

**AVIATION, TOURISM AND CONSERVATION NEWS from Eastern Africa and the Indian Ocean islands.**  
*A weekly roundup of breaking news, reports, travel stories and opinions by Prof. Dr. Wolfgang H. Thome*



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**East Africa News**

**INTERNATIONAL ELEPHANT CONFERENCE PLANNED FOR JULY 2013 AT ZULU NYALA LODGE**

An international elephant conference has been convened to discuss the plight, and future on the continent of Africa, of the remaining elephant herds, which are increasingly endangered and pushed into ever smaller habitats with ancient migration routes being cut off by fenced farms, ranches and housing to cater for massively expanded populations.

The dates now given for the planned international elephant conference are July 03<sup>rd</sup> to 07<sup>th</sup> next year, according to one of the main promoters of the idea to give enough time to key speakers, international elephant experts and globally renowned conservationists to schedule an attendance or else be available for a speaking assignment.

Never before was the plight of the African elephants greater as across the continent a mass slaughter continues, driven by the greed and endless hunger in China and some other East and South Asian nations for ivory carvings.

In Cameroon were earlier in the year hundreds of elephants mowed down with automatic weapons, the carcasses stripped of the tusks and often parts of the tail with the equally valued elephant hair, and then left to rot.

In Southern Africa but increasingly also in Eastern Africa have the elephants become targets for gangs of commercial poachers, equipped with sophisticated communications gear, often using silencers for rifles or resorting to using poisoned spears and arrows to avoid alerting the anti poaching units.

As an added component have in Kenya gangs of brainwashed Masai criminals taken their own rage, or often rather their masters' instructions, out on wildlife, killing lions indiscriminately and only recently a nearly tame elephant, whom they speared to death, exploiting the trusting nature of Ezra, one of the patriarch elephants of Amboseli National Park. Enough has been said elsewhere, in the Kenyan media and in the columns of the social networks, but the fact nevertheless remains, that Africa's wildlife is under assault like never before for their trophies, the medicinally absolutely useless rhino horns and the tusks, much of which ends up smuggled to the East to be turned into quack medicine or carved seals, chop sticks or figures.

In South Africa the rhino deaths over the past three years stand at over 1.000, alarming by any standard and putting the survival of the entire species at risk, and in comparison, over the past 100 years have the great herds of elephants been decimated to less than 5 percent of what they used to be. Growing populations are now pushing into previously unproductive or the least productive agricultural areas in countries across Africa, especially East Africa, causing conflict with wildlife previously left alone and having wildlife managers reeling under the sudden onslaught of violent reactions by people, who should not be in such fringe areas in the first place.

Said Mandy Young, one of the promoters of the international elephant conference, when asked about the purpose but also the shift of dates from what was initially scheduled to be September this year: ***'The vision for the International Elephant Conference arrived because of the challenges Land Owners of Small Game Reserves face with Elephant Management. In addition the Elephant Norms and Standards for Elephant Management became a part of the National Environmental Management of Biodiversity Act in February, 2008.'***

*[But] I think there needs to be an [intensified] build up to the International Elephant Conference in order to get the right participants there [not only from South Africa but from the entire continent, wherever there are issues with poaching and management of the herds]. You can see some information leading to the conference on the following links: Beuga, the Matriarch of an Elephant Herd I researched between 2002-2005, an elephant herd I often took people to observe when facilitating Wisdom of Elephant self-discovery wildlife experiences, was shot on 31st October, 2011, the last day before her Destruction Permit would have ended. Her death has not been in vain and I think it would be a good time to relate her story and the good consequences that have been the result of action taken since her death. One of those actions has been the establishment of the International Elephant Conference [www.elephantconference.co.za](http://www.elephantconference.co.za) where prominent speakers like Gay Bradshaw, author of *Elephants on the Edge: What Animals Teach us About Humanity*, will establish the vision of the Conference to influence elephant management in a way that will hopefully minimize human-elephant conflict and ensure 'transfrontier' [as well as domestic and regional migration] corridors to make biodiversity and elephant survival possible.*

*Please will you tell this story and inform your readers about the up and coming International Elephant Conference in the build up to the Conference which now takes place from July 03 – 07, 2013. The dates were changed to accommodate speakers who were not able to make the dates earlier given.'*

Gladly done, from one conservation friend to another, to ensure the widest possible publicity and eventual participation in this important African meeting, where the conservation fraternity can also map out a new approach and strategy towards the increasingly unsustainable and barely understood policies of CITES vis a vis the trade in wildlife products, in particular ivory. Watch this space.

#### **AFRAA AIMS AT SCHEDULING ALIGNMENTS**



The Nairobi based African Airlines Association has recently met with several member airlines to discuss a greater alignment of the respective schedules, aimed at improving connectivity for passengers travelling across the African continent.

Working in partnership with international service provider Sabre, AFRAA brought amongst others Kenya Airways, RwandAir and South African Airways together, to start a process of optimizing schedules in the future for the benefit of travelers in need of faster connectivity and avoiding costly layovers.

AFRAA and Sabre have reportedly signed a Memorandum of Understanding to implement an African route network development vision, some of which appears to have been discussed amongst member airlines also at the recently concluded *Routes Africa* meeting in the Seychelles.

Like with the joint fuel purchasing programme, AFRAA is banking on member airlines seeing the benefit of cooperating in such areas while continuing to compete, promoting a change of mindset amongst top airline executives to look beyond their own carrier and find benefits and synergies by cooperating where possible.

Sabre reportedly posted a team to Nairobi to consult towards that end for AFRAA and participating airlines, using the experience Sabre has as a major CRS for global airlines.

Amongst some of the proposals floated at the *Routes Africa* meeting are suggestions that suitable partners team up with code shared flights, under which one airline would operate the service but still giving the partner the opportunity for sales and revenues by booking passengers on code shared flights.

Cooperation through special fare agreements and MoU's between suitable partner airlines too will be looked upon and the next session on the topic is expected to bring more AFRAA members on board, once the potential benefits have been quantified and the commercial advantages for participating carriers can be demonstrated with financial projections. Watch this space for regular and breaking aviation news from the vibrant African airline industry.

#### **5<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL E-TOURISM AFRICA SUMMIT SET FOR CAPE TOWN**



South African Tourism and Cape Town Tourism are the main sponsors for the upcoming 5<sup>th</sup> Annual e-Tourism Summit, which will take place this year at the southern end of the African continent between 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> of September at the Cape Town International Convention Centre. Economic wobbles apart, the UNWTO has forecast that in 2012 for the first time ever more than a billion people will travel, equivalent to what is expected to be the number of people subscribed to Facebook, the world's largest social network.

The African continent, still getting the smallest slice of the global travel business in percentage terms, has however embraced the new technologies by storm and with the global playing field on the world wide web now more level than ever before, it is important to continue working cyberspace and making an impact by embracing e-marketing of destinations and company services. This year's e-Tourism Conference will once again highlight how best to make use of social networks and promote e-transactions to an estimated 1 billion plus subscribers and users of social and professional networks and how to use the latest technologies of interactive websites and linkages to social and business networks to get the best out of one's presence on the web.

Speakers will include top ranking executives from Facebook, YouTube, TripAdvisor, Expedia and hosts South African Tourism, who will inject the inspiration into the summit on the opening day before workshops, dedicated seminars and panel discussion groups will on day two take the participants into the 'application' stages to discuss the how and where.

Registration for the event is open via [www.e-tourismfrontiers.com](http://www.e-tourismfrontiers.com) and although the early bird discount for registrations expired yesterday, participation still offers extraordinary value for money.

