

The Livingstone biWeekly

19 August 2015

Dear All

My header is the view from half-way up (or down) Palm Grove, looking at the Victoria Falls Hotel through the gorge.

A Visit to the Boiling Pot

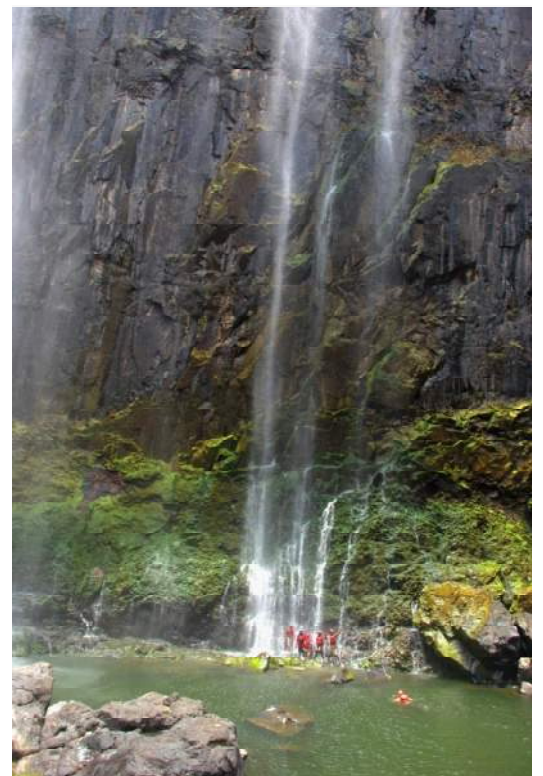
The Zambezi River after it has fallen down the Victoria Falls passes through a narrow channel where the water churns and bubbles. This is known as the Boiling Pot. To reach the Boiling Pot it



is necessary to walk down the gorge on the Zambian side for around 700 metres. The path winds its way down the gorge on steps which have been made through the rocks. At the steepest section handrails have been put in place to hold on to. There are a couple of places where there are benches for taking a breather. I decided to give it a go.

My plan had been to join Jo from Bundu on his activity of going by raft to the cliff face of the Victoria Falls – an activity known as Swimming Under the Falls. But in order to get to the raft we had to climb up and down boulders. Jo and his team hopped easily from one boulder to the other.

For me I was on my bottom climbing down each one and on my hands and knees climbing up them! Talk about being unfit! Anyhow, I got over some of them bravely until I reached a point where I knew, not only was I having a hard time, but also that I was spoiling the experience for the other guests. I decided to give up.



A pic from Bundu website



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I scrambled back over all those rocks and back to the path. Now I had to get back up those 700 metres ...

It actually wasn't that bad although it did take me about 40 minutes. I stopped and watched the baboons for a while as they

played on the cliff face. I also met one of them on the path and she did not seem as if she wanted to move off so that I could pass. Eventually, I stepped off the path and she looked at me and plodded past me then took herself off clambering up the cliff-face to join her friends. At that point I wished I was a baboon and could be so agile.



All the way along the route I had been overtaken by young Zambians as they bounded up the steps laughing all the way obviously wondering why I was huffing and puffing. Finally, though, for the last 50 metres I was joined by a lady from Dambwa who was also feeling the strain and we did the last bit together chatting as we went and then laughing as we reached the top.

One comment for staff at the National Heritage. Litter. There was a litter bin at the bottom which had been overturned by baboons, I assume. There was litter everywhere. Also, all the way down the footpath there were bottles and other rubbish. Surely if our guests to our World Heritage Site are paying US\$20 per person for the privilege of seeing the Victoria Falls they can be assured of a litter-free environment.

LIVINGSTONE

A Long Walk To School

As I mentioned in the last newsletter a bunch of stalwarts were walking from Lake Kariba, through the bush, to Livingstone. The distance is thought to be 250 km. Their aim was to raise money for School Club Zambia, an NGO which helps community schools to finance their operations.

The group of 7 and their support team of 3 finally arrived in Livingstone via the farm road known as Simatobolo Highway. They passed the quarry and through Ngwenya, ending their walk at St Raphael's School.

We celebrated with pizza and champagne.

