

TOURISM NEWS

from the Eastern African
and Indian Ocean region



By Prof. Dr. Wolfgang H. Thome
Third edition August 2010

Uganda News

ANTI HUNTING LOBBY SENSES NEW CHANCE TO STOP THE BLOOD SPORT

The anti hunting lobby in Uganda has taken fresh hope, following reports last week that the top management of the Uganda Wildlife Authority was suspended from office to clear the way for an investigation into alleged extortion of bribes from hunting firms.

While the 'real' culprit, former 'conservation coordinator' – and what a misnomer that is in this case – James Omoding left UWA by handing in his resignation a few weeks ago, effective immediately, his bosses are now reportedly accused of having been too lenient with him when the information became known. Omoding may of course still face criminal charges for having allegedly solicited bribes, but for the hunting companies too this could spell doom as not just the corruptee but also the corrupter can face court action in Uganda under existing laws. Therefore, should the case end up in court, and the current new board of UWA seems determined to start their tenure with such a bang, the hunting companies could face a fine, jail and cancellation

of their agreements with UWA if found guilty.

Several anti hunting lobbyists have been in touch with this correspondent to point out once again, that should that be proven, hunting should be prohibited immediately to make way for a long term moratorium, which ought to be used for honest dialogue, the public evaluation of any and all data from the so called hunting pilot project which quietly, almost stealthily transformed into hunting proper, and a detailed country wide survey be conducted of game numbers to ascertain scientifically if hunting, and for what species, can potentially be allowed again, if at all that is.

Hunting crept back through the new Wildlife Act's 'wildlife use rights' section, and when first proposed the then CEO of UWA publicly promised to avail the study and results or the 'pilot scheme' to tourism and conservation stakeholders. This, according to many, however never did take place and although Moses Mapesa has repeatedly in the past made comments that the dialogue was held, no evidence to that effect was ever made public, as to the where, when and the list of participants, to ascertain once and for all which side was telling the truth. Evidence was also submitted to UWA in the past that the endangered Sitatunga gazelle had been advertised by the hunting firms, but also no visible action appears to have been taken then against the culprits. Hunting is hugely controversial amongst conservationists, and while proponents constantly point to the benefits, it is alleged that those are for few, while the excesses of 'canned hunting' in Southern Africa have certainly raised the emotions to boiling point. Watch this space.

UWA BOARD 'EATS' OWN DECISION, NAMES NEW ACTING ED

The Uganda Wildlife Authority Board did not exactly convince onlookers, when a day after appointing the UWA Director of Finance, Mr. Joseph Tibaijuka as Acting Executive Director, they turned 180 degrees and sent him on forced leave too, with the Chairman of UWA quoted in the local media as feebly saying it was 'not appropriate to appoint the Finance Director as Acting ED' – a thought clearly coming to him and his fellow board members a day too late ...

At the same time of announcing their turnabout they also sent two more senior staff on forced leave, amongst them the Director Tourism Development Ms. Eunice Mahoro, leaving observers both bemused as well as confused over the true reasons for the drastic action suddenly unfolding now.

One regular source working closely with UWA on these issues suggested that the board better find hard evidence for what they are suggesting to the public by their action while also saying: 'they are new, they may want to make an impact, leave a mark, or stamp their authority on UWA's management from the word go. The old board served for one term, this is also somewhat unusual, so what is really going on in UWA. Are people right now being railroaded for expediency sake or are there truly things going on the public did not find out about. Mapesa was a tough counterpart when dealing with him and never gave us the impression he was on the take or otherwise 'dirty'. Let that audit complete now to get some answers but if the chairman does not find the dirt he is looking for, then his own tenure is under the microscope too'.

Mr. Mark Kamanzi was meanwhile named as Acting Executive

Director of UWA and will now be finding it paramount to keep morale amongst staff intact and high to meet the daily challenges in the field the authority is faced with besides pleasing his new masters to avoid the same fate which befell others before him, should he not ask 'how high' when his masters tell him to jump.

All these developments however now also brought the Ugandan parliament into the fray when the committee on tourism demanded that the minister and the board chairman of UWA appear before them and explain the circumstances of their various actions in recent days. Information given to the media also confirmed the statement made by the chair of the parliamentary committee for having said: 'if Mapesa was sacked illegally we will re-instate him'. Watch this space as this hugely damaging saga continues.

Also find more details and background on this story in an article in the last Saturday Monitor: www.monitor.co.ug/News/National/-/688334/976242/-/item/0/-/1tpsjlz/-/index.html and yet more revealing revelations from the Sunday Monitor illuminating the undercurrents, why an otherwise honourable man is being sacrificed and put to the sword while Uganda's key conservation body is driven to the near brink and having development partners and donors now asking questions as to who is in charge and running the organisation while closely monitoring and considering the long term implications of these developments to their assistance and support programmes <http://www.monitor.co.ug/News/National/-/688334/976562/-/x3avtt/-/index.html> <http://www.monitor.co.ug/News/National/-/688334/976566/-/x3avtx/-/index.html>

FERRY GROUNDING ANGERS USERS

MV Kalangala was last week taken out of service for what was described 'routine maintenance and inspection', leaving many travellers stranded as they were unaware of this development. What angered regular travellers to and from the Ssesse Island group on Lake Victoria however, was the fact that the ferry was tied up at the pier without any visible activity underway, leaving shippers of cargo and goods to the islands equally outraged, as they had to hire expensive lake boats – often in the news over accidents and poor safety standards. The weather at present and the prevailing strong winds across the lake are posing a danger for smaller lake boats and added to the anger by the public, many of whom were according to local media reports demanding the vessel to be put back into service immediately or else maintenance to start promptly and not delaying the work. Couldn't agree more ...

UN MAKES ENTEBBE REGIONAL AFRICAN PEACE KEEPING BASE

The international airport in Entebbe, for many years now the regional supply and aviation logistics base for the ongoing UN missions in the Congo DR, Sudan including Darfur and Burundi, has now been elevated into the global body's main operational peace keeping base in this part of Africa.

Added scope, according to a reliable source, will be training and pre-deployment preparations of troops and personnel, and staff numbers, civilian as well as military contingents attached to the various missions the UN is currently involved in, now stands at a staggering 60.000 across the region.

Should the UN in fact get involved again in Somalia, as is

quietly expected and hoped for by the African Union as well as in political circles in Uganda, which currently carries the troop deployment burden together with Burundi, added numbers of troops and support personnel could in fact filter through Entebbe in coming months and acclimatise and train in Uganda.

The UN mission operates dozens of flights every week with aircraft both stationed in Entebbe as well as those flying in and out of the country, to keep their forward bases in Congo, Burundi and Darfur supplied and their base, storage and supply facilities are now occupying much of the 'old' part of Entebbe International Airport, visible for anyone coming to or from the passenger or cargo terminals.

Already now has the UN's staff based in Entebbe, and their activities including the employment of local Ugandans in various capacities, boosted the Entebbe economy substantially, with rented houses and apartments now going at a premium, while restaurants, supermarkets, entertainment hot spots and the nearby attractions like the Botanical Garden, the Uganda Wildlife Education Centre, Ngamba Chimpanzee Island and the further out in the lake Ssesse Islands all feature on the 'must see' agenda of staff based in Entebbe or transiting through. Watch this space.

MORE GORILLA 'BABIES' BORN IN BWINDI

Information was now confirmed that two gorilla babies were born in July this year, one each in the Mubare and Habinjanya groups of Bwindi National Park.

The 'Mubare' addition has been identified by the trackers and rangers as a young male, while the second baby's gender could not be ascertained yet.

UWA has provided back ground information that the Mubare group now stands at 5 / 6 members after the 'new arrival' with one group member regularly migrating in and out of the family, apparently paying regular visits to a neighbouring group. The Habinjanya group now counts 20 gorillas in their midst (yes and in the mist too for those in the know).

Tracking to gorilla groups with new born babies is said to be more difficult as they migrate a lot across the forest to find fresh food and shield the young one's from prying eyes until the little ones' are grown up a little. A naming of the babies is expected to be announced soon. Meanwhile, find more details and stay up to date on gorillas in Uganda via their Facebook pages or www.friendagorilla.org

It is there that specific details on each of the habituated gorilla groups can be found, their movement tracked and donations be made from as little as US Dollar 1 (ONE) to make friends with a particular gorilla. Go visit and support gorilla conservation in Uganda. Webare Nyo Nyo Nyo – thank you.

RE-APPOINTMENT OF CAA CHAIR AND MEMBERS IRES PARLIAMENTARIANS

When the Minister for Transport and Works finally appointed Eng. Baliddawa to a further term of office recently, alongside other board members, it prompted an outcry from some members of the parliamentary oversight committee on transport but also members of the public accounts committee of parliament, who accused the Minister of ignoring their objections and termed the fresh appointment 'illegal'. As reported in the local media they accused the CAA Board

Chairman and some of the re-appointed board members of irregularities over contract awards, although clearly the minister thought otherwise when he signed the appointment instruments.

The move to restore a fully functional board was generally welcomed by the aviation fraternity though, as the previous term of office of the board had expired many months ago, leaving the CAA management without the benefit of receiving advice and / or oversight. Eng. Baliddawa can look back at a long and distinguished career in aviation and is generally considered as a sound choice for chairman, but in the run up of general elections early next year every such appointment now tends to be politicised beyond reason irrespective of a candidate's obvious qualifications.

TOURIST BOARD OFFICES ESCAPE FROM 'DUNGEON' - MOVE TO KOLOLO

The new offices of the Uganda Tourist Board, aka Tourism Uganda, have finally moved to their new location in the upscale Kololo suburb on Acacia Avenue, not far from the Protea Kampala Hotel and the Metropole Hotel, after years of 'hiding' in a much criticised 'basement' location.

For many years the supposed showcase for Uganda's tourism industry was located in the lowest floor of Impala House on Kimathi Avenue in the city centre, often overlooked and when found giving a rather not too inviting impression to their visitors.

UTB also operates two 'window shops' at the Entebbe International Airport's arrival lounge and the Garden City shopping mall, making contact for arriving tourist visitors easy and simple.

The new premises are now fully operational and open for 'business' – aimed to bring more tourists and commercial visitors to the 'Pearl of Africa'.

Well done indeed to Cuthbert and his team for this achievement.



EMIRATES COUNTERS BLACKBERRY WOBBLER WITH ADDED US FLIGHTS

The current undertones when talking about the UAE, caused by intermittent talk of a card house property market, the near failure of some state controlled companies during the global economic crisis and most recently about UAE's plans to ban the use of BlackBerry phones effectively 'grounding' communications while in transit in the UAE, has not deterred Emirates (the airline) to go double daily with B777 equipment from the end of October to Houston and Los Angeles. This offers even better connectivity to travellers to the US, and in

particular those two destinations, and while some travellers will be put off by the ban intended on BlackBerry communications, others will not mind that at all considering the service levels on board and the ease of connectivity via Dubai.

A source at the Emirates Kampala office has confirmed that Los Angeles will go double daily 'first' on the 31st of October while Houston will follow suit on November 01st. The same source was also reiterating that Emirates had during the recent Farnborough Air Show in Britain signed added orders for another 30 of those wide bodied aircraft.

The new flights are on sale with immediate effect from Entebbe but also the other regional Emirates destinations like Nairobi, Dar es Salaam and Addis Ababa, through where the Emirates flights to and from Entebbe route.

Kenya News

KENYA AIRWAYS GETS EXTRA B737 FROM KLM

The cooperation between KQ and KLM has again shown to bear fruits when a B737-300 arrived in Kenya, still painted in KLM livery, to join the fleet of the 'Pride of Africa'. The aircraft will according to a well placed KQ source be deployed on the Nairobi to Mombasa route but is likely to appear also on some other regional destinations, a boost to KQ's expressed plans to offer more flights on routes with growing demand.

The arrival of the extra aircraft – we could not ascertain as yet how long the lease will last – will also serve notice to KQ's competitors on domestic and regional routes, where other privately owned airlines like Fly540, Jetlink and East African Safari Air have made inroads in KQ's previously dominant position and cemented their own positions with more flights and faster and more comfortable newer aircraft, also saving on fuel. KQ in their latest press releases had to acknowledge a reduction in domestic traffic, attributed to the fact of having withdrawn from Lamu due to availability of a suitable aircraft, and from Malindi – something according to another source under active consideration to maybe resume flights there.

Kenya Airways is expecting more aircraft later in the year, including two E190 Embraer jets, but clearly wanted to add capacity to their fleet as the market shows strong signs of traffic growth, without leaving the field to their domestic and regional competitors while waiting for aircraft deliveries to take place. Watch this space for the most up to date information from the regional aviation scene.

