

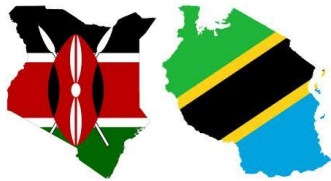


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Fifth edition April 2013

East Africa News

KENYA AND TANZANIA CONDUCTING JOINT TRANSBOUNDARY GAME COUNT



A regular conservation source from Arusha has sent details about a planned joint transboundary game count, going underway shortly to cover areas along the common border, like Amboseli / Kilimanjaro national parks and further into the Rift Valley along the Lake Magadi / Lake Natron areas.

The census was agreed upon in the face of alarming poaching numbers becoming available of elephant and other game, prompting the African Wildlife Foundation, in short known as AWF, to help finance the 80 million Kenya Shillings cost.

One of the added components will be a detailed assessment of the greater Amboseli area vis a vis sharply grown human populations, expanding ever further into marginal land areas previously left for the wildlife to roam and migrate, as agricultural production was thought to be impossible on a sustained basis.

Major wildlife corridors in Kenya, extending from Amboseli, and in fact from across the border in Tanzania even, to as far as the Nairobi National Park or the Chyulu Hills, are now increasingly diverted to other uses, prompting NEMA in Nairobi recently to put a moratorium of at least one year on all developments in this area. This time out period is hopefully providing some useful data on migration patterns and routes of game, then allowing for transit areas to be gazette and making human settlements illegal.

The last census was done in 2010, according to the source, during which zebras, elephant, wildebeest, giraffes and gazelles were counted, among other species, as well as bird counts undertaken.

The count will be conducted from the air to cover the entire area more effectively and use established methods to calculate the game roaming the surveyed parts. Results, as and when available, will be published here.

FLY540 AND FASTJET SET TO DROP LEGAL CASES THROUGH NEGOTIATED AGREEMENT



Information has reached from Nairobi, that the two combatants Fly 540 and FastJet seem to have dropped their mutual court action, which reflected widely different understandings and perceptions on the state of their erstwhile agreements of cooperation and sale of shares. Sources close to FastJet in fact spoke of a statement issued by them today – though not seen in person – that the apparent agreement to drop legal action was aimed to accomplish a: ***‘mutually beneficial and constructive solution’***.

After weeks of exchanging harsh words and leaving the FastJet team, which was supposed to have done due diligence prior to entering into agreements with Fly 540 in a precarious situation, when the deal blew up in their principals’ faces, apparently cooler heads prevailed, or the financial circumstances dictated as some other source from the UK suggested, that a negotiated settlement should be reached.

Knowing both sides though, nothing is done until the proverbial Fat Lady sings in this case and all hymn sheets read the same script and melodies, and this situation will hence be monitored until a conclusion, either way, has been reached.

FastJet was desperate to enter the Kenyan market but owing to the claims laid at their door steps by the Fly 540 CEO Don Smith some weeks ago, failed to make headway, prompting them to even start discussions with other potential partners, namely Jetlink of Nairobi / Kenya. Those talks too showed no immediate signs of getting FastJet into the Kenyan skies on the trot, perhaps making the company realize that either they seek amends with Fly 540’s Don Smith or else see their dreams for Kenya evaporate.

Only two weeks ago did news break that FastJet had to suspend two routes in Tanzania not long after launching them with great fanfare, a further sign that their local expatriate management team has still to come to terms with seasonalities and the peculiarities of Tanzania’s domestic aviation market. There is intense speculation among aviation observers if or when, one or more of them, may have to pay the price for such misfortunes and be asked to leave, more so as one of their expatriates faces a case in a Dar es Salaam court over the alleged use of abusive language towards a local Tanzanian employee.

Watch this space for breaking and regular news from East Africa’s vibrant aviation scene.

CASSOA REDUCES FINANCIAL DEMANDS AFTER OPPOSITION FROM EAC MEMBER STATES



First reported here in late November 2009, the demands of CASSOA for a70 US cents per ticket coupon levy to finance operations did not go down well with airlines, passengers and member states. Opposed by Kenya and Tanzania, the East African Civil Aviation Safety and Security Oversight Agency has now changed tune and ***‘reduced’*** their demands to reportedly 30 US cents to appease the member countries and finally secure a funding approval, the absence of which, according to a CASSOA staff, ***‘makes our life a bit difficult’***.

‘CASSOA was supposed to make life easier as a one stop centre for East Africa wide approvals, licences and permits. This has NOT happened. National regulators still make airlines file multiple applications if they want to operate in the member states other than where they are registered. Why should passenger have to pay for another layer of bureaucracy which failed to meet its objective’ commented a domestic airline operator in Uganda while a commercial airline sales staff said: ***‘The charges on tickets in Uganda, in fact the entire EAC, is already very high. Let me be blunt, government milks aviation and tourism and put too little back into the sector. Fares charged by airlines are often nearly tripled by charges and fees and taxes when flying in East Africa or on international routes. This is not right. That money rarely makes its way back to meet sectoral needs. We need to invest in new technology and new infrastructure. True, many airports in the region are getting modernized now, finally, but that is after many years of neglect.***

Another regular commenter from the general aviation services added: ***‘What we need, and would welcome, is one single stop approval process for licenses and permits, valid across the entire East African Community, doing away with the national approval levels. The regulators should pool resources and become more efficient. Flight clearances should be done instantly for the entire EAC. CASSOA could take over the licensing process on behalf of Kenya, Tanzania, Rwanda, Burundi and us here in Uganda. Certificates of airworthiness, air operator certification, air service licenses, inspections of facilities and all could be done by CASSOA but national regulators are jealously protecting their own turf. As a result we have a duplication and multiplication of paperworks which adds to the cost of flying. How come we are still treated as ‘FOREIGN AIRLINES’ when we***

try to fly to a neighbouring country, this violates the spirit and in my opinion even the law of the EAC. They [CASSOA] should not hide behind being only responsible for safety and security, there is more to aviation than that and even there national regulators still pursue their own agenda', shy to be named for fear of repercussions against his company by UCAA officials.