Their walk had taken them through some of the remotest regions of Zambia from one community school to another. They said that some of the schools were in dire need of help and that School Club hopes to concentrate their work on these schools. The children are seemingly forgotten by the rest of the country. In one school, the children come from possibly 20 km away on a Monday morning and use the classrooms as dormitories too because they don't return home until Friday. The classroom was



littered with their little cooking pots, their worn shoes and clothes. Lois said she was close to tears when she saw it.

The good news is that the walk has raised about \$19,000. The money will go to constructing and equipping a carpentry workshop at one school. The workshop will be used by the community to make furniture which can be sold to raise funds for the school and also as a training centre for the children so that they learn a valuable skill.

The rest of the money will be kept safe until another project is identified.

Well done to them all. And, many thanks to everyone who helped, especially the Waterfront, which hosted the Wrap Party on Wednesday afternoon.



Toll Gates on the roads

ZAMBIA

In Zambia there are billboards around the place telling us that we are to have toll gates on our roads soon. Toll gates are on all major roads in Zimbabwe. It is now \$2 per normal car; trucks are \$10. It cost me an extra \$14 for a trip from Vic Falls to Harare. Not much, I suppose, but it does slow down the journey. So, with the masses of road blocks along the road and the increasing traffic adding to the time, I now find it impossible to travel from Harare to Victoria Falls in one day.

For us in Zambia the journey from Livingstone to Lusaka now takes 6-7 hours because of the increased traffic on our narrow roads. Toll gates are only going to add to the irritation and time taken to get from one town to another. And, as many of us keep saying, toll roads should only be put in place when there is an alternative road to use; they are generally seen as 'expressways' which people can opt to use if they are in a hurry.



Surely it is much more rational, if the country needs a bit of extra money for road rehabilitation, to add a small amount on the cost of fuel. By constructing toll booths we are only increasing capital expenditure and adding to the number of people government has to employ, which is surely something we now need to avoid.

In the meantime from the Zimbabwe Herald:

A delegation from the Zambian Road Agency which is in the country on a road administration study tour, yesterday visited the Goromonzi toll plaza along Mutare Road where it hailed the country's tolling system. The team, which is led by Engineer Steven Mwale (director commercial and technical services), is being hosted by the Zimbabwe National Road Administration.

Eng Mwale told The Herald after the tour that Zimbabwe's tolling system was a model in the region and they would soon implement the same in Zambia....

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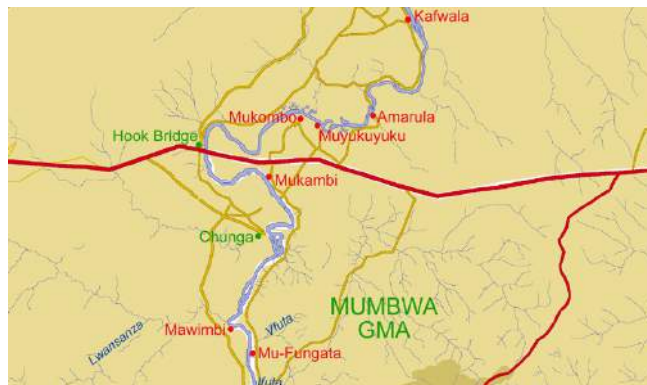


Hook Bridge Repair

The Hook Bridge over the Kafue is to be repaired by China Henan at a cost of K147million (US\$18.6million). The bridge is 52 years old and has had no maintenance.

The bridge is in the middle of Kafue National Park. The road which passes over the bridge is getting busy with trucks, hence the number of animals killed on the road by passing vehicles. I can only hope that the government takes a look at the road while it is there to see what it can do about the safety of our wildlife.

Linked to this article is another one about the Road Development Agency which states that it is in the process of building bridges across rivers to replace pontoons. According to the article on ZNBC, 114 bridges have been identified over 'small' rivers in Zambia. I am not quite sure what the 'small' refers to.



Conservation Lower Zambezi

RUBATANO 2015

July saw CLZ and the Chiawa Community's second annual Community Sports Day/Tournament – Rubatano 2015. The event saw 15 football teams and 8 netball teams competing for the titles. There was a mixture of corporate teams, community teams and lodge teams. This was a great illustration of the unity and interlinked relationships within the Chiawa Community, one of this event's main objectives.

CLZ on behalf of Chiawa Community and all the teams present would like to thank the following for making this day possible: Apam, Chiawa Camp, Chongwe Safaris, Neon Signs, Farm Pride, Hi-fi Corp, Kanyemba Lodge, Kiambi