SQUABBLES, ACCUSATIONS TRADED OVER 'KOGELO CENTRE' IN KISUMU

The paternal home of US President Obama near Kisumu / Kenya has come into the headlines again for all the wrong reasons. This time it is a set of accusations, counterclaims and a government graft probe which brought the intended tourism attraction into the news, when a government minister called for an immediate investigation over the use of a grant worth 10 million Kenya Shillings apparently misused for putting up, according to the minister, a 'shoddy building'. Community leaders too have divided into two different camps, squabbling over the donation of land some consider unsuitable, again suggesting that vested interests have overtaken the initial grand vision of honouring the past of the present US' president.

Notably, the US Ambassador to Kenya has seemingly gotten involved in the dispute by seeking to mediate between the two

opposing camps, but only time will tell how to put the PR for the centre back on the straight and narrow after these potentially derailing developments.

POTENTIAL AIR BERLIN PILOTS' STRIKE PUTS MOMBASA FLIGHTS IN DOUBT

Pilots of Air Berlin, presently operating charter flights to Mombasa and intending to add scheduled flights between the German capital and the Indian Ocean resort city of Mombasa, have voted almost unanimously for strike action, should the airline's management not make an improved offer in their present round of pay and term / condition talks. Strike action could start any time from now although added talks are scheduled according to a source in Germany for later in August and September already. It appears that while most areas of dispute can be resolved amicably the pilot's demand for a third pilot on board for long haul flights is a position the airline vehemently opposes for cost reasons. Tour operators sources in Mombasa were not able or willing to comment as yet what an impact a strike would have on their tourism business, should one or several of the Air Berlin flights be affected by industrial action. Said one regular: 'I have not even heard about this yet, let me find out more from the airline's representative first before I can make a comment'.

The news come hot on the heels of the airline announcing a rise of over 6 percent of passengers in a month on month comparison with the same period last year and continuously high loadfactors in excess of 80 percent for all their flights.

Air Berlin has in recent years established itself, through mergers and internal growth, as Germany second airline after market leaders Lufthansa.

Tanzania News

TANZANIA TOURIST BOARD ADMITS TO MISSING 2010 TARGETS

Officials of TTB have in recent days scratched their heads when the available half year figures of arrivals and revenues from tourism to Tanzania suggested that the targets initially set for this year will most likely be missed substantially. Estimates presented last year for 2010 spoke of reaching a million visitors and revenues in excess of 1.7 billion US Dollars, but the present trend indicates that the country may now only receive some 800.000 visitors and correspondingly lower revenues than forecast.

Experts are divided over the reasons for this development, as neighbouring Kenya – which kicked off a marketing storm last year and early this year around the world – are already having their eyes set on their best tourism year ever. Suggestions have been made that the stand taken by the Tanzanian government and delegation at the global CITES meeting earlier in the year in Doha has influenced many would be travellers and more so travel and tour agents to send less visitors to Tanzania to express their disagreement on the proposed large scale sale of ivory, while other observers have pointed to the hugely controversial planned highway across the Northern Serengeti, which has conservationists from around the world up in arms. The coordinated campaign against this project may well have resulted in revealing and damaging articles and publicity against Tanzania's government stand on the planned road, and may be just one added cause why less people are visiting

Tanzania this year while tourism generally in the region, in particular in Rwanda and Kenya is showing a sharp upswing. Budget constraints for marketing too have been cited by usually well informed sources from Arusha, who claim that while Kenya and Rwanda in particular, have spent big to reap big. However, this logic has not apparently been understood in Tanzania as yet, and the present election campaign too has taken focus off the sector at a time when it is most needed. Watch this space.

CROSS KILI BALLOON FLIGHT COLLECTS CLIMATE CHANGE DATA

A recent successful attempt to cross Mt. Kilimanjaro via balloon was finally able to reach elevations suitable to collect weather and climate data supposed to flow into a wider study of the effects of global changes for the mountain and its immediate neighbourhood.

A team from the Southern German university of Freiburg, together with Swiss colleagues, managed to reach over 5.500 metres elevation and drifted across much of the mountain's side but failed in the face of prevailing winds to reach the top of the mountain peak, which stands at 5.895 metres above sea level. However, in the process of the flight the researchers were able to use their equipment on board to measure particles high up in the air but nevertheless thought to be of crucial importance for interpreting and forecasting future changes of weather and regional climate.

Since mid of the last century, when the icecaps – immortalised by the 1936 book 'The Snows of Kilimanjaro' by Ernest Hemingway – were still covering well over 10 square kilometres, the present icefields are thought to be just over 2 square kilometres wide and have shrunk visibly, putting the water supply of an entire sub region into future doubt, as melt off reduces as the ice gradually disappears.

This correspondent has raised this issue already nearly a decade ago, at the time earning little but derisive comments and contempt but having been more than vindicated since then as the glaciers, not just on Kilimanjaro but also on Mt. Kenya and across the Rwenzori Mountains have visibly and progressively shrunk ever faster.

The six 'passengers' in the balloon included two Swiss pilots, the two scientists from Germany, a cameraman and a journalist, the latter two covering the story for the media, hoping to raise further awareness of the present impact of global climate change and convincing the habitual deniers that indeed mother earth is sliding ever faster towards rising temperatures which in turn may irreparably change life as we know it.

The flight, according to sources in Arusha and Moshi, was cleared by the Tanzanian Civil Aviation Authority although a rather inept sounding staff of Kilimanjaro National Park tried to kick up dust by claiming he knew nothing about it and 'flying over the mountain is prohibited'.

The team is supposed to also fly across Ol Donyo Lengai in coming days, an active volcano some distance between the Ngorongoro massif and Lake Natron, to gather added data on volcanic ash and gas concentrations found nearby, which might give added clues to the impact of volcanic eruptions on weather changes. The entire 'expedition' is scheduled to last between two and three weeks, following which they will return to their universities to process the gathered data and then

interpret them before publishing their findings.

Rwanda News

NO TOURISM DOWNTURN BEFORE AND DURING ELECTIONS

Information was received from Kigali, that the arrivals recorded in the run up of the presidential elections last week were in line with 'normal' figures of tourists and business people coming to the 'land of a thousand hills', supporting a previous opinion voiced here that there was no cause for any concern over visiting Rwanda during this historic period. Feedback from Ruhengeri and Kigali also tells the story of satisfied clients who experienced the country immediately prior, during and after the election and were full of compliments over what they saw from their safari vehicles or when stopping to take fuel or have a rest stop, peaceful and orderly conduct of the elections and not a sign of troubles anywhere.

General consensus was that visits to Rwanda are possible at any time and that political events were not deterring tourists from coming. Rwanda is for the current year 2010 looking at a new arrival and spending record from tourism and from half year figures available the country is very well on course to achieve this objective.

Next week will the annual Rwanda Trade Fair take place in Kigali, as are a series of similar events presently unfolding across the entire region. Come on come all, said a regular source from RDB – Tourism and Conservation, we are open for business 24/7 every day of the year. Well said!

Seychelles News

VICTORIA SET FOR INTERNATIONAL CARNIVAL FESTIVAL



March 04 – 06 next year will see the inaugural Victoria International Carnival Festival unfold, aimed to bring in participants from the key carnival countries and carnival cities around the globe to the Seychelles. The new 'invention' will work towards bringing yet more international 'flair' to the archipelago and each of the invited countries and cities were requested to prepare two 'floats' to be used for display and in a major parade, which will traverse the Seychelles capital city and for which tens of thousands of residents and tourist visitors are expected to line up along the route.

More details will be made available through the Seychelles Tourist Board on request or via their website www.seychelles.com

SUBIOS 2010 OPEN FOR REGISTRATION NOW

The annual 'sub Indian Ocean surface' underwater festival, due to be held between October 01 – 03, is now formally open for intending participants to register with the festival organizers. SUBIOS is one of the major annual activities in the Seychelles bringing together photographers and film makers of underwater activities, and the prize winners in the past have

included well reputed names. For more details on this year's festival visit www.subios.com where entry details, terms and conditions can be sourced. More information can be obtained on the site of the Seychelles Tourist Board via www.seychelles.com. Entry deadline has been given as the 17th September, i.e. a month from now, so some urgency ought to be attached to downloading and completing the relevant forms and returning them to the organizers.

AIR SEYCHELLES PROMOTES 'GREEN AWARENESS'

Visitors to the archipelago, flying on Air Seychelles, can now watch a short film on environmental protection measures and what tourists can do themselves while on holiday to avoid damage to the pristine environment they find across the islands. The initiative was supported by the airline, hand in hand with the Seychelles Tourist Board, and turned the idea by conservation NGO 'Sustainability for Seychelles' – aka S4S, into reality. Other partners funding the production of the DVD, it was learned over the weekend, were UNEP, GEF and private sector partners like the Constance Ephelia Resort.

Passengers on board of long haul flights to Mahe can learn a lot about the Seychelles being one of the 'greenest' destinations around the globe and the efforts undertaken by government, the business community and civil society across the archipelago to keep it this way.

Air Seychelles only recently was in the 'good' news when formally signing on to the EU's carbon emission trading scheme, which will officially come into effect by next year, again leading from the front unlike many other foreign airlines still pondering how to get either around the new rules or else dithering with compliance requirements.

Southern Sudan News

KHARTOUM TIGHTENS FOREX RULES

Travellers leaving from the Sudan are facing yet more restrictions on the amount of foreign currency they can purchase, according to a source in Juba. Already suffering from a shortage of hard currency the situation seems to have grown worse in recent months, and questions are being asked in the South where all the forex earned from oil sales has gone. Allegations frequently emerge that the regime in Khartoum has mortgaged much of the oil proceeds to acquire arms and ammunition in defiance of a UN embargo, but insiders in Juba regularly in contact with this correspondent often argue that this is of no concern to the Bashir regime, said to re-arm on a large scale to be ready for another round of war, should they not be able to keep the Southern oil wealth under their control when the independence referendum has been concluded.

At the same time the Central Bank also suspended operations of accounts for a number of government agencies and bodies, most notably of the country's Civil Aviation Authority, of the Stock Exchange and more worrying expatriate organisations. Having no access to their funds will make operations for the CAA hugely difficult, something those at the Central Bank in Khartoum do not seem to appreciate, but the blocking of expatriate organisations accounts is more ominous as oppressive and muzzling policies are thought to be behind this particular move.

Southern Sudanese travellers, as well as leading business figures in Juba openly called to defy this move saying as a

presently semi autonomous region, en route to independence, they are not subject to the regime's command and control economy and dictates, while several were seemingly prompted to send messages to the effect 'independence for us in the South cannot come soon enough' ... Indeed it can't, adds this correspondent.

JUBA – NIMULE TO UGANDA ROAD ON COURSE

Information was received last week from Juba, confirming steady progress along the route of the newly constructed road between Juba and Nimule, near the border with Uganda. Officials from USAID, the main funding agency for the project under a bilateral grant, GoSS and state officials were joined by stakeholders from the transport sector to inspect the progress of construction of the 200 KM road works.

Once completed the new road will not just ease transport between Uganda and the Southern Sudanese capital of Juba, but also link the areas in between to markets for agricultural products and livestock while making the delivery of supplies to these areas easier and more affordable.

Southern Sudan presently imports over 90 percent of their daily requirements from Uganda and the link between Gulu and the border too us being worked on to create a lifeline for trade and travel between the neighbours.

Kampala is linked to Gulu by a recently upgraded all tarmac highway and travelling times between Kampala and Juba, when the new road is open for traffic, will reduce to a daylight trip, making visits easier and supporting in particular visits to the Nimule National Park where, besides game and the appealing vista a long stretch of white water is of particular scenic beauty for tourists.

It is notable though that the regime in Khartoum never made an honest effort to construct this road, arguably to keep the then 'occupied' and for sure oppressed South focused by force towards the North while keeping links with the Southern neighbours of Kenya and Uganda at a minimum. And they still seem surprised in Khartoum that the Southern population is so yearning for independence

And here is a goodie travel report and a bit of humour, both taken from Gill Staden's 'The Livingstone Weekly' – always appreciated and a lot more next week from 'further down South' ...

Chinhoyi Caves

On my way from Harare to Kariba, I stopped off at Chinhoyi Caves. The caves have a sunken lake inside. It is very pretty. Anyhow, for a bit of a break en route, I thought I would give the caves a whorl ...