#### **Uganda News**

#### **EMIRATES INTRODUCES THE A380 ON THE AMSTERDAM ROUTE**



A regular source at the Emirates' office in Kampala has confirmed that the airline is now deploying the world's largest passenger aircraft on the route between Dubai and Amsterdam, making the Dutch city the 19<sup>th</sup> A380 destination now being served by Dubai's award winning airline.

Emirates flies daily between Entebbe and Dubai, offering a nonstop service on the route, and passengers from Uganda and other East African destinations, with final destination Amsterdam, can with immediate effect enjoy flying on the double decker sky giant when connecting in Dubai.

The source also pointed out in the communication that additional A380 destinations would be launched in 2012 and 2013, moving from the B777 to the larger aircraft on selected routes, when more of the aircraft were being delivered to the airline.

Emirates presently have 22 A380 on the fleet but many more on order, making it the largest A380 operator in the world. Besides the daily flights to Entebbe Emirates also flies twice a day to Nairobi and to Dar es Salaam, although latest indications are that flights might be introduced to Kilimanjaro International Airport outside Arusha, probably in combination with Dar.

Meanwhile has Emirates celebrated 25 years of operation from Dubai to Britain, where the airline now serves 6 destinations with a total of 19 flights per day, including of course the use of the A380 aircraft on flights to Heathrow. The first flight from Dubai to London's Gatwick Airport took place on 06<sup>th</sup> July 1987. Watch this space.

#### **WILD SKIES OVER KAJJANSI – RELLOADED VERSION 3.0**



The skies over Kajjansi just got wilder, when news broke that the Kampala Aero Club and Flight Training Centre now operates a third aircraft dedicated purely to acrobatic flying.

Besides the classic single seat Jungmeister, owned and lovingly maintained by Capt. Howard Davenport, the Aeroclub also has an equally classic Great Lakes two seater biplane on their books, which is used to take those thrill seeking adrenaline junkies daring enough into the skies over Kajjansi, where they can experience the half hour ride of their lives while expertly taken through the motions of loopings, dives, spins, eights, rolls and of course inverted flight, during which the world is truly turned upside down.

The two existing aircraft are now joined by a 1954 De Havilland Super Chipmunk. This unique bird, only 7 Super Chipmunk's exist in the world now, had its wings shortened by 3 feet, the tail and centre section modified and strengthened, the rudder enlarged, has been given longer ailerons and the engine was spruced up to 260 HP with a fully inverted system to provide the raw power needed when flying acrobatic maneuvers.



(Pictures courtesy of KAFTC showing the 1954 De Havilland Super Chipmunk flying inverted over Kajjansi before doing a trial run for a ribbon cut)

The arrival of a third acrobatics plane in Kajjansi now makes this airfield outside Kampala the centre of acrobatic flying in Eastern Africa, as not one other aviation company, nor airfield, can boast of that number of dedicated and actively flown planes used for aerial acrobatics flying and displays anywhere in the region, another first for the Kampala Aero Club which only recently became Uganda's first certified carbon neutral aviation company.

Capt. Davenport will be using the Chipmunk on the occasion of the annual '*Royal Ascot Goat Races*', this year to be held at the Commonwealth and Speke Resort in Munyonyo on Saturday the 01<sup>st</sup> September, to perform his signature '*RibbonCut*' move over the open water of Lake Victoria in front of the usual ten thousand plus strong crowd. Watch this space for breaking and regular news from East Africa's aviation sector.

#### **WILDPLACES AFRICA MOVE TO NEW PREMISES**

The Uganda Safari Company and sister organization WildPlaces have moved their offices in Kampala to a new location in the suburb of Bugolobi. WildPlaces comprises the Semliki Safari Camp, the Apoka Lodge in Kidepo Valley National Park, the award winning Clouds at Nkuringo / Bwindi National Park and the latest edition Pineapple Bay, located on Bulago Island in Lake Victoria, just 40 minutes by boat from the mainland.

As shown below, the company will however maintain a liaison office at the Sheraton Kampala Hotel's shopping arcade in office no. 2.



## **We have moved**

**This is to notify our esteemed clients and the general public that THE UGANDA SAFARI COMPANY and WILD PLACES AFRICA head office has moved to Bugolobi on Binayomba Avenue, off Lithuli Avenue, opposite the Ambrossoli International school.**

**The new office is more convenient and ideal for our customers and is aimed at serving you better.**

**The following is our new address and phone contacts:**

**First Floor,**

Plot 15 Binayomba Avenue  
Tel: +256 414 251182, +256 312 261995  
Email: [info@safariuganda.com](mailto:info@safariuganda.com)

Our downtown office will continue operating from The Sheraton Kampala Hotel at Shop No. 2



#### Kenya News

#### MORE BAD NEWS FOR FLY 540 AS LUFTHANSA TECHNIK SUES THEM TOO



Join the queue comes to mind when news emerged in Nairobi overnight that Lufthansa Technik has sued Fly 540 over an unpaid bill for the repair of an aircraft engine. The suit was brought before the High Court in Nairobi, where another suit over allegedly unpaid fuel bills is also pending, spelling more troubles yet for the low cost airline which seems to attract such controversies in fair measure. Lufthansa Technik is demanding a major multimillion Kenya Shillings settlement for work carried out on an aircraft engine, which while being 'opened up' emerged to be in much worse of a shape than initially thought, requiring significant extra work, something Fly 540 now disputes while accusing Lufthansa Technik to have exaggerated the repair cost. A provisional court hearing date has been set for October 19<sup>th</sup> according to information availed from a regular aviation source in Nairobi, where the industry continues to watch closely everything to do with Fly 540, in particular after the airline's runway incident a day earlier in Eldoret.

This latest controversy will do little to strengthen market confidence for the carrier which in the past has been plagued by a number of operational challenges with flight delays, and at least one court case being cited as a reason for the holdup of the completion of a share transfer from Lonrho to Rubicon Diversified, aimed to rebrand the airline as 'FastJet', reposition it in the market and introduce a number of new aircraft. Make sure you watch this space as the Fly 540 saga continues to rage on.

#### LEOPARD BEACH RESORT AND SPA REBUILDING ON COURSE FOR MID DECEMBER REOPENING



The management of the 'Chui', as the Leopard Beach Resort and Spa is fondly referred to by friends and aficionados, has confirmed that the present rebuilding of parts of the resort damaged by a fire two months ago, is one course for a provisional reopening date of 12<sup>th</sup> December, just in time for the Christmas and New Year season. It is understood that sections of the hotel damaged by the fire have been taken down and are being rebuilt from scratch, giving the 'Chui' an even fresher look as brand new, state of the art facilities can now be introduced, making a virtue out of the tragedy.

The hotel management also confirmed that the construction of the 28 new garden and forest villas, offering either two or three bedrooms, remains on course for a full opening in early 2013, offering a new standard of resort accommodation for discerning travelers with their own private pools and a separate fusion restaurant, which will add to the 5 restaurants already in place across the sprawling resort complex on one of Kenya's finest beaches.



Chris Modigell, the brain behind the continued success and popularity of the ‘*Chui*’ expressed his satisfaction with the rebuilding progress while pointing out that the exact re-opening date would depend on the timely arrival of newly ordered furniture and equipment, the approvals from local authorities for the re-building of the affected sections of the resort in a modernized style and the timely settlement of the remaining insurance payouts. Notably, it is also Chris Modigell’s birthday today, so happy birthday to him and all the best to the entire team at the ‘*Chui*’ towards the reopening of this award winning resort.

#### FLY 540 PLANE VEERS OFF RUNWAY IN ELDORET



Reports from Kenya speak of a runway incident at Eldoret’s International Airport yesterday morning, when a Fly 540 plane reportedly veered off the runway, fortunately not injuring any of the passengers on board, all of whom escaped a potential tragedy by a whisker.