CASSOA is headquartered in Entebbe but maintains liaisons with the national civil aviation regulators in all the five EAC member states, and supposed to be funded with equitable contributions from the member states, based on the number of flight movements, passengers and number of aircraft registered, but since its inception has the agency struggled to get adequate funds. Yet, disputes among member states over the level of a levy on tickets as well as their national share have made it impossible to reach consensus so far, endangering the agency's functionality. East African spirit, certainly NOT flying high.

Uganda News

AIR UGANDA UPS JUBA FLIGHTS FROM MAY 01ST



Effective 08th of May will Air Uganda, the *Pearl of Africa's* quasi national airline, increase the number of flights between Entebbe and Juba, the capital of South Sudan, from the present 12 to 15 flights a week. Weekends, i.e. Saturday and Sunday, will get a second daily flight while Friday, due to the rise in demand, will have a third flight added to provide extra seats. Effective from that date will all services be operated by the airline's single class CRJ200 aircraft, phasing out the dual class MD87 from this route. There are also going to be changes in the airline's flights to Dar es Salaam which will be served daily with a nonstop service. New, from 29th of May, will be flights to Kilimanjaro International, connecting Arusha, the seat of the East African Community and '*Safari Capital of East Africa*' with Entebbe, before continuing to the Kenyan port city of Mombasa. More information about Air Uganda is available via the airline's website www.air-uganda.com

MORE RHINOS 'ON THE WAY' AT ZIWA RHINO SANCTUARY



The distance of just over 100 miles from Uganda's capital city makes the Ziwa Rhino Sanctuary the closest game area to Kampala and an excellent tarmac road, presently being upgraded further, allows easily for a full day outing and the guarantee to see the country's only rhinos in the wild all in the space of 12 hours.

The sanctuary started out with initially four adult rhinos, two male and two female, imported from Kenya's Solio Game Reserve, before Disney's Animal Kingdom donated another breeding pair and flew the two from Florida to Uganda. The six adults, after settling in at their new home, soon started to breed and while there are now 6 adolescent rhinos on the sanctuary, the three adult females are already pregnant again and during the course of this year the overall number of rhinos is likely to rise to 15. The rare animals enjoy 24 / 7 protection from a team of armed and well trained rangers, who are at all times moving with the rhinos to ensure their security.

This rapid rate of reproduction is to the knowledge of this correspondent unprecedented, but nevertheless most welcome, as the objective to raise numbers to a point, where at least some rhinos can be returned to Uganda Wildlife Authority's parks, like Murchisons and Kidepo, can then be accomplished sooner rather than later.

Entrance to the sanctuary is FREE, making visits affordable even though the tracking of the rhinos, accompanied by rangers and guides, is a chargeable activity. Such tracking is best pre-booked, as visitor numbers to Ziwa have constantly risen over the past years. Ziwa remains the ONLY place in Uganda where rhinos can be seen in the wild, apart from a pair at UWEC, also brought into the country by the Rhino Fund Uganda which manages the sanctuary.

Besides the ‘visits’ to the rhinos, normally moving in small groups across the sprawling 17.000 acre former ranch, has the sanctuary management also introduced nature walks and dedicated guided bird walks, with the rare Shoebill Stork being a key attraction to foreign but also local visitors. Some 250+ species of birds have been recorded at Ziwa over the years, making it a bird watchers paradise. At the sanctuary headquarters in the heart of Ziwa is information available about the work done by the Rhino Fund Uganda as well as are staff and rangers at hand to explain in detail what other game is found, including by the way a number of leopard. For more information on the Rhino Fund’s activities see www.rhinofund.org

Driving around the sanctuary is restricted for visitors to reach the administrative headquarters and the two lodging facilities found here, in other words conventional game drives are not permitted. Accommodation is available through the very upmarket Amuka Safari Lodge www.amukalodgeuganda.com or the Ziwa Rhino Lodge www.ziwarhino.com , where budget accommodation in two guest houses of 3 bedrooms each with a common shared bathroom as well as dorm style accommodation is available, while a camping area is presently being set up to facilitate those travelers preferring to pitch their own tent.

Ziwa Rhino Lodge is located adjoining the sanctuary headquarters, where they also operate the main restaurant, which is open daily for breakfast and lunch and of course for supper when guests are staying overnight. Most safari itineraries tailored for foreign tourists coming to Uganda and visiting Murchisons Falls National Park, now include stops at the sanctuary, for either tracking only or to stay overnight. However, the expatriates living in Kampala, and of course other parts of Uganda, have really taken to visiting Ziwa in growing numbers, as the experience to approach the rhinos on foot, accompanied of course by armed and well trained rangers, is second to none and only rivaled by gorilla tracking.

Uganda was in 2012 named by Lonely Planet as their most favoured global destination and the National Geographic Society has followed suit for 2013 when listing Uganda as among the top global adventure destinations. Welcome to *Uganda, the Pearl of Africa* and to the country’s many attractions, of which Ziwa undoubtedly ranks right on top.

SERENA’S SKILL DEVELOPMENT PROJECT GETS MINISTERIAL NOD OF APPROVAL



(Seen in the picture are the Ugandan Minister for Tourism, the Hon. Maria Mutagamba [on the right] and the AKDN Representative for Uganda Mr. Mahmoud Ahmed [on the left])

Serena Hotels yesterday afternoon launched their Skill Development Project at the Kampala Serena Hotel in the presence of the Ugandan Minister for Tourism, Wildlife and Antiquities, the Hon. Maria Mutagamba. Also present was Mr. Mahmoud Ahmed, the Representative of the Aga Khan Development Network AKDN while the regional hospitality giant was represented by the Director of Operations, Mr. Killian Lugwe who stood in for the Serena CEO Mr. M. JanMohamed, Mrs. Catherine Waruhiu, Director of Human Resources and Mr. Anthony Chege, Country Manager of Serena Hotels in Uganda, among many others.