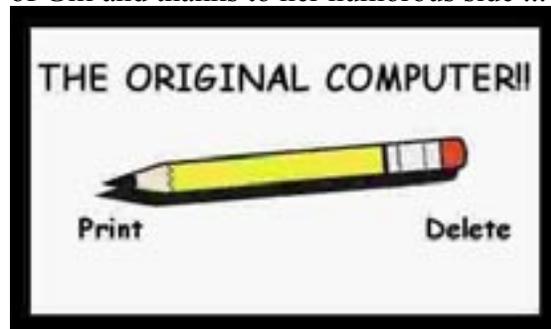
They are about 5 km east of Chinhoyi Town, which is 120 km from Harare or 240 km from Kariba Town. I was a bit shocked when I found out that it was going to cost me US\$8 to enter the caves, but paid it anyway. Zimbabweans pay US\$2, Internationals pay US\$10.

A short walk from the office, there are some stone steps heading into the caves. It is a bit dark so you need a torch to see properly. There are over 200 steps down ... and worse still, there are 200 steps up ...

I reached the bottom and took some photos. Then I noticed a couple of signs: one stated that swimming was prohibited and that scuba divers should not stir up the mud ... Very confusing ...

Anyhow, the caves were interesting, but not US\$8 interesting. I can tick that one off and won't need to go again.

Still in use in many parts of Africa ... again, courtesy of Gill and thanks to her humorous side ...



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Reports, Travel Stories and Opinions

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Second edition August 2010

I WISH A PEACEFUL AND BLESSED MONTH OF RAMADHAN TO ALL THE MUSLIM FAITHFUL AROUND

THE GLOBE, AS THEY COMMENCE THEIR ANNUAL FAST

ERITREAN NATIONAL FOOTBALL TEAM TURNS UP IN ADELAIDE

While playing in an East African football tournament in Nairobi last December, the Eritrean national side, underdogs on the pitch, nevertheless stole the headlines, when they reportedly walked out of the team's hotel and went into hiding. The defection, accompanied by full mouthed denials from government mouthpieces in Asmara, however soon became fully evident, when they eventually sneaked from their well concealed hiding place to the UN's High Commissioner for Refugees office in Nairobi and were then granted refugee status, however then bussed by the Kenyan government to a remote camp where they awaited news of any country to accept them and grant them asylum, which was in the end taking nearly half a year. That measure, according to a source in Nairobi, was 'necessary to protect them as someone could have come from 'there' and try to grab them'.

The team now made yet more headlines when they turned up last weekend at a sports stadium in Adelaide / Southern Australia, as they were apparently given green light by the government in Canberra to settle 'down under'. Several of them are said to be eyeing a new footballing career in their new adoptive country, and having played at national level are having good chances to secure contracts and make a decent living instead of those days in Eritrea, where according to Australian press reports they lived in daily fear for the freedom, liberty and lives and are worried that the rogue regime may take it out on their relatives and families, still living under the yoke of their 'jailers'.

Football association officials were also quoted in the regional Australian media to welcome their arrival and once all issues concerning their status and eligibility to play have been cleared – the Eritrean FA may still try to throw some spanners in the works – they would undoubtedly enrich the coming footballing seasons considerably with their skills.

(Information tip off courtesy of a FB contact in Adelaide – thanks Margit)

Uganda News

NEW EAST AFRICA WEBSITE LAUNCHES

In2Eastafrica is the name of the newest kid on the block in promoting travel to and across Eastern Africa, following its launch last week. After the sad demise of SafariWire a couple of months ago this seems an earnest and well prepared attempt to capture the attention of wannabe travellers as well as of advertisers making use of the new site, which features destination information, travel updates, details on economic issues related to the tourism industry across the region and a wealth of other useful details.

The new site also features content drawn from this correspondent's regular weekly articles and features and is available via www.in2eastafrica.net

TURKISH PROMOTES NEW US DESTINATIONS

Information was received that Turkish Airlines will soon commence additional flights into the United States, offering convenient added onward connections from their current three East African destinations Nairobi, Dar es Salaam and

Entebbe via THY's hub in Istanbul. It is understood that they will initially operate five weekly flights from Istanbul to Washington DC's Dulles airport beginning in November this year and initially four flights a week to Los Angeles, the latter one planned to start however only in March 2011.

EMIRATES TRAVELLERS SOON TO BE DENIED USE OF BLACKBERRIES IN DUBAI TRANSIT

Disconcerting news have broken last week that the United Arab Emirates and neighbouring Saudi Arabia would soon ban the use of Blackberry communications over unspecified concerns and fears over 'security'. This however is generally seen as a 'front' for a lot of other reasons, although these countries are not willing to admit to such while hard pressed to deny suggestions posed to them by global media organisations. Investigative journalists are already on their case to dig up what is really going on behind the scenes and who exactly is pushing for these 'prohibitions', but for regular users of both Blackberry phones and Emirates the ban, when effective, will mean that while in transit in Dubai they will no longer be able to stay in touch the way they are used to in most global places where Blackberry has established a presence. This development comes not long after allegations emerged that Etisalat, the national communications operator, tried to install spyware in Blackberries last year, denied by the company, the regulator and government. It is not clear if the use of mobile communications via phones in flight, while travelling with Emirates, will also be affected, which would be a further detriment for travellers to use them as opposed to other airlines.

The United Arab Emirates have in the recent past come under scrutiny and been accused of living in the past, over other issues also seen as archaic or, as one travel agent regularly selling tickets on Emirates put it 'stone age', although adding 'their airline is ok'. Not long ago news emerged that hardliners were proposing to ban the use of alcohol when cooking or baking for an international and expatriate clientele in international class hotels, and when a number of travellers were dragged to court over allegations of 'public kissing and indecent behaviour' the long promoted liberal and open appeal by the UAE as a holiday destination took a serious knock.

After speaking to several regular Emirates travellers and Kampala travel agents supporting Dubai's price winning airline, their tenor was: 'the place is losing some of its charm, duty free is no longer cheap, well sorted variety but not cheap unless you catch a promotional bargain, the global crisis exposed their financial card houses to the point of defaults and plenty of foreclosures, and these ongoing reports about arresting visitors over allegations of kissing or booze or wearing narrow bikinis don't help either ... maybe it is time to give them a reality check now that the gloss is off ... the more such reports, especially now about the communications ban, reach the global market the more people will think twice ... connections via Dubai to the East are excellent, but it is a detour when going to Europe or America and if I cannot get emails and work in transit, what the h..l ... is that what they want, go fundamentalist like the Saudis, ever wondered why hardly a Western tourist goes there with their draconian stuff going on?' Such were selected sentiments, repeated several times and NOT ONE giving a positive read on these issues. Therefore, should the UAE and KSA indeed go ahead with the Blackberry data transmission

ban, which is undoubtedly their right to decide so as sovereign countries, they better also be prepared for the backlash of global public opinion, which may hit their tourism, real estate, aviation, financial and general business sectors hard, should a sustained and agitated campaign be mounted against them as 'pay back' and there will undoubtedly be a few, or more, out there with an axe to grind and ready to start a FB campaign. Watch this space.

And in a related piece of absolute dark humour I like to share this with you – makes you think about all this nonsense even harder...

Life in Dubai after 1 year..... once UAE ID card in place
An Expat calling Pizza Hut in Dubai

Operator: ' Thank you for calling Pizza Hut . May I have your...'

Customer: 'Salam Ale koum, can I order..'

Operator: 'Can I have your UAE identity card number please, Sir?'

Customer: ' It's eh..., hold..... ..on..... 889861356102049 998-45-54610'

Operator: 'OK... you're... Mr Waleed from Syria and you're calling from Flat #402, Al Maskaan Building, Bur Dubai. Your home number is 04-3661231 04-3661231, your office number is 04-8852302 04-8852302 & your mobile number is 050-2665667 050-2665667. Where has the delivery to take place Sir?'

Customer: ' Home! How did you get all my phone numbers?'

Operator: ' We are connected to the system Sir'

Customer: 'May I order your Seafood Pizza...'

Operator : 'That's not a good idea Sir'

Customer: 'How come?'

Operator : 'According to our medical records - you went for your check up last week to Welcare Hospital & you have high blood pressure and even higher cholesterol level Sir'

Customer:'What? ... What do you recommend then?'

Operator : 'Try our Low Fat Hokkien Mee Pizza. You'll like it'

Customer:'How do you know for sure?'

Operator : 'You borrowed a book entitled 'Popular Hokkien Dishes' from the National Library in Deira, last week Sir'

Customer:'OK I give up... Give me three family size ones then, how much will that cost?'

Operator : 'That should be enough for your family of 10, Sir. The

total is Dirham 112.00'

Customer: 'Can I pay by credit card?'

Operator : 'I'm afraid you have to pay us cash, Sir. Your First Gulf credit card is over the limit and you owe Citibank Credit card another Dirham 3,720.55 since October. That's not including the late payment charges on your housing loan to NBD, Sir.'

Customer: 'I guess I have to run to the neighborhood ATM and withdraw some cash before your guy arrives'

Operator : 'You can't Sir. Based on the records, you've reached your daily limit on HSBC ATM withdrawal for today'

Customer: 'Never mind just send the pizzas, I'll have the cash ready. How long is it gonna take anyway?'

Operator : 'About 45 minutes Sir, but if you can't wait you can always come and collect it on your Honda Civic...'

Customer: 'What!'

Operator : 'According to the details in system ,your Honda Civic's Registration ie Malkia is expiring in 23 days & your Gargash Insurance has already got expired last week.....'

Customer:'?? ??'

Operator : 'Is there anything else Sir?'

Customer: 'Nothing... by the way... aren't you giving me those 3 free bottles of cola as advertised?'

Operator : 'We normally would Sir, but based on your records you're also diabetic..... ..'

Customer:#\$\$ ^%&\$@% ^ tm kiere.....abe ytga...npiye!
!!!!!!..... .. .

Operator : 'Better watch your language Sir. Remember on 15th July 2008 on Dubai Hatta Road, when you wrongly overtook the BMW & you were convicted of using abusive language also on the policeman... ?'

Customer (fainted)

Operator: hello hello, are you still there....

Well, they asked for it...

ENTE B B E T O B E C O M E N E W C O D E S H A R E D E S T I N A T I O N F O R C O N T I N E N T A L

Brussels Airlines and Continental – a leading US airline recently merged with United to create another global aviation giant – have signed a full code share agreement to cover flights between Newark / New York and Brussels but also for flight beyond on both sides of the Atlantic. Both carriers have been

working closely together in the past but the formal agreement to code share will be a bonus for travellers of both airlines, as they can enjoy more perks and most important, more destinations.

Entebbe, but also the other East African Brussels Airlines' destinations like Nairobi, Kigali and Bujumbura will now appear in the Continental schedule and the flights will as before be operated by Brussels Airlines, now flying 6 times a week into the region and soon it is understood going daily between Europe's capital city and East Africa.

In addition Brussels Airlines will be able to offer initially 5 added destinations via EWR to such cities as Orlando, Ft. Lauderdale, Houston, Dallas / Ft. Worth and Cleveland while Continental will add 9 European cities and eight West Africa destinations served by SN to their schedule.

AUGUST / SEPTEMBER 'THE EYE' NOW OUT

The latest edition of Uganda's premier 'insider guide', THE visitor's bible for where to go, where to eat, what to do and how to get around Uganda, is now again available on the web via www.theeye.co.ug.

Printed copies are distributed only in country for FREE through selected outlets and the main hotels, but intending visitors can get their own preview on the internet and prepare themselves accordingly. The print version is also now focusing on the different towns outside Kampala and the main categories of information are now centred on the municipality, like Jinja, Kabale, Fort Portal, Mbarara and so on rather than having to sieve through the entire booklet.

The Eye is a MUST READ publication for visitors to the country and information is updated every two months with the latest phone numbers, locations and data and current events.

FORMER UGANDAN PRESIDENT BINAISA PASSES AWAY

At the ripe age of 90 did former Ugandan president Godfrey Binaisa pass away last Thursday 05th of August 2010. Godfrey Binaisa was notably the only surviving past head of state in Uganda and had lived for the past few years in Kampala, where he enjoyed the privileges of a former president as provided for by law. He served the country for 11 months after the overthrow of notorious dictator Idi Amin between June 1979 and May 1980 before being removed from office when he tried to send a powerful top army officer abroad as ambassador. He was then succeeded by a 'presidential commission' which remained in office until the rigged elections in 1981 returned the other notorious Ugandan dictator Milton Obote to power, leading to the liberation war which ended with Yoweri Kaguta Museveni taking office after defeating the enemies of a free Uganda. The late Binaisa was accorded a full state funeral according to governmental house sources and President Museveni himself led the nation in mourning. Sincere condolences to the family of the late Binaisa and may he now rest in eternal peace.

