. We therefore request that as fishermen are the ones who benefit the most out of what we do, it would make sense that they come forward and rescue this unfortunate situation. Our appeal is to all fishing clubs out there and those of you individuals who frequent fishing in the Gache.
 5. As it is now, the fishing is like it was 10 years ago if not better!! Tiger of 5kg plus and bream by the keep net full (and more...) are what is coming out.
 6. When there is a fishing competition in Kariba, 25 mins after starting time, 15 speedboats race into the Gache. You may ask yourselves WHY would this be? The obvious answer is that this is where the fish are to be found now. Then you can ask yourselves WHY? The answer is simple - due to our anti-poaching project, the netting is hugely limited compared to any other area on the lake. Then ask how many of those 15 boats popped in to make a donation... And you will be shocked to hear that last competition, NOT ONE came in to make a donation, never mind ask how it's going. Apparently the winning fish was caught in the Gache too.
...
 7. Now ask what happens if the project stops. Simple answer:- OVERNIGHT the illegal netting will take over and within a week all our hard work, time, energy and money spent on this project will have been in vain.
 8. The second last questions is:- Do you want YOUR children and THEIR children to be able to enjoy fishing and having the wildlife around them in the future, as you have been privileged to enjoy?
 9. ...and finally ask yourselves what you are willing to do about it RIGHT NOW!
and if the answer is that you'd like to help us sustain the project, then please don't ignore this plea for support. Come forward now before it's too late. We are on the verge of shutting the project down.
-

Nairobi Living

James Murua is a popular journalist in Kenya. Here are his comments about a trip to Zimbabwe:



I spent some time in Zimbabwe on my holiday recently. One of the highlights of the trip to that country was that I had to see the world famous Mosi-Oa-tunya which in the local dialect is the “steam that thunders” (some people have give the place the mistaken name of Victoria Falls but that is a story for another day.) These are the most majestic falls in the world by some reports.

The place is about 800 kilometres from the base that is Harare and I had opted to go there through several towns with a stopover in Kwekwe then onto Gweru Zimbabwe's third largest town followed by the second largest town Bulawayo also known as the city of Kings. Bulawayo was established by Shaka Zulu's general Mzilikazi as the headquarters of his newly formed Matabele kingdom and that is why the folks from that part of the country speak Ndebele which is related closely to the Zulu language I am told.

The last leg of my journey to Mosi-Oa-Tunya was a 450 kilometre journey east to the border of Zimbabwe and Zambia to see

the wondrous and wonderful wonder. I had been taking the bus throughout the earlier part of the journey and I wanted to have something different so I opted for the train. It was not a very difficult choice to make really as I have used Kenya Railways also known nowadays as Rift Valley Railways to Mombasa from Nairobi a few times and I always have a pretty good experience. The journey is all nighter and 2nd class costs Kshs2335 – child at kshs.1550 – and includes a bed with

bed sheets and some breakfast for those who need some sustenance before going about their duties. Both National Railways of Zimbabwe (NZR) and Kenya railways (KR) have some pretty old coaches. However I figured that as Zimbabwe was surprising me in how well it run as opposed what I have been watching on CNN and BBC in the last half decade I figured it might have a similar service. I was wrong.

The price in NZR's second class is more reasonable at US\$12 (Kshs840) – minors at US\$6 (Kshs660) – per person and I was to find out why fast. First off, the compartment that I got was without lights. Turns out that some of the carriages do not have lights and if you do not ask in advance, those are the ones you are stuck with. That meant that you are stuck in a dark compartment all night trying to figure what to do with your life. If you have those smartphones with dodgy battery life and you had left the charger in a previous town you are stuck twiddling your thumbs. You can't social media or play games. You can't even read the book you had brought in case of boredom.

