



Dear All

Last week I was out of town. I had gone to stay at Kariba Bush Club. My son, Muftau, is running the lodge for a while and he wanted me to do a Guest Handbook. It meant a bit of research on the birds, trees, animals and all that stuff that goes into an interesting booklet for the guests to take home. I had intended to stay 4 days but ended up being there for 6, so I had time to relax as well as work. More of the story later ...

From Ramesh Patel, Southend Travel

We were recently given a nice little dog by Dr Shroff and it stayed with us 2 day no problem but on the third day it went missing we did try to look for it but no luck we even checked with Dr Shroff Still no luck however on the night of 30 October 2012 or the early morning of 31 October 2012 we were woken by our guard to tell us that the dog is here and it's been dropped by some muzungu May I take this to thank him with our full heart, if he can give us his number I would like to thank him personally.

Livingstone Town Centre Market

On the news this week was the information that the Livingstone Town Market, which in fact, they called the Zimbabwe Market, is to be demolished and then rebuilt into a modern market. It is sometimes called the Zimbabwe Market because many Zimbabweans come over to sell products there, especially Zimbabwe beers.

A bit of history: Markets in Zambia were only located in the suburbs – each suburb had its own marketplace for buying and selling local products. Our best one in Livingstone is Maramba Market which is great fun to walk around.



When, many years ago, Council approved the Town Centre market, there were a lot of unhappy residents, but it did go ahead. The plan was that the market was enclosed in a wall, but as time went on the market spilled out all over and onto the road. For me, the road is a nightmare to drive – there are taxis and people everywhere and the road is potholed. It is the sort-of area one avoids as much as possible!

Having said that, we need to be pragmatic and realise that many, many Livingstonians earn an income from small trading and we need to make space for them. A modern market will be right. But I have some concerns.



Firstly the plan by government is to have it ready for the UNWTO. So it will be a mad dash from start to finish. There will be no time to design a beautiful structure. We will probably just get a load of square boxes with some tin roof. This is not what Livingstone needs. I can remember many years ago that the late Peter Jones Architect drew up a great design for Maramba Market Extension. (It was never built because the extension was demolished to make way for Police houses.) It took into consideration light, fresh air, beauty and lots more ...

Secondly, one market is not enough. We need to do a bit of analysis of numbers. The market, as it is, is already packed with marketeers – like sardines. It is dirty, unhealthy and a mess because so many people are crammed into one space. We need to know how many people and how many stalls we need. One market is certainly not enough to provide accommodation for the present market traders and all the other traders now perched on our pavements.

Lastly, too, we need a market which is going to add to Livingstone's beauty – we need a good design.

From the traders' point of view, it would appear that they are concerned about lack of trading for the period while the construction is ongoing. Where are they to trade and make a living for all those months? When the market is completed, what rents will be asked – are they affordable?

I appreciate that the Government just wants to get things done, but some things take time ... and I think that this is one of those things ...

Market in Dar Es Salaam built in 1974 by architect B J Amuli. The building provides air circulation and there are huge funnels to collect rainwater which is stored in underground tanks.



Police Station gets a Facelift

The Main Police Station is being painted. At least it is being painted white instead of the jail-house grey of Musi-O-Tunya Building. The road to the Police Camp is also being resurfaced with laterite. It was tar, but laterite is a good second place and, of course, it can be done in a short time. I just hope they get the drainage right – the most important thing for any road.

Gravel roads are the ideal solution to many of our side roads. Livingstone is on a hill and, over the years, the tar roads have collapsed and left sand, sand which washes away with each storm. I should go and take some photographs ... old Livingstonians will be shocked when they see some of them.



Cost of Doing Business

Last week I wrote another impassioned article about the costs of running a tourist enterprise. It annoyed one of my readers ... here is her response:

There is a tendency for national self-flagellation all over the world, and Zambia seems to do it pretty well.....as exemplified in your article 'Cost of doing Business' and your comment that Zambia is getting ever more expensive and that is putting agents off encouraging tourists to come here. I agree Zambia is expensive; Africa is expensive for tourism. Prices baffle tourists who see such extremes - locals living on a tiny fraction of the European basic wage and yet commodities such as diesel apparently as expensive as they are in Europe. But it is not restricted to Zambia and we should not beat ourselves up about it to the extent that we demoralise our own industry.....

On my admittedly limited experience I see that Botswana lodges are more expensive than Zambia, and I have not noticed that Zimbabwe or Namibia are any cheaper. Namibia has a bed levy - not dissimilar to a tourism levy - which is surely a fair way to tax a business because it is entirely occupancy/income based. Zimbabwe charges UK residents more for a visa than Zambia does, it is more expensive to get into Vic Falls on the Zimbabwe side than on the Zambia side. And don't forget that there is a positive side to the budget - customs and excise duty suspended on new vehicles to be used for tourism, and on goods for refurbishment, rehabilitation and expansion for tourism enterprises. Import duty has been a bugbear for a long time, so bring on the good news! The currency restriction is a nuisance, but arguably an understandable one; most countries do not want to be identified by the currency of another. We are free to charge in dollars, but we have to give change in kwacha, just as happens in South Africa or Botswana - where just as it is in Zambia the change you get in rand or pula seems miserably low.