UGANDAN SAB MILLER SUBSIDIARY ACCUSED OF BEING UNSENSITIVE ON ENVIRONMENT

The Rwenzori Bottling Company, a long time and in fact the first ever supplier of mineral water made in Uganda to the country and the region in plastic bottles, has now finally added 5 gallon bottles for water coolers, 15 or more years since the

first coolers appeared on the local market. Yet, unlike all the other suppliers which offer bottles against a deposit, compelling customers to return their empties or lose as much as 9 US Dollars per water container, Rwenzori against professional advice by environmentalists has decided to go ahead and use 'disposables', which are thought to further litter the already under strain environment.

Plastic bottles constitute a substantial component of waste disposal, and while some few efforts are being made to collect the bottles and re-process them, many simply end up thrown away or worse burned, with the gasses then emitted posing further risks to environment and human health. This is a startling development, considering the involvement of the global Coca Cola company and it is hoped that pressure, from consumers, NGO's and the holding company in Atlanta will soon show results to have the 'unfriendly' bottles removed and substituted against what other mineral water companies use for the dispensers.

In addition, the shrink wrappers used by this and many other companies to 'seal' the bottle tops and prevent contents from being polluted or adulterated, too are found flying all over the place, and the twist caps and bottles themselves have even been found in the hitherto still pristine environment of the country's national parks as well as floating in rivers and lakes. It clearly is now time for the water industry – otherwise crucially important to deliver clean potable water to the population – to get together and find a way out of the plastic bottles by adding a deposit on them to compel a return or else find other means of safe water delivery without adding to environmental pollution – and no, the disclaimers do not hold 'water'.

WILDLIFE AUTHORITY TOP MANAGEMENT SUSPENDED

News broke overnight that the recently installed board of trustees has suspended the Executive Director of UWA Mr. Moses Mapesa together with the Director of Conservation Sam Mwandha to allow a 'forensic audit' to be conducted over a number of unspecified allegations made against the officers. An inside source overnight spoke of apparent issues over the handling of disciplinary matters, the new board chairman was not happy with.

At least two other senior managers had recently resigned from the authority not long after the new board came into office. The Uganda Wildlife Authority, a statutory body under the Ministry of Tourism, Trade and Industry has been benefitting from major World Bank funding over the past 15 years to turn the financial page towards long term self sustainability, and great progress has indeed been made in recent years. Controversial issues were considered to be hunting, where a long time 'pilot project' of late seems to have been expanded to other parts of the country, without having taken the route to discuss the implications of the pilot study first with stakeholders, something UWA has repeatedly denied but no records were ever availed of the alleged public consultations. One website promoting hunting has recently mentioned that their trips to Uganda were 'suspended for the time being' giving the first indication that not all may be well in this regard. Moses Mapesa in particular had in past years – he served with UWA in various capacities from its inception before becoming Executive Director some years ago – build a solid professional

reputation and served on many international panels and bodies dealing with conservation. Watch this space as the saga unfolds.

FUEL PRICES GO UP – AGAIN

Alongside low supplies to the market for all white fuel products, including AVGAS once again, have prices quietly crept up too over the past week, with some petrol stations now charging a whopping 3,000 Uganda Shillings per litre of petrol, while paraffin, used in many rural and even urban households, now costs as much as 2,000 Uganda Shillings a litre. The rise in fuel prices has already resulted in a hike in cross country transport fares, and although the value of the Shilling versus the US Dollar has marginally improved last week, rising international crude oil prices, added cost for shipments to Mombasa through pirate infested waters and – some say artificially – low supplies resulted in the commodity prices to go up.

Safari operators sampled yesterday were saying they had sufficient supplies in stock to operate all their safaris without any problems and as they quote safari rates in foreign currency also did not anticipate any sudden price hikes for their services. Good to know.

Kenya News

ADAMSON MEMORIAL GATHERING SCHEDULED FOR MERU

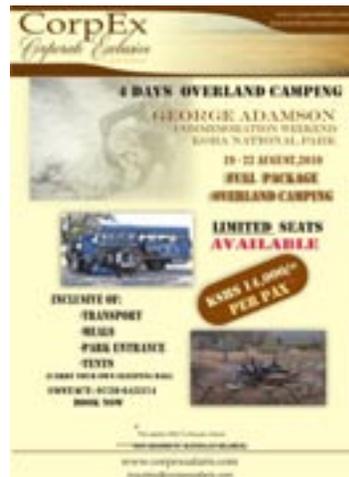
The Meru Conservation Area, which also includes the Kora National Park, will be the venue from 19th of August for a broad gathering of conservationists honouring the memory of the late George Adamson. Made immortally famous across the globe through the film 'Born Free', the late George and his late wife Joy were engaged in pioneer efforts to train and release lions back into the wild after being born in captivity or brought up from early stages in captivity. 'Born Free', starring Virginia McKenna and Bill Travers, has since its initial release in 1966 become an adventure and wildlife 'classic' and raised awareness towards wildlife conservation and the huge efforts undertaken by the couple.

Joy herself lived for many years also on Lake Naivasha, where her home 'Elsamare' is now a conservation and education centre and a magnet for visitors from around the world.

Both George and Joy were murdered, George by 'shiftas' attempting to rob visitors arriving in his camp on that fateful day of 20th of August 1989, when he true to his nature rushed towards the scene of the gun shots to bring relief and help, only to get shot himself in the process.

His wife Joy was murdered in her 'Shaba' camp on 03rd January 1980 by a member of her staff, shocking her friends and the global conservation fraternity, but it was George's death which brought the era of 'Born Free' finally to an abrupt end.

Conservationists, friends of the late couple and members of the tourism fraternity are set to visit Meru between the 19th and 22nd of August – a organized trip is available from Nairobi as per attached – to honour and commemorate the work the Adamson's have done in their lifetime and celebrate their devotion to conservation. George's book 'My Pride and Joy' and the dozen books written by Joy herself also gained global acclaim and are still much in demands by tourist visitors coming to see the very sights of those long gone days.



KENYA SHOWS MATURITY AT THE POLLS

The harsh lessons taught after the last general elections showed results, when Kenyans last Wednesday went to the polls for the first time since those ill fated days to cast their vote over a new proposed constitution.

Final results from Nairobi indicate that a two third majority voted in favour of constitutional reform while a mere on third of the voters rejected the draft. The new constitution, following this overwhelming endorsement by Kenyans, is due to be enacted soon, and although even proponents in the 'yes camp' admit that there are flaws in the draft framework, these can be resolved as Kenya moves on under the new supreme law, the first major constitutional reform ever since independence in 1963.

What is most noteworthy though was the maturity shown at the polling stations and when counting the ballots, as nowhere across the country were any serious incidents recorded. Kenyans lived for weeks in fear after the last general elections and government was well prepared this time through a visible security forces presence in known political hot spots, ultimately not necessary as none of the two camps showed any appetite to once again resort to violence in order to 'change' results. The losing 'no' camp has already let it be known that they will respect the verdict by voters, although accusing the 'yes' camp to have used state resources to tilt the results in their favour, but the clear two third majority was clear enough and was not likely influenced by 'dishing out favours' as alleged by the defeated opponents of the new draft constitution.

These developments are good news for the Kenyan tourism industry and were also greeted with relief by the hinterland countries which depend heavily on the constant flow of supplies from the Indian Ocean port of Mombasa by rail and road. Senior tourism stakeholders were jubilant and welcomed the final results with relief, saying this was positive news for the sector and helpful to once more portraying Kenya as a desirable destination with a conducive peaceful environment for foreign tourists. Well done Kenya and now for better times ahead.

NEW KENYA CONSTITUTION TAKES EFFECT ON 27TH AUGUST

The administration in Kenya has set Friday, 27th August as the day when the new constitution will be signed into effect by President Mwai Kibaki during a grand ceremony in Nairobi.

The day is expected to be announced as a public holiday, giving Kenyans a 'long weekend' to celebrate the onset of a new period in their so far chequered history, which after the death of the founder president and 'father of the nation' Jomo Kenyatta, saw a coup attempt on August 01st 1981, then descended into a one party and literal police state before the onset of multi party politics – under severe pressure from foreign countries – then opened the political spectrum. Yet, pre election violence during those early days from 1992 onwards maintained oppression and it was only when former president Daniel arap Moi had to leave office, having completed his permitted two terms of office, that the scenario of local politics began to reshape. However, corruption scandals kept rocking President Kibaki's first government and in 2005 a first attempt to introduce a new constitution 'bounced' following widespread bickering in government and across society. The post election violence, following the end December 2007 general elections, then saw Kenya descend into a state of near anarchy, rocking the country and the region. The intervention of former UN supremo Kofi Annan eventually helped to establish a coalition government, the first ever in post independence Kenya, and their promise on taking office, to draft a new constitution and take it to the voters, was last week finally fulfilled, offering the assurance of better days ahead.

A number of foreign dignitaries, including heads of state from the region, are expected to witness the momentous occasion when President Kibaki will affix his signature and presidential seal on the new constitution. More than two thirds of voters have endorsed the new supreme law in a referendum last week, which – although hotly contested in the run up – unfolded in a mature and peaceful manner. This appears to have disappointed some global media organizations which had dispatched large teams to cover any potential outbreak of violence, only to then sit on their hands and witness how well voting and counting went.

Once the new constitution is formally brought into effect the President, Vice President, Speaker of Parliament and Deputy Speaker of Parliament will then once again take a formal oath of office under the new constitution following which all member of parliament too will have to be sworn in afresh. Parliament will then fast track a number of new laws to operationalise the new constitution, said to be about 50 and all drafted already by the Kenyan Attorney General's office in anticipation of the big day. One of the major changes will be the option of dual nationality for Kenyans, the introduction of a second legislative chamber, the abolition of the post of Prime Minister and changes in the appointment of members of the judiciary, all aimed at giving more power to the legislature and trimming the previous almost absolute powers of the presidency. All the best wishes to Kenya and her people and peace and prosperity for the future.

Tanzania News

ZANZIBAR'S INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT EXPANDED, RENAMED

The recently expanded runway of the spice island's international airport was officially opened last week. The rehabilitation and extension of the airport's single runway now permits larger wide bodied airplanes to land, as operations into Zanzibar were hitherto restricted to smaller aircraft like

the B737, the Bombardier CRJ and larger turboprop planes being able to land and take off. At the opening ceremony it was also announced to change the current name 'Kisauni' to 'Abeid Karume International Airport' in recognition of the first president of Zanzibar.

The tourism sector of Zanzibar expressed satisfaction over the completion of the work at the airport and are now busy lobbying international tour operators and airlines to fly either nonstop or via another airport in the region to Zanzibar, so that tourists can reach the island from Europe and elsewhere without having to change planes enroute.

Zanzibar only last week underwent a referendum to create a government of national unity between ruling party and the opposition, to end constant political arguments and prevent the periodic outbreak of violence prior and after elections, which had in the past led to unfavourable anti travel advisories.

NEW FOSSILE FIND IN SOUTH WESTERN TANZANIA

New skeleton remains were found in the south west of Tanzania in a recent 'dig', which unearthed a creature with similarities to both ancient crocodiles as well as cat like features.

A team from several Ohio based universities was on site and assisted by scientists from both South Africa and Tanzania and they have now revealed details of this creature, thought to be 100 million years old when this part of Africa apparently supported different reptiles and animals no longer found today.

Information sent to this correspondent from Arusha also speaks about the teeth found being of an unusual shape, compared with 'normal' crocodiles.

This latest find underscored Tanzania's standing for prehistoric finds, of both early man as well as the creatures which roamed the region in those long gone days.

Rwanda News

PEACE PREVAILS IN RWANDA'S PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

10th August 2010

As suggested by this correspondent in several articles leading up to the presidential elections in Rwanda, it was indeed the case as the 'land of a thousand hills' went to the polls on Monday 09th of August that voting took place in a secure and peaceful fashion right across the country. President Kagame, although by the time of going to press no 'official' results were available, was in a runaway lead over his challengers and is likely to be declared the winner later today, following which he will lead Rwanda for his second term of 7 years, once the formal swearing in ceremony has taken place.

Tourism sources expressed their immediate delight that all went well and that none of the thousands of tourist visitors had their itineraries disturbed or were in any way affected by the elections. Said one regular source in Kigali in an overnight telephone conversation: 'Things went very well here in Kigali, but we also asked visitors coming back to Kigali today from the Parc de Volcanoes where they tracked gorillas. They confirmed there was nothing which could have disturbed them or upset them, and they commented favourably on the organisation and orderly conduct at polling stations they saw from their vehicles as they returned to the capital. The new Rwanda stands for peace, reconciliation and to live in harmony with each other

and this policy paid us off very handsomely in tourism over the past years. The sector just grew phenomenally beyond expectations. Rwanda is not risking economic prosperity through political squabbles, I am very happy that we now have this continuity at the top and can go on with firm leadership for the next seven years.' Congratulations to President Paul Kagame and the people of Rwanda, well done indeed.