Then the biggest shock as far as I was concerned. No blankets and bed sheets; not as far as I could tell. So I was stuck in a long journey all night in the freezing cold. Without food. Yep. If you needed any sustenance you needed to go to a certain carriage in compartment B and all you get was alcohol – Carling black label or Chibuku and a soft drink – coca cola. There were some snacky things – biscuits in a little pack, that sort of thing – that made me wish I had thought ahead and brought some food.

The collage features several photographs of wildlife: an elephant at sunset, a lioness, a lion, a cheetah, a zebra, and a lion cub. The central text box is titled "Friends of Hwange" and contains the following information:

Friends of Hwange

To All Friends of Hwange

We would love for you to join us for an evening filled with fun, laughter and great entertainment at our 2013 Dinner Dance, to raise funds for our beloved animals in Hwange National Park.

When.... Friday 17 May 2013 @ 6:00pm
Where... Jubilee Hall ~ Hartmann House
Price... US\$ 75.00 per head (including drinks, dinner, & entertainment)

Entertainment provided by Fraser MacKay and David Musto

Please contact David Dell on 0712630152
or email : david.dell@strachans.co.zw

Tickets only available until 12 May 2013

proudly sponsored by
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NMB BANK LIMITED

For more information on Friends of Hwange, please see our Facebook page!

One the way back I was informed that first class was nothing like the second class and I could get a sleeper that would cost me US\$30 for the whole thing. This was because it was specially designed for tourists coming from Mosi-Oa-Tunya. Hmm. I figured let me give NZR another chance in the spirit of African brotherhood and I got my family in there. The blankets thing came up again. Turns out I had to hire blankets at US\$4 for each set which meant I paid US\$8 for two sets. Total cost US\$38.

I had my blankets and this sleeper had lights (although I suspect whoever had last used this place had smoked some very illegal substances and there was little issue with cleaning up). The food issue again reared its head up again. For anything I had to go to compartment B again. Fortunately this time I had prepared and had brought something to eat and drink.

The long and short of this story is that sometimes in Kenya we take some of the services we get for granted. Yes some of them are really bad (Zimbabwe kicks our behinds in so many areas if I start you might think I work for the Zimbabwe Tourism Authority) but the people at Kenya Railways are not our weakest link.

So when going Mosi-Oa-Tunya please remember while in Zimbabwe, please steer clear of the train. My good deed of the day sorted there.

NAMIBIA

Namibia's Drought

Namibia did not get much rain this year. There was one drenching from the skies late in the season, but it did not come close to the required rainfall. People are going to be affected because dams which provide water for towns are low; the crops too have been awful; but the parks have a more serious problem as they try to provide water for the wildlife.

Already in Etosha the animals are congregating at the water remaining in the park and the grass has not grown much to provide food. Simeon Negumbo, Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Environment and Tourism, says that they are not too worried at the moment and will continue to monitor the situation. He says that smaller parks like Daan Viljoen are worse hit and some animals have already been relocated to farms where there are resources available.

The Manager of Etosha National Park, Boas Erkki, said that they are conducting a survey which will be completed next month. He said: *With all these animals, where will you take them to save them? Due to the red line, we are not able to do much. Parks on the other side of the red line can sell animals to commercial farmers, which we cannot do here.*

I took some time to find out about the 'Red Line'. This line came into being in 1911 during German rule and its main purpose was to keep out the Rinderpest from the north which was prevalent at the time. Since then the line has moved slightly to take into account Foot and Mouth, but the result is that movement of animals and meat from north of the line are severely restricted, if not banned.

It looks as if things might be bad for the wildlife in Etosha this coming season. Another Hwange 2012 situation in the making.



UGANDA SIGNS UP FOR FIRST GEOTHERMAL POWER PLANT

Uganda's Ministry of Energy has signed a power purchase agreement with American company AAE Systems, pre-requisite to entering the construction phase. PPA's were one of the lender's key requirements to avail finance for the new 150 MW geothermal power plant, which according to local media reports is due to go on line within 24 months.