On another point, and an area where my experience is not limited, I deal daily with a lot of different tour operators, and my impression is most definitely not that Zambia is suffering because it is more expensive than its neighbours. In fact there is a noticeable tendency to recognise Zambia as one of the last great African wildernesses with wonderful sights and fantastic game viewing AND you don't have to spend hours photoshopping the Land Rovers out of your best shots. If you publish this I expect there will be a chorus of disapproval pointing out exactly where I have gone wrong, but I just wanted to get it off my chest!

As editor, I think I am allowed a last word. I agree with the comments above, but I think my main point is that tourism should be a major income generator for the Zambian economy and it should also provide thousands of jobs. The fact that tourism creeps along is because of over-legislation and costs imposed by government.

Let us compare two industries – Agriculture and Tourism. Both are important industries in Zambia. Does an owner have to have a licence to run a farm? Does he have to have a licence to breed cows, sheep, goats? Does he have to pay a levy to government every time one of his cows gives birth? When a farmer wants to clear a piece of land to plant mealies, he will cut down the trees and burn them (chitemene); does he have to have an Environmental Impact Assessment before he can go ahead? Do the farmhands have to have a medical exam to prove that they are fit to work on a farm? I could go on ...

The tourism industry is totally over-regulated which is why it cannot grow, but Agriculture is supported by little or no regulation and massive assistance by government in the form of inputs being free of duty and VAT. Depots are set up by government to help with collection of farm produce and transport is laid on ...

I have probably upset the farmers now and will get long emails telling me how difficult it is to run a farm ... but I think we can see that farming is much less regulated by government. We are also seeing a massive increase in commercial farming in Zambia so that we can feed ourselves and we can export produce.

One can only wonder why farming is less regulated. Is it the fact that most Zambians are involved in farming of one sort or another? I think the figure is 72% of the people work on farms, either their own farm or on a commercial farm. It could possibly be that these people form the largest voter population too and they need to be kept happy ...

Travel Report from a Livingstone Weekly reader:

We have just returned from our trip to Mana pools, South Kafue and Hwange. This is not intended as a trip report, but just a comment on the Zambian aspect of our trip.

I have not yet read any of your Livingstone weeklies. That is a pleasure I am keeping for when hubby is at work and I am left in peace. I did open the latest and noted your concerns on costs in Zambia, which prompted me to write to you. If you want to Quote me ...feel free.

1 We crossed into Zambia at the Kariba border. Zimbabwe was a piece of cake. Zambia was a nightmare! 5 vehicles, 11 people 4 hours later at R1200 per vehicle we were on our way.

2. We were aware we required Kwacha to pay gate entrance fees at Kafue as friends of ours were refused entry in September as they did not have Kwacha...not a good customer retention action! They have stated they will NEVER revisit Zambia: and they had same experience as us at border)

We used street side money changers and were totally aware we were being ripped off. You cannot buy Kwacha outside of Zambia and we had no idea if we were going to find a bank on way to Kafue.

3. Entrance fees to Kafue and the fact that you pay a daily rate make for a very expensive camping trip. (actual camping fees were excellent. Not expensive at all.)

Comment on the camping: Lovely campsite. Wonderful staff. Tsetse flies made driving around unpleasant in a very beautiful park. (I know we picked a bad month) No game..luck of the draw. Lovely birds. However, adding up the cost of the border crossing, the petrol costs to get to Kafue and the actual costs of camping, plus the loss on buying and selling Kwacha make this our first and last trip to Zambia.

We had had all expectations of including Zambia as part of our annual trips. We have been avoiding Botswana because it was becoming too expensive....Zambia unfortunately is the same..not a cost effective holiday. Mana pools and Hwange were stunning and much cheaper.

Zimbabwe border crossings were a pleasure. To enter and exit all 3 countries never took longer than 45 minutes on Zim and S.A borders....lays to rest the horror stories we had heard about Beit Bridge.

4. Livingstone is a tourist nightmare with relevant inflated costs. The noise of helicopters and "planes" over the Falls are horrible...nothing anyone can do about that tho.

Oh Gill... I really thought I would let you have a "Happy Report" on my Moms country. Hopefully your government will catch a wake up and realize what a cash cow tourism is. Money is hard come by these days and people are counting costs. Zambia is just plain too darn expensive. **Everything else was fantastic and we would love to return if it ever becomes affordable.** We don't even mind border delays except when we have to sell a kidney or two to cross over.