Kenya’s Civil Aviation Authority has according to the source in Nairobi started to investigate the incident to establish if pilot error or a technical failure were responsible for the plane coming off the runway, or if any contributory factors like runway conditions or weather could have played a role.

While Fly540 did not have any accidents with passenger aircraft in the past, two of their F27 freighters crashed in recent years, a record which will undoubtedly be looked at afresh by the KCAA team now put into place to get to the bottom of this latest incident involving a Fly 540 aircraft. Watch this space for regular and breaking aviation news from the Eastern African region.

#### EMIRATES TO OPEN MOMBASA OFFICE



Information was received from a regular source in Kenya that Emirates, Dubai’s award winning national airline, intends to set up an office in Mombasa to tap into the increasingly important market from the Kenyan coast. It could not be established if the planned start of scheduled flights by Gulf rival Qatar Airways to Mombasa has anything to do with that, but it is generally thought that the increased competition from other airlines like Qatar Airways or even Etihad, now also flying daily to Nairobi, has prompted Emirates to take a fresh look at both destinations in Eastern Africa but also their service levels on the ground.

Only days ago was information availed that Emirates was actively looking at flights to Kilimanjaro International Airport, following the start of daily flights by Qatar Airways to JRO, an indication that competition does prompt the change of mind set, as was the case when Emirates was compelled to drop the stopover between Dubai and Entebbe in Addis Ababa, as rival airlines offered nonstop connections to their own hubs in the Gulf.

A travel agent from Mombasa, periodically contributing opinions, said: *‘That would be great news. Emirates’ is an airline in demand, even though they do not fly to Mombasa (yet). To connect to their double daily B777 service from Nairobi to Dubai or beyond our passengers need to fly to Nairobi first. It will be an advantage also in terms of ticketing and sales support to have an office in Mombasa. And who knows, perhaps this is the start of possible flights here, we could use another scheduled airline to come to Mombasa on a daily basis. It would boost tourism and trade too. Great development’.*

Regular sources close to the airline would only in the broadest terms confirm their plans for a Mombasa office but were unable or unwilling to comment on speculation this may be the precursor of scheduled flights, emulating Qatar Airways which has also announced their intention to fly daily to Kenya’s second city. Watch this space.

#### LAPSSET GOES INTO TENDER STAGE AS COMPETING RAIL/PORT LINKS RACE INTENSIFIES

The announcement earlier in the week that the Kenyan government had, through the Kenya Ports Authority, issued invitations to tender for the design and construction of the first three berths of the planned new deep sea harbour of Lamu, has thrown the gauntlet down to ‘*competing*’ projects in the wider region. Related infrastructure too is said to be part of the tender documents now available for domestic, regional and international bidding as rail, besides and alongside improved roads and highways, will be the key to opening up Eastern Africa’s full economic potential.

Kenya will be home to the new rail / road link between the still to be built new port of Lamu, connecting the South Sudan and Ethiopia to the Indian Ocean with a pipeline, a highway and a railway, while the existing '*Lunatic Express*' line, initially known as '*Uganda Railway*' when it was built at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, which links the Indian Ocean port of Mombasa via Nairobi to Kampala, is due for major upgrades in terms of not only rolling stock and locomotives but also the widening of the line to '*standard gauge*'. The Lamu project is an undertaking by the Kenya government, with participation of the private sector while the existing railway upgrade is to be undertaken by Rift Valley Railways, the concessionaire chosen by Uganda and Kenya to manage their existing rail network and modernize it. When complete, the Lamu port is due to extend to as many as 20 berths, become home of a refinery able to process over 100.000 barrels of crude oil per day and become the railhead of over 1.700 kilometres of railway connecting Kenya with the South Sudan and Ethiopia as well as the endpoint of the oil pipeline spanning nearly 1.300 kilometres to the South Sudanese oilfields.

Yet, in the wider East African region other rail projects are also being discussed, and often thought to be potential white elephants considering national egos and grandeurism have been shown when promoting them to financiers from abroad, since not one of the other countries involved in similar schemes can actually raise the multibillion US Dollar capital otherwise needed to start, leave alone complete such mega infrastructure projects.

In Uganda there has long been talk about a consortium wanting to put together a rail link from South Sudan's capital city of Juba to the Northern Ugandan city of Gulu and from there into the Kampala to Mombasa line. To be built in standard gauge for higher speeds of cargo and passenger trains, this component of a greater East African railway network however has gone ominously quiet when the direct rail and road link to Lamu was floated by the Kenyan government, keen to see a shorter, purpose built rail line to connect their planned port of Lamu with a key consumer market for Kenyan products and broader import / export services. This project has the added incentive with a link to Addis Ababa, which would provide the Ethiopians with a strategically hugely important '*secure*' link to the Indian Ocean, further away from what is thought to be an aggressively hostile regime in Eritrea, which is too close to comfort to the traffic axis between Ethiopia and Djibouti. And in Ethiopia itself railway projects are also being planned on a major scale to link the country domestically and with Kenya and Djibouti. In fact, information from Addis Ababa suggests that four contracts for separate segments of an improved national railway network are already signed and more contracts have been prepared, to eventually cover a rail network of some 4.700 kilometres of overall length. Notably, in spite of extensive international competition, have Chinese companies so far bagged all the contracts so far awarded, a trend duplicated elsewhere in Africa.

Kenya's LAPSET project got a further boost towards implementation when South Sudan made it known that they would build a new pipeline from their oil fields to the Indian Ocean port of Lamu, where a dedicated oil export terminal is to be constructed, allowing for much of the distance to have the oil pipeline run parallel with the railway and the highway, easing construction problems of otherwise multiple routes.

While this has left Uganda sort of reeling – South Sudan is Uganda's most important export market in the region – though they were first off the blocks talking rail links, events seem to have overtaken this option as South Sudan's primary gateway to the coast, leaving Uganda to either find their own financiers to construct the Gulu – Juba section, somehow unlikely considering the much reduced cargo volumes it could now generate in competition with the Lamu – Juba link, or else drop the plan.

In Tanzania three major rail projects are under discussion, one being the full overhaul and modernization of the TAZARA railway, which links Dar es Salaam with Zambia and which was built by the Chinese and opened in the early 1970's. That railway however has over its lifetime seen more downs than ups due to often inept management, lack of capitalization to maintain and modernize infrastructure and rolling stock and not the least over the bane of African economic development, corruption.

Talks are underway with China once again to restore this line to its former functionality, leaving the upgrade of the existing railway and plans for a new one to be resolved.

Agreements between Tanzania and Rwanda are at an advanced stage to construct a new railway link between Isaka in Tanzania to Rwanda's capital of Kigali, with an onward planned link to Bujumbura / Burundi and to Goma / Eastern Congo, to ease the flow of goods for import and export but also promote passenger traffic by rail, a cheaper and safer alternative to road transport.

This link, to be built in standard gauge, is at an advanced planning, design and financing stage already and the most likely of the projects to go ahead, leaving it to Tanzania to find either the funds or investors to upgrade the existing railroad from Dar es Salaam to Isaka from the present narrow to the standard gauge.

This seems the most urgent of the Tanzanian railway projects under consideration, but requires larger sections of a modernized routing to be improved and secured against constant flooding and disruptions as seen in recent years when at times rail traffic came to a standstill over weeks if not months while waiting for the flood waters to drain and repairs to the line to be completed.

That leaves Tanzania with the grandiose plan, often seen as the proverbial white elephant project, to build a new port near Tanga at Mwambani – instead of modernizing the existing Tanga port facilities currently massively underutilized – and create a new purpose built railway to the Lake Victoria town of Musoma, from where a rail ferries are to connect the line to and equally new lake port on the Ugandan side.

