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Fourth edition March 2013

East Africa News

FASTJET REPORTEDLY FILES LETTER OF INTENT WITH 1TIME LIQUIDATORS



Seemingly unperturbed by the ongoing negative publicity for the airline, as a result of being entangled with former choice darling partner and now turned arch foe Fly540, has the management of FastJet now apparently filed a letter of intent with the liquidators of 1Time, a South African lower cost carrier in liquidation after running out of cash last year.

According to a South African aviation source, and as reported here before, were FastJet chairman Lenigas and the airline CEO Ed Winter in South Africa recently to meet with the liquidators of the moribund airline, following up on an MoU signed with 1Time last year.

True to style though did FastJet sound an ominous warning to the liquidators, that should they not comply with their overtures, other partners could be sought in South Africa to the detriment of 1Time, which FastJet proposed to purchase at the cost of 1 South African Rand. The purchase price, low as it seems, however will possibly include taking on a number of liabilities 1Time could have incurred and which the liquidators are presently dealing with. It is hoped though that the lessons taught by the disastrous relationship with Fly540, a proper due diligence is being carried out this time round and all legal loopholes be plugged, with a clear understanding of existing and inherited debts so as to avoid legal cases spreading further into Africa, beyond the legal battle underway now in Kenya and the UK.

Uganda News

THE SILENT ASSAULT ON MABIRA CONTINUES UNDER THE NOSES OF NFA



(Picture by Bernard Werber Officiel – given the title '*The Forest Fights Back*' by this correspondent)

This week the world celebrated the International Forest Day and, I guess true to form, I felt the time was right to dedicate some thoughts to the forests in our region. In Kenya politicians pondered for the past 5 years how to restore the Mau Forest, and others, to their crucial functions as water towers. In Tanzania illegal logging is now worse a problem than poaching, and that is out of control as it is, and the seizure of a freight train last week packed with illegally logged timber shows how deep the collusion has reached, when entire railway trains can be converted into ferrying the loot.

Of course, a shining example in East Africa is Rwanda, where Nyungwe Forest is a national park and jealously guarded and protected and where Gishwati's tourism potential will in a few weeks time be revealed in a breaking news article, paying tribute to those in the land of a thousand hills who have the foresight to protect their forests as sources of water, medicinal plants and to store carbon emissions and use them sustainably for green ecotourism activities.

But today it is once again Mabira which has caught my attention, as reports keep emerging of continued illegal logging deep inside the forest, now a growing problem thought worse than the ill considered move to turn a quarter of the forest into a sugar plantation. The forest, as demonstrated in an earlier article, has started to develop its tourism potential, slowly but surely, and the RainForest Lodge in Mabira has become a focal point of forest tourism, from where cycling and hiking trips can be arranged with ease. Opposite the turn off to the lodge is, a few hundred metres down the track, the forest's eco tourism centre, established by the National Forest Authority, from where some of the hikes start and where mountain bikes are available for hire, for those who come without them and then suddenly get into the mood for a ride through the forest under ancient trees.

Robert, the secretary to the Mabira Forest Integrated Communities Organisation, aka MAFICO, was recently quoted in the local media as having said: '*It is part of the rich cultural heritage of Mabira*' before adding that though the history of Mabira is locked up in mysteries, the legendary stories have been told over generations. In the last five years, according to Robert, the Small Grants Programme under the United Nations Development Programme has invested \$70,000 to help harness the tourism potential at Griffin Falls and also promote community development.

'*The tourism potential at Mabira is immense*' added Robert saying that there are many tourism products waiting to be harnessed.

Only two years ago was a new species of primates discovered and confirmed by experts and the list of birds, butterflies and a range of other mammals, of trees, medicinal plants, shrubs and orchids is extensive, belying the fact that the forest is so close to the country's capital of Kampala. As a result the nearly 29,000 hectares of the forest serve as the green lung of Kampala, often overlooked, often denied but nevertheless so, maintaining that crucial balance of carbons released by society's modern lifestyle and industrial emissions and carbons captured in the trees. The added function as a water tower is equally important, as the River Nile and the River Sezibwa both drain from it, benefitting water levels in Lake Victoria.



(Aerial pictures taken recently, showing the extend of encroachment, where little shambas are cleared of tree cover, and in one picture the column of smoke where cut offs from illegally cut timber are burned)

The loss of forest cover in Uganda is massive and has increased in recent years, largely attributed to unscrupulous politicians promising land to their constituents in return for their votes, and this has led in other parts of the country to hundreds of deaths when landslides consumed entire small villages, built by people illegally entering Mt. Elgon Forest National Park and refusing to leave despite such tragedies. Similar reports of illegal forest occupation come from Kibaale District and elsewhere in the country. Again, recent media reports now call the issue of the environment a matter of national security and the following article copied below speaks volumes of where Uganda is heading:

Environment a security matter

Although the country's collective Vision for 2025 talks about, a "Prosperous People, Harmonious Nation, Beautiful Country," little is being done to secure the environment. And because of this Uganda is losing its forest cover at a rate of 2% annually amounting to 892,000 hectares.

According to FAO, countries like Rwanda where the forest cover is increasing have improved in their policies, laws and invested more for foresters to engage the local population to conserve nature and plant trees.

Godber Tumushabe, the head of Advocates Coalition for Development and Environment points out that the ecological integrity particularly the environment that drives the county's food basket and the forests together with wetlands that feed water bodies with water should be placed at the same level as state security.

"Poor people without resources and hit by environmental disasters are ungovernable," says Tumushabe.

Change of land use is not a wise option

While the Mabira give away to the Sugar Corporation of Uganda Limited (SCOUL) is being considered to address sugar shortage in the country, a study on the economic valuation of Mabira shows that such a proposal is a miscalculation.

But if SCOUL increased its productivity to match Kakira and Kinyara then the expansion of the sugarcane scheme into Mabira would not arise, according to a new report.

The report entitled Economic Valuation of 7,186 hectares of Mabira Central Forest Reserve proposed for the land use change or outright degazettement," says if SCOUL produces at Kakira's rate of productivity then the demand for land would reduce to 5,496 hectares.

SCOUL's demand for land could reduce further to 4,988 hectares if SCOUL produces at 120 metric tonnes per hectare as proposed by a study by the Africa Development Bank.

Another scenario is that SCOUL could also improve its sugarcane conversion from 8.4 to 10 like Kinyara. If this is achieved, the land demand could reduce from 7,186 hectares to 6,036 hectares.

By increasing the productivity of land as recommended by the African Development Bank study together with increased sugar conversion, SCOUL's demand for additional land could reduce by 5,038 hectares leaving an outstanding need of only 2,148 hectares. This, according to the report, could be obtained elsewhere and Mabira be left alone.