Before we left we were advised to skip Zambia because it "is not worth it".....sadly I have to agree.

Good news ...

The good news this week is that Guy Scott, Vice President: *There are major calls concerning the high cost of doing business in the country such as high interest rates which is a drawback to society...Government will support the private sector by ensuring that the cost of doing business is reduced.*

Eagles Rest News

TIGER CHALLENGE 2012

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Kariba Bush Club

Kariba Bush Club is near a village called Siansowa on Lake Kariba. It is a bit of a drive from Livingstone and took me 5 hours, but it is a pretty journey. Just after Choma there is a turning at a small hamlet of Batoka which sends you onto the Maamba road – of Maamba coal mine fame. After a while the roads heads into the Zambezi Escarpment. There are some lovely views and then you descend from an altitude of 1,240m to

the Lake level at 490m, the last section passing through many Tonga villages.

Kariba Bush Club has got camping, basic rooms, self-catering houses and some en suite chalets. Being a guest of special significance I was given an en suite chalet, with its own veranda overlooking the lake. I spent a few hours during my time sitting on the veranda just enjoying the breeze (actually it was a howling gale a lot of the time). I was visited by impala, bushbuck, warthog, monkeys and lots of birds. I was also visited by Bongo and Stevie, the two goats. Bongo has a liking for paper and on one occasion I had left some notes on the chair outside ... when I returned they had gone and I can only assume that Bongo had them for lunch.



Other animals on the site include kudu, zebra, puku, bushpig, duiker, grysbok, and lots of little things. The birdlife is sensational because of the croc ponds nearby. My favourite, though, is the ostrich which were brought in for a bit of entertainment, I think!

There isn't much grass for the animals to eat at this time of year. They still haven't had rain yet. So, every evening the animals visited the lodge to mow the lawns. The ostrich thought that they might like a game of volley ball and toured the court.



The birds and animals at Kariba Bush Club are 'tame' to the extent that they are used to people so it is an ideal spot for families. Children can learn at the Bush Club to be close up and personal with Zambia's animals and yet learn respect for them too. Zebra and ostrich can give a nasty kick if they feel threatened ... so don't go close.

Next door to the Bush Club is, on one side the crocodile farm and on the other the kapenta fishing business, so there is always a lot going on to see. Tours can be taken by guides into the croc farm and I have shown you pictures before, but here is one as a reminder because I didn't do a tour this time ...



This is believed to be the largest crocodile breeding farm in Africa. And, on a tour, you get to go right into the pens on the back of an open vehicle ... don't fall off ...

The kapenta fishing business one witnesses on the lake at evening/night as the rigs head out for a night's fishing. While I was there it was full moon, and you can't fish at full moon, so the lake was quiet.

Having spent a few days enjoying the wind from the lake, the gales subsided and we were able to take a boat out onto the lake and cross to Maaze Island. Kariba Bush Club has two islands – Maaze and Mashape – which have been stocked with animals over the years. During the past year they have been constructing an island camp on Maaze – a real getaway. We went over to spend the night. The dog came too ...

Maaze Island has six chalets, all en suite. There is also a boma, kitchen and lots of sandy beaches (well, I should add that the sandy beaches only occur when the lake level is low-ish).

The comfortable tented chalets have a toilet-and-shower room next door. There is a rechargeable lamp on the bedside table for use to visit the loo in the night. I did get up once, put on the light and heard a mad dash of hooves careering through the bush – I must have startled some animals which were resting nearby.

At Maaze, food can be prepared for the guests but it is much more fun to take a barbie and do it yourself. The kitchen is fitted with all the cooking essentials and there is the important fire spot outside with grill.

Elephants do come onto the island from time to time and can be a bit of a hazard, but all the other animals are friendly – impala, waterbuck, puku, kudu, eland, reedbuck, bushbuck, duiker.