The partners selected from among the Ugandan hospitality training institutions, namely the Ugandan national Hotel and Tourism Training Institute, aka HTTI, the Makerere University Business School, the YMCA and the Jimmy Sekazi School of Catering were are set to benefit to the tune of over 380.000 US Dollars worth of training over the coming two years, financed through the German development bank DEG, which is one of Serena Hotels’ key partners through both equity and loan finance.

Minister Mutagamba applauded Serena’s initiative, calling it a ‘*Wind of Change*’ blowing through the tourism sector in Uganda, while urging other hotels to embrace the concept of training and look at it as an investment for the future and not merely a cost of doing business. ***‘The UNWTO projects a 4 percent [annual] growth rate. Africa is currently leading in the growth rate at an average of 8 percent and particularly Sub Saharan Africa registering 12 percent. The overwhelming success of international and domestic tourism has given rise to a pressing demand for professionalism and quality service. The requirements for skilled and efficient human capital pose a serious threat to the future competitiveness of this service industry’*** said the minister in her launch address before continuing: ***‘In this regard I applaud the initiative of the Serena Group in developing the human resource capacity. Serena is undoubtedly a laeding hotel brand in Uganda and I believe that investment in human resource development greatly explains this achievement. I applaud the Serena Group for being visionary and***

leading the effort to upgrade hospitality skills in the country. Their plan to train additional staff and students from our key training institutions points to notions of sustainability, inclusiveness and corporate social responsibility in empowering our labour force'.

In a related mention did the minister also confirm that 47 hotels in and around Kampala had now been inspected and would during the second half of the year be awarded their respective star rating, as the grading and classification of hotels, under the East African Community's various programmes to introduce common standards across the region, was taking root and being implemented by national governments.

The training programme Serena has now launched in East Africa will be undertaken by South Africa's Lobster Ink, whose head trainer Russel Dunkley gave a brief introduction and elaborated on the state of the art methods of instruction through a multimedia presentation, based on the latest techniques of e-learning.

On a lighter note was Mr. Amos Wekesa, CEO of Great Lakes Safaris, who represented the Ugandan tourism private sector, given a '**Happy Birthday to You**' song by all present before cutting a cake prepared by Serena's pastry chefs after the function was over and the participants were able to discuss the finer details with the **Lobster Ink** staff members and heads of the training institutions selected for the 24 month long training initiative.

Well done to all concerned and on behalf of Uganda's next generation of hospitality staff a great many thanks to Serena Hotels, DEG and all the partners involved.

Kenya News

FIRST KENYA AIRWAYS DREAMLINER ON COURSE FOR MARCH 2014 DELIVERY



11 months and counting was the sentiment at Kenya Airways' Embakasi headquarters, when Boeing yesterday reaffirmed that deliveries scheduled for the B787 Dreamliner will not be affected by the recent grounding of this revolutionary new aircraft. The delivery of the KQ order was repeatedly delayed as a result of production problems at Boeing and resulted, according to a usually well informed source in Nairobi, in significant compensation by Boeing, although both parties have not commented as to the value of the '*rebates*' agreed.

Last week, after obtaining approval from the FAA for the proposed modifications to the aircraft's lithium ion battery system, have airlines around the world started to work on installing the revamped battery set up and the 50 aircraft are due to resume service in due course. 10 technical teams from Boeing comprising over 300 technical personnel and engineers have been dispatched to B787 operators to assist in carrying out the modifications ordered by the FAA's airworthiness directive.

While all the 50 aircraft delivered so far were kept on the ground since January, has Boeing continued to build new aircraft at a rate of 5 per month, set to rise to 10 by the end of this year, to resume instant deliveries just as soon as the modifications have been fitted.

Kenya Airways has 9 B787-8's on firm order, with a further 4 options which are expected to be turned into firm orders once deliveries have started.

Rival airline Ethiopian has already received four of the B787 and is expected to put the aircraft back into service as early as the beginning of May, putting pressure on Kenya Airways to follow suit. Both airlines are pursuing similar strategies in their struggle for continental superiority and both have earmarked their ageing B767 fleets to be phased out just as soon as the B787 orders are delivered. ***'The B767-300 is an ageing aircraft. Fuel consumption is significantly higher than what the B787 will offer. Ethiopian has started to retrofit some of their B767's with blended winglets to reduce fuel consumption but Kenya Airways opted not to do that. They will keep their birds in the air until they get their B787's and then begin phasing the smaller B767 out. Ethiopian now got 4 B787 on their fleet and when they resume flights it will give them a competitive advantage. Some of their new destinations were delayed because of the grounding of the B787 and Kenya Airways is also finding constraints on new long haul destinations as the B767 does not have the range the new B787 will offer. But for sure March 2014 cannot come soon enough for KQ to get back on level terms with their Addis based rivals'*** commented a regular aviation source from Nairobi's Jomo Kenyatta International Airport.

Meanwhile are deliveries of other jet aircraft, especially Embraer 190's continuing for Kenya Airways, facilitating the roll out of more African destinations, thought crucial to the airline's success in capturing a larger market share on the continent in particular for flights, via Nairobi, to the Gulf, India and the Far East. Watch this space for regular and breaking news from across Eastern Africa and the Indian Ocean region.

KENYA AIRWAYS SET TO COMMENCE NAIROBI - BLANTYRE FLIGHTS ON JUNE 03

In breaking news was it just confirmed to this correspondent that Kenya Airways has been granted fresh approval by the Malawi government to commence flights between Nairobi and Blantyre, effective 03rd of June this year.

At the same time was Kenya Airways also granted 5th freedom rights to once again operate services with full traffic rights, for cargo and passengers, between Lilongwe and Lusaka in Zambia.

Since Malawi presently has no operating national airline, Kenya Airways will fulfill the need of the business communities in Malawi and Zambia, when the flights to Lusaka resume, which were halted several months ago over disputes on commercial agreements.