This railway, following what has been termed the notorious ‘*Corridor of Destruction*’ will likely have the greatest opposition over the chosen routing and importantly the purpose of it overall from environmental lobby groups. As the true extent of the current Tanzanian government’s intent becomes clearer by the month and their secret shroud over hugely detrimental components of the transport axis and related industrial projects gets lifted more and more by leaks from within the establishment in Dar es Salaam, creating greater awareness of the potential risks in the public domain of late.

The plans for a new port in Mwambani, to be constructed directly inside the marine national park only launched a few years ago for the protection of the prehistoric Coelacanth fish, have met with determined resistance from global conservation groups as well as increased opposition by local populations, who are apparently being targeted for removal and relocation without either consent or having been made part of the consultative process. Meetings, the latest only held two weeks ago, regularly exclude tourism stakeholders and genuine local representation, preparing the grounds surely for legal cases to be brought, if not in the national court system then at the Arusha based East African Court of Justice.

The ‘*Corridor of Destruction*’ then moves along the Eastern Arc Mountains, for which an application for recognition as a UNESCO World Heritage Site was withdrawn last year following a directive from President Kikwete, to avoid sinister plans for mining and logging to be interfered with by UNESCO in the future, as seen over other controversies in the Selous and over the planned Serengeti highway. The route of the new rail line would be near enough to the Eastern Arc Mountains to become an effective ‘opener’ to an aggressive and very likely quite unsustainable exploitation of the wider area, where illegal logging is already decimating the forests at an unprecedented rate. But the two worst impact areas of the planned railway, as only weeks ago admitted by government officials in another case of lapse of secrecy, will be the creation of the necessary link to a planned soda ash factory on Lake Natron, another by hook or crook pet project of the Tanzanian president. If this project comes to be it will irrevocably destroy the sole breeding grounds for the millions of flamingos which are found in Eastern Africa and which congregate in the mud flats of the lake to breed. A soda ash plant and related infrastructure, like roads and rail and human settlements, would in the opinion of experts create enough disturbances in this crucial breeding area to drive the birds away, with nowhere else to breed and then doomed to die out within years.

And then there is of course the issue of the most direct route to Musoma at Lake Victoria. Will financiers, said to be the Chinese with an appalling track record of environmentally negative practices, add the extra cost to circumvent the Serengeti or else follow the planned highway routing across the national park’s most sensitive areas for the annual migration of the wildebeest. Here, while having made half hearted noises that they would not ‘*pave the highway*’, high ranking officials have in past months time and again referred to the highway as ‘*coming, like it or not*’, inspite of the matter being before the East African Court of Justice. It is there that other related projects linked to the railway may well end up too, as the court registrar, when announcing the decision of the appellate division a few months ago, which dismissed objections by the Tanzanian government over competence of the court to hear this case, also made it clear that the court was not just competent but more than willing to take on cases which were not being dealt with by the national judiciaries, often rumoured to succumb to political pressure.

Be that all as it may, Kenya is seemingly set to fast track the start of major construction in and near Lamu, which will, if and when the project components advance, transform this formerly remote and untouched part of Kenya into a new transport hub, create a new airport, promote manufacturing under bond, very likely establish a free port and see the establishment of a new population centre for as many as half a million people, workers and their dependents. Catapulting Kenya into the 21<sup>st</sup> century has been a catch phrase over these plans and the tender announcement does indicate that someone somewhere means business – so watch this space for regular future updates on this first of several mega infrastructure projects, which will open an entirely new range of business opportunities along this stretch of Kenya’s coast line, hospitality and tourism included.

## MUTOKO APPOINTMENT ON HOLD AS KTDC CHAIR CHALLENGED IN COURT BY PREDECESSOR





(File photo)

Ms. Caroline Mutoko, appointed last weekend as chairperson of the Kenya Tourist Development Corporation by President Kibaki, and other members of the KTDC board, appointed by the Kenyan minister of tourism at the same time, will have to wait a little longer to take up their positions as the former chairman of KTDC took his grievance over being unceremoniously removed to the High Court. Justice Cecilia Githua suspended the appointment notice in the Kenya Gazette, where all such notices must be published to become effective, until a full or ex parte hearing can be held and the substance of the challenge, which claims the revocation of appointment of the former chairman was illegal, be assessed. It is understood that the legal team of the applicant was given 21 days in which to file a material case and a provisional date has been set for September 25<sup>th</sup> when the case comes up for mention. Until then, it appears that the Ministry of Tourism will have none of the former board doing any further business while of course the new board cannot transact any business either, until the court case has been either withdrawn, thrown out for lack of merit or else been heard and determined. Watch this space.

### **GENERAL ELECTIONS SET FOR 04<sup>TH</sup> MARCH 2013 FOLLOWING APPEALS COURT DECISION**

Kenya's Court of Appeal yesterday upheld an earlier ruling by the High Court and affirmed, that the next general and presidential elections will indeed now be held on the 04<sup>th</sup> of March 2013.

The election date has long been speculative but the judges, inspite of one dissenting opinion from a member of the 5 judges bench, felt that the date is legal and falls within the prescribed period of holding elections within 60 days after the term of the current parliament expires on 14<sup>th</sup> January next year.

There was immediate relief from in particular the tourism industry, which has for long advocated that the traditional end December polling dates be shifted to let the peak holiday season of Christmas and New Year pass without the political tension elections inevitable brought in the past to East Africa's largest economy.

*'At least any possibility of disturbing our peak season with December polls is now out for good. The country can now prepare for elections and get ready with the logistics. It will also give the tourism industry time to prepare, and tourists not need worry about coming to Kenya during the high season. True, as you point out the date now confirmed with somehow clash with the run up to Easter next year which is at the end of March, but at least now the uncertainty is over. What tourism is now expecting is our politicians to be mature and refrain from anything which could bring back the scenes of early 2008. So besides our electoral commission we demand that our security organs prepare to prevent any violence instigated by election losers as we saw in early 2008, which threw the country into chaos and ruined the tourism industry. Our partners abroad should be assured that safety and security of tourists are our top priority in Kenya and our sector will play a crucial consulting role with public officials and security organs to make sure that this will remain so'* commented a regular source from the Kenya coast, which depends on substantially on tourism.

While the matter could still be referred to the Supreme Court of Kenya, the time limitations to convene a full bench and hear such a final appeal may ultimately not permit a different outcome as the logistical preparations for elections are now and have been geared towards a March 2013 election date and it may be physically impossible to have the voters registers updated and published and election materials procured and ready for any date much before the now confirmed date of 04<sup>th</sup> of March next year.

From this correspondent it is therefore best wishes to our Kenyan brothers and sisters towards a peaceful run up to the general and presidential elections next year and a mature and responsible conduct by all concerned.

### **KENYA TO RENEGOTIATE KEY BILATERAL AIR SERVICE AGREEMENTS**

The Seychelles, Mauritius and South Sudan are three of as many as 13 countries Kenya intends to review and revise bilateral air service agreements, in short BASA's, which regulate air traffic between states. Governed under BASA's are amongst other issues the number of frequencies 'designated' airlines from both countries are allowed to fly, how many airlines can be designated to be on the route, but also often specifies the type of aircraft which can be used to operate passenger and cargo flights.

Most significant for Kenya is probably reaching a formal agreement with South Sudan to where several Kenyan airlines including Kenya Airways and Jetlink fly double daily services, but air links to the Indian Ocean islands of the Seychelles – Kenya Airways presently flies three times a week to Mahe although Air Seychelles is currently not reciprocating their route rights – and Mauritius could see added competition as other airlines besides the national carriers could opt under new arrangements to commence flights.

It is understood from a regular aviation source in Nairobi that the agreement with the Gulf state of Qatar is also due to be re-negotiated, while others on the list reach as far as Vietnam and the Philippines' while negotiations are also still ongoing with such countries as Canada and Mexico.