Ethiopia News

GULF AIR COMES TO ADDIS

Information received from the Ethiopian capital speaks of Gulf Air to commence a five times a week service between their home base in Bahrain to Addis Ababa. Flights are due to start in December this year and are part of Gulf's apparent plans to expand their Africa network once again. Sadly the airline did withdraw a number of years ago from Entebbe but their addition of Addis will open the option for them to eventually, depending on load factors, to continue these flights to other destinations in Eastern or Central Africa. Watch this space.

Seychelles News

NEW 10 YEAR ENVIRONMENT PLAN LAUNCHED

Late last week saw the launch of the Seychelles' new environmental protection plan preparations during a one day workshop and meeting at the International Conference Centre in the heart of Victoria. Participants from government, private sector and crucially from conservation NGS's had the opportunity to discuss the new plan's contents and objectives in details and then strategized over the implementation of it during the coming decade.

The last 10 year plan was reportedly completed with a 'done' ratio of over 85 percent, leaving the challenge for the next period to do better than that when it comes to the protection of marine and terrestrial biodiversity and staying 'green', hugely important for the country's tourism and fishing industry.

Added attention under the new framework will also be paid to monitoring of climate change and the development of mitigative measures, improved forest husbandry and agricultural farming methods but also aiming at improving public health. Combating intrusive and alien species on land and in the sea too are a focus of the discussions, which will be ongoing till October when the new plan will be formally launched after obtaining cabinet approval.

When complete the next 10 year plan will be the third put in place and advocates for best environmental practise in the archipelago are rightly proud of seeing this as a core part of government's commitment towards maintaining growth subject to protecting the 'green' element long term.

Meanwhile, and in a related development, are a group of Australian researchers in the country to carry out studies on early colonisation and human settlements across the archipelago, which is expected to throw more light on the ancient days of these islands and help clarify when mankind first stepped into this tropical 'Garden of Eden'.

In a related development has President James Michel formally opened the new 'Silhouette Island National Park' for visitors last weekend, in a ceremony attended by the archipelago's tourism and conservation fraternity and government officials. The island is the third largest of the 'inner' part of the archipelago and over 90 percent of its land has been made part

of the new protected area. Seychelles now is not far away from its objective to have half of its territory declared protected, and the present count reportedly stands just over 47 percent, making it the global leader in environmental protection measures and underscoring its status as one of the globe's greenest tourism destinations.

MAHE AIRPORT PARKING / APPROACH MODIFIED

It was learned that last weekend a new 'regime' came into place at the Mahe International Airport. Passengers to be dropped off for their flight now have a straight approach route, no longer via the parking areas and in another change vehicles of the touring companies are now also found in a separate area where their passengers will now board without interference from other traffic. This has according to one regular source been a long standing issue and had now finally been resolved to the satisfaction of all airport users.

South Sudan News

ALREADY SEARCHING FOR A NATIONAL ANTHEM

With the independence referendum now less than 5 months away, a range of activities are already unfolding in the Southern Sudan, clearly in anticipation of the vote being overwhelmingly in favour of becoming an independent country. News from Juba, the Southern Sudan's capital city, speak of earnest efforts to have a national anthem composed as various educational and other institutions have commenced an exercise aimed to producing a compelling piece fit to reflect the aspirations and heritage of Southern Sudan.

A new flag, and related symbols too are said to be in the making, all under the guidance of the '2011 Taskforce' which is overseeing these activities ahead of the vote on 09th January next year.

This information lends more and more credibility to suggestions, that while the Southern leadership – still in a coalition government with the regime in Khartoum – has not yet officially taken a formal and public position of their recommendation on how to vote, they are privately in total favour of independence, no surprise considering the brutal oppression, exploitation and long war waged against the South by Khartoum's regime soldiers and allied militias, which only came to an end in January 2005 when the CPA – comprehensive peace agreement – was signed between the erstwhile foes. Regular contact and visits to the Southern Sudan also affirm the overwhelming desire by the Southern people to finally be able to determine their own destiny and take their rightful place amongst the Eastern African nations.

And in closing today again some interesting material received from 'down south' courtesy of busy bee writer Gill Staden from Livingstone / Zambia

No Room at the Inn



We arrived at White Horse Inn after a long day of watching mad cyclists, looking forward to a good night's sleep. The previous nights we had slept on Chilo Lodge veranda and been very cold; the following night we had put up the tent in the grounds of a polo club near Chipinge; and the night before three of us had shared a room in a hotel in Chimanimani.



White

Horse Inn is along a quiet road in The Bvumba. The roads are twisty and either side the trees tower above. Streams trickle down from the mountains. A stunning spot.



I ambled into the

hotel to ask the receptionist what room we were in only to be told that they were fully booked and there was no space. This was rather disappointing, to say the least. I really could not imagine putting up the tent in the car park.

After a short while our dilemma was sorted out and

we were given a resident's lounge to sleep in – we had bedding and mattresses so it wasn't a train smash. We carted in our bags and bedding and sorted out a make-shift bed. We were just grateful that the owner allowed us to use the rooms.

White Horse Inn was a house before David Graham bought it about 30 years ago. It has 12 rooms, all furnished in an olde worlde fashion.

In the bar there was a roaring log fire so we settled down to warm up and to drink a few beers. Dinner was excellent. I had bream, the others had trout and oxtail.

The night's sleep was fine, even though it was on the floor. We let the cyclists go off on their fourth day of peddling while we had a shower in a now-empty room. Then I had a walk around the grounds.

The gardens are very mature with huge trees, some tree ferns and even a rose garden. I wished I could have stayed another night just to sit in them for a while.

So, if you are ever near Mutare and need a place to stay, try the White Horse Inn. You will love it.

Email: whithorseinn@bsatt.com



From Peter Jones, River Club

1954. Alfred Hitchcock, the great film Director, with his wife and Harry Sossen, owner of the Capitol Theatre, outside the Livingstone airport



2010. John Landau (Director of Avatar and Titanic etc) with his wife, Julie. Same spot. Same tree!

Hwange Ride

Hwange National Park is undoubtedly one of the world's truly great wildlife sanctuaries.

Situated in the North West of Zimbabwe it contains some of the world's largest concentrations of wildlife on the African continent.

Before being proclaimed a game reserve in 1928, wildlife in this vast wilderness was virtually hunted out, with its only human inhabitants being a few bands of San or Bushman Hunter Gatherers, who had learnt to exist in this harsh environment and commercial poachers who had all but eliminated the last remaining wildlife.

However it was soon realised that to encourage and increase the wildlife population in an area where rainfall is unreliable, a programme had to be established to guarantee continuity of reliable surface water during the long hot dry seasons, resulting in the first borehole being sunk in the mid 1930s.

So successful has this programme been that today Hwange boasts in excess of 50 pumped water points throughout the park, so guaranteeing that this life-giving commodity is available all year round to wildlife

The Matabeleland branch of Wildlife and Environment Zimbabwe have been privileged to have been involved in this game water supply programme for the past 20 years and have been supported in their efforts by numerous people and organizations locally and externally.

In continuing this ongoing assistance the 23rd of July saw an array of some 60 cyclists arrive at the park clutching off road cycles, these amateurs were not racing for yellow jerseys or glory, their goal was more noble, ensuring the supply of water for the parks wildlife. They were there to

take part in the sponsored Hwange Adventure, now dubbed "PUMPING LEGS FOR WATER "

Life during the harsh dry season in this part of Africa can be difficult for both man and beast and when the boreholes dry up, parks staff often have no means of providing water for the vast herds of elephant, buffalo, and the other game that abounds in the park. The economic crisis in Zimbabwe has led to serious shortages of resources needed to preserve infrastructure, especially the crucial maintenance of important water sources.

These Wildlife and cycling enthusiasts, ranging between 12 and 65 years of age were committed to completing a two day 100km ride. It was not a race, just a means to demonstrate support to a worthy cause. High class endurance athletes cycled alongside novices and youngsters encouraging and supporting all towards the finish.

Under normal circumstances, cycling is prohibited in the park and large areas are cordoned off to the general public, however, in this case, broadminded authorities facilitated the roll of the general public by offering these cyclists the opportunity to cycle in the park and providing them with game guards and escorts

A considerable amount was raised and while perhaps not much in terms of a national conservation budget, enough to pump water for the coming dry season to satisfy the mega herbivores and other wild life.

Conservation is an expensive business and when things go wrong, I feel we all have a responsibility and a roll to play.

Colin Gillies
Wildlife and Environment Zimbabwe
Matabeleland Branch

Reports, Travel Stories and Opinions
By Prof. Dr. Wolfgang H. Thome
First edition August 2010

HOUSTON MARKETING'S WORKSHOPS FOCUS ON 'SPOTLIGHT ON AFRICA & INDIAN OCEAN'

South Africa based Houston Marketing is once again arranging for a series of travel trade workshops in Southern Africa, focusing on both inbound and outbound travel, permitting to promote African destinations to a wider audience and beyond the 'normal' trade shows and tourism exhibitions like INDABA. They recently published a schedule of these events in South Africa,

Zimbabwe and Mozambique, but also of overseas activities, all of them aimed at specifically promoting travel to Africa.

Said Derek Houston to this correspondent recently:

‘The South African Outbound Market into Africa continues to increase year on year. To keep up with the demand, regional African carriers are regularly adding more frequencies and new routes from South Africa to East and West Africa, as you frequently report in eTN. Recent Kenya Tourist Board figures showed that South African visitor arrivals were in 6th place overall for the first six months of 2010. I have personally no doubt South Africa also ranks in the top 10 for most other East African countries.

To tap into this lucrative market almost a dozen East African hotel, resort and safari operators have joined our ‘Spotlight on Africa & Indian Ocean’ road show around South Africa from October 04th to 08th. Two sessions will be held in the Johannesburg / Sandton area (which accounts for 65% of outbound Travel) before the road show visits Durban and Cape Town, covering all the major South African outbound markets.’

Derek Houston will for these road shows invite corporate and leisure travel agents, outbound tour operators, conference organisers and incentive travel companies. Over 350 travel trade participants are expected to attend the four sessions.

Additional spotlight workshops are planned in Harare / Zimbabwe on 02nd September and in Maputo / Mozambique on 21st October. Central European road shows, covering Vienna, Budapest and Prague will take place between September 13th to 16th.

Contact www.houstonmarketing.co.za for more details or write to Derek@houstonmarketing.co.za to sign up or get added information.

Uganda News

FLY 540 ADDING KISUMU STOP ON WEEKEND FLIGHTS

The regional ‘original’ low cost airline Fly 540 has introduced Kisumu as an add on destination to one each of their Saturday and Sunday flight between Nairobi and Entebbe, offering the first time for many a year the option to fly on a scheduled service between the two lake side city destinations. Saturday’s morning flight will route NBO KIS EBB KIS NBO as will the Sunday evening flight, giving ample time for visitors to see the sights. The cost for a regular return flight was given at US Dollar 185 inclusive of all regulatory charges and the inaugural flight will take place next weekend

already, i.e. the first weekend in August. Tour packages are at this moment not available yet but are expected to be launched soon too, giving travellers a variety of options how to best to spend a day and night in each destination, either Kisumu / Kenya or in Entebbe / Kampala. Near Kisumu are Lake Victoria island resorts and fishing camps available for overnight stays as are game reserves and a national park for a day out on safari, besides also offering the opportunity to see the paternal home of current US President Obama which is located just a few kilometres from the city’s airport. The Rusinga Island Camp in particular can be highly recommended and should absolutely be part of Fly 540’s upcoming package deals and visitors can be picked up from the airport by the camp vehicle or, against some added fee, take the speedboat to the island. Visit www.rusinga.com for more details and bookings.

Visitors coming to Entebbe meanwhile can see and explore the famous Botanical Gardens, the Uganda Wildlife Education Centre with rare and exotic animals, birds, reptiles but also medicinal plants and trees, or else take a boat ride from the Entebbe pier to Ngamba Island where a large chimpanzee colony can be seen in a tropical forest and where a tourist camp also allows to spend the night. Details of this camp, operated by Wild Frontiers Uganda, can be found via www.ugandaexclusivecamps.com/ngamba.html.

Well done 540 for re-connecting more and more of East Africa – now let’s just do away with the nuisance Visa requirements for East African residents duly registered in one of the EAC member states wishing to travel to another, to encourage regional tourism.