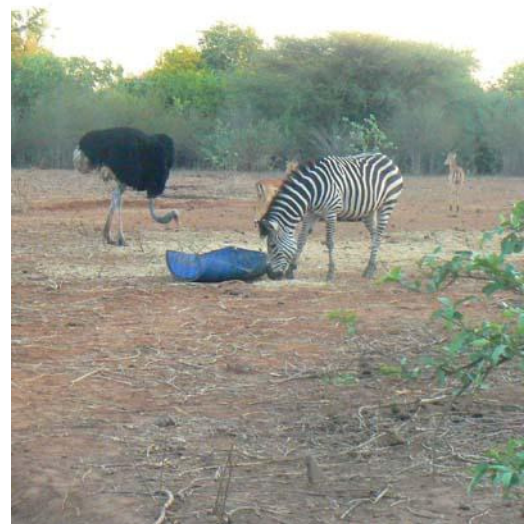
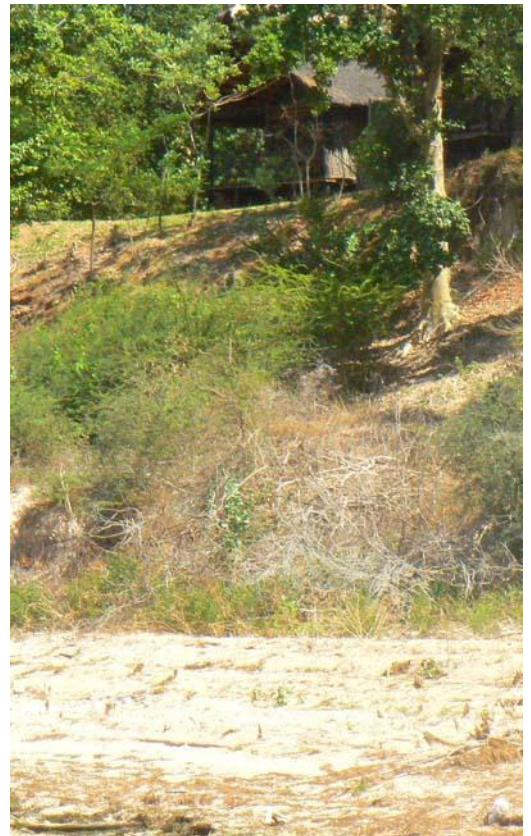
I was told that the elephants were on Mashape Island nearby, so I took myself off for an early morning walk (everyone else was still asleep). The island was dry, very dry. Normally the camp manager will take guests on a walk – long or short – around the island. The animals were found along the lake shore feeding on the grass which was growing where the water had once been.

When the others got up we made breakfast in the kitchen then waited for the wind to subside before setting off back to The Bush Club. It is a short trip of about 20 minutes.



Unloading the boat we all traipsed back up the steep path to the lodge. I went to the office to work on the Weekly ...

Here are a few more photos:



Intrepid explorer arrives in Siavonga From Siavonga News

David Lemon, the 67 year old explorer and writer who is attempting to walk the entire length of the Zambezi River arrived in Siavonga on the 20th October 2012. David's "long walk" began on 25th April when his epic journey began at Mwinilunga in North Western Zambia, and will end some 3,540 kilometres downstream where the river empties into the Indian Ocean at the remote settlement of Chinde in Mozambique.



David hoped to enter the record books by being the first known explorer to walk the entire length of the Zambezi River - not even David Livingstone laid claim to such an amazing feat of endurance. However, David's attempts at the record were thwarted soon after the journey had begun when he tried to cross into Angola to follow the river a mere 240 kilometres before it flows back into Zambia at Chivuma. Before starting off on his journey, David enquired with the Angolan Embassy in London about obtaining a visa only to be told that he could obtain it at the border - upon arrival at the border at Jimbe he was denied entry.

He returned to Solwezi where he attempted to get help in obtaining a visa. The then Minister of Foreign Affairs and Tourism the Hon. Given Lubinda, who had supported David's record breaking attempt on behalf of the Zambian Government, promised to speak to his Angolan counterparts, but alas this intervention did not result in permission to travel through Angola.

David at the start of his journey.

Even though the record was now impossible to achieve, undeterred, David decided on a compromise and followed the border line between Zambia and Angola from Jimbe to the point where the river crosses back into Zambia.



The journey through the Western plains was according to David "a bit of a nightmare". The Zambezi flood waters had not receded as he had expected and he walked for days through knee deep water and sometimes wading waist deep. At places along his journey David was able to communicate with the "outside world" and at one point he was quoted as saying:

"Grass tore at my feet and falls were frequent, while my nights were spent on small patches of high ground without firewood and in company with millions of marauding mossies. The water was full of leeches too and I spent a lot of time tearing them off and leaving my legs streaming blood to attract more."

"Had it been possible, I would have packed up then and there, but fortunately perhaps, I just had to press on as I was entirely alone and help was not readily available. I was later told by locals that nobody had walked across the plain at that time of year (July) in living memory".

Pressing on, David reached the 'half way' point, arriving at the Victoria Falls Livingstone on the 13th August. Tired, dirty and having lost 22 kilos of body weight on this journey, David sought refuge and was "kindly adopted" by Karien and Peter Kermer who live on a remote riverside farm on the outskirts of Livingstone. After a week of kindness, care and 'feeding-up' to gain strength, David was raring to go again and continue his journey.

David says that he has been overwhelmed by the kindness of the Zambian people.

"No matter what colour creed or societal status they were, they have welcomed me and helped wherever and however they could. If they had any doubts as to my sanity for attempting this walk, they kept them to themselves and the general attitude was summed up for me by a Lozi fisherman called Reuben, with whom I enjoyed a Sunday meal of fish and nshima. Reuben took my photograph on his cell phone - no matter

how poor they are, they all have phones - and told me that he was going to take it into Sesheke and have it printed to poster size so that he can one day tell his grandchildren that he spent time with David Lemon. Nice hey?"