The same source also added that airlines interested in flying to Kenya continue to question the opening of the new passenger terminal, added aircraft parking areas and in particular the time frame for a long overdue and much needed second runway, infrastructure facilities playing an increasing role in the decision making by airline executives when selecting new destinations. Watch this space for regular and breaking news from East Africa's vibrant aviation industry.

## Tanzania News

### AIR TANZANIA'S TROUBLES CONTINUE



Only weeks after making full mouthed statement when the company brought in a leased B737-500 – a move by the way immediately questioned by aviation analysts as this Boeing type is no longer considered a state of the art aircraft – have news emerged from Dar es Salaam that Air Tanzania had a change of heart and mind and is trying to ditch the leased aircraft and find a way out of the contract.

The news left supporters and advocates of Air Tanzania once again reeling, as flights between Dar es Salaam, Kilimanjaro and Mwanza were immediately suspended along with a short nondescript statements that ticket holders would be rebooked to other airlines. *'We have said this so often, that company must be wound up. They are making a mockery out of aviation. Those in government still thinking that anything material has changed at Air Tanzania now better think again. A few weeks ago they make big announcements, talk of even more aircraft and now this. They tried to steal passengers from other airlines by offering ridiculous fares to JRO and Mwanza before they realized they are losing a lot of money and cannot sustain operations. Government this time must not use tax payer money to bail them out. The management of ATCL failed the country again and they should never have leased this old plane. Let market mechanisms take over now. There are private airlines which can deliver, Precision had ordered new planes even to offer more flights within Tanzania and there are others too willing to start up an airline for as long as our government not constantly tilts the playing field for misunderstood national pride. What our country needs is a strong airline which can help bring more visitors to Tanzania and not wasting money and effort to keep a national airline alive which is only a national disgrace'* roared a regular aviation source from Dar es Salaam in a mail yesterday, when sharing the news development.

From comments made by the airline's acting CEO Capt. Milton Lazaro, it is understood that the airline has been struggling to meet lease payments in the face of low revenues accomplished with the ageing plane. Subsequently the company had little option but to suspend the contract, in the process using parliamentary committee observations that the required procurement procedures may have been breached as a reason, not however absolving them of the liabilities under the lease agreement. A Gulf based aviation source therefore was quick to point out that regardless of the internal Tanzanian requirements and politics, Aero Vista has a valid contract for the lease and could insist on full payment plus penalties, which could leave ATCL in a similar position as was the case when inept management leased an A320 some years ago. Under that shady deal ATCL incurred a mega million US Dollar debt which government now has to settle and discovery of which led to the sacking of ATCL management and of the responsible minister a few months ago after parliament dug up the dirt on that transaction. A short statement from the company expressed 'regret' over the development, not something the passengers now affected care to hear for sure, more so as the website [www.airtanzania.co.tz](http://www.airtanzania.co.tz) makes not only no mention of the development but still continues to mislead the general public by saying: *'Air Tanzania is the national airline of Tanzania, with its head office in Dar es Salaam. Its main base is Julius Nyerere International Airport (JNIA) and it flies all over across many destinations across Tanzania'*. Where exactly are you flying and with what my dear ATCL asks this correspondent in closing. Watch this space for regular and breaking news from Eastern Africa's aviation industry, always timely, always telling the stories as they break and evolve.

### TANZANIA SET TO CLEAR ALL BUILDINGS INSIDE THE 60 METRE SHORELINE LIMIT

Information has come to light that the Tanzanian government seems set to implement a ban on coast line construction and has pledged the removal of all buildings, houses and apparently even resorts, which reach inside the 60 metre distance of the high water level along the beaches from Tanga near the Kenyan border all the way to Mtwara and the border with Mozambique. The issue came to the fore through questions asked in parliament in Dodoma recently, according to a regular source from Dar es Salaam, which were reportedly prompted by concerns over rising ocean waters and the possible impact on built up areas following a potential tsunami or storm impact.

Another source however lamented that this will open the door wide to corruption, as officials may try to blindside resort or property owners with demolition notices only to then promise to make them go away following some ‘consideration’ as in particular in popular resorts beach bars and restaurants are often within that radius and have been there long before such regulations have come into place. *‘Talking of safety measures, that 60 metres will not make much difference in case a tsunami would strike our populated coast lines. So surely there is some other agenda at work again. And raising the issue of Rio+20 resolutions, that has never been the case that implementation would be that fast anywhere, for sure not in Tanzania. That is pure pretence. So there has to be suspicion over the way this is being floated to the public. We must know the true motives behind this move and who is being targeted and why. They should leave all tourist resorts, hotels and restaurants alone or is this just another pretext to run wild against what they constantly call ‘foreigners owning our land’* asked another source from the hospitality sector when requested to comment on the development.

Sources close to parliament and government preferred not to comment, saying only the matter is ‘sensitive’ and it would be best to wait and see what if any measures government would take, although there have been unconfirmed reports that in the wider Dar es Salaam area some demolitions may already have taken place. Watch this space for further information as and when available.

## **Rwanda News**

### **RWANDA’S TOUR AND SAFARI GUIDES GET PROFESSIONAL RATINGS**

The efforts to inject professionalism into Rwanda’s tourism industry, supported by government via the Rwanda Development Board, the Private Sector Federation’s tourism chamber and the Rwanda Tours and Travel Association RTTA have born fruits when late last week 25 guides out of 30 who sat for exams in May, were awarded their ratings after successfully demonstrating their various competence levels.

7 graduated with attaining the 1 star bronze level, ten attained the two star silver level, six attained the three star gold level while two of the guides attained the coveted 4 star diamond level.

Although no specific examination details were immediately available it is understood that East African regional standards were used, similar to the examinations administered regularly by the Kenya Professional Safari Guide Association or Uganda’s Safari Guide Association, ensuring that tourists travelling across the region get the best possible guiding services now when visiting *‘The Land of a Thousand Hills’*.

Said a regular source in an overnight email: *‘Rwanda has for long known that we need to strengthen our human resources and provide adequate skills for staff in the tourism sector. RDB’s Tourism and Conservation Department has for several years now supported the drive to train our staff. The Private Sector Federation also has been instrumental and the private sector has been fully behind this objective. I want to thank you for always being positive about what we do here in Rwanda because many have taken inspiration from your articles and feel appreciated in their efforts and how you report about us. We are proud to have to top rated guides now and others with high exam pass rates. More courses will now follow and there will be regular exams so that newcomers can test their skills and others can attain higher grades and then get better pay. Let me end by congratulating all those who sat for exams and in particular the two who graduated with top honours, they have done Rwanda proud.’*

Only days ago was it reported here that Rwanda’s tourism revenues, against global and regional trends, has grown yet again by 11 percent compared to the already record breaking year 2011, setting the stage to reach new records in arrivals and revenues when the year closes. Regular sources close to the Rwanda Development Board also spoke of a increasing acceptance of the Congo Nile Trail launched officially in November last year and of the birding trails outside the national parks, where visiting tourists can also come face to face with how ordinary Rwandans in rural areas live their lives.

For more information on Rwanda’s tourism attractions visit [www.rwandatourism.com](http://www.rwandatourism.com) and for information how to get to Rwanda when in the region see [www.rwandair.com](http://www.rwandair.com) which flies from all major regional airports to Kigali.

### **RWANDA’S TOURISM REVENUES GROW BY 11 PERCENT TO REACH NEW HALF YEAR RECORD**



Tourism continues to perform way above average for Rwanda's economy, with a reported 11 percent rise in revenues generated for the first six months of 2012, up from the previous year by nearly 13 million US Dollars to 128.3 million US Dollars, a new record result for the '*Land of a Thousand Hills*'.