Dr. Titus Naikuni said on receiving the confirmation about the renewed traffic rights: ***‘We are delighted to get these approvals which will enable us to enhance our presence in the Southern African country whilst supporting the development of the region through provision of efficient air transport services’.***

Kenya Airways currently flies 10 times per week between Nairobi and Lilongwe, the primary airport in Malawi and the schedule for the Nairobi – Blantyre route will be published in coming days as scheduling experts at KQ are putting final touches to the new summer schedule.

NEW JKIA TERMINAL TO FEATURE TWO KENYA AIRWAYS LOUNGES



Information has become available that Kenya Airways will be opening two state of the art lounges in Terminal Four, when the new facility will eventually open its doors to passengers next year. Presently does KQ offer two lounges at the existing terminal, however distant from the boarding gates and near the main immigration facilities where arriving passengers go through passport control. While the upstairs lounge has been doubled in size a few months ago, passengers using either of the two lounges during peak traffic times know that space is at a premium in these facilities and that, food and service quality notwithstanding, they no longer can be called state of the art airline lounges.

The new terminal will however introduce, according to information availed by a source close to the airline, the latest in premium passenger lounge quality, comprising dining areas, dedicated rest areas, shower facilities, a sauna and treatment rooms for massage, besides the ‘usual’ amenities of comfortable arm chairs along with an array of reading materials and news channels.

The fight for premium passengers in Africa, largely dominated by the alliance affiliation of market leaders like Kenya Airways, Ethiopian Airlines and South African Airways, the latter two members of global market leader Star Alliance and the former a member of the KLM/Air France led SkyTeam, is according to some aviation experts won on the ground, as inflight service levels and cabin layouts are all now very similar when it comes to the business class products offered.

‘Lounges are becoming a key tool in the fight for market share in the premium segment of travel. Those passengers insist on state of the art aircraft and great inflight services and we all offer that now, punctuality, superior service on check in and when connecting through the airline hubs to onward flights the amenities in the lounges. Ethiopian has taken this game to the next level when they opened the first section of their new lounge in Addis and Kenya Airways is now almost compelled to level the playing field again. Because of the delays in completing Terminal Four it will be a bit longer until they can showcase their response to the move by their rivals but when the new lounges are open, they will be the best available in Africa. The same will be the case when the next airport phase comes on line, which you call Project Greenfield. That new mega terminal is going to be used by Kenya Airways and the alliance partners, maybe two thirds or even more of the projected space and capacity, and there the premium lounges will be even better. Kenya Airways transit traffic forms more and more the bulk of their business and business class travelers are the ones every airline wants to attract and keep. If they are happy in the air with an airline’s product, they must be equally happy on the ground with the service they get. If there are shortcomings, they will eventually walk away and start using a rival airline. Competition is tough and such investments are as important as ordering new planes’ added the source from the KQ headoffice in Embakasi on condition of anonymity for not being an official spokesperson of the airline.

Recent efforts to obtain an authoritative response from the Kenya Airports Authority on the anticipated completion of the new Terminal Four, as well as reasons for the delays in opening this new facility, were unsuccessful as emails

sent to the main mail portal went unanswered. Watch this space for regular and breaking aviation news from across Eastern Africa.

KENYA AIRWAYS POSTS Q4 OPERATING RESULTS



Kenya Airways, aka *The Pride of Africa*, yesterday afternoon published their operating results of their fourth quarter of their financial year, which came to an end on 31st March. Full financial results will be announced, as has been the case in the past, during a press conference in a few weeks time, when the airline's finance department has put all the relevant data together before making results public.

The following statement was availed to this correspondent showing the relevant details on operational performance vis a vis the previous FY 2011/12.

The company put into the market capacity totalling 3,143m seat kilometres which was 4.5% below last year's level. The decline during the period was as a result of discontinued operations to N'Djamena, Muscat and Jeddah though New Delhi joined the network in the first quarter of 2012.

Middle East and Far East regions saw a capacity growth of 18.9%. This was largely due to the operation of the larger B777 instead of the smaller B767 to Hongkong and Guangzhou via Bangkok. Europe shrunk in capacity by 30.4% compared to the same quarter prior year due to rationalization occasioned by the Euro zone crisis and anticipated lower demand during the Kenyan election period.

The Northern Africa region capacity declined by 5.4% as a result of right sizing capacity to Djibouti via Addis Ababa and the Khartoum-Cairo route. Capacity availed into the East African region grew by 34.9% compared to same period last year. This was mostly due to increased frequencies to Dar-essalaam, Seychelles, Moroni via Dzaoudzi and equipment mix between Boeing 738 and Embraer 190.

Capacity growth in Southern Africa region remained flat. West African region declined by 6.5% mainly on the Lagos route as a result of operating the smaller B738 aircraft compared to B767. The suspension of N'Djamena as a destination due to low demand also contributed to the decline.

Capacity declined by 2.3% compared to similar period last year on the domestic front despite entry of Eldoret route. This was as a result of rationalization of Mombasa operations from the larger B737 aircraft to the smaller Embraer 190. Capacity availed to Kisumu grew by 18.7% due to use of the larger Embraer 190 fleet as opposed to Embraer 170.

Traffic measured in revenue passenger kilometres at 2,073m was 7.5% below similar period last year. Europe recorded the highest reduction due to the economic challenges facing the Euro-Zone economies that necessitated cutbacks in capacity offered including the closure of the Rome route.

The total passenger tally, which closed at 828,032, was at par with the same period last year. The resulting average cabin factor at 65.9% was 2.2 points lower compared to last year.

Passenger uplift to Europe at 83,506 was a reduction from last year's level of 113,184 at a 75.7% seat occupancy, an improvement of 5.2% over last year.

In the Middle East, Far East and India regions, uplifted passenger traffic at 130,522 showed an improvement of 11.0% compared to same period prior year. However, the realized cabin factor of 66.1% was below prior year's level of 74.6% due to slow uptake of capacity availed.