The report was done by a team led by Dr. Yakobo Moyini (R.I.P) as the lead researcher four years ago. The study was commissioned by Nature Uganda, a non-government organisation and partner of BirdLife International. Other researchers included a biodiversity specialist, an agricultural economist, a forest inventory specialist, a natural environment economist and a policy analyst.

Apart from the results of the economic analysis, the report questions why the Government, "appears to place an apparently greater focus on SCOUL, the least efficient firm in the sugar industry."

This, among many other media reports and scientific contributions from forestry experts and researchers goes to show what important role Mabira has to play, and yet, under the cover of darkness but increasingly often in bright daylight are lorries emerging from the forest loaded with freshly cut timber, widening the cleared areas invisible from the main road through Mabira but visible very clearly from the air, as the pictures above show.

International Forest Day should mean something, here in Uganda in particular as we claim the name '*The Pearl of Africa*' but it takes political will and backbone on one side and halting forest give aways which send the wrong signals and encourage wood poachers on the other. Tourism is a big business now in Uganda and it depends overwhelmingly on intact nature, intact forests and the birds, wildlife and reptiles found across the country.

When nature is destroyed, tourism will collapse alongside it and when tourism collapses our economy will be on the brink too, oil and gas or not, unless we will happily ever after live in a wasteland where food and water and fresh air can no longer be taken for granted.

NFA, according to well informed sources on the subject, are shy to lock horns with the power that be, and while off the record express their vehement opposition to what is happening to Uganda's forests, hardly dare to stand up to the appointing authority, draw a line in the sand and tell politicians to dare cross and then face the full force of the law. Hence, NFA officials have a good inkling of what is going on vis a vis illegal logging but have to tread on eggshells instead of mobilizing and leading the cavalry to the sites in question, taking those found into custody and charge them in court, while at the same time going for the financiers and middle men, just like it should be done with poachers of elephant.

Is it too much to ask to protect our still relatively intact nature for future generations or are we today mortgaging the future of our children's children with irreversible destruction. Time will tell – I hope you hugged a tree on the International Forest Day, or better planted a few.

SSESE ISLAND TOURISM BUSINESSES COMPLAIN ABOUT LACK OF FERRIES FROM KAMPALA



Anger and disappointment are spreading among travelers to and from the Ssese Islands but also the business owners, in particular those offering accommodation services to visitors that the main government owned ferry MV Kalangala continues to be out of service after a brief period of operations earlier this year.

It also appears that a second, privately operated ferry, Earth Wise, is also not in operation for reasons not revealed, though the regular rumour mill was swift in making up stories of collusion and opposition, business jealousy and wrangles over the routes.

The local media ran a short story on the issue when the allegations surfaced and Ministry of Works and Transport staff denied any such conflicts or collusions, saying: '*Allegations had started coming up that some ministry officials were deliberately delaying the repair of MV Kalangala so as to favour Earth Wise with whom they had*

struck a deal’ the official was quoted but refused to be named because he is not authorised to speak to the press, said.

Another staff however denied claims that the ministry stopped Earth Wise from operating the Entebbe-Kalangala routes, saying they failed because of the high operational costs.

Island residents, including hotel, resort and restaurant owners, last week staged a demonstration at Kalangala District headquarters protesting the delay to repair the vessel. Without the ferries from either Entebbe or Port Bell there are two water transport alternatives for passengers; either to travel to Bukakata, Masaka District by road and then board the MV Pearl ferry that sails to Kalangala daily or to use lake boats, which safety has often been criticized and which in stormy weather have the notorious reputation of being unsafe while overcharging. Watch this space.

SKAL KAMPALA ELECTS NEW LEADERSHIP



Skal Kampala Chapter 611 has last night held the mandatory annual general meeting and after serving twice as Club President, has Kainembabazi Sabiti, in her professional standing the General Manager for Amadeus in Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi and South Sudan, stepped down, making way for Miss Monalisa Aman to lead the club for the next 12 months. The complete line up of newly elected club officials is:

Miss Monalisa Aman - President
Miss Christine Mwinike - Vice President
Mr. Mohit Advani - Treasurer
Miss Pearl Hoareau - Secretary
Mr. Karl Wipfler - Program Director
Mr. Mani Khan - Committee Member
Amb. Klaus Holderbaum - Committee Member
Miss Kainembabazi Sabiti - Immediate Past President

The club membership has warmly welcomed the mix of experienced and new office bearers, hoping for continued exciting club meetings and further membership growth. Warmest congratulations to the new leadership from a Skalleague who has just clocked 35 continuous years as a member of Skal in Kenya and Uganda.

UGANDA WILDLIFE AUTHORITY INTRODUCES CASHLESS SMART CARD



Visits to any of Uganda’s ten national parks will soon be easier as the Uganda Wildlife Authority is putting final touches to the introduction of a cashless smart card based on chip technology, aimed at maximizing revenue collection and improving cash flow as a result of prepaid ‘loading’ of funds on it.

As a first step will gorilla and chimpanzee tracking permit details be loaded on the available cards, and then used at Bwindi, Murchisons Falls and Kibale national parks, in addition to which they will be accepted at Lake Mburo and Queen Elizabeth national parks. The remaining five other parks like Rwenzori, Mt. Elgon, Mgahinga, Kidepo Valley and Semliki will be added in due course once the technology has been installed at the various park entrance gates and offices of those parks.

Unlike in other neighbouring countries, where the point of sale is centralized and often inconveniences potential visitors for having to set aside extra time to get an electronic card, UWA intends to have several points of sale

beyond the national park headquarters in Kampala, namely at park entrance gates where re-usable temporary cards can be purchased while from the headquarters in Kampala personalized permanent cards can be obtained for regular visitors to the parks, be it Ugandans or foreign residents.

In a related development to an earlier article filed, covering the Murchisons Falls Invitational Fishing Tournament, it was also learned that UWA benefitted from two donated motorcycles, to be used for mobile patrols by game wardens across the park. One of the winners of the motor bike, one Piet de Jong, spontaneously donated the motorbike to UWA when he was given the surprise prize from Toyota Uganda, the agents of Yamaha in the country, while the second bike was as a result of this gesture donated by the SAB Miller which had a team participate in the event.

For information on all of Uganda's ten national parks and additional game or community reserves, visit www.ugandawildlife.org or else click on www.visituganda.com, the site of the Uganda Tourism Board.

AIR UGANDA SET TO RECEIVE NEW CEO ON APRIL 01



Usually well informed sources have indicated that after a 6 months gap at the top – the last CEO, one Kayle Haywood in early October 2012 prematurely walked out on his contract with the airline to take up a better paying position with FastJet in Tanzania – will on April 01st 2013 a new CEO finally take up the vacant position. Known already to this correspondent, but surprisingly still not known to the staff at Air Uganda's head office in Kampala, the matter clearly is treated like a state secret by the chairman of the board. One regular aviation source, not working for Air Uganda I hasten to add, attributes this style to past experiences with CEO's who apart from Hugh Frazer did not last overly long nor had great fortunes in their brief periods at the helm, a trend started with a team of hapless Italians, brought in from sister airline Meridiana at the time, which now finds itself in financially challenging times. MeridianaFly is operating with a fleet of MD aircraft which are aged and guzzling fuel, impacting hugely on the bottom lines, leaving the owners with unenviable choices to make after missing the proverbial bus to commit for a full fleet renewal several years ago.