"I have also been compared with Jesus walking through the wilderness, taken for the Spirit of some early explorer and even asked to run for President, as I would now understand how ordinary people live."

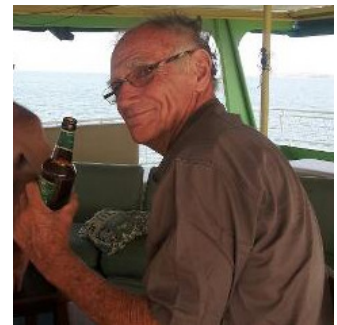
Having rested awhile, David set off on the next leg of his journey from Livingstone to Siavonga, a section that would be one of the most challenging and taxing due to the difficult terrain he had to cross. The tired traveller arrived at Mpango (Lotri Bay), about 20 kilometres from Siavonga and sought refuge with an old friend Glen Tatham.

Messages were relayed to Eagles Rest, who was to host his next resting stop, and arrangements were made to collect David by boat. The Eagles Rest houseboat the 'Bateleur' went to collect him and David enjoyed a well earned relaxing trip to Siavonga.

Don't worry; David's record is still in-tact as he walked up and down the deck during the journey"

David enjoying a well earned Mosi

The next stage of the journey takes David through the Kariba Gorge and onwards down the Lower Zambezi Valley towards Mozambique. However due to the onset of the rains and the excessive summer heat in the lower valley, David has decided to take a break and return to the UK for a while.



Another reason for David's suspension of the walk is, at the request of the Zambian Government, he will write the first chapters of his book on his travels, covering the 'people of the Zambezi Valley', for use in schools. He will be returning to Siavonga after the rains to continue his epic journey and complete his long walk to the Indian Ocean.

Footnote:

David is being sponsored by the Zambian milk processing company "Cowbell". The generous sponsorship not only provides David with financial support but the company also re-supplies him with food and other provisions at every possible place along his journey.

David is also doing the walk to try and draw attention to the fact that the African Elephant is becoming endangered in the Zambezi Valley due to poaching. David runs a charitable fund known as the "Kariba Elephant Campaign" together with Zimbabwean wildlife artist Nic Lywood and an English Accountant who, according to David "has never seen a wild elephant".

The fund does not solicit money, but uses the profits from David's adventure books and Nic's paintings to subsidise the people working on the ground to release elephants and other animals from snares.

"This is a costly business in terms of fuel, maintenance and the purchase of tranquilising drugs" David says, "and although we know we are fighting a losing battle, the little we can do to help the dedicated folk who do their best for wild life, the better we feel about it".

We will keep you updated when David returns to Siavonga.

From Robin Pope Safaris in Luangwa

Well the subject of the week is: “jeepers it’s hot!!” What makes things even better is that it is not just us feeling the heat. The elephants can be seen regularly in the river joining the hippos and cooling down. The animals are concentrating around the last remaining areas of water and the cutest was a band of banded Mongoose that hang out around our house, came down to an ever increasing puddle on the front lawn yesterday in an attempt to cool themselves down, some submersing themselves completely in the water. Their little pips, pops and splashes showing just how content they were with their discovery.



One of the other occurrences for this time of the year with the heat are the occasional whirlwinds that scuttle around. One particularly strong one came through the Nsefu bar during the course of the week and managed to push a pint of Mosi from one end of the bar to the other, cleverly pushing the beer from Polly to the guest who was waiting for their drink!! So there is always a bright side to everything that happens. ...



As if this was not enough we have also had some phenomenal wild dog sightings, which for this time of the year are rare and majorly exciting. As guests got back into the car having finished a yummy cooked sunrise breakfast two packs of dogs appeared from different directions. The smaller pack flattening themselves to the ground watching, listening and smelling what was going on and then, all of a sudden, all chaos broke loose and a rather rampant chase ensued, yelping, and all sorts of other strange noises coming from the twenty-one or so dogs as they pursued each other and stood their ground. Needless to say it got quite vicious so sooner rather than later, the smaller pack stood down and made a run for it.



Kangaluwi Mine

We reported before about Zambia Environmental Agency (ZEMA) rejecting the Environmental Impact Report produced by Zambezi Resources to mine in Lower Zambezi National Park. In a report this week, Irene Chipili, Public Relations Officer, gave some of the reasons for the rejection:

- The mine would have compromised the ecological value of the park
- The site was not suitable as it was in the middle of a national park and the mine would permanently destroy the landscape of the park
- The mine would reduce the tourism value of the park which earns a lot of revenue
- The Zambezi Escarpment was prone to earthquakes and the proposed mine dump (Tailings Storage Facility) would have been located in the park
- The proposal did not address the issue of acid rock drainage
- The mine was only 30 km from the Mana Pools World Heritage Site
- Although the company had pledged to provide 300 jobs, the negative impact outweighed the job creation.