Within Africa but excluding Kenya, passengers uplifted totalled 424,490 indicating a marginal growth of 1.1% on the back of 2.6% capacity growth. The resultant passenger cabin factor of 60.0% was 2.3 percentage points lower than similar period last year.

Passengers uplifted within Kenya at 189,514 increased by 4.3% a 1.9% cabin factor improvement.

Cargo capacity dropped by 14.9% with a proportionate decline in tonnage during the period. There was a general slump from some key feeder markets in Asia and Europe.

HIPPO KILLS CHINESE TOURIST ATTEMPTING TO PHOTOGRAPH YOUNG ONE



Sad news are coming out of Kenya that a Chinese tourist has died in a local hospital, where she was taken last night after being attacked by a hippo while attempting to take a close up photograph of a young born.

The tragic accident happened in the grounds of the Lake Naivasha Country Club around 9 p.m. when the guest left her room to approach a young baby hippo grazing, which prompted the mother hippo to rush her and maul her in protection of her offspring. Although the injured guest was promptly rushed to a nearby private health facility, she sadly passed away as a result of the injuries sustained.

A source close to the management of the club reassured this correspondent, that all guests are informed about the dangers of walking out of rooms at night, and that askaris – night watchmen employed by the club – are available on request from guests to safely escort them to and from the public areas after nightfall.

Information displayed on the notice board of the club, but also in the rooms, warns of wildlife straying from the lake into the park like sprawling gardens, and game, while seen well during the day, at night can stay concealed in the dark.

‘This is a very unfortunate accident which everyone regrets. Guests however are cautioned not to walk at night unless accompanied by a guard and for sure not to leave the lit walk ways and wander into the open grounds.

Approaching a young born hippo is not something a tourist should do, in fact a tourist should never approach wildlife close up. Mothers fiercely protect their young in the wild when they think their young are threatened. The decision by the deceased could have been spontaneous after seeing the baby hippo outside her window, not remembering what she was told to avoid. It is a sad moment’.

This correspondent has in the past often visited the Lake Naivasha Country Club and recalls being specifically told about the Do’s and Dont’s when walking around during the day, but more so at night. Accidents with wildlife of such a fatal nature are very rare in Kenya, as they are across Eastern Africa, mainly due to the constant reminders by tour guides and safari lodge staff how to avoid getting into close contact with wildlife. At Lake Naivasha, where hippos are common and known to come out of the water at night in search of pasture, all lodges observe a strict protocol with guests and brief them accordingly. Condolences are expressed to the family and friends, and fellow travelers of the deceased lady.

Tanzania News

AIR TANZANIA FORMER OFFICIALS FRAUD CASE LIKELY TO REVIVE WITH FRESH EVIDENCE



As reported here on previous occasions did the Tanzanian Auditor General in subsequent annual reports unearth a number of irregularities over the lease in 2007 of an Airbus A320, which as a result of government guarantees ended up costing the taxpayers over 40 million US Dollars. The matter raised a storm in parliament at the time when the report was published, resulting in the three named official eventually leaving the airline but in the process also taking the then Minister of Transport down with them.

The latest audit report, according to an aviation source in Dar, now even talks of additional multi million US Dollar debts the government is apparently still liable for from other deals the same management struck with suppliers. Former ATCL Managing Director David Mattaka, whose abuse of office case was adjourned mid last year, is standing trial with two of his former staff, who were also named in the Auditor General’s report and the latest reports are likely to strengthen the prosecution case against the three accused.

The same source used the opportunity to once more castigate government for continuing to pour tax payer funds into the moribund carrier, which, while presently operating a B737 and a Bombardier Q300, is looking at an uncertain future as it is not only faced with competition from arch rival Precision Air – now covering Tanzania more extensively than Air Tanzania even during its heydays ever did – but also upstart FastJet on the Dar es Salaam to Kilimanjaro and Mwanza routes.

Such pending, in the past undisclosed and still obscured liabilities, besides the prospect of the country leaning towards the trade unions when it comes to disputes, has in the past kept financial suitors and potential strategic investors away from Air Tanzania, after the partnership with South African Airways was dissolved, leaving the government to step in with rescue packages time and again.

‘If our government had spent that money to buy into Precision Air at the time of the IPO, they would now be paid dividends instead of coughing up more money. There were all sorts of obstacles put into Precision’s way, like the forgotten taxiway to their maintenance hangar or lukewarm comments ahead of the IPO. If government would fully back Precision it could be the strongest national airline Tanzania ever had. I do not see an investor to come to the rescue for ATCL because in Tanzania there are other options now where someone can invest.. Our country needs a lot of money for health services and education, or even tourism promotion, and sinking big bucks into ATCL is a major mistake’ did the same source add when passing the information on email overnight.

Precision Air uses a mixed fleet of B737-300, ATR 42 and ATR 72 aircraft, while smaller Tanzanian airlines like Auric Air use a fleet of Cessna Caravans or Coastal Aviation a mix of single and twin engine aircraft to fly both scheduled as well as charter services between key centres but also the national parks and tourist islands off the mainland. Aviation in Tanzania is presently being boosted through a major investment by government in expanding and modernizing the three primary airports of Dar es Salaam, Kilimanjaro and Zanzibar with other airports and aerodromes / airfields also being upgraded to receive larger aircraft. Watch this space for regular and breaking news from Eastern Africa’s vibrant aviation scene.

Rwanda News

RWANDA GOVERNMENT HALTS SALE OF UMUBANO HOTEL



As ties with the new Libyan government continue to improve, did news break that the Rwandan government, initially intent to sell off the Umubano Hotel – which under Gaddafi Libya had become part of his African hotel empire – when Laico Hotels failed to live up to their end of the bargain to renovate and expand the landmark hotel. Information was brought to the board’s attention, both partners have nominated individuals to the Board of Directors, that Libya will avail the money to modernize and upgrade the hotel, apparently causing a change of heart by the Rwandan government.