Those Italians set a trend of bull in China shop behaviour, which took subsequent job holders overtime to repair industry relations but also left them clearly exasperated with the challenges they were faced with, in the market as well as vis a vis being able to take fast decisions and be granted sufficient funds for investments by the owners, in new routes and new aircraft. Understandably were the start up losses, for which the Italian managers are generally held responsible, making a huge dent into the available funds and economically hard times did not help to see this change.

However, that said, U7's main competitors in the region, Kenya Airways, Precision Air and RwandAir, are all cooperating to various degrees and a standalone Air Uganda is hard pressed to rival them, leave alone copy their commitments to buy new aircraft and aggressively expand their route network, which in particular with RwandAir is key to their success in penetrating the market. When Air Uganda was formed in 2007, RwandAir had fewer aircraft but has since moved to 4 brand new acquisitions in the space of just 15 months, i.e. 2 B737-800NG and 2 CRJ900NextGen. They are also in the final phase to exchange two leased B737-500 into more modern B737-700 longer range aircraft, while for the domestic and near regional routes they operate a Bombardier Dash 8-100. It is here that Air Uganda's new incoming CEO is challenged to smartly position U7, get his board to agree on funding for new aircraft and to open up new routes, or else leave the airline where it is at present, with narrowing spaces in the skies over East Africa.

Watch this space for when the news are broken, right here as oftentimes.

UGANDA NAMED 5TH BEST AT RECENT ITB



'It was a bit disappointing to only get 5th, but then, it is still 5th for all of Africa' said a participant to the recent ITB to this correspondent last weekend, when discussing the performance of the country at the world's most important tourism trade show. Last year Uganda came a respectable third after Rwanda and Burundi. *'Personally I think we*

did better than last year but then the competition also does not sleep. They have all realized that being crowned top of Africa has benefits in marketing the country and so we tried, and others tried too. Last year we had the 50th anniversary of Independence to promote, being named by the Lonely Planet as the top global destination and this year we used the National Geographic ranking which makes us a top destination for 2013. We need to take stock now and see where we can improve. More money would have helped but we shall lobby for that ahead of the budget reading. We have a serious minister now and I think she can persuade her cabinet colleagues to fund marketing better, let's hope'.

Congratulations nevertheless to the Ugandan participants for a job well done to put the country in Africa's top five, one of tourism's BIG FIVE, if not in numbers but certainly in attractions, scenery and hospitality.

Kenya News

FASTJET'S COURTSHIP FOR JETLINK THREATENED BY WINDING UP PETITION



News are emerging from Nairobi that one of the aviation fuel suppliers to grounded Jetlink has gone to court to file a winding up petition, in order to attempt recovery of outstanding money to the tune of over 160,000 US Dollars owed to them. A source in Nairobi passed the information that a case was filed in the High Court in Nairobi on Tuesday, 19th March.

This development might complicate the talks between FastJet and Jetlink aimed to form a new partnership in Kenya, allowing FastJet to finally get into the aviation market they had targeted all along but were pushed to Tanzania for start up when problems in the cooperation with erstwhile partner Fly540 started to emerge, effectively stalling any fast tracked entry into Kenya. Jetlink and FastJet had held repeated talks in the past, with no results becoming publicly available, though Jetlink reportedly also were and are in talks with other potential partners to inject capital and then resume operations.

The court case invites comparison with FastJet's attempt to enter the South African market through a cooperation with defunct 1Time, which is in liquidation, and where the newcomer claims the market is underserved. This mindboggling statement came inspite of Kulula and Mango, two LCC's operating within South Africa and into the region, providing travel at fares hard to beat, giving the two loadfactors other scheduled airlines in South Africa only marvel at.

Interesting enough, the same fuel company, Finjet, last year also launched a winding up petition against rival Fly540, a company FastJet eventually went to bed with only to see the nuptials come crashing down when the erstwhile partnership fell apart as claims and counterclaims were made and courtcases filed. That case was eventually withdrawn with Finjet opting for other ways and means to recover their money from Fly540 at the time. Jetlink is expected to vigorously defend against a winding up petition, so watch this space for upcoming future news.

MALINDI FESTIVAL LAUNCHES MARCH 29TH



The National Museums of Kenya have reiterated their intent to go ahead with the 4th Malindi Cultural Festival, starting on March 29th and set to run over the Easter Weekend, despite the present political uncertainty as an election petition is being heard in Nairobi at the Supreme Court.

The news were passed around at the currently ongoing Holiday Fair 2013 at Nairobi's Sarit Centre, aimed to attract visitors to Malindi for the Easter weekend and make up for the notable downturn in foreign visitor arrivals experienced right now. The festival organizers, according to a Nairobi based source, expect as many as 70,000 visitors from the coast and upcountry to flock to Malindi to participate in the event, one of Kenya's main cultural features alongside the Lamu Festival.

The information received included a statement issued yesterday by a senior curator of the museums, one Swaleh Gazaa, which read: *'We are finalizing preparations for the fourth Malindi Cultural festival , many people were*

not sure the festival will take place, it's an annual event which is in our calendar and acts as an assignment NMK undertook. We chose this time of the year because its during the low season (kusi), and there are usually no tourists, the idea was to make season out of the off season, and create a good atmosphere for the tourists visiting the resort town. The hotels volunteered to provide free accommodation for our guests who will be officiating at the event.'

It is understood that a wide sponsorship has been attracted for the festival, ranging from the US Embassy, the National Oil Corporation, the Kenya Maritime Authority, the Kenya Airports Authority, and hotels including Ocean Sports, Aquarius, Turtle Bay and Blue Bay resorts. It is clearly #TembeaKenya time again and with the attractive packages on offer at the Holiday Fair 2013 for Easter trips to the Kenya coast, Malindi would be happy to see more visitors arrive to enjoy not just the beaches but the unique coastal Swahili culture too. Go Travel.

OL PEJETA DOES IT AGAIN



Described by this correspondent as one of Kenya's most complete safari experiences, all in one place, the Ol Pejeta Conservancy has been making its way back here with some frequency which left others to wonder what the deal is between us. Actually, the deal is in the innovations, the fresh approach to promoting domestic tourism to the conservancy and the range of added attractions, and safety / security measures introduced, this being the first place in Kenya to be monitored from the skies above with a dedicated UAV, aka drone. That, well reported here followed the introduction of a mobile rapid deployment unit, supported by among others Tropic Air from Nanyuki, which is sponsoring the helicopter for such hot pursuits, all aimed at protecting the priceless rhinos and keeping them alive and well so that the coming generations of safari enthusiasts can still see these animals in the wild.