Zambezi Resources has put in an appeal ...

ZIM-ZAM

Preparations for the UNWTO

I have reported that Livingstone is having a bit of a paint-job and some minor roads are being repaired. A new town market is planned, but whether this will be done before the UNWTO is debatable. I think that the traders may take some persuading to move out for the duration of the build.

Meanwhile, on the Zimbabwe side, the authorities have conceded that a new convention centre is not viable and that the upgrades at the airport will not be completed in time. It is expected that the runway will be complete, but the terminal will not.

ZIMBABWE

ZIMBABWE CONSERVATION TASK FORCE

11th October 2012

THE DESTRUCTION OF HARARE'S WETLANDS

Whether it is due to greed, carelessness or just plain ignorance, the Zimbabwean authorities seem to turn a blind eye to the destruction of every aspect of the natural environment. Over 60% of our wildlife has been eliminated, millions of acres of trees have been chopped down, dry river beds have been damaged by gold panners and now, one by one, our precious wetlands are falling victim to this destruction.



Harare's wetlands play a very vital role in providing the City's water source. Everybody is aware of the severe water shortages we have been facing and this is made worse by the destruction of the wetlands.

Harare's major water source originates from the vleis and open green spaces around the city, many of which are now being destroyed by development, pollution and informal urban agriculture. A vlei is an important type of wetland. It is a low-lying, marshy grassland, covered with water during the rainy season, and even though it may seem to be dry during the winter season and droughts, it is actually storing water under the ground which it releases slowly into the streams and rivers.

The Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources is apparently fully aware of the vital role of wetlands for Harare's future survival because the minister declared 26 of these areas protected. This was gazetted on 27th July 2012.

Mr Ken Sharpe Jnr was contracted to build a new highway leading to Harare International Airport. The construction of the highway has been ongoing for quite some time now but the authorities are unable to pay Mr Sharpe for the work he has done. In lieu of payment, he has been given Warren Hills Golf Course where it is alleged that he plans to build a 5 star hotel. He has also been given the wetlands which constitutes about 21 hectares of land at the corner of Princes Road and Sherwood Drive in Meyrick Park. This has caused a huge outcry among conservationists because in conjunction with an International Christian Ministry and Kentucky Fried Chicken, he intends to build a conference facility and theme park. The servicing of this land will destroy the vital wetland. The conference facility will have a seating capacity of up to 10 000 and will include offices, a recording studio, bookshop and library. A sporting facility will also be constructed to provide recreational activities. Construction activities are confined to 3,6 hectares but the balance of the land, approximately 18 hectares will be converted to a theme park.

In addition to this, Mr Sharpe has also been given the wetlands in Borrowdale behind Dandaro Village where it is alleged that he plans to build the biggest shopping mall in Africa in partnership with the International Christian Ministry and Kentucky Fried Chicken.

If these projects are allowed to proceed, it will mean the destruction of these very vital wetlands which supply precious water to Lakes Chivero and Manyame - in other words our drinking water. In addition to this, the wetlands support a wide range of organisms from aquatic invertebrates to fish, birds, reptiles and mammals. As usual, it is all about making money. If the Christian Ministry has enough money to partake in this construction, we wonder why they don't put their money to better use and help to feed the millions of Zimbabweans who are starving or improve their medical and educational facilities.

Although the go-ahead for these projects has already been granted, the general public is quite entitled to object to this development taking place and we would like to encourage as many people as possible to email their objections to the Environmental Management Agency - ema@ema.co.zw. We need to jealously guard any existing wetlands because if these are destroyed, it will be a case of "no wetlands - no water." Let's all work together to keep our wetlands intact.

Johnny Rodrigues
Chairman for Zimbabwe Conservation Task Force

Victoria Falls Boat Club

I reported a few weeks ago that the Boat Club in Victoria Falls Town was to be re-possessed by government because of failure by members to pay the outstanding rent arrears amounting to US\$16,000. It seems that the members of the Boat Club are staying put while the Ministry of Local Government and the Victoria Falls Town Council vie for ownership of the property.

The Ministry of Local Government ordered the eviction but the Town Council intervened stating that the state did not own the property; that it belonged to them. According to the Mayor of the town, the land became part of Council property when it was give town status 10 years ago.

The wrangle will continue, one assumes for some time. Let's hope it continues until well after the UNWTO when the spotlight in Zimbabwe will be taken off the town.

Green Power

Solar and wind power are finally emerging as alternative technologies for power generation. The innovations are being led in South Africa. South Africa does not have Zambia's huge rivers so relies mainly on coal plants. We have seen before that South Africa is importing power from Mozambique's Cahora Bassa hydropower scheme. The new proposed dam in Mozambique, 70 km downstream of Cahora Bassa, Mphanda Nkuwa Dam, will displace over 1,000 people but the dam will not help the poor people of Mozambique – a large proportion of it is set for export to South Africa. But it won't be long and Mozambique will want that power for itself. It is essential that South Africa starts now to develop alternatives.