Rwanda is known in the region to be an excellent investment destination but also to ensure that commitments made by investors are fulfilled and pledges turned into action, which has brought by and large only serious investors with viable projects to the land of a thousand hills, unlike in other East African countries where often quacks are given the red carpet treatment while taking the host governments for a ride.

The Rwandan government had commissioned an international audit firm to establish the current market value of the property, ahead of a potential sale to a new investor – after clarifying that Laico would in such a case get their 60 percent share of the proceeds but this latest turn of events seems to rule a sale out as the partnerships is filling with new spirit and new life.

A renovation and modernization of the hotel will add much needed beds to cater for tourists and business visitors, as Rwanda is pushing ahead with the construction of the 250+ million US Dollar national convention centre and other measures to position the country as a hub for service industries, in particular the ICT sector and promotes tourism as a mainstream economic activity. Watch this space for regular and breaking news from Eastern Africa’s vibrant hospitality sector.

RWANDAIR SIGNS DEAL FOR NEW AIRCRAFT WITH BOMBARDIER



RwandAir, the national airline of Rwanda, has just signed a firm purchase order for one Bombardier Q400 NextGen, the type presented last year by the Canadian manufacturer's sales team which showcased the aircraft across Africa. The order is valued at approximately 33 million US Dollars at list prices. The aircraft will join two recently delivered CRJ900NextGen jet aircraft and a wetleased Bombardier Dash8-200, bringing the total fleet of RwandAir on delivery to 8 aircraft.

The new bird will be offering 67 seats in a two class configuration, allowing passengers on the routes this aircraft will be deployed the same inflight service levels as they are accustomed to when flying on RwandAir's jets. Said Mr. John Mirenge, CEO of RwandAir, on the occasion of signing the deal: ***'As demand for domestic and regional travel in Africa accelerates, our 67-seat, dual-class Q400NextGen aircraft will ensure RwandAir is well positioned to offer increased capacity on popular routes that are being opened and serviced with our 37-seat Bombardier Dash 8-200 aircraft. The Q400NextGen turboprop is the right aircraft to develop our domestic and regional market and to firmly support RwandAir on our path towards growth and increased profitability. We are also complementing our new dual-class Bombardier CRJ900NextGen regional jets by offering similar cabin amenities on the Q400NextGen aircraft, providing for a seamless passenger service between the two aircraft models and aligning our total fleet strategy towards a unified passenger experience. We are developing the RwandAir brand and we are gaining momentum in the region through selection of the right aircraft and right services for our growing market'***.

RwandAir will become Africa's 12th Q400 operator as Bombardier is widening its footprint across Africa with over 40 of these state of the art turbo prop aircraft in service.

Only last month did the airline announce the launch of new destinations with Accra and Douala in West Africa and Juba in East Africa, bringing the total destinations RwandAir will fly to from July onwards to 17 on domestic, regional, continental and intercontinental routes.

Happy Landings.

RDB PREPARING MUSANZE CAVE FOR TOURIST VISITS



The Rwanda Development Board's Tourism and Conservation Department will within the space of the next few weeks official launch a new tourism site, a cave in Musanze District which is being readied for visitors by installing walkways, stairs and safety measures, according to information received from a source at RDB over the weekend. The main tourism activity in Musanze, previously known as Ruhengeri, is of course the tracking of mountain gorillas from the Volcano National Park headquarters near Kinigi but local hospitality businesses have long advocated for longer stays of tourists, to explore the wider area, perhaps track for the Golden Monkeys or just take extended hikes in the forests on the slopes of the volcanic mountains. ***'Tourists come for tracking and stay one or two nights only. Some even come from Kigali very early and return in the evening. If more attractions are offered visitors can perhaps stay a few more nights in Ruhengeri or the lodges around the park'*** said the receptionist of one of the hotels this correspondent stayed at in the past.

Mrs. Rica Rwigamba, head of RDB's Tourism and Conservation Department, late last week interacted with Rwanda's tour and safari operators with the aim to introduce cave visits to them and have such visits included in regular safari itineraries. No fees have yet been set but are expected to be published in due course as the cave is getting ready for visits by tourists. Visit www.rwandatourism.com for more details on the country's three national parks, community reserves and other tourism attractions.

South Sudan News

FLY DUBAI ADD SIXTH AFRICAN DESTINATION BUT EYES MORE



The inaugural flight by Fly Dubai to Juba, South Sudan's capital city, took place yesterday, bringing the airline's destinations on the African continent to six and fifty six overall, covering Africa, the Gulf and wider Middle East, Pakistan and India and to a growing extent countries of the former Soviet Union. Notably has Fly Dubai more recently launched flights to the Maldives, one of the airline's first purely leisure destination.

Besides Juba, the airline has already been serving Alexandria in Egypt, Khartoum and Port Sudan in the Republic of the Sudan, Djibouti and Addis Ababa but is reportedly keen to further expand into the continent as the range of their choice aircraft, the B737-800NG allows. This B737 type is able to fly up to 5.650 kilometres, which would easily see Fly Dubai to cover other Eastern African destinations, where there is a growing need for a no frills service connecting passengers to Dubai.

Presently it is Air Arabia, which operates out of Sharjah / UAE on a daily basis into Nairobi as the only Gulf based LCC but with growing numbers of expatriate workers from Eastern Africa in the UAE the demand for affordable fares will continue to rise.

Fly Dubai's CEO Gaith el Gaith was welcomed at the Juba International Airport by the country's Vice President, H.E. Dr. Riek Machar where a brief celebration was held followed by a media briefing during which he was quoted by a Juba based source as having said: ***'We are delighted to have started flights to Juba today which is our 56th destination in operation across our route network. We are excited about the trade and travel opportunities that this new route brings to both the Republic of South Sudan and the United Arab Emirates'***.

Visit www.flydubai.com for more details on destinations and fares.