A '*Living with Wildlife*' estate launched last year, a new restaurant to offer day visitors to the conservancy the opportunity to enjoy a decent meal without having to slug an entire picnic outfit along, and most important, a variety of birds, big and small game plus a concentration of rhinos, black, southern and northern white second to none in Kenya, have made Ol Pejeta for many THE domestic destination.

For the growing stream of visitors Ol Pejeta has now introduced a '*mobile map*' of the 90.000+ acres estate, showing game concentrations and the way to see them. The map can be accessed on a smart phone with ease and then '*navigated*' by clicking on the estate location, but also downloaded in PDF format and printed.

Visit www.olpejetaconservancy.org and follow the link to the map for details and once done, also browse the website for news and updates on rhino conservation, the fine properties found on the estate like *the Porini Rhino Camp*, the *Kichche Laikipia Camp* or *Serena's Sweetwaters Safari Camp*, or see what Ol Pejeta's own *Ol Pejeta House* or their *Pelican House* has to offer for those travelling on a budget. #TembeaKenya – the time is now, tomorrow and any day after that.

KENYA AIRWAYS INCREASES GUANGZHOU FLIGHTS TO DAILY FROM APRIL 01



The upcoming new summer schedule by Kenya Airways, aka *The Pride of Africa* will see a significant upping of flights to China's Guangzhou, from presently 4 a week to daily departures, reflecting strong demand by travelers in both directions. The new schedule also introduces three night departures from Nairobi to Dubai and on to Hong Kong, reflecting a double digit growth in traffic numbers between the Middle and Far East and Nairobi in recent months. The imminent arrival of the airline's fifth B777, the new bird being a -300ER version compared to the existing 4 -200ER versions, will allow the airline to expand frequencies on such routes which are showing strong growth and support Kenya Airways' plans to eventually fly to significantly more destinations in China – up to 6 overall according to information available from their strategic *Plan Mawingo*.

Airline analysts and aviation observers concur that the medium to longer term prospects of Kenya Airways are overwhelmingly positive despite the presently challenging business environment, which will likely result in a full year loss for KQ as a result of one off cost incurred from a major restructuring exercise and the substantially higher fuel cost, besides increased competition on the airline's core routes overseas by in particular the Gulf carriers. Watch this space for regular and breaking news updates from Eastern Africa's vibrant aviation industry.

NAIROBI SET TO HOST ECOTOURISM CONFERENCE IN SEPTEMBER



The **Seventh Annual Ecotourism and Sustainable Tourism Conference (ESTC)** will take place in Kenya's capital city of Nairobi between September 24 – 27 this year, bringing together stakeholders from Africa and around the world to discuss sustainable development and how tourism can help developing countries to fight poverty among fast growing populations.

Hosted jointly by the Kenya Tourism Board and the Ecotourism Society of Kenya, the event is organized by The International Ecotourism Society in close cooperation with the United Nations World Tourism Organization.

Up to 500 participants are expected to attend the event from among the 120 countries where TIES is represented through local partners and ecotourism societies, discussing progress made since the previous meetings and the topics dominating ongoing dialogues and on-line forums.

Proposals are still invited by the conference organizers as are calls for potential presenters, aimed to enrich the agenda of the meeting and give communities and individuals the opportunity to voice problems encountered in their own back yards and share their experience with their colleagues at large.

The event will be held at the conference centre of the Safari Park Hotel in Nairobi, which will also be the official conference hotel, although other hotels are available for delegates to stay in with regular transport to and from the venue.

For more information please contact either Ayako Ezaki via media@ecotourism.org or the conference secretariat via Edith Bosire, Conference Coordinator Kenya via estc13@ecotourismkenya.org

HOLIDAY FAIR 2013 AIMS TO ATTRACT AND STIMULATE DOMESTIC TRAVEL



The 2013 edition of Kenya's domestic travel exhibition at the Sarit Centre, Holidays 2013 Tourism Fair, is going underway today and will run until the 24th of March, giving Kenyans the opportunity to see the range of resorts, safari lodges and safari camps now available for them at special residents rates.

All leading hotel and lodge companies, but also DMC's and other service providers, will be exhibiting at the region's largest domestic tourism show. In no particular order have companies like Serena Hotels, Sarova Hotels, Hemingways, Fairmont Kenya, Cheli & Peacock, Sun Africa Hotels and many others confirmed to this correspondent in recent days and weeks that they will exhibit at the Sarit Centre and try to fill their beds for the upcoming Easter season.

Many have confirmed that a distinct downturn of foreign tourist arrivals as a result of the March 04 elections has left them with space to sell and the current petition pending before Kenya's Supreme Court, filed by the main loser of the presidential elections, has kept many foreign visitors away for longer as the outcome may yet set the stage for an election re-run. ***'Another election will be very costly for Kenya. We have to spend money we do not have for another election in April and in addition tourists will stay away for the uncertainty this might create. We have demonstrated that Kenyans are responsible citizens. Our election went on peacefully, the counting and announcement of results was peaceful and even the petition in court so far was peaceful. Personally I cannot blame our overseas partners to be cautious but only appeal to them to trust our processes here. There is no danger for foreign tourists. However, we have empty beds and the Holiday Fair this year is extra important to help us sell beds, for the Easter holiday period and right through the low season till end of June or to mid July. Kenyans and East African have in the past been a backbone for our business. The pay less, that is true, but have helped to keep occupancies within viable range. Without Kenyans travelling to the parks and the coast, our sector***

would be much worse off when the wagenis are staying away’ said a regular source overnight in response to the question how important this year’s edition will be.

Also on site will be the Kenya Tourism Board and other trade partners like tourism associations, all working hand in hand to promote increased domestic travel and meet the objectives to eventually reach a 50 percent local and regional business margin vis a vis foreign visitors. Happy selling to all the participants.

UNEP’S UPGRADING TO TOP UN STATUS RAISES NAIROBI’S PROFILE IN THE WORLD



Kenya’s capital city of Nairobi is now the home of the newly upgraded United Nations Environmental Assembly, formerly known as the UN Environment Programme. A sustained campaign by Kenya and her friends in the region and on the continent was finally seeing the fruits of a long labour to bring a key UN component to the African continent, and with UNEP already based in Nairobi there was no question where the new assembly would be located. With Africa arguably the most affected continent by climate change and global warming, many in the UN Assembly felt it was the right thing to do to upgrade UNEP into a fully fledged organization, to give Africa a voice and highlight the upcoming environmental challenges the world is faced with.