Wind Power was in the news this week. It would seem that wind power is now cheaper than power supplied by coal plants. Eskom, South Africa's power authority, has coal plants, nuclear plants and imports from neighbours. If there is one thing that South Africa has it is lots of wind and surely this should be used to generate power as it is around the world.

Roger Price, of Windlab, was quoted as saying about wind power:

The costs are unlikely to go up because, unlike coal, there are no input costs as wind is free. Overall we say the capacity of wind generation should amount to 25% of generating capacity by 2030.

Eskom plans to build two more coal plants in Mpumalanga and Limpopo and more nuclear plants along the coast. Coal adds to greenhouse gases and we have all seen what happens to nuclear plants and that many countries are now opting to close them because of the dangers.

Solar technology had a breakthrough a couple of years ago when a South African professor, Vivian Alberts, developed an alloy to replace silicon, thereby making solar panels cheaper to produce. The technology is being used by a German company and the hopes are that a manufacturing plant in South Africa is on the cards. Using this technology it will be possible for homes to afford to be totally self-sufficient.

So, all in all, if the South African government can take these innovations on board, the country is going towards 'small is beautiful' – lots of small projects to produce power locally instead of dirty, dangerous alternatives. Well done. Let's hope neighbouring countries can learn from South Africa.



WOLFGANG'S COLUMN

KENYA'S TANA RIVER DELTA BECOMES THE WORLD'S LATEST RAMSAR SITE

(Map courtesy of www.ramsar.org)

Those with greedy eyes on this prized area, wanting to turn it into agricultural wastelands through unsustainable farming methods, will have to think twice now that the Tana River Delta has been officially recognized as the world's latest RAMSAR site, giving added protection and recognition to this fragile biodiversity hotspot.

The area, recently the scene of interethnic violence fuelled by politicians full of tribal hatred for others with the same birthright, has since independence nearly 49 years ago seen no significant infrastructure

development vis a vis hospitals, roads, education facilities and other social services and is often portrayed as the *'poor house of Kenya'* where only subsistence farming and fishing can provide for the daily needs of the local populations, and not when the frequent droughts strike.

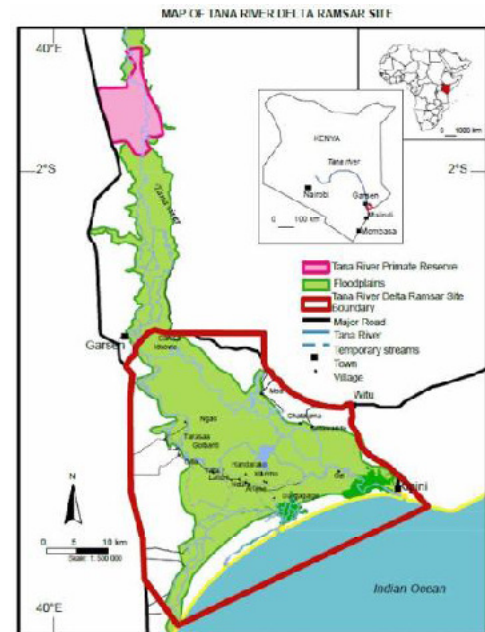
Few tourism businesses have established themselves in the Tana Delta, but tourists who opted to go there came back with experiences second to none, in terms of bird and game watching, after enjoying the luxury of solitude and being miles upon miles away from *'civilization'*.

The announcement that the area was now a Ramsar Site drew immediate applause from the conservation fraternity in Kenya, expressing delight that the RAMSAR Secretariat had recognized the unique beauty and global value towards protecting migratory species of birds as well as an extensive local bird population of this expanded wetland ecosystem, where the Tana River empties into the Indian Ocean. The designated area is over 400,000 acres large and after the Rufiji Delta thought to be East Africa's second most important such river mouth wetland.

Conservation NGO *Nature Kenya* has been instrumental in achieving this global recognition and is reportedly working with the Kenyan government to develop a medium and long term management plan of how best to protect the delta and yet sustainably use it for tourism purposes, with the least impact on the area compared to other forms of exploitation such as fish, crab or prawn farming or exploitative commercial agriculture.

Kenya already has 5 designated RAMSAR Sites in the Great African Rift Valley, namely lakes Naivasha, Elementaita, Nakuru, Bogoria and Baringo, all of which form the foundation of a thriving tourism industry providing employment for locals, some of which have become Kenya's foremost bird guides.

Watch this space as I extend congratulations to the staff of Nature Kenya and their supporters who worked tirelessly for year to gain this recognition and protection for the Tana Delta. Well done indeed.