With the next power deficit already creeping up on the horizon, a scenario business association representatives have expressed concerns to government in no uncertain terms, the introduction of this 'green technology' will go a long way to add electricity at more affordable prices, compared to the hugely expensive thermal power plants using diesel or heavy fuel oil.

The plant will be constructed at Katwe, a location in Kasese District and just outside the Queen Elizabeth National Park, where reportedly tests have confirmed easy access to subterranean heat sources.

In Kenya geothermal energy has long been exploited and the present power plant near Mt. Longonot is undergoing substantial expansion while additional new geothermal plants are under construction near Nakuru.

The notorious loadshedding by the monopolist national electricity distributor UMEME has reduced after the commissioning last year of the Bujagali hydro electric power plant on the upper Nile, although regular power outages are attributed not just to a rotten distribution network but, besides increasing power theft as a result of extremely high tariffs, also to the newly added capacity already being absorbed at record rates.

The overdue start of construction of the 600+ MW Karuma Falls hydro electric plant has repeatedly been delayed as a result of allegations over corrupt practices in the selection of contractors, which brought the matter before the Ugandan courts and no end in sight of the wrangles. For that reason is the news welcome that Uganda is not only going for 'green technology' – geothermal power is renewable and sustainable – but also for the fact that a further 150 MW may become available before wide spread loadshedding would once more disrupt manufacturing industries as well as domestic life.

Only last month did similar news break from Rwanda, where some 25 million US Dollars were set aside for initial test drilling, leading to early geothermal power production, a clear sign that at last East Africa's government have started to appreciate the potential of renewable energy sources from underground.

FRANKFURT ZOO TO BOOST SECURITY IN SERENGETI

Information was received from a regular conservation source in Arusha that the Frankfurt Zoological Society, one of Tanzania National Park's staunchest supporters over the past decades, has set aside fresh funding to boost in particular anti poaching capabilities in the Serengeti National Park.

It was this park which over half a century ago caught the eye of Prof. Bernhard Grzimek who went on to become its global 'brand ambassador' even though such 'titles' were unheard of back then.

In his books and documentaries he immortalized the Serengeti under the title 'Serengeti Shall Not Die', which earned him the friendship of Tanzania's founder president and father of the nation Mwalimu Julius Nyerere at the time and established a cooperation between the FZS and Tanzania, lasting until today. It also made the Serengeti one of the best known ecosystems and national parks around the world and has ever since been at the heart of promoting tourism to the country.

Tens of millions of US Dollars have since the late 1950's been raised by and through FZS' efforts and gone into material support for the park, the latest being the funding for a control room from where anti poaching efforts will in the future be coordinated. According to the report FZS was honoured last week by Germany's development bank KfW, which awarded the Frankfurt Zoological Society 50.000 Euros for their outstanding conservation work, and FZS in turn dedicated these funds to assist TANAPA in setting up a security centre at the park headquarters near Seronera. The new control room will coordinate anti poaching operations on the ground and from the air, and the source indicated that TANAPA, like their colleagues in Kenya, are now also considering the use of unmanned airborne devices, aka drones, to keep an eye in the sky at all times and assist in swift reactions when poachers are detected.

In the past has FZS regularly donated communication equipment and vehicles dedicated to facilitate the movement of rangers across the park, has helped in constructing park gates, administrative buildings, quarters for staff, roads and bridges, has helped to train staff and a range of other measures, aimed to keep the management of the Serengeti National Park up to date with technology and management methods, beyond the financial assistance through grants by the Tanzanian government, and the income from park entrance fees. The Frankfurt Zoological Society has however also not minced words when coming to the defense of the park, speaking out against plans to construct a highway across the migration routes of the wildebeest and zebras, as a result of which the German government has offered to carry out a detailed study for a highway around the Southern edges of the park rather than have a major road run right through the park as hapless officials had tried to do before being stopped by the global conservation fraternity. A case for a permanent injunction against such plans is currently pending against the Tanzanian government before the East Africa Court of Justice. Regardless of such opposition though has the FZS continued to support park operations and met the many needs regular funding was not able to accomplish. Well done FZS, and let us not forget, Serengeti Shall Not Die.