Nairobi is one of the best connected cities in Africa when it comes to air traffic and a major expansion programme for the congested Jomo Kenyatta International Airport is underway, creating a second runway and more than tripling available terminal spaces by 2016/17, allowing yet more airlines to fly to Kenya’s capital. Besides national airline Kenya Airways, which connects the continent like few others with the rest of the world, the three main Gulf giants Emirates – double daily – Qatar Airways and Etihad are meeting at JKIA with the leading European airlines but also an increasing number of airlines from the Far and South East.

‘We had a lot of negative publicity in the past. The entire issue of Somalia and then our elections have dampened interest in travel to Kenya. The decision by the UN to upgrade UNEP is most welcome therefore. It affirms that Nairobi is a worthy partner to the UN and a capable host city to the new UNEA. They have world class facilities at Gigiri where their headquarters are located. Our hotels are among the best in Africa and new big hotel names are coming to Kenya all the time. Our airport is the busiest and best connected in this part of Africa. The good publicity with the UN decision will hopefully translate in a lot more conferences and meetings coming to Nairobi focusing on the environment and all the related problems and opportunities, so we are happy’ said a regular tourism source from Nairobi when discussing the development on email yesterday. Well done Kenya.

KENYA AIRWAYS PREPARES FOR WELCOME TO A BRAND NEW B777-300ER



Kenya Airways’ implementation of *Plan Mawingo* remains on course with the upcoming delivery of another brand new B777-300ER, which will boost *The Pride of Africa’s* ability to add flight frequencies and eventually more destinations to their growing long haul network.

Over the past year the emphasis was on the delivery of short and medium haul Embraer E190’s, needed to widen the Africa network and capture that all important transit traffic coming via Nairobi for the airline’s Middle and Far Eastern destinations. While yet more deliveries of these sleek birds are expected in coming months, the next arrival though at Kenya Airways’ Embakasi base, opposite the main terminal at JKIA, will be Boeing’s largest aircraft available right now, of which KQ already has four B777-200ER on the fleet, those being configured in a two class layout of 28 full flatbed seats in Business Class and 294 seats in Economy Class.

‘The arrival of another wide bodied plane is crucial for KQ’s plans to expand long haul destinations to Asia. The long delay with the B787 has hit them hard because now they are stuck with the older B767’s which are smaller and consume much more fuel. They had to bring another B767 to the fleet and now the next B777 is coming. The regional fleet has grown a lot last year and it now needs the added capacity for long haul flights to match those extra passengers flying with KQ through Nairobi’ said a regular aviation source from Nairobi with good insight

into the workings at *The Pride of Africa*. Watch this space for the formal announcement when the new aircraft has arrived in Nairobi and on which routes it will be deployed.

HEMINGWAYS OPENING SET TO BLITZ THE LUXURY MARKET IN NAIROBI



When Hemingways Nairobi will open its doors next month, Nairobians and regular travelers to the city will likely stand in some awe after seeing what the team around Group CEO Alastair Addison has created in the leafy suburb of Karen, where the new, 45 all suite property is located.

Built to exacting standards and equipped with the latest technologies available for top rated hotels and resorts, the third Hemingways property – the other two are the *original* Hemingways in Watamu and their more recent addition of a luxurious safari camp in the Masai Mara – is aimed not just to serve as a base in one of the capital's most sought after suburbs for Hemingways beach and safari clientele but also to attract business visitors for whom the location, facilities and service levels matter more than the slightly longer commute into the city, compared to CBD based hotels.

A Michelin starred chef, a novelty for Nairobi, will make sure that no culinary craving remains unanswered and a personal butler for every suite will be at his guests beck and call around the clock. Watch this space for more updates when the new hotel opens its doors and welcomes the first guests. Meanwhile, visit www.hemingways-collection.com or www.hemingways-nairobi.com for more information on this fine collection of luxurious properties.

KENYA BUZZ LAUNCHES PHONE APP TO BE AVAILABLE ON THE GO



Kenya's premier leisure, food, entertainment and travel e-Guide for what's to do, where to go and what to find where has just launch their phone application, which is now available to get the news on the go, the first such known **app** available for this purpose in the entire East Africa.

KenyaBuzz's 'app' is targeted towards people who want to know about and actively participate in the rapidly growing social scene in Kenya, be it Kenyans, East Africans on visit or tourists and business visitors from further abroad. Aptly named, '**Kenyabuzz Raha**' with the slogan 'fun at your fingertips', the '**app**' gives its users the ability to:

- Search events by city and area, date, or type of event including- art exhibitions, festivals/craft fairs, films, kids events, live music events, nightlife, photography, fashion, sports, theater, dance, yoga/meditation, campus events and much more.
- Check the movie listings by movie or theater for all movie theaters throughout Kenya.
- Search for restaurants by city, area, or cuisine.
- Find other fun including bars and nightclubs, sightseeing spots, spas, casinos, recreation activities and other fun and interesting places in Kenya.

'This is just the first version of the app', said the CEO of Kenyabuzz Alix Grubel when asked about the innovation before she continued: ***'it simply gives the user information. But the next versions of the app will be interactive in the sense that they will allow people to check into the places, find their friends, make comments, review places, upload pictures and earn badges'***.

The app, which can be downloaded free of charge by anyone with an android phone, will undoubtedly have a positive impact on the Kenyan social scene where previously it was difficult to get accurate and up-to-date information on the go, something which has now changed forever as **KenyaBuzz** catapulted itself into the next generation of lifestyle and entertainment guides similar to those available in Dubai, London or New York.

Kenyabuzz Raha is available for download from www.kenyabuzz.com/raha or from the Google Play Store via https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.kenyabuzz&feature=search_result

Well done indeed Alix and all the staff at **KenyaBuzz** and of course many thanks for continuing to feature selected articles from this correspondent.

KENYA AIRWAYS PREPARES FOR DELIVERY OF FIRST CONVERTED B737-300 FREIGHTER



Slightly later than initially expected will Kenya Airways receive the first of eventually four converted B737-300 cargo aircraft, which have been selected from their passenger fleet and which will be undergoing this transformation at a facility in China. With the arrival of more Embraer E190 jets is Kenya Airways now able to progressively phase out the ageing B737-300 models still in service and replace them with the more cost effective Embraer's and, in due course, with new B737-800's, which are larger than the old -300 type.

Kenya Airways had for a prolonged period of time scouted the global aircraft market in search of suitable narrow body cargo aircraft, but when the exercise did not yield acceptable results eventually decided last year to rather use their own aircraft due to leave the fleet to make place for newer jets, and convert those to create a fleet of dedicated cargo aircraft. Already operating a code shared B747- 400 freighter with KLM, which regularly flies a triangular service between Nairobi, Amsterdam and China, the new B737-300F will allow to distribute cargo into the wider Eastern African region but also beyond, and collect palletted cargo to be transhipped in Nairobi where one of Africa's largest cargo centres has been established over the past decade.