The second half of the year, now underway, is expected to see a further revenue rise as the permit fees for gorillas has been raised, effective June this year, to now 750 US Dollars per person, a move which reportedly had little if any impact on the forward bookings for tracking permits.

Gorilla tourism remains Rwanda's number one tourism activity but a determined programme of diversification in recent years has seen new tourism attractions receive more visitors and greater exposure by the international travel and tourism media. The Congo Nile Trail along the shores and through the hills along Lake Kivu or the Nyungwe national park with its unique tree canopy walk and a growing networks of hiking trails into and through the forest, with 1.000 square kilometres the largest montane rainforest in the wider Eastern African region have made an impact on the global adventure travel trade and attracted thousands of more visitors coming specifically to experience these new tourism products.

The establishment of birding trails, both inside and outside of protected areas like parks and reserves, has also drawn additional visitors to the country and should indeed Gishwati forest be turned into a national park in due course, this would only add to the growing attractiveness of Rwanda as a key destination.

MICE tourism too is now being actively promoted by the Rwanda Development Board's Tourism and Conservation Department, and the opening next year of a brand new Marriott Hotel and Conference Centre in the heart of Kigali will aid the marketing campaign already underway to turn Kigali into a meeting and conferences destination.

These new marketing initiatives were greatly aided by the arrival of new airlines such as Turkish Airlines and Qatar Airways, and the return of South African Airways, and the anticipated arrival of an additional two brand new CRJ900 jets for RwandAir in October will undoubtedly result in yet more travelers reaching Rwanda with even greater ease from the region, from across the African continent and from around the world.

Ms. Rica Rwigamba, who is heading the tourism and conservation department at RDB, when asked on the impact of the current problems in Eastern Congo on Rwanda Tourism, had this to say: '*Rwanda's tourism progress is attributed to peace and security. Visitor safety is guaranteed as usual. We would like to reassure visitors to Rwanda that it is business as usual here and that it is extremely safe and secure to travel to and within the country. The all-in-one experience in Rwanda from diverse wildlife in the national parks, to the magnificent scenery, amazing climate and the rare mountain gorillas, peace and security continues to be a magnetic for visitors in Rwanda.*' She then added some insight into the economic equation of tourism on the national economy when she concluded: '*There was a noticeable increase in revenues, visits and value of registered tourism investments as well as projected jobs created in the first semester. We believe that if we continue to achieve as reflected by the results in the first half, we will indeed surpass our targets and more importantly, this will drive growth and generate wealth for Rwandans.*'

Well done once again Rwanda and does it not show that small is not only beautiful but can make quite an impact when, as is the case here, the powers that be are fully behind the tourism industry and support conservation efforts and in particular re-forestation across all sections of society.

## **Congo News**

### **CONGO'S FORESTS GET WIDER OVERSIGHT**

The often reckless destruction and unsustainable felling of tropical hard wood trees in the sprawling forests of the DR Congo has at last received the attention from the African Union it long deserved under the COMIFAC initiative, the English translation being the Central Africa Forests Commission.

Increased deforestation in the absence of effective policies and lack of political will, if not the complete absence of comprehension by the Kinshasa regime of the long term impact of rapidly decreasing forest cover, has led the international community to now establish a 10 country oversight committee, which will be tasked to '*assist*' the Congo DR, and others in similar need, in formulating forestry policies and then enforce them.

Rwanda notably is a member of this body, selected not only for the vicinity to the great Congolese rainforests right across the common border but also for the impressive record of the country in recent years vis a vis re-forestation and restoring degraded forests with the aim of having 30 percent of the country under tree cover by 2020.

Other countries participating are Burundi, Congo (Brazzaville), Congo DR, Chad, the Central African Republic, Cameroon, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon and Sao Tome and Principe.

The monitoring committee will work hand in hand with COMIFAC, and is tasked to ensure the sustainable management of the forest systems along the equatorial belt of Central and Western Africa. Also on board of the project will be the Norway / UK and EU funded Congo Basin Forest Fund, which has over 6 million Euros available

to finance activities promoting the objectives of the cooperation as will be the UN's Food and Agricultural Organization, in short FAO.

The 200 plus million hectares wide forest system, second only in size to the Amazon's forests, has in recent years been greatly abused by illicit felling of tropical hard wood trees, commercial and wild cat mining with significant poisoning of water and soil and encroachment for the purpose of subsistence farming by ever growing populations at the edges of these great rainforests. Hope for Africa's forests, but only time will tell and there is not much time left. Watch this space.

## Seychelles News

### LA DIGUE IN THE SPOTLIGHT AS ISLAND PREPARES FOR ASSUMPTION FESTIVAL



The Seychelles third largest island, La Digue, a personal favourite of this correspondent for its laid back attitude and unique way of life, is preparing for the ***Feast of Assumption***, when the Catholic faithful from the archipelago are joined by hundreds of tourists to celebrate this religious festival, which has become a cornerstone in the annual calendar of events promoted by Seychelles Tourism. This year the festival is expected to last for several days, to allow more visitors to come and be part of La Digue's long tradition, starting on August the 10<sup>th</sup> and culminating in the grand event on the 15<sup>th</sup>, when a procession will be held to '***La Grotte***' with an open air mass.

The archipelago's nearly 87.000 strong population is deeply rooted in Catholicism and the age old celebration on La Digue has in recent years found more followers from around the world, literally doing pilgrimage to the island and joining the Seychellois faithful in their prayers.

The Seychelles Tourist Board, not missing a beat, has gone flat out to promote the event in their recent mailings and marketing activities and has been handing out relevant information to tourists arriving on the archipelago in recent days to promote day trips, from the main island of Mahe and the second largest island of Praslin to La Digue.

STB's Chief Executive Elsia Grandcourt was quoted to have said: '***The La Digue Feast or Lafet La Digue as it is commonly known is an event of distinctive Seychellois character which shows to our visitors the vibrancy of our culture, which is something they come here to experience. It is through these kinds of events that Seychelles will continue to proudly show its colours to the world.***'

The Seychelles Minister for Tourism and Culture, Alain St. Ange, added his own views when he commented about the upcoming even to this correspondent: '***The Feast of La Digue is an excellent example of what the Seychelles Brand of tourism stands for. Here we go beyond our natural attributes of sun, sea & sand to allow visitors to experience the unique island-style way of life of our islands. Today's traveller is looking beyond just soaking up the sun on our world-beating beaches, and we must continue to bring to bear the characteristics of our Kreolite to attract visitors to our shores.***'

In a related development, and very timely ahead of the ***Feast of Assumption*** was the latest '***Seychelles in your Pocket***' guide map released from the printers, this time numbering 150.000 copies. An invaluable tool for tourist visitors, whom the little folding guide with its maps and key locations assists getting around the archipelago's capital Victoria or generally find locations across Mahe, Praslin or La Digue, the 2012 edition will be distributed for free by the Seychelles Tourist Board, their offices in key overseas markets but also by local resorts and the DMC's, hotels, restaurants and other tourism related businesses to both enhance the holiday experience as well as serve as a little souvenir when coming home and dreaming of a return to the islands at some point in the future.

***Seychelles – truly Another World.***

### SEYCHELLES GET AFRICAN UNION NOD TO BID FOR 2017/18 UN SECURITY COUNCIL SEAT





The Seychelles have started their campaign to be elected to the UN Security Council as a non permanent member for the years 2017 and 2018, after being cleared by the African Union as a continental candidate. The tiny Indian Ocean country has in recent years distinguished itself before the African and world community by being part of a number of global initiatives, amongst them the fight against the Somali piracy menace where it not only provides a base for aerial surveillance but also actively participates in hunting down pirates, including several successful rescue missions. Another area in the international arena for the Seychelles has been the building of a global coalition of island nations, now facing the stark prospect of rising ocean waters due to global warming and the melting of the world's ice caps, where President Michel has made it his personal mission to lobby amongst fellow heads of state for measures to slow global warming down. The Seychelles have never before been elected to serve on the UNSC, a fact not lost on the friends of the Creole tropical island paradise, to whom the country is now turning on the continent to secure the necessary votes and commitment to be elected as African representative to the UN's most important organ.