CASSOA OPEN ‘OWN’ OFFICES IN ENTEBBE

The Civil Aviation Safety and Security Oversight Agency, a body established by the East African Community, has at last been able to officially ‘open’ their own premises in Entebbe, signalling a new phase in aviation cooperation in the region. Besides the pomp and glamour though aviators sampled in the region expressed their disappointment, some of them outright disgust, over continued non tariff barriers impacting on their ability to freely operated across the entire region. One senior management staff of a commercial airline suggested to ‘scrap all bilateral agreements just as soon as possible which are in place between the EAC member countries and replace it with a new regime of open sky policy’ before adding ‘our aviation bureaucrats need to put into action what our politicians profess to in public, and fast’. Others continue to take issue with the

fragmented licensing regime, which compels airlines to obtain in a worst case five separate operating licenses, in techno lingo called AOC's, and demanded that this too be streamlined. Said one seasoned airline staff: 'They need to recognize an AOC for instance issued in Kenya also in Uganda or Tanzania or Rwanda or Burundi. Now CASSOA is in their new headquarters and they already give binding guidelines for licensing of airlines registered in the member states. We need to cut through the red tape now. We need to bring relief in terms of bureaucracy and cost. Right now, say look at 540 Aviation, they have operations in three countries and needed to establish companies, get air service licenses, then get their separate AOC's, install accountable managers. All this should in the new EAC be reviewed and once you have met the standards, once you are given an AOC in one member state, that should be binding for others too.'

Operators of light aircraft, mainly used for regional charters and tourist traffic into the parks, also added comments with one claiming: 'right now the brutal truth is that the public is being deceived. Integration right now is an added layer of bureaucrazy. The functions now overseen by CASSOA must be removed from the national regulators, permits and licenses should be granted by CASSOA and then valid across the entire region. We should be allowed to fly tourists into national parks without being treated as invaders. Stop treating us as foreign airlines when we fly across East Africa. We want clearances just as fast as airlines registered in that country would get them, not wait for 24 hours, or 48 hours or longer. What is the point of our clients wanting to fly when in the end they get there faster by road because we are not given clearance fast enough.' Upon further probing one regulatory staff, on condition of anonymity, conceded that there were still problems over integration and cutting red tape, and blamed it on one memberstate in particular, without however being drawn into giving the name ... regular readers though can probably figure that one out themselves. Watch this space as this issue is ongoing and will undoubtedly attract future attention again.

NEMA BOWS TO PRESSURE – NAMES WETLAND ENCROACHERS

Media reports late last week highlighted once again the plight of conservationists in their efforts to retain, protect and restore wetlands, around the capital city of Kampala but also across the entire country. The National Environmental Management Authority has often been

harshly criticised for doing little to live up to their mandate while at the same time constant allegations speak of selective enforcement only, as and when it apparently either suits them or for other reasons, much speculated over of course. Enroute from the city to this correspondent's residence, in the so called Konge valley, the wetlands and drainage of rain water towards the lake has been massively encroached in recent years, but inspite of regular information sent to NEMA on that spot nothing at all has been done, encouraging the rapid closing up from both ends of the swamp for commercial and farming purposes.

However, the stinging criticism has not entirely fallen on deaf ears as NEMA has now named the top 100 encroachers they are presently dealing with. The list includes some of Uganda's leading business names, including the Speke Resort in Munyonyo, the Islamic University in Uganda, Mukwano Industries, well connected individuals and also faded socialite and former 'Miss Uganda' organizer Sylvia Awori, all of whom are reportedly under investigation by NEMA.

The organization itself let it be known that often their enforcement officers are assaulted by private developer's security guards while they still wait for the dedicated environmental police unit, created last year, to become fully operational and deploy into the field alongside NEMA staff. NEMA also announced that they would soon start on yet another demarcation exercise and that following its completion land titles in wetland areas would likely be cancelled to assist in the future protection of this crucial resource.

In a related development it was also learned that the water quality in areas affected by encroachment, be it through the run off of fertilizers or the unchecked flow into the lake by waste water and in particular the Nakivubo channel, has further deteriorated, requiring Kampala Water to introduce newer filtering and water treatment technologies. The resulting added cost of producing potable water is expected to rise in the future, making all consumers pay for the environmental sins of a few. See separate article on this topic and watch this space.

SHERATON INTRODUCES 'THE BOOST JUICE BAR'

Following the global trends of eating and drinking 'healthy' has the Sheraton Kampala now opened a fresh juice outlet in the hotel. The new 'health bar' will serve customers using the Kidepo Health Club, but products are now also available at the swimming pool's snack

bar and the Paradise Terrace daily from 9 am till 10 pm. The ‘smoothies’, ‘crushies’ and full flavoured and textured fruit and vegetable juices are prepared ‘to order’ from fresh ingredients and reportedly already found a faithful following especially amongst the ladies frequenting the health club and garden eatery.

FLY 540 NOW ADDS ‘HOLIDAY PACKAGES’ FOR ZANZIBAR

Vacation packages are now being sold by Fly 540 on the Ugandan market in conjunction with their flights to Zanzibar, via Nairobi for as low as 665 US Dollars per person sharing, all taxes included. Destination hotel will be the Zanzibar Beach Resort and meet and greet services, return transfers in Zanzibar from airport to the resort and back are included in the package price as is a welcome drink, a daily breakfast buffet, free wireless internet access when using one’s own laptop or netbook and a dayroom on the departure day. Use of the hotel’s fitness centre and a daily animation programme are also included in the package rate. The basic package is for two nights and add on days are available at the very reasonable cost of 75 US Dollars per person, valid between now and the 19th of December for Ugandan residents. Considering that the Zanzibar Beach Resort is a four star hotel this is very good value for money – Fly 540 operates daily to Zanzibar from Nairobi and double daily between Nairobi and Entebbe, giving travellers the choice of leaving any day of the week.

UGANDAN FORCES ENGAGE AL SHABAB IN MOGADISHU

No sooner had the African Union Summit ended in Kampala did the large Ugandan contingent based in Somalia make good of President Museveni’s threat, to go after the Islamic terror group Al Shabab, thought to be behind the recent twin suicide bombings in Kampala.

While the UN reportedly still has other ideas and tried to insist on ‘peace keeping only’ – forgetting that presently this is a complete misnomer as there is no peace – Ugandan troops made no mistake in decisively engaging a contingent of militia fighters coming too close to their positions and made short work of them with both artillery and other means, in the process decimating the terrorists and defeating their attempt to establish a forward base near the guarded zone of Mogadishu.

The AU Summit sanctioned an immediate further 2000 troops to be deployed, presently training in Djibouti before being flown to Mogadishu, and has somewhat

strengthened the mandate for them, meeting military demands. An expert panel from the AU is now also considering how many more troops are needed to expel the terrorists from not just Mogadishu but to progressively expand the area controlled by the Transitional Federal Government and pacify parts of the country presently suffering from the barbaric rule of Islamic militias and pirates.

When these news broke in Kampala satisfaction took root and President Museveni’s hard stand to pursue and bring to justice those responsible for the recent atrocities got a visible boost when the success story reached the local media.

PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEE HEARS OF ‘POISON ALGAE’

The natural resources committee in parliament last week heard about alarming developments in Lake Victoria near the city shores, when they were told of a growth of toxic algae now polluting the waters, presumably in Murchison’s Bay and beyond. These parts of the lake near the city are considered the most polluted of all, as the so called Nakivubo Channel, built on advise of the World Bank in a straight line towards the lake against all protests at the time by experts, is emptying the city’s water run off including rubbish into the bay.

Parliament was told that as much as 14 tons of pollution are carried into the lake by the channel, as the filtering function of the surrounding swamps and wetlands has been severely compromised by wetland encroachment in crucial area and the design of the channel into the lake.

When asked on funding available it was stated that only 2.3 billion Uganda Shillings had been allocated to combat pollution but that at least a further 12 billion was needed to effectively roll out reforestation along river banks and lake shores and unspecified amounts of money for the establishment of additional sewerage treatment plants for the city, its environs and the redesign of the Nakivubo channel.

Many of Uganda’s lakes and rivers are also threatened by increased deforestation along river and lake banks, adding to the woes of these water bodies as evermore silt is being washed into rivers and lakes, eventually making them shallower and impacting on the breeding patterns of fish, a staple diet for many Ugandans. It is for such reasons that these problems are of late receiving greater attention and publicity, in order to compel governmental bodies to spend more on educational programmes and re-forestation across the country but

in particular to protect river banks and lake shores.

ANOTHER LAKE TRAGEDY INCREASES PRESSURE ABOUT SAFETY

News reports from Lake Albert tell a harrowing story of yet another lake boat capsizing in bad weather, and in the absence of sufficient life vests costing dozens of lives again. Overloading of boats, in this tragic case once more suggested as the main cause of the accident, combined with sudden storms and often poor training of the crew on board are regularly cited by authorities, but due to the many landing sites tighter supervision is often not possible. Many boat operators are also shy to invest in life vests to be worn by each passenger and NGO's and development partners trying to promote lake safety are struggling to keep up with demand. The ill fated boat was reportedly on an 8 hour overnight journey from a landing site on the Lake Albert shores in Hoima district to Nebbi district across the lake and ran into a strong storm. Rescue operations have managed to find a number of people alive, clinging to floating cargo and debris but over 70 people are feared drowned in this latest calamity striking lake travellers.

In contrast, boats used for tourists to explore the shores of Lake Victoria, Lake Albert and other lakes and rivers are licensed, insured, well equipped, the crew have safety and first aid training, carry life saving equipment on board and are in communications with shore by both radio and – where available – mobile phones.

Kenya News

STARWOOD SAID TO EYE KENYA

Following last week's announcement of the takeover of the Holiday Inn Nairobi by South Africa's Southern Sun Hotel Group have further news emerged that Starwood, the owners of amongst others the Sheraton global hotel brand, too is eyeing an entry into East Africa's biggest economy. Present global brands like Intercontinental and Hilton have been operating leading hotels in Nairobi for decades and Hilton for some time even owned and operated two safari lodges, before divesting of those interests at a time when the market had fallen a little flat and concentrating on its core business with the Nairobi Hilton Hotel. Sheraton for a brief period in the 1980's managed a beach property in Mombasa but having failed back then to understand the market soon afterwards withdrew from the contract.

Intercontinental owns and operates its Nairobi flagship property since the mid 1970's and recently opened a

Crown Plaza hotel in the 'upper hill' part of the city, which it operates on behalf of an ownership consortium, effectively covering the luxury and up market segment in Kenya's capital.

Sheraton in contrast manage hotels in Kampala and Addis Ababa, both owned by the same middle Eastern group which also owns the Djibouti Sheraton, but had pulled out of a management deal in Kenya it had entered into with a highly controversial individual claiming to own former Block Hotels – in spite of warnings by many industry observers at the time – who, according to a source in Nairobi, for a while spent more time in court and remand than behind his desk. The recent strong growth in Kenya's convention and meeting market however has made Nairobi in particular once more interesting for the 'big boys' and the expected opening in 2012 of the Radisson Hotel – a Rezidor brand – will add pressure to other global players to seek out a property to either own and manage or at the very least sign a long term management contract to establish a presence in the largest city of the region.

Kempinski has over the past years built a significant presence in Tanzania with one lodge, resorts and the leading business hotel in Dar es Salaam, but not spread their wings further into the region, while Fairmont has a strong presence in Kenya with lodges and the Norfolk Hotel in Nairobi, but again abandoned plans to build a hotel in Kampala, when the global financial and economic crisis made the going tough.

It is thought that with the further integration of the East African Community, and the harmonization and streamlining of the legislative and regulatory frameworks in coming years, the EAC will become a major focal point for investments by global hospitality giants, aided also by the fact that Nairobi has become THE regional aviation hub, further aided when the expansion and rehabilitation of the Jomo Kenyatta International Airport has been concluded. Watch this space.

KENYA AIRWAYS PRESENTS OPERATING REPORT

The latest release of operational data by Kenya Airways last weekend shows that the upswing and improvements for the 'Pride of Africa' continues unabated. The global economic and financial crisis impacted severely on the performance of the East African economies too, and combined with at the time huge rises in the cost of aviation fuel KQ had recorded reduced cargo and passenger loads, had to cut routes and capacity but over

all still managed to avoid the mega losses compared to in particular US based carriers.

Strike action last year, by many observers thought illegal at the time as the union ignored a court order, and then the European 'ash cloud' earlier this year too caused financial wobbles, but now it seems the airline has put all of this firmly behind and is progressively returning to its star performance of past years.

The operational report pointed out that KQ's B777 fleet is presently undergoing heavy maintenance, and that their B767 are taking up the routes albeit with lesser uplift capacity, underscoring the urgency to bring additional aircraft into the fleet, considering the long delays with the deliveries of the ordered B787 aircraft. It was in fact the B787 which was due to replace the ageing B767 fleet progressively from 2011 onwards but the airline has remained shtumm on this issue and refrained from confirming if indeed they have made a deal with Airbus to bring A330's into the fleet as an intermediate measure.