'Cargo uplift has been declining over the past months but the airline is confident that medium term an own cargo fleet is the only way forward. Using just the underfloor space on wide body passenger aircraft is not enough. For that reason the B747 was leased but the key is in using an aircraft type which allows for pallets but is also not too big. There is a lot of cargo in the region which needs collecting. There is a lot of cargo coming into Nairobi which has to go into the region. For now, palletted services are expensive for lack of suitable aircraft but when the new freighter arrives, this makes it a bit easier. Kenya Airways has in their strategic plan outlined that they want to have a dozen cargo aircraft on their fleet by 2022. They are aware of what Ethiopian and Egypt Air are doing with their cargo aircraft and know that they either go into that business full scale or otherwise leave it to others. Kenya Airways does not leave business opportunities to others however, we all know that from how they went back into the domestic Kenyan market in 2010. When the first converted B737-300 comes back the next one will leave passenger service until all four are converted but just wait for announcements' said a regular airline source close to *The Pride of Africa* over the weekend when discussing the imminent arrival of the aircraft.

Watch this space for regular and breaking aviation news from the entire Eastern African region.

Tanzania News

AIR TANZANIA EYES COMOROS FLIGHTS



Air Tanzania is reportedly eyeing Moroni / Comoros as their first international destination since relaunching operations last year, with March 25th reportedly the date for the inaugural flight, using their B737 for the route. A Dar es Salaam based source with insight into ATCL confirmed that the airline will launch 3 flights a week to Moroni, instead of returning to the more likely destination Nairobi as was widely expected. *'I think ATC has figured out they need to go to places where there is demand and little competition. If they start up with Nairobi they are running head on into Precision and Kenya Airways and they need a right sized aircraft to do that. Their B737 is used on daily flights to Kilimanjaro and Mwanza and can do Moroni 3 times a week, but to do say 2 added frequencies to Nairobi it might be a stretch. The aircraft of course can fly the route but the question is departure times from Dar and Nairobi for a morning and evening service because just once a day would not do. And that would clash with the domestic flights to Mwanza and Kilimanjaro. Perhaps they are waiting to get more aircraft as they keep telling us, but for now they made the right choice to go to the Comoros instead of other places like Nairobi or Entebbe'*. Happy landings to the crews and passengers.

TURKISH TO GO DAILY TO DAR



A regular aviation source in Dar es Salaam has confirmed that Turkish Airlines will be moving from 5 flights a week to daily flights starting end of May this year. The airline is using a B737-900ER for the destination, connecting Tanzania – Turkish is also flying to Kilimanjaro on a different flight which then returns to Istanbul via Mombasa – to their global network of 185 destinations, besides 37 additional domestic destinations, one of the largest networks in the world. Now operating over 200 modern aircraft Turkish is a member of global market leader Star Alliance. The source mentioned that Turkish saw an opportunity as the market is now preparing for the exit of British Airways at the end of March, a move never quite fully explained and reacted to with some level of disappointment if not anger by Tanzanians who enjoyed BA's services for decades and, going by the word of one regular reader '**felt dumped**'. Other airlines have equally responded with the introduction of larger aircraft, like Emirates starting to bring their B777 on the route, lending credibility to the claims by Tanzanian officials that while the market for travel to and from Tanzania is there, a hidden agenda may have been at work for BA when they announced their withdrawal from the route. This notion however was rejected by a source from Nairobi, close to BA, who pointed at the mounting losses of IAG, the parent group of British Airways, which might have compelled them to consolidate routes in an attempt to save money by closing down low yield destinations. Watch this space for regular and breaking news from Eastern Africa's aviation scene.

SWISSPORT (T) PROFITS SHRINK BY 5 PERCENT AS COMPANY STRUGGLES WITH COST



Information was received from an aviation source in Dar es Salaam that Swissport, Tanzania's leading ground handling agency at the main airports of the country, has seen a profit reduction of some 5 percent at the end of their last financial year. The company reportedly attributed the reduction to increased cost of operations, including staff expenses. While revenues for the financial year 2012 apparently grew by more than 8 percent to over 30 billion Tanzania Shillings for the first time ever, expenses increase above that margin by 14 percent, leading to the profit reduction. At the same time however did the company manage to grow the asset base by 14 percent too with the introduction of state of the art equipment and facilities.

The company expressed confidence that 2013 will see further revenue growth and a recovery of profits after declaring a final dividend for the past financial year, combining to nearly 150 Tanzania Shillings paid per share. Swissport Chairman Juan Alves released a media statement yesterday in which he said: '***We remain committed to ensuring a continued growth of our company. We foresee slight increase in number of frequencies and volume of cargo in 2013***'.

MANGO LAUNCHES FLIGHTS BETWEEN JOHANNESBURG AND ZANZIBAR



AfricaStay, a South Africa based tour operator, has yesterday launched nonstop charter flights between Johannesburg and Zanzibar, now operating every Tuesday and using a B737-800 with a configuration of 185 seats, all economy. The flights are reportedly a '*replacement*' for the services operated until last year by now defunct ITime, once more offering South African travelers direct access to the ***Spice Island***. Tourism sources on Zanzibar have welcomed the new flight and expressed their hope that the possible second flight during the high season could add even greater numbers of visitors, helping to fill beds in the resorts across the island.

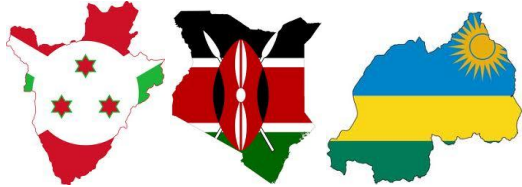
AfricaStay's Cobus Vermeulen, Director for Sales and Marketing, was quoted to this correspondent by a Zanzibar based source as having said that the new connection would be reasonably priced and ticket only sales are available besides AfricaStay's package holidays which include flight, transportation and resort stay.

'Like you wrote Zanzibar is getting new resorts of top quality. We have a lot of beds to sell now and what we need is more nonstop flights to Zanzibar. Mango is welcome because even ITime had good load factors and South Africans like Zanzibar. But like we made it clear at ITB, we want more charter flights directly from Europe, or

even combined with maybe Kilimanjaro or Mombasa, and we want more scheduled flights from bigger airlines. We are different from the coast of Tanzania or Kenya, we have beautiful beaches and we also have history to see for visitors' added the source when passing the information about the new flights by Mango. Other flights presently route via Dar es Salaam with both Precision Air and Coastal Aviation the main airlines serving the island. Watch this space for breaking and regular aviation news from across Eastern Africa.

Burundi News

BURUNDI RECLAIMS TOP AFRICAN EXHIBITOR HONOURS BEFORE KENYA AND RWANDA



The results for '**Best African Exhibitor at ITB 2013**' are somewhat surprising for many observers but not for this correspondent, who is a keen observer of the regional tourism scene.