President James Alix Michel, when making the announcement to the assembled Seychellois Ambassadors and High Commissioners, was reported to have said: ***'We can bring a unique perspective to the work of the Security Council. We have demonstrated our readiness for this seat by playing a leading role in the fight against piracy and for the advancement of peace and stability in Somalia. More recently, our mediation efforts in resolving the crisis in Madagascar have been internationally recognized by our partners. And we shall continue to provide the leadership and the support that are required in this process. It would be naïve to pretend that we live in a just multilateral system. We have made great strides but many inequalities remain. Humanity remains confronted with poverty, wars, conflicts, disease, injustice. We have become so blasé towards them, so inured to them, that more often than not they merit just a passing mention in the international media. Yet, we can make a difference. This small nation of ours, whose flag bearers you are, can make a difference. We have values that we can share with and impart to the rest of the world. These values are solidly anchored in our abiding faith in the inherent goodness of humanity.'***

It is understood from a reliable source in Mahe that the Seychelles efforts to become a UNSC member for the years 2017 / 2018 will be anchored not only in regular diplomatic efforts but also find its way in the PR and marketing juggernaut of promoting the archipelago as one of the world's most sought after tourism destinations, to gain new friends from around the world and make the global community take notice of a country, which has well over 50 percent of its land mass dedicated to conservation and the protection of biodiversity. Watch this space.

## **D' ARROS ISLAND BECOMES A NATURE RESERVE**



The Creole Island Paradise of the Seychelles is once again living up to its billing as one of the world's most committed 'green' countries when the announcement was made yesterday that D'Arros Island was to be declared a nature reserve. The island's owners, a locally incorporated company, will let the **'Save Our Seas Foundation'** manage the island, which is located over 250 kilometres southwest of the main island of Mahe and part of the **Amirantes Group**. Together with the nearby atoll of St. Joseph is D'Arros island a place of outstanding natural beauty and home to a range of bird species and marine life including giant tortoise and sea turtles, which come to short to nest. The island has an airstrip of over 975 metres long, allowing twin engined turboprop STOL aircraft to safely land and take off.

This latest declaration of an island as a nature reserve drives the overall percentage of protected land yet deeper into the 50 percent range of all terrestrial area of the archipelago now protected, the highest proportion of land set aside anywhere in the world for conservation purposes.

It was also learned from communications received from Mahe that the **Save Our Seas Foundation**, a Switzerland based not for profit NGO, has an established track record of supporting sustainable programmes of ocean conservation, and has in the past worked in the Seychelles with the Marine Conservation Society working towards the protection of sharks.

The formal announcement is expected to be made today in Victoria, the capital of the Seychelles, and members of the conservation and tourism fraternities are expected to attend the press conference to be briefed on plans of future conservation measures and if the present villa of the owners may perhaps be converted to a more permanent luxurious holiday hideaway. Meanwhile, breaking news here for our readers to be one step ahead of the pack.

**AND** in closing today once again some worthwhile reads from '*The Livingstone Weekly*', courtesy of Gill Staden. First a narrative and pictures of one of her frequent trips in Zambia and to neighbouring countries, and the resulting frustrations on borders, a reminder that Africa makes travel seemingly as difficult as possible for her people ...

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I had gone on a trip with my travel partner, Josh, and his sister and family to Kariba and we had found ourselves on a very unfriendly Lake Kariba as we tried to boat across the lake to Matusadona National Park. Although the crossing was rough our visitors enjoyed their trip.

Returning to Kariba Town we filled up with fuel (to avoid paying kwacha in Zambia ...) and headed to the border. It took us three hours to cross the border ... just one problem after another ... The most annoying part was finding dollars (???!!) for RTSA at the Zambia border. I had gone equipped with kwacha, but, no, they wanted dollars and did not have change. I was taken by the RTSA officer to the money changers hanging around on the road and told to buy dollars at the rate of US\$1 = K5,300. No, I said. *I have the dollars. It is your problem if you can't find me change.* Eventually, I found US\$10 in bits and pieces and gave it to him.

So, at the border: Visa is paid in dollars. Car insurance is paid in kwacha. RTSA is paid in dollars. Council Levy is paid in kwacha. At the Kariba border there is no bureau, so, to get kwacha you have to buy from the money changers ... which, of course, are completely illegal.

It is a strange phenomenon, our Zambian borders. They are more like small villages with money changers, curio sellers, touts and beggars. Any other country border is a border with immigration and customs officials only. I feel completely at home at our borders, but I wonder if it is correct.



After our frustrating experience at the border we happily drove to Eagles Rest for an overnight stay. Alex and John were quick to get into the pool, but they didn't last long as it was rather cold. The rest of us headed to the lake shore and enjoyed a beer or two.

Eagles Rest is my favourite place to stay in Siavonga and our visitors loved it too. Eagles Rest has chalets and a campsite, all ranged along the lake shore. The bar and restaurant overlooks the lake too but things are about to change as the restaurant will be closed this month. The owners have decided that the restaurant requires a lot of staff and, with the new minimum wage, it is not viable. Food will still be available at Eagles Rest but you will have to buy it from a shop and there will be a cook to prepare it for you, but no waiter service.

Interestingly I saw an article in the news this week about Kariba Inns having laid off 18 members of staff and that Lake Safari Lodge, also in Siavonga, had laid off 24. A sad time for Siavonga.



We had a lovely meal overlooking the lake and went to bed early because we had a long journey in front of us to Livingstone (600km +).

During the night the wind started to blow and we could hear the waves bashing along the shoreline ... Lake Kariba continued to behave badly ... as it does this time of year.



In the morning I took a quick walk around Eagles Rest to see the campsite and the houseboat. The houseboat can take 12 people and travels along the lake shore for fishing and relaxing. Next time ...

We drove to Livingstone, stopping off at Choma Museum for a break. It took all day but our visitors had been booked into the Zambezi Sun for the night – a special treat which they loved.



In the morning I took everyone to the border to go over to Victoria Falls Town for a few days to do the activities while I stayed at home to work on the Weekly ...

On Monday I joined everyone at Victoria Falls Safari Lodge and we headed towards Hwange National Park ... I will tell you about that

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## UNESCO World Heritage Committee Decisions in 2012

There were many decisions made this year by the UNESCO World Heritage Committee about sites around the world. The first one which affects us here is:

*Mosi-oa-Tunya / Victoria Falls (Zambia/Zimbabwe): Zambia has agreed to limit the dry-season diversion of water from the falls for hydro-electric power generation.*

Also, the proposed Dam in Tanzania which threatens the Selous Game Reserve, gets this comment: *Urges Tanzania to not issue permits to the Stiegler's Gorge Dam and reminds Tanzania that further action on dam construction could cause the site to be listed on the danger list.*

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## Tourism Radio Station

A new radio station is being set up in Livingstone called Falls FM and it is hoped that it will market Zambia's tourism potential. It will transmit on 90.1FM.

The radio station is the brainchild of Innocent Kabwe who hopes that it will promote domestic tourism in Zambia and will play a key role in marketing Livingstone during the UNWTO next year.