Hence, the routes to the Middle and Far / South East are presently down by 8 percent, largely due to the use of the smaller B767, but still up from last year overall, while it is again the African route network which shows the largest upswing. Flights to South Africa were up by 22 percent during the period under review, supported by world cup traffic, into which KQ tapped successfully by using their Nairobi hub for the onward connections to Johannesburg.

East Africa capacity by KQ on papers seems 'down' by 7 percent, but informed observers, including this correspondent, attribute this to the increased use of the smaller capacity Embraer jets and a greater integration of traffic into Tanzania with partner airline 'Precision Air', which is now playing a larger role in cross border traffic, giving KQ the ability to re-deploy their own fleet to other valuable destinations in the region. Visit the company's website www.kenya-airways.com for more information on corporate and financial performance.

'NEW' TRAVEL NEWS APPEARS ON THE WEB

As mentioned a while ago, Tony Clegg Butt, formerly of 'the' Travel News, has made good of his promise to launch a new travel magazine in Kenya. The web based 'Travel News' is similar in editorial content selection to the former print version, which had many faithful followers across the region after establishing itself as THE travel and lifestyle magazine. However, after selling the magazine to a South African media group the new owners merged it with their own creation 'Twende'

and then managed to run the magazine into the ground through a series of management errors, which included letting go of key creative brains and staff behind the erstwhile Twende and then committing other blunders, serving as 'afterburners' for their magazines' free fall into oblivion.

The 'old' Travel News interestingly was never on the web, not even for a fee, and the 'new' Travel News will according the Tony ONLY be on the web and available there for subscribers in a marked departure from past distribution and availability channels – surely saving a forest or two in the future by NOT having use paper to print on.

Write to travelnews@triad.co.ke to be added to the distribution list, and meanwhile all the best to Tony and his team for the future – East Africa needed you back!

SOUTH – EAST COOPERATION ITINERARY NOW AVAILABLE

Kenya's 'Bush Adventures' and South Africa's 'Peace of Eden' have now published the itinerary for September, the first such cooperation between the two companies. Both companies have specialised in unique features such as survival training and teaching 'bush craft', taught by Masai in Kenya and Bushmen in Southern Africa to the participants of courses and activities.

Peace of Eden will offer the first of their East Africa adventures between 17th and 22nd of September, from and to Nairobi and the full itinerary and cost, excluding flights, Visa and items of a personal nature can be accessed via www.peace-of-eden.co.za/corporate-wildlife-teambuilding-experience-with-the-masai-from-the-ilingwesi-clan-itinerary.htm

This being a unique and rather novel vacation adventure, interested parties are advised to book swiftly to be assured of a place. Find details of the Kenyan operation via www.bush-adventures.com

CAMPSITE RAIDED IN MASAI MARA CONSERVATION AREA

Reports are being received from Nairobi that shortly after 8 p.m. last Monday night a group of armed raiders, thought to have crossed the border from Tanzania into neighbouring Kenya, attacked a private tented camp put up for the night by long term Kenya residents on a local vacation. After first firing a salvo of shots into the camp, a previously never experienced method of robbery, they then raided the campsite and made away with valuables.

The campsite, normally used by and popular with East

African residents and Kenyan campers is reportedly located on one of the conservancies in the so called Mara Triangle, below the Ololoolo escarpment and near the common border.

According to reliable sources two of the campers suffered gun shot wounds while one of the group was fatally wounded and succumbed not long afterwards to his injuries. According to a very reliable source in Nairobi this person in fact celebrated his 60th birthday that day. An aircraft of the Flying Doctor services has since then collected the injured and brought them to a leading Nairobi hospital for treatment where they are said to be in a serious but stable condition.

A combined team of Kenya Wildlife Services rangers and other security personnel stationed in the wider area was deployed just as soon as the information reached them, and this being a full moon night they immediately began tracking the criminals who reportedly fled in the direction of the border with Tanzania. Additional security teams were airlifted into the Masai Mara or dispatched from their observation points to join in the hunt for the gang, and it is understood that Tanzanian authorities too dispatched rangers and security forces to the area close to the incident on the Tanzanian side to also join in the search, hand in hand with their Kenyan counterparts.

This is a 'first' of its kind of such a brutal attack, never seen before, and as and when caught the culprits will be facing the death penalty when convicted. It is presently of no consolation to this correspondent that no foreign tourists were involved in the incident. The tragic loss of life and the injuries to the survivors are harrowing and shocking as it is and being East African residents does not make this any less serious than had it been foreign tourists.

The eTN East Africa team expresses their sorrow and sympathy and extends heartfelt condolences to the families and friends of those affected by this senseless act of violence.

KENYA REFERENDUM ON NEW CONSTITUTION EXPECTED TO BE CALM

Senior tourism stakeholders in Nairobi and Mombasa have expressed their confidence that the imminent referendum over the new constitution, due to be held on Wednesday 04th of August, and which was hotly contested by proponents and opponents for months now, will be conducted in a peaceful and mature manner and that NO repeat of the post election violence in early 2008 is expected. In fact, leading safari operators,

while acknowledging 'contingency plans', are said to be not really concerned about the voting and counting, as the high season for safaris – especially into the Masai Mara where the annual migration of wildebeest and zebras can now be seen – is underway. While no official statement could be obtained from government other usually reliable sources connected to governmental bodies and authorities were giving reassurance and portrayed optimism, that tourists visiting Kenya would as usual be safe and could enjoy their vacation without any problems.

All indications are that the people of Kenya will vote 'YES' to finally get a new constitution, and while it is acknowledged even by proponents of the document that it has flaws, these can always be amended at a later stage without throwing the entire document for a second time after 2005 into the bin.

Meanwhile it was also confirmed that Wednesday will be a public holiday in Kenya, to permit citizens to vote on the new proposed constitution, while civil servants will be having three days off, to allow for travel on Tuesday to their home areas, vote on Wednesday and return to their duty stations on Thursday ...

YEMEN AIR TO START EAST AFRICA FLIGHTS

From December this year, or so says the information passed to this correspondent by sources in both Kenya and Tanzania, will Yemen Airways be flying three times a week between Sana'a and Nairobi, before then continuing to Dar es Salaam. The return is due to follow the same routing. The airline will reportedly use one of their relatively new NG Boeing 737-800 aircraft for this service. The flight will not be operated under any code share arrangement with other airlines and offers upon landing in Sana'a connections into the region, details of which however were not available by the time of filing this report. Watch this space for the most up to date news from the Eastern African and Indian Ocean aviation scene.

Tanzania News

DAR ES SALAAM TO GET NEW AIRLINK WITH SOUTH AFRICA

It was confirmed last week that Comair, the franchisee for British Airways in South Africa and also operator of low cost airline 'Kulula.com' will commence flights into Dar es Salaam from November this year. The airline is set to fly five times a week between Johannesburg and Dar, the limit set under their present licence granted by

Tanzania's air transport licensing body, but has already stated their intent to eventually operate daily flights. It is presently not entirely clear if the flights will be operated under 'Kulula.com' or under Comair's British Airways franchise, but intending passengers will probably not mind that at all as long as added options for flights are put on the market at affordable fares.

In the past South African tour operators sent plenty of visitors to explore Tanzania's national parks, beaches and islands but the near collapse of Air Tanzania, and the resulting unsettled huge claims for tickets already paid when the airline ceased operations on the route to Johannesburg, has deeply upset the travel and tourism stakeholder affected. (Such contingent liabilities actually are one of the major reasons for the reluctance of potential core investors in ATCL the government has been wooing) However, with this new connection, operated by a rather more reliable and better reputed South African airline, this reluctance to promote Tanzania will probably be overcome in coming weeks ahead of the inaugural flight and 'regular' business will undoubtedly resume soon.

TANZANIAN POLITICAL ESTABLISHMENT TRAMPLES ON NYERERE LEGACY

"The survival of our wildlife is a matter of grave concern to all of us in Africa. These wild creatures amid the wild places they inhabit are not only important as a source of wonder and inspiration, but are an integral part of our natural resources and our future livelihood and well being.

In accepting the trusteeship of our wildlife we solemnly declare that we will do everything in our power to make sure that our children's grand-children will be able to enjoy this rich and precious inheritance. The conservation of wildlife and wild places calls for specialist knowledge, trained manpower and money, and we look to other nations to co-operate with us in this important task - the success or failure of which not only affects the continent of Africa but the rest of the world as well." Julius K. Nyerere, Father of the Tanzanian nation and Founder President of the United Republic of Tanzania, in his pre-independence Arusha Manifesto, 1961

The announcement by President Kikwete during a campaign speech last weekend, that 'the Serengeti road will go ahead' was a hard slap into the face of the legacy left by founding father Julius Mwalimu Nyerere,

who had immediately prior to Independence in his 'Arusha Manifesto' vowed to protect the Serengeti and recognized its importance as a world heritage, belonging to all of mankind. It is also a stark departure from not only these but other 'teachings' of Nyerere too, whom Kikwete has often described as his political mentor and inspiration.

Plans to build the hugely controversial highway across the sprawling wilderness, home of the one of the last of the world's great herds of migrating wildlife, have repeatedly been defeated in the past, but industrial mining interests, allegedly combined with huge campaign donations, are hard at work to succeed this time round. International financing institutions like the World Bank, the African Development Bank, the East African Development Bank, the European Investment Bank and others will be reluctant though to fund such a project, as their own environmental guidelines prohibit them from touching such follies and as opposition is already forming on their own doorsteps by conservation NGO's, civil society and an unfolding letter and email campaign by thousands of individuals from around the world. Such concerted efforts ordinarily swiftly throw a spanner in the work of assessing loan and grant applications and these bi- and multilateral institutions are not likely to incur the wrath of influential NGO's in their own 'back yards' when an alternative route is available.

That alternative route would benefit millions more people with access to markets and the urban centres than the Northern route but has been dismissed as 'not viable' by some Tanzanian governmental mouthpieces and politicians seeking re-election on the back of the president's past campaign promises, likely uttered at the spur of the moment and now hard to disown. Yet, much of 'official' Tanzania certainly ignores if not outright disowns that alternative route option in the face of expert advice available to them. The 'Southern Route', as can be seen on websites advocating against the route through the park, is meeting the access needs of more villages and productive agricultural areas and still connect the very parts of Tanzania the present park road proposal seems to secure. The minor climb down by government last week, 'not to tarmac' the park section, is minimalist in its nature as a commercial road, even if only constructed with murrum, will still attract thundering trucks, since at both ends of the park tarmac is beckoning for them. Other government mouthpieces are pointing to 'existing roads through the Serengeti', conveniently mixing the term 'road' with the type of

tracks established and maintained by the park authorities. These tracks are narrow, often causing even safari 4x4's to pass each other at walking speed, while the proposed commercial road would be of standard width to permit heavy traffic pass each other, or overtake with ease.

Notably, the Tanzanian government hierarchy is also silent to apparently most, if not all enquiries being made for a 'statement on the record about the project', rightly fearing that this may in time to come harshly backfire on them when, as the doomsday scenario for the Serengeti is painted in greater detail, they may one day be held accountable for their complicity in 'killing the Serengeti'.

However, it is also established already that countries applying lesser standards for loans and known to habitually ignore the issues of environmental protection, are likely to step forward and offer funding against securing concessions and the hope of huge profits, leaving Tanzania in the end with deep holes in the ground, a wrecked and poisoned environment and the loss of biodiversity and the big herds in the Serengeti, bled dry of natural resources and likely left in greater poverty rather than less. Intriguing enough, it is one of those 'usual suspects' country which is constantly in the news when smuggling of ivory and rhino horn is mentioned in the media and many citizens from that country in the Far East have been arrested for their involvement in smuggling blood ivory and poaching operations, not just in Eastern Africa but also further down south on the continent, where the problem is even more acute.

It has become evident now that the 'Save the Serengeti' coalition needs to shift their focus to lobby their respective home governments and global institutions and have Tanzanian plans exposed, so that at least a temporary 'pariah' status can be attached to the country until the route for the road is shifted to the Southern side of the Serengeti, where according to information at hand a great multiple of a population would benefit from the road links – but of course lengthening the access route for the future miners, their equipment and supplies.