Burundi, like last year, once again claimed the top prize as best exhibitor, hopefully helping this little country in the heart of Africa to promote the tourism attractions better and get more visitors to the country's national parks.

Second this year was Kenya, clearly on the ascent and keen to eventually capture the top spot, perhaps as early as next year. Magical Kenya brought the largest delegation to the ITB again this year from among the 5 East African Community member countries, united this year under an East African stand set up where all the '**Big Five**' were able to showcase their individual highlights and specialties to the world.

Third came fancied Rwanda, which had in past years always come out on top before being dislodge by neighbours Burundi but has nevertheless captured the imagination of stand visitors with their tales of gorillas and forest hikes in Nyungwe, about the Congo Nile Trail and the savannah park of Akagera.

Promoting East Africa as one destination with many attractions is now slowly taking root but can only ultimately succeed when a common visitor Visa is finally launched, something which to the disappointment of many tourism stakeholders is still stuck in bureaucratic arguments and squabbles over the distribution of the Visa revenue.

Congrats to the winners who can now turn honours into marketing efforts and revenues.

Rwanda News

SERVICE MAGAZINE HAS READERS TO VOTE ON THEIR FAVOURITES



Rwanda's leading business magazine, *The ServiceMag* has just revealed the results of a customer satisfaction survey, where readers of the magazine had the opportunity to cast their own votes in a range of categories, expressing themselves and giving a fair insight into the level of service one can now expect when visiting the *Land of a Thousand Hills*. Launched yesterday evening at a reception in Kigali at the Gorilla Golf Hotel, the results revealed some stunning upsets for more fancied places but are generally considered unbiased, other than for being the personal opinion of the 'voters'. The annual service survey is a barometer how far Rwanda has come in recent years, but also a glowing tribute for *The ServiceMag* to have established itself as THE magazine of record for the business community and society at large in the country.

And the winners are – not exactly Hollywood style but as good as it gets in our part of the world:

Restaurants - Camellia Tea House

Supermarkets - Nakumatt
Health providers - CHUK
Government Departments - Immigration and Emigration
Districts – Nyarugenge / Kigali
ISP - Broadband Systems Corporation
Telecom - Airtel
Pay TV - CANAL+
Hotels - Nyungwe Forest Lodge
Road Transport - Volcano Express
Airlines – Qatar Airways
Insurance - Military Medical Insurance
Banking - Equity Bank
Overall Best Service Provider - Immigration and Emigration

Congratulations to in particular the Nyungwe Forest Lodge, springboard to the ‘*Enchanted Forest of Nyungwe*’ and of course to the world’s five star airline ***Qatar Airways***. The overall winner, the Department of Immigration and Emigration, must be especially applauded as their service at the Kanombe International Airport in Kigali is, in the humble opinion of this correspondent, considered exemplary in the entire region, on arrival and on departure, services rendered with a smile. Way to go Rwanda, way to go.

Mauritius News

RESORT STAFF STAGE DEMONSTRATIONS OVER BEING LAID OFF



Laid off in February due to low business recorded at their resort, some 18 staff of the St. Geran resort on Mauritius took to the streets to demonstrate over the allegedly poor deal they got, hoping for intervention from the labour ministry to either be reinstated or else be given a substantially bigger golden handshake for losing their employment. Mauritius has been struggling last year with less than hoped for arrivals, losing the coveted top spot for tourist arrivals in the Indian Ocean to the Maldives. A shake up in the tourism promotion authority, long overdue when going by the regularly voiced opinions from stakeholders in touch with this correspondent, has started at the wrong end when two months ago the chairman was sacked, also causing substantial fallout between the tourism minister and his party leader, who is also the deputy prime minister.

‘There have been some layoffs as a result of the poorer than expected business in our hotels. We just had the St. Regis open its doors which means stiffer competition for those tourists who opt to come to Mauritius. Marketing is the key as you always write and there we have to really get back on track. Innovation, new ideas, new perspectives are needed, not cheaply copying what others do. We need to create our own brand identity again, find a new catching slogan and tag line for Mauritius because, as you also write about, we have a lot of attractions on the island. Mauritius needs to showcase our nature, our island landscapes, not just the beaches. And we need to open our skies without just thinking of protecting our national airline. Air Mauritius needs a strong partner, like Air Seychelles. They turned from big losses to profits in a year since they teamed up with Etihad. Those are lessons we need to analyse and turn into action of our own’ wrote a regular source from Port Louis when passing the information about the demonstration to this correspondent.

Other stakeholders though expressed their hope that 2013 will be a better year and catapult Mauritius above the 1 million arrival mark, but acknowledged too in varying degrees that the island’s marketing by MTPA needs urgent revision and reorganization and become inclusive to have all stakeholders on board and not just a select few.

Seychelles News

TOURISM BUSINESSES FEATURE HIGH IN SEYCHELLES ‘BEST HR PRACTICES’ AWARDS



Last weekend saw the first ever recognition of best human resource management practices in the Seychelles, during a ceremony held at the Berjaya Beau Vallon Bay Resort and Casino.

Award winners were picked from both private and public sector in three main categories, small and medium and large enterprises, and with tourism being the mainstay of the archipelago's economy it came as no surprise that several hospitality and DMC businesses were among those honoured.

The Seychelles Civil Aviation Authority took the honours for public sector large enterprises while Masons Travel, one of the country's leading DMC's took runner up in the private sector after communications company Cable & Wireless.

In the medium category it was Starwood's Le Meridien Fisherman's Cove which came second after Seychelles Breweries while in the small business category no nominees had taken part this year.

'Brand Seychelles has many different aspects and it is not all about marketing or showcasing our destination. Within the Seychelles many areas are addressed by government and the private sector to improve service delivery. HR is one area which is a cornerstone. Through STA [Seychelles Tourism Academy] we are creating the manpower the country needs to efficiently and smartly run hotels and resorts. This recognition will go some way to show that Seychelles is taking a holistic approach to all aspects of the economy, tourism of course being at the forefront of it all'.