MORE BLOOD IVORY IMPOUNDED IN TANZANIA

The seizure yesterday of 214 tusks and the arrest of initially three suspects rocked Tanzania's conservation fraternity, only days after a shipment, allegedly coming from the port of Dar es Salaam, was impounded by Hong Kong customs officers in a record haul.

Poaching, according to a recent parliamentary report, stands at nearly 30 elephant a day or about 10,000 of these animals per year, with authorities doing far too little to stem the tide and halt the commercial scale slaughter of elephant. Driven by exploding demand from mainly China, poaching for ivory and rhino horn poses the greatest threat to Africa's wildlife heritage ever seen and with nearly 500 rhino poached in South Africa alone and an estimated 15,000+ elephant slaughtered this year across Africa, the booming safari tourism industry is facing the prospect of losing its key assets, roaming rhinos and large herds of elephant. The seizure of over 450 kg's of ivory in a place near the Kinondoni municipality by vigilant security personnel prevented the loot to be smuggled across the border into neighbouring Kenya.

This latest development will further dent Tanzania's bid to be permitted a one off ivory sale of 100 tons of 'legal' ivory for which it has applied to CITES, as the same attempt to obtain permission in 2010 failed when the CITES inspectorate issued a damning report on the laxity of enforcing anti poaching measures in Tanzania and the relative ease with which the country can be used for trafficking.

No nonsense Minister for Natural Resources and Tourism, Amb. Kageshiki, is expected to come down hard on wildlife officials once again, after only weeks ago sacking a number of them and demoting others, for their failures to establish sufficient patrols and putting measures into place to protect the country's dwindling elephant populations. *'This seizure was a chance event, not a result of following leads. Who knows how many such illicit cargos go out of Tanzania. The president last year offered the help of the army. Was that ever taken up? It is time to use all resources we have in our country to combat poaching. If people would steal our mineral resources or fish in our territorial waters all hell would break lose but when they*

destroy our greatest heritage, our wildlife, no one seems too bothered. This has to change, no elephant, no tourism, it is as simple as that' said a regular source from Arusha in a conversation overnight, when discussing this latest discovery of blood ivory in Tanzania.

Watch this space as certainly more such bad news will emerge in coming weeks and months.

SELOUS SPARED FOR NOW AS MNYERA FALLS TARGETTED FIRST FOR HYDRO POWER

A usually impeccable source has confirmed that the Tanzanian government has signed a loan and finance deal with Brazil, aimed to construct a 700 MW facility near Mnyera Falls.

The cost of an estimated 1 billion US Dollars will be fully advance financed by Brazil and it is expected that Brazilian companies will provide all consulting and construction services for the project as well as post construction advisory services and maintenance support.

The choice of location will provide at least some relief for the Stiegler's Gorge, where inspite of initial denials, when the news were broken here of decades old plans being dusted and revived, a hydro power plant might be put up, after Brazilian consulting company Odebrecht conducted site visits to assess the scope of the project there and the potential electricity output. The greater Rufiji basin, according to studies conducted long ago, could provide up to 4.000 MW of electricity from 8 sites, but Stiegler's Gorge with a potential output of 2.100 MW could generate half of that potential from just one location.

Environmentalists and tourism stakeholders have protested the location however and threatened to decampaign both Tanzania and Brazil, claiming enough alternate sites are available for exploitation, allowing the Selous to be left alone. Stiegler's Gorge is at the heart of the core tourism area and the resulting flooding behind the high dam could result in massive displacement of game and radically alter the entire ecosystem and micro climate of the reserve.

Tanzania's dilapidated electricity grid and power plants are notorious to conk out at the most inopportune moment, largely attributed to an almost complete lack of preventive maintenance and investments in a more modern grid and overland transmission lines, leaving industries and businesses often forced to use expensive generators to keep the doors open but at a huge added cost to the Tanzanian consumers.

Watch this space as this story is unfolding.

THE SMILE

A story from Etosha

Some workers reportedly smuggle liquor for resale in their shebeens in the Etosha National Game Park under the pretext that the booze is for birthday parties.

The Otjozondjupa Regional Crime Investigations Coordinator, Deputy Commissioner Moses Khairabeb, over the weekend confirmed the practice saying no worker is allowed to sell alcohol inside the national park unless they are registered operators with valid liquor licences.

Khairabeb said the police received information that some people are dealing in the illegal sale of alcohol and cannabis inside the Okaukuejo camp inside Etosha park.

"We conducted an operation between October 13 and 14 around the park. And really as alleged we arrested a man with dagga," he said.

The man was allegedly not employed in the park, but is a relative of one of the employees. The suspect, Funa Gaeseb (22) was arrested with 60 'ballies' of dagga, which he used to sell around the park.

He appeared in the Tsumeb Magistrate's Court and was sentenced to N\$1000 or 6 months imprisonment. He paid the N\$1000 and is now a free man. ...

Have a good week

Gill