Tourists visiting Tanzania too should bring their voices to bear on their tour operators back home and their safari operators in Tanzania to compel them to speak up and expose the project for the what it is, a sure killer for wildlife and an insurmountable obstacle for the annual migration of the wildebeest and zebras in search of food, the lack of access to which will surely decimate the present big herds to a fraction, as the bison's were

decimated across the North American prairies. Sadly though, the media in Tanzania and much of Eastern Africa are shtumm on the issue, apart from a few isolated articles and dissent in particular in Tanzania itself seems deliberately kept out of the media spot light, probably – as several sources in Arusha and Dar es Salaam confirmed, speaking from third party phones in a tell tale sign – to avoid political repercussions, framed up arrests and worse before the elections at the end of October. The mention by the president last week, when he pointed to opposition to the road coming mostly from outside Tanzania, is – while technically correct – also an affirmation of having successfully muzzled dissent to the project within Tanzania, leaving only web based media to give information to the Tanzanian people as their own media continue to let them down. Even media contacts, known to this correspondent for many years, have become shy to even discuss the issue by phone or exchange emails on the matter, with two giving almost identical responses: 'you know how things are, this is election time, don't put me at risk please. We see what is written on the internet and appreciate but Tanzanians really cannot speak up against it. Just remember what happened to the former TANAPA chief who was completely opposed to this road'.

Serengeti Shall Not Die for the last nearly 60 years was the slogan the world listened to, attracting huge funding and a huger following by friends of the Serengeti, and of Tanzania, from abroad, but for how much longer that will continue, should this project go ahead.

The project is, according the available projections and studies carried out before, a certain death sentence for the Serengeti herds migration pattern and those holding the hangman's noose are none other than President Kikwete and his orchestra of sycophants surrounding him, and either unwilling or unable to tell or show him the errors of his way. It is therefore mega barbs for the Tanzanian establishment and their industrial and big business backers and bouquets to all those in support of saving the Serengeti from this fallacy.

In a related, and under the circumstances truly ironic development, was the Ngorongoro Conservation area, including the Olduvai Gorge, last week made a UNESCO World Heritage Site alongside the Serengeti, a status the latter will surely lose if indeed the road project goes ahead as presently suggested.

Follow the developments and new postings and articles on Twitter via @stopserengetihw or sign up to and regularly visit the 'official Facebook' site to post your own comments and contributions via www.facebook.com.

Rwanda News

RWANDAIR REPLACES FOREIGN CHARTERED AIRLINES FOR TROOP TRANSPORT

Having acquired additional aircraft in recent months the Rwandan national airline has now won a bid to fly peacekeeping troops from Kigali to Darfur, where the country maintains a major presence under the United Nations mandate. Previously foreign carriers had filled this gap and operated the regular flights, at times dogged by controversy, but now that RwandAir does have B737-500 aircraft on their fleet they were at last able to not only contribute troops but also fly them there.

It was also learned that the delivery of the second leased B737-500 was on schedule for end August, allowing the airline to roll out their planned network, frequency and capacity expansion as reported about in earlier articles. This has according to a source in Kigali already resulted in adding a Sunday flight to Kilimanjaro / Arusha in Tanzania, making it now four a week.

Meanwhile has the airline announced sweeping changes in their scheduling of flights out of Kigali and intending travellers are urged to visit www.rwandair.com for updated information, or else call RwandAir or their travel agent to avoid either missing their flight or coming way too early to the airport.

NAKUMATT GIVES BOOST TO GORILLA CONSERVATION

One of East Africa's leading retail giants, Kenya's Nakumatt, has made good of a pledge made earlier in the year to donate 1 percent of their revenue accrued during the month of June in their Kigali shop to gorilla conservation projects. A cheque was handed over last week to the Ministry of Environment and Lands to eventually benefit RDB – Tourism and Conservation in their projects and activities, worth 5.9 million Rwandese Francs.

Gorilla tourism is the highest profile tourism activity in Rwanda and conservation is a key cornerstone of government policies, aimed to maintain bio diversity and protect species from which tourism, the biggest foreign exchange earner for the 'land of a thousand hills' can benefit in the long term.

RWANDA VOTES ON AUGUST 09TH

As previously indicated, Rwanda is holding general elections across the country to choose new members of parliament and – what seems a foregone conclusion – confirm President Paul Kagame for a second term of office. Tourism stakeholders have contacted this correspondent seeking to reassure tourist visitors about to arrive in the country, that these elections will be held in a mature and peaceful manner and that no problems or any nature are expected for tourists, when coming to see the country's cultural and natural attractions. Previous elections in the 'new' Rwanda, which emerged from the 1994 genocide like the proverbial 'phoenix' from the ashes, were also held without any significant incidents and safaris to the national parks went on as scheduled without any interruptions, as is expected this time also. Visit www.rwandatourism.com for updates and information.

Seychelles News

CHINA TOURIST OFFICE TO OPEN SOON

The Seychelles Tourist Board has confirmed that they are at an advanced stage to formally open a marketing office in China, to promote more tourists visit the archipelago. Excellent air connections via Emirates flights routing through Dubai are available six days a week to Mahe, soon to rise to daily flights once scheduling conflicts have been resolved. The Seychelles also discussed direct airlinks with China during a recent visit by President Michel to China and while this may still be a while off before bearing fruits it would certainly boost tourism links between the archipelago and the Far East.

Already one staff, Ms. Stephanie Lablache from STB, is attached to the Seychelles diplomatic mission in Beijing and looking after the promotion of tourism but the planned opening of a 'proper' tourist office will undoubtedly help the Seychelles to work the market better.

AIR SEYCHELLES TO COMPLY WITH EUROPEAN EMISSION CONTROLS

The EU emission trading scheme has been a challenge to airlines flying into European airspace and progressively have foreign carriers started to comply with monitoring and reporting requirements. Air Seychelles too is now 'on board' with this and has instituted measures and procedures to meet the European Union's requirements, based on which continued traffic rights into the EU are anchored. The Seychelles' national airline is expected to buy 'carbon credits' if necessary but may also take advantage of free carbon credits once the first schedule

of reports has been submitted to the EU and reviewed by their experts.

Air Seychelles operates scheduled flights to Italy and Britain and charters as and where required from mainland Europe and Britain to the archipelago, but also currently operates a contract for the UK to the Falkland Islands, all of which fall under the EU's new regulations.

It was learned that the reporting and data processing was outsourced to 'Aviation Footprinter' as a result of doing in house trials first, a decision the airline took to promote accuracy and full compliance with a variety of rules but also to obtain added data relevant to aircraft and engine maintenance.

Meanwhile has Air Seychelles also confirmed that they expect to take delivery of their first Boeing B787 'Dreamliner' by 2013, when the replacement of the current fleet of B 767 aircraft will begin in earnest.

NAME CHANGE FOR SEYCHELLES HELI OPERATORS

Following two earlier articles on the planned joint venture by Helicopter Seychelles and Zil Air, the merger has now taken place and the new corporate identity and name was revealed yesterday, in time to be reported here in 'breaking news' fashion.

'L' Air DeZil' was the name revealed to the public yesterday, combining Creole, English and French terminology and translating broadly into 'the fragrance of the islands'.

Also highlighted were the key corporate values as: Right Thinking – Right Experience – Right Team – Right Now

Good luck and happy landings and when the new corporate logo is revealed you too will be amongst the very first to see it.

Southern Sudan News

BORDER DEMARCATION REMAINS A CHALLENGE

As the rainy season is now beginning in parts of the Southern Sudan's territory adjoining the North of the country, the ongoing verification exercise – dealing with the remaining 20 percent of hitherto unmapped boundary lines – is facing suspension due to transportation and access problems. It is thought that the remaining mapping however is also focused on the most contentious areas and about three quarters of the remaining work scope will be 'hotly' disputed, according to a source in Juba. The regime in Khartoum

is already using the pause to threaten the South with a shift in referendum dates, claiming that unless the border lines are verified and agreed no vote on independence can take place, a notion firmly rejected by the Southern leadership who have already vowed that the referendum will take place as scheduled.

Some of the borders are important for both sides as huge oil deposits were found along the North / South divide and Khartoum will by hook or crook try to grab some of the oil by having border lines drawn along their own image rather than follow historical division lines, when few from the North were ever coming to the South other than to raid for cattle and slaves.

The international community has supported the peaceful progress under the CPA of January 2005 and not ruled out arbitration, should some stretches of the boundaries not be agreed upon between the two parties, similar to the Abyei case which was partly resolved before the international arbitration panel in The Hague.

Meanwhile has the regime in Khartoum poured more oil into the 'fire' when introducing parallels of the Ethiopia / Eritrea conflict over unresolved border issues, conveniently pushing aside the fact that an independent border commission had ruled long ago on those disputed boundaries and leaving unsaid the aggressive nature of the regime which prior to the CPA brutally oppressed the Southern population and occupied their land, inflicting a great loss of life at the time ... trust know whom ...

And in closing today again some interesting material, courtesy of Gill Staden who produces 'The Livingstone Weekly' down South in Zambia at the Victoria Falls ...



Kariba Bush Club

I took a mad dash to Kariba Bush Club during the week. There one day, back the next ... but it was

worth it. It is such a beautiful spot on the lake.

Kariba Bush Club is a 5-hour drive, through Choma and on to Batoka where you turn east on a tar road towards Maamba. It is well sign-posted so impossible to get lost. The last stretch of road is dirt so a car with high clearance is probably best.



I arrived in the afternoon to be welcomed by Chennai who took me across the lake to the houseboat which was moored in a bay off one of their islands. I joined the rest of the group on the boat – family and friends - who were all idling around the deck, some fishing in a half-hearted fashion. All were enjoying an afternoon beer so I joined them with a Mosi.

The island is stocked with game so we watched as waterbuck, eland, impala and kudu came down to drink. The water is still high but has gone down about half a metre from its highest level. As with all the islands in the lake, the water has covered much of the grazing along the water's edge. All the animals on the Bush Club's islands have been given supplementary food to help them get through the lean times. Once the water level has gone down and the new grass has grown, there will be plenty for the grazers to eat.



The evening was spent chatting on the deck and enjoying the breeze from the lake. Peter and Chennai cooked a great meal and, after that, I decided I needed to sleep. I left the rest of them playing a ridiculous board game – apparently until midnight.



I was the first up in the morning and as I had no-one to chat to, I decided to have a go at the fishing thing. I didn't expect to catch anything ... and I didn't. I was joined a while later by Steve from England who also picked up a rod and threw a lure into the lake. We were trying to be quiet as the midnight revellers were still sleeping. Then suddenly Steve yelled: I think I've got one. And a huge tigerfish leapt out of the water on the end of the line. Of course, this woke everyone up, so we all watched as Steve landed a 4kg fish.

Having roused everyone we all had cups of tea and coffee, started up the boat and trundled round the island and across the lake to the mainland for breakfast. Peter took me for a bit of a tour to see the new ensuite tents, the children's playground and a few other developments since I had last visited. He told me that they can now take 78 guests, so, if you have a large family, they can all fit at Kariba Bush Club.

They have two houseboats. The small one we used

can take six people comfortably, but a few extra can find a mattress on the deck. The other one is large and can take about 20 people and has a plunge pool.

Then it was time for breakfast so we all tucked into bacon and eggs with lots of juice and coffee. With a return journey to Livingstone ahead of me, I packed my car and set off with a promise to myself that I would go back again soon.

Hungry lion saves rhino, causes arrest of poacher
From Patrick Chitumba in Victoria Falls

A hungry lion attacked a group of poachers who were about to kill a rhino, resulting in their arrest and recovery of an AK 47 assault rifle, a fully charged magazine and 50 rounds of ammunition.

The officer commanding police in Victoria Falls district, Chief Superintendent Regis Munyaradzi, confirmed the arrest of five poachers, who included a Zambian.

“Yes, I confirm that five poachers, including a Zambian, were arrested at a hide-out in Mkhosana Township in Victoria Falls in the early hours of Monday after failing to poach a rhino for its horn as per their plan,” said Chief Supt Munyaradzi. “We believe this could be a syndicate and investigations are under way and because of that, we are still withholding their names and the area they wanted to poach from.”

Chief Supt Munyaradzi said on Sunday night, the poachers descended on an area he declined to disclose, where they were sure of gunning down a rhino for its horn. “Luck ran out on them when a lion approached them. In fear, they ran in different directions. As a result, the lion took after one of the poachers resulting in him climbing a tree while others fled and went back to their base,” he said. Chief Supt Munyaradzi said the poacher who climbed the tree spent the night clinging to the branches so that he would not fall as the lion was waiting for him under the tree.

“The lion only walked away from the tree when there was daylight after which the poacher climbed down,” he said. Chief Supt Munyaradzi said as the suspected poacher made his way out of the park, he was seen by

rangers who were on patrol. They then apprehended him. “The poacher was brought to the police and he revealed that he was working with others,” said Chief Supt Munyaradzi.

He said the police then laid an ambush at a house in Mkhosana Township in the early hours of Monday, leading to the arrest of the four other poachers and the recovery of the rifle and ammunition.

“So we are tracing the origins of the rifle as part of investigations and they will appear in court soon,” said Chief Supt Munyaradzi.

ADDS yours truly – this lion ought to be given a medal for his work as a rhino conservationist.