ARIDE ISLAND GOES EXCLUSIVELY SOLAR

The Seychelles northernmost granite island, Aride, a nature reserve owned and managed by the Island Conservation Society and dedicated to protect the island's unique flora and fauna, has earlier this week switched of its diesel powered generator as a new solar system took over.

The Seychelles have a policy of increasing sustainable energy sources across the main islands of Mahe, Praslin and La Digue to reduce the reliance on costly, and CO2 emitting thermal power plants and the government has put legislative and regulatory measures into place to promote the use of solar water heaters for domestic residences and businesses but also the use of solar panels to generate electricity. Funded by the Australian High Commission through a grant an upcoming second phase will be sponsored by the UNDP's under its GEF funding line later this year it was learned.

Other smaller islands, either entirely dedicated to conservation or else with small upmarket resorts are closely monitoring the pilot project before decisions are made to also convert from generator power to solar power or at least complement thermal power sources. Such moves will reduce the archipelago's carbon footprint and live up to the country's commitment to staying green as a contribution towards the fight against global warming and climate change.

Aride Island is home to the huge frigatebirds, the Seychelles Warbler, the endangered Seychelles Magpie Robin and the Seychelles Fody, among many other bird species found on Aride. Day trips to the island are normally arranged from the resorts of Praslin or La Digue and guided tours then take visitors across the island. Visit www.seychelles.travel for more information about Aride and the other 114 islands of the archipelago dedicated to either conservation – like the Aldabra Atoll – or tourism purposes. Seychelles, Another World.

OTHER STUFF

Ethiopian Dams on the Omo River

In 2004 Gibe I, a dam on the Gilbel Gibe River (a tributary to the Omo River) was completed. Ethiopia gained 184 MW of power. In 2010 Gibe II was completed. Gibe II is a tunnel (26 km) from the Gengel Gibe River to the Omo River. The power generated from this power station is around 400 MW. Now under construction is Gibe III, a mega dam, to potentially provide 1,879 MW of electricity. (Kariba Dam provides 1,319 MW). Another two dams are planned further downstream.

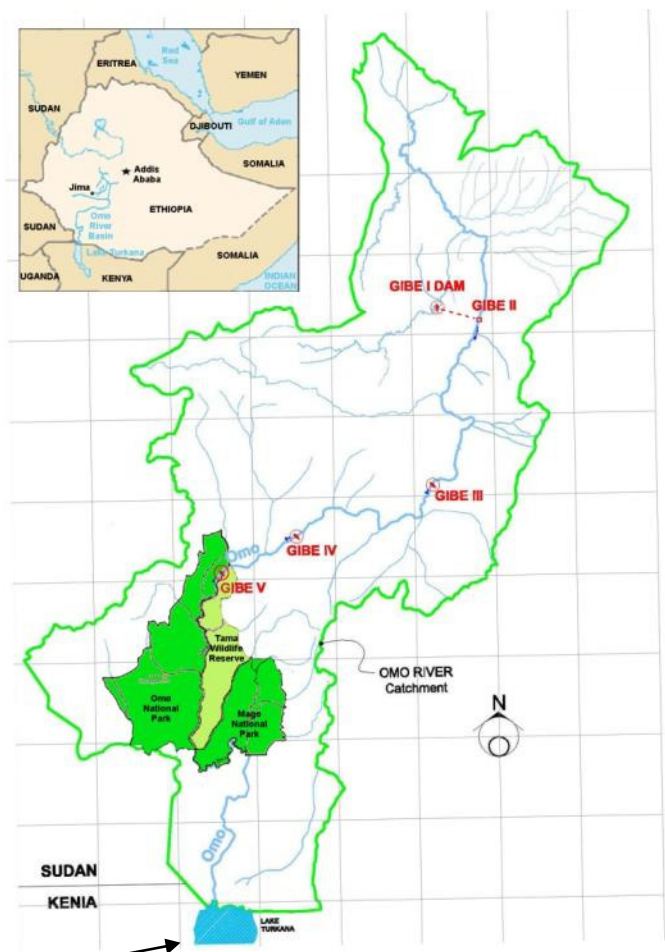
Controversy has surrounded both Gibe I and II, but the debate over Gibe III is much more heated.