Seychelles News

AIR SEYCHELLES SIGNS GROUND BREAKING CODE SHARE WITH SOUTH AFRICAN AIRWAYS



Air Seychelles today announced the signing of a ground breaking codeshare agreement with South African Airways, now covering the routes from Johannesburg to Mahe's International Airport but also beyond, to the archipelago's second island of Praslin where the airline operates multiple daily flights.

In turn will Air Seychelles be able to place their own flight number on South African Airways flights from Johannesburg to a number of domestic destinations across South Africa, giving them access to a much wider market of sun seekers in particular during the Southern African winter season.

The first code shared flights will commence operations on 30th of April already, showing how keen the two partner airlines were to make this agreement a reality.

Last month did Air Seychelles launch a new schedule which now connects Johannesburg with Mahe three times a week, and offering convenient day time departures both ways every Tuesday, Thursday and Sunday, with more flights likely to be added soon as existing capacity is taken up by the market. The aircraft used on the route is one of Air Seychelles new Airbus A330-200 models.

Cramer Ball, Air Seychelles Chief Executive Officer, said on the occasion of announcing the new deal: ***'Our flights to Johannesburg have been incredibly successful, reflecting an increasing number of travellers coming out of South Africa to the Seychelles for leisure, business and sport. Traffic from South Africa has grown at a steady pace of 11 per cent each year for the past decade. In the first quarter of this year alone, traffic is up 13 per cent. With this codeshare agreement, guests will be able to purchase flights from South African Airways destinations onwards to the Seychelles on one ticket, making for a simpler and seamless journey. We have also established a foundation for twin-centre tourism products which combine a safari in Africa with a Seychelles beach holiday. SAA Holidays will also be adding Seychelles to their holiday program, providing a new channel for selling travel to our island nation and supporting the vitally important tourism industry'*** while SAA's Commercial Director Papa Manoj added: ***'This partnership signals a strategic move by both airlines to increase connectivity and grow their networks. This also augments SAA's already extensive African footprint. SAA currently flies directly to 26 destinations across Africa from its Johannesburg hub. Furthermore, the partnership adds breadth to our network, incorporating two additional destinations to the existing global partnership network which provides in excess of 1329 destinations in 194 countries globally. With strategic partnerships such as this one SAA is able to provide its passengers with more connections on the continent and across the globe'***.

Flying the Creole Spirit to South Africa, Mauritius, Abu Dhabi and Hong Kong – Happy Landings.

AND in closing some material taken from Gill Staden's *The Livingstone Weekly* – enjoy!

Livingstone in Joyous Mode

When I returned to Livingstone after a couple of weeks away, I could feel a positive vibe in the air. The roads are being done, there is work going on at a new bus terminus along Nakatindi Road and the new market, I assume, is being worked on. Some artists are erecting a statue on a roundabout between Kabompo and Kombi Drive.



On the radio I am listening to the daily countdown to the UNWTO, about the garden competition which has been initiated by the Livingstone City Council and about the directive from Council to 'get your buildings painted'.

It would appear that Livingstone has come alive and really wants to show itself off for our visitors during the UNWTO. We still have lots to do but if we can keep up the momentum, Livingstone will become a fresh new city with a happy atmosphere in August.

Mongwe

I had decided that I wanted to go and see Mongwe and planned a trip around travelling between Harare and Livingstone. The plan was to go via Chirundu border thereby being able to visit Mongwe and then into Lochinvar National Park. It was supposed to be a short trip but ended up being longer than expected as my car broke down in Lochinvar ...

Mana Pools National Park, Sapi and Chewore Safari Areas form the World Heritage Site in Zimbabwe. Over the river in Zambia, Lower Zambezi and Chiawa are hoping to be included in the World Heritage Site. The whole area is part of a



Transfrontier Conservation Area in the making. I wanted to have a look at Mongwe which is in Hurungwe Safari Area, next door to Mana. Mongwe is well known for its fishing. In fact, it only advertises fishing as its attraction. I wanted to see if there was more to it than fishing.

Mwinilunga Safaris had offered me a camping spot at Mongwe. They also have a house which was booked up, but I am always happy to camp, so off we set ... tent and camping gear piled up on the car ...

We had left Harare late-ish which is pretty normal for Josh and I as we never seem to get ourselves organised. The Harare-Chirundu road was not pleasant with a lot of traffic, especially trucks. The road is not very wide and the hard shoulders have not been repaired for many years so the road seems to drop off at the edge. Although Zimbabwe seems to be much better than Zambia at maintaining its roads by filling in potholes they neglect the hard shoulder and this is leading to the breaking up of the edges and narrowing of the drivable surface.

Anyhow, we arrived at the Mongwe Road sign 6 km before Chirundu and took a very nice dirt road through the bush.



The roads winds through the woodland and jesse bush. Jesse bush is a mixture of thicket trees, mostly Combretum, which form dense foliage much loved by animals. It is common in this area and in Mana Pools. We easily found Mongwe 18 km down the road but, by this time it was getting late and the sun was going. We needed to find our campsite for the night and to get the tent up.



Mongwe has several camps and campsites. Some years ago the camps were sold off to individuals and companies; there didn't seem to be much order. We drove around trying to find a sign to tell us which was ours. We found some men working and asked them but they didn't know. As we were leaving, one man carrying a fishing rod shouted at us to stop. We said we were in a hurry, he shouted: *You will talk to me. Where is your permit?* His name was Josiah and he was the game scout for Mongwe on duty at the time. I told him that we did not have a permit, but would get one from him in the morning. Now, we just needed to find our campsite and get the tent up before it was dark. *You will talk to me like a human being*, he said. *I am in charge of this area. You were supposed to get a permit at Marongora before entering here.*

After explaining that we had not been informed about the necessity of paying park fees at Marongora and doing a bit of groveling, Josiah allowed us to leave to find our camp. Eventually with a bit of help, we did, and, of course, now it was dark.