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## IBAs and Ramsar Sites

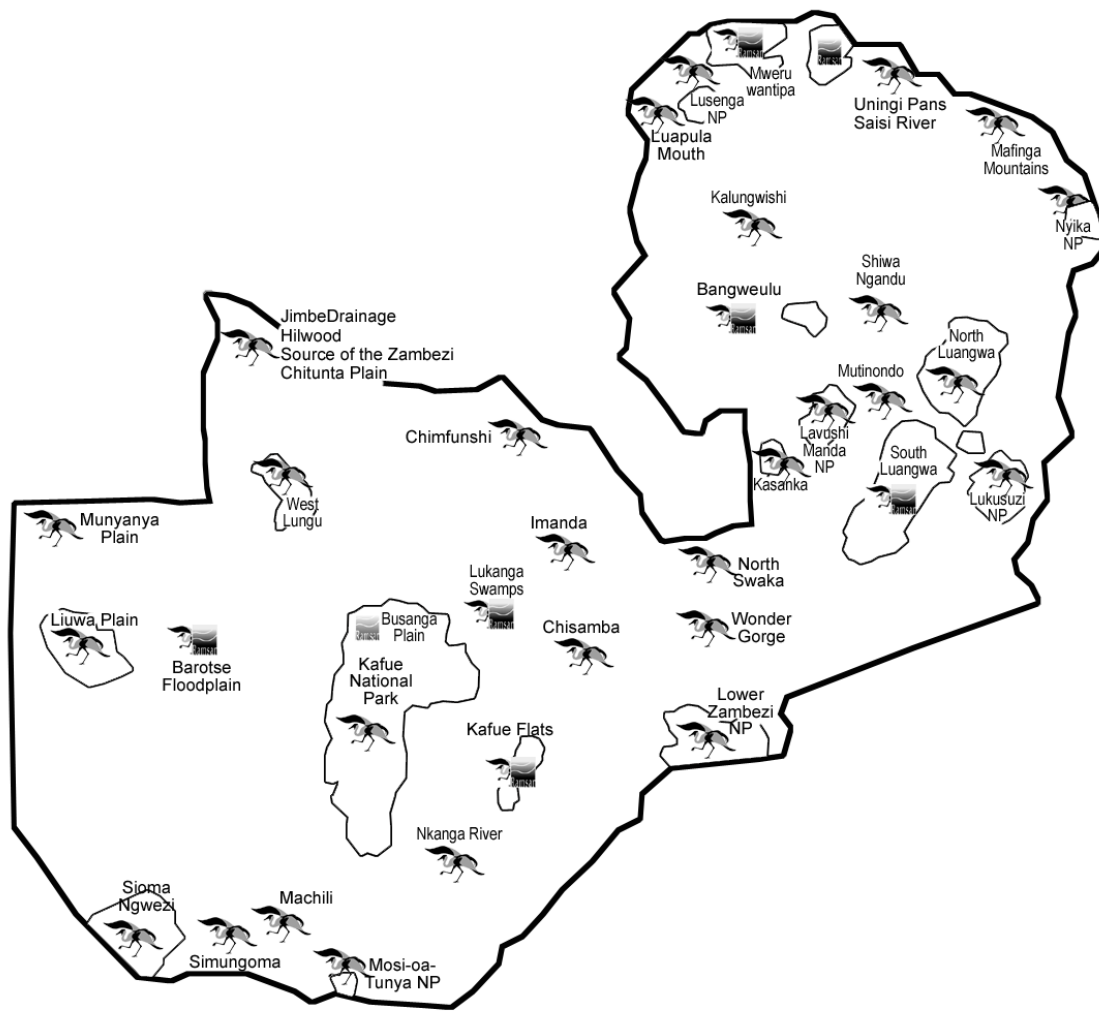
Zambia has 42 Important Bird Areas (IBAs). *IBAs are key sites for conservation – small enough to be conserved in their entirety and often already part of a protected-area network. They do one (or more) of three things:*

- *Hold significant numbers of one or more globally threatened species*
- *Are one of a set of sites that together hold a suite of restricted-range species or biome-restricted species*
- *Have exceptionally large numbers of migratory or congregatory species*

*The map below shows the sites of IBAs in Zambia and also Ramsar Sites. Ramsar sites are Wetlands of International Importance. We have 8 Ramsar Sites in Zambia.*

The Mosi-oa-Tunya National Park is an IBA. Our other nearest IBA is in Chief Sekute's area – Machili.

For interest and comparison: Zimbabwe has 20 IBAs and no Ramsar Sites. Botswana has 12 IBAs and 1 Ramsar Site. Namibia has 19 IBAs and 4 Ramsar Sites.




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**BirdWatch Zambia (BWZ) receives a boost for IBA Monitoring activities,**  
by Moses Nyoni

The secretariat at BirdWatch Zambia (BWZ) has the pleasure of announcing the commencement of a new project; National Biodiversity Monitoring and Species Protection Project (NBSPP).

Following a successful application made to the Civil Society Environment Fund (CSEF), a sum of K499,577,925 (approx. US\$ 96,000) has been approved to undertake monitoring work over a period of 17 months.

Five (5) Important Bird Areas (IBAs) namely; Kafue Flats, Lukanga Swamps, Bangweulu Swamps, Machile and Chisamba will be worked on. Besides instituting effective monitoring of sites and habitats, selected trigger species will also be monitored in a more detailed way.



The creation of a window for the involvement of student interns from University of Zambia (UNZA) and Copperbelt University (CBU) makes the project even more innovative. In order to coordinate this project an additional staff member, Ms. Chaona Phiri, a graduate of UNZA has been employed.

During this first quarter of the project, the following activities have been planned;

- Stakeholder Analysis
- Harmonization of the IBA monitoring protocol
- Developing and agreeing on the project's Monitoring & Evaluation Framework
- Preliminary field and species assessment of Chisamba IBA.

Stakeholder analysis for Chisamba, Lukanga and Machile has been completed while that for Bangweulu swamp is scheduled for the week starting 10th June 2012. In order to harmonize the IBA monitoring protocol and agree on the Monitoring and Evaluation Framework, a meeting has been set for Friday, 8th June 2012 at Lodge Serenity. In attendance at this meeting will be at least an officer each from Zambia Wildlife Authority (ZAWA), Forestry Department (FD) and two lecturers from UNZA and CBU. The coordinator will be commencing field activities in Chisamba IBA in the last week of June thereby completing activities planned for the first quarter.

With the phasing out of the European Community supported project on IBA monitoring last year, this project has come at the right time and will provide support to the NOF funded IBA Project whose life span expires next year.

Over and above the fund meant for monitoring activities, CSEF will be extending its capacity building support to finances. The CSEF is a fund created by the Finnish and Danish Embassies in support of environmental based NGO's in Zambia which, unlike government ministries, have limited access to sources of financial support.

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### More on the UNWTO Preparations

In the news this week was more about the planned Convention Centre in Victoria Falls Town for the UNWTO next year. We are told that the government is still thinking of ideas as they feel that the cost and timeframe of putting up a permanent structure is out of the question.

It seems that they are now considering a semi-permanent structure made of aluminium glass (?) in Chogm Park near Sprayview Hotel. The architects, however, feel that this would be too hot and inappropriate for the World Heritage Site.

Other concerns were that the time required for plans, tendering, EIA, etc, would take several months and that the rainy season will start in October when construction would be difficult.



**Meanwhile, over the border in Livingstone ...**

Sylvia Masebo, Minister of Tourism, visited Livingstone during the week. She told the press that the government was in the process of identifying contractors to build a 'hosting centre'. The reports do not tell us exactly what this is or where it is. One assumes that Zambia will face the same problems as Zimbabwe – the logistics of building are the same – lots of paperwork, approvals, etc, to go through before building can start ... and facing the rainy season to come ...

The Minister also commented that Livingstone needed to provide transport for the delegates and called on the private sector to upgrade their fleets of vehicles. The media was also urged to market the event.

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