Meanwhile, in a related development of further improvements to the archipelago's resorts, it was learned that Fregate Island Private is undergoing a full transformation in coming months with new furnishings and fabrics being introduced across its 17 villas, including the latest technology available for guestrooms to make a stay as enjoyable as can be. Local art is also being promoted by displaying works from Seychelles art legend Sir Michael Adams. Fregate Private, though long established already, is one of a new breed of resorts where an island restricts itself to just one top notch property to ensure maximum privacy for guests while at the same time being able to dedicate much of the surrounds to nature conservation, amply demonstrated here with a recorded 100 species of birds and a population of over 2,000 of the giant Aldabra tortoises. ***Seychelles, truly Another World.***

AND in closing some more interesting material from Gill Staden's ***Livingstone Weekly***

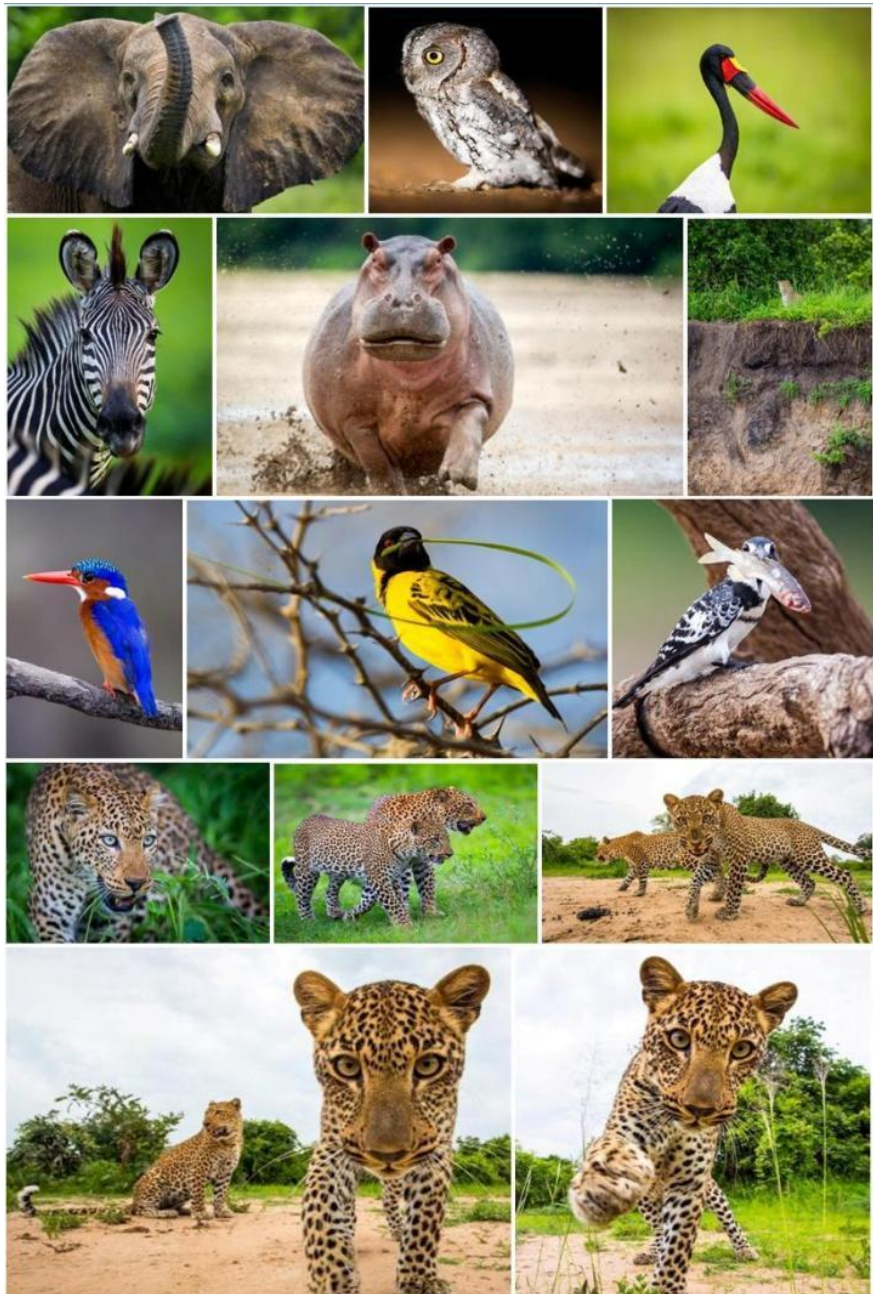
From Norman Carr Safaris

**NCS - Luangwa secrets
revealed
March 2013**

"There is no game in the
green season....."

This is a phrase we often
hear quoted about the
Luangwa in the green
season. It simply is not true
and we spend a lot of time
and effort trying to dispel
this myth. These images
taken by our friend Will
Burrard-Lucas over 5 days
this February on foot, by
vehicle, by boat and from his
fiendishly clever "Beetle-
cam" describe the glories of
the green season far more
eloquently than I ever could
- so let them speak for
themselves. And it's not ALL
about birds - although this is
perhaps one of the best
times of the year for
ornithologists..... scroll down
for the leopards. Is there
such a thing as "too many
leopards"?!

Potential guests worry that
it rains all the time in the
green season but in reality,
game viewing activities are
rarely interrupted and the
small chance of getting wet is more than made up for by the incredible beauty of the bush at this lush
time of year. We are in a tropical region so the usual weather pattern during 'the rains' is a few days
with no rain at all, a gradual build up of thunderheads, a spectacular tropical downpour from time to
time lasting an hour or so - then back to hot sun and blue skies! Very rarely do we experience long spells
of rain and we can almost always make any lost game viewing time.



Jimbe Minerals was set up by a former Minister of Health, Chilufya Kazenene. In 2011 the company raised K15billion for development and started exploration in North Western Province. They have identified a potential Nickel Mine near Ikelenge, in Chief Nyakaseya's area. The people there are naturally excited about the possibility of jobs and are keen for the project to go ahead.

However, during submissions for the Environmental Impact Assessment, Kelvin Mkandawire representing Bird Watch Zambia, brought the meetings attention to the unique environment of the area and bird life that it supports.

Kelvin Mkandawire: *I know that the coming of the mine is good news, but not for the birds of course because mining and birds actually don't get together.*

I would like to highlight that your mining license area actually captures the entire Important Bird Area (IBA) because Jimbe is an IBA.

The significance of this Important Bird Area is that it's the only one in Zambia that has the Guineo-Congolian Biome and in Zambia there are 17 Guineo-Congolian species and Jimbe (IBA) holds 16 of them.

This has put the cat among the pigeons, or, should I say, the birder among the miners ...

A bit of background on Jimbe

As you can see on the map, this area has four Important Bird Areas. As well as Jimbe, there are Hillwood, Source of the Zambezi and Chitunta Plain. From Birdlife International about Jimbe: *Management considerations: About 90% of the site is unprotected but, due to its proximity to Angola, it is much more sparsely populated than surrounding areas, where many forests have been cleared for small-scale farming. The broad mushitus found at headwaters in this region probably represented the areas of greatest biodiversity, yet these are particularly favoured for cultivation and virtually none remain. Within the site, much of the gallery forest is presently undisturbed, but action is urgently required to protect it.*

Recently BirdWatch Zambia has trained guides in Important Bird Areas in Zambia. For Jimbe IBA: Elias Makondou - Kayuka village, Justine Kanema - Lukano village.

Contact Persons: Kenson Muke, Kayuka village. Christopher Kawangu near Swana Muhongu Village, close to the Jimbe River.