We put up the tent with the aid of the car headlights, ate a sandwich and went to bed.

The morning dawned beautifully with kingfishers and fish eagles chattering to each other. The Zambezi River was high and I sat with a cup of coffee by the water watching the river change colours as the sun rose. A croc patrolled the water's edge. The escarpment on the Zambian side lightened with the sun, showing up all its ridges. Stunning.



Josiah arrived at some point, now in his Scout uniform and had replaced his fishing rod with an AK47. He sat down to chat and seemed much more amenable than the previous day. We talked about the problems he faced at Mongwe; he mostly complained about Zambians coming over to the Zimbabwe side to fish illegally and to poach. I asked him if there was any cooperation between the two countries and he said that he didn't know of any.

He also told me that I could pay my park fees in Chirundu and gave me directions to the parks office. He left.



The camp has its own ablution block and kitchen so when the chappie came to clean around the surroundings I asked him about some hot water. He said that as we had not paid park fees we were not allowed to have any firewood to heat the water ...

The camp was quite pleasant but without hot water we were a bit stuffed. I know I will want to revisit Mongwe when the bush is less dense and I have paid for firewood



and park fees!

We decided that we would pack up, take a slow drive through the bush and cross the border at Chirundu. We knew Chirundu was going to be a nightmare – it has that reputation.

In the meantime we met Rod Huck who also has a camp at Mongwe and he said we could go and have a shower at his place, which we did. This camp has, I think, 8 tented ensuite chalets and a main boma. Very nice. Contact Rod for details on 0772 239197.

My thoughts on Mongwe: I love rivers, especially the Zambezi, but I am not a fishing fanatic. Mongwe now has a 5 km exclusion zone. Being within a hunting area, this is for safety reasons. I wondered if the Mongwe experience could be improved by some roads through the bush to view the wildlife. For me, it certainly would have improved it. I think, though, that our stay there was spoilt by the attitude of Josiah. I really wish that Wildlife Officers were given some guidance on how to deal the people as well as how to deal with animals. I was to find out a few days later that Zambian Wildlife Officers have the same lack of tuition ...



The drive through the bush was really pretty – we saw one ele and some impala too. And then we headed to the Chirundu border and the much-feted One Stop Border Post.

Before going to the border we toured Chirundu to find the Parks Office to pay our park fees. We went along every road and found no office. So, knowing that I owe ZimParks US\$25, I think, I gave up and decided that I would pay next time I go to Vic Falls.



The approach road to the border was littered with trucks. We did not know where to go and there were no signs. After taking 2 wrong turns we found the right road which led onto the old bridge. We were the only ones crossing at the time but a man sitting on the bridge had his sign which told us to “Stop”.

We did. As soon as we had stopped he swiveled the sign round to say we could “Go”. The importance of being a Sign Swiveler ...

We arrived on the Zambian side which acts as the entry into Zambia. We found ourselves behind a bus-load of people and there was only one Zimbabwe Immigration official and one Zambia Immigration official. So although the buildings were very smart, the efficiency left a lot to be desired. We had to get a visa for Josh and were taken to a small office at the side of the main entrance where the Zambian Immigration officer neatly wrote out a whole-page visa and pasted it into the passport. Altogether we spent about an hour getting through ...



I thought about our UNWTO and wondered how long it was going to take to process all our visitors during that time when they wish to cross between Zambia and Zimbabwe. If our experience at Chirundu is anything to go by, the delegates, media and visitors during the UNWTO will be spending half their time in queues as they wait for their visas. I am assuming that the Zambian and Zimbabwean governments have got a solution to this ...

New Victoria Falls City

During a ceremony at Victoria Falls Airport, Walter Mzembi, Minister of Tourism, stated that land had been allocated for a new Victoria Falls City. The city was to be modeled on Niagara Falls City and be home to hotels, theme parks and casinos. 1,200 ha has been allocated to the project on the road to the airport. There are also plans to develop Kariba and Masvingo for tourism.

I think we have heard all this before. When the UNWTO meeting was announced to take part at the Victoria Falls, to be shared between Zambia and Zimbabwe, the Zimbabwe government pledged to build massive infrastructure. It didn't happen. It didn't happen for two reasons. Firstly the government has no money and secondly the private sector would not take on the challenge. The situation has not changed.

Until Zimbabwe sorts out its political situation and tourists feel comfortable visiting Zimbabwe, the tourism industry cannot be revived. So, the plan to build a new Victoria Falls City will be a pipe dream and maybe is just being mooted for political means.

Meanwhile Victoria Falls Town is gearing itself up for the UNWTO. According to reports, the private sector has spent around US\$16million in upgrades for their hotels. The government is working on the

airport and roads; electricity and waterworks have been improved, as has internet connection and medical facilities.

Air Zimbabwe on the move

Air Zimbabwe, according to reports, has resumed its daily flights to Bulawayo and Victoria Falls as well as flights to Johannesburg.

ZIMBABWE'S WETLANDS (INCLUDING MANA POOLS): A FIRST STEP TOWARDS INTERNATIONAL RECOGNITION

From the Zambezi Society

Eight of Zimbabwe's wetland areas (including Mana Pools) are soon to be officially included in the RAMSAR Convention's List of Wetlands of International Importance.

The following was posted online in RAMSAR News on 28th January 2013:-

Zimbabwe's accession to the Ramsar Convention

The Ramsar Secretariat is delighted to welcome Zimbabwe to the Ramsar family as its 164th Contracting Party.

UNESCO has confirmed that the instrument of accession and the names and maps of seven Wetlands of International Importance (Victoria Falls National Park, Mana Pools, Monavale Wetland, Lake Chivero and Manyame, Driefontein Grasslands, Chinhoyi Caves, and Cleveland Dam) were received on 3 January 2013, so that the Convention will come into force for Zimbabwe on 3rd May of this year.

The Ramsar Information Sheets for these new sites are still being prepared by the government, and we will be posting more details as soon as they are made available. ...