According to a recent report from Claudia Carr from Africa Resources Working Group the impact of the dam downstream have been largely ignored and could be catastrophic for the people and the environment. www.arwg-gibe.org/uploads/Carr_ARWG_Gibe_III_Report_Dec_2012.pdf

The Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA), according to the report, was only completed two years after the construction of Gibe III was started. This EIA is thought to be inadequate and deeply flawed. It is thought that the lives of 500,000 people living downstream will be affected by the construction of the dam; their livelihoods in peril. The people are poor and largely uneducated, therefore having no voice against the dam.

Further downstream the Omo River runs into Lake Turkana in Kenya. Lake Turkana National Park, on the east of the lake is a World Heritage Site.

This is UNESCO's description of the area:
The most saline of Africa's large lakes, Turkana is an outstanding laboratory for the study of plant and animal communities. The three National Parks serve as a stopover for migrant waterfowl and are major breeding grounds for the Nile crocodile, hippopotamus and a variety of venomous snakes. The Koobi Fora deposits, rich in mammalian, molluscan and other fossil remains, have contributed more to the understanding of paleo-environments than any other site on the continent.



Lake Turkana is an inland lake with no outlet to the sea. It is therefore saline and requires the fresh water from the rivers to keep down its salt levels. The fish (50 species) in the lake are adapted for this environment but, were the salt levels to rise because of the reduction of fresh water from the Omo River there may be consequences for the health of the fish, and therefore the people who rely on fish as their main source of food. The lake has already seen a drop in its water level from the effects of hydropower and irrigation schemes on the Omo and Turkwel Rivers. The region also suffers from prolonged droughts.

From Birdlife:

Turkana is an extremely important waterbird site: 84 waterbird species, including 34 Palearctic migrants, have been recorded here. ... As well as supporting many wintering Palearctic migrants, the lake is a key stop-over site for birds on passage. Waterbirds are distributed all around the lake, but the highest densities are on mud and pebble shores; particular concentrations occur in sheltered muddy bays and the Omo delta.
 ...

So, for us in this part of Africa I think we can take on board the fact that an Environmental Impact Assessment is probably the most important aspect of any large project – be it a dam, mining or other major change to our environment. Claudia Carr's report on Gibe III is thorough and not couched in scientific terms, which makes it readable by laymen such as myself. Read it if you can ...

As more and more people inhabit our planet we know that to change one aspect of our environment can change the lives of hundreds of people. The weight of this responsibility lies squarely on the shoulders of our Environmental Agencies. Not only do they need to do their jobs thoroughly, but governments have to listen to them. It would seem in Ethiopia that the Environmental Agency is on the periphery of society, if their website is anything to go by:

From the Ethiopian Environmental Agency website:
There are currently no active announcements.
There are currently no upcoming events.
Developing Knowledge Management System: Not Started
Pollution: There are no posts in this category.
Ecology: There are no posts in this category.
Gallery: There are no pictures to show in this view.

Maybe the website has just been started ...

THE SMILE

Work Outing

This guy was staggering along the road, much the worse for the drink, throwing empty beer cans into the street and falling into people's gardens. His singing gained the attention of a passing policeman who decided to question him.

"What do you think you're doing there?" the policeman asked.

"I'm on my works outing" came the slurred reply.

"Then" the policeman queried, "where are all the others?"

"Ah" the man grinned, "You see officer. I'm self employed!"

Have a good week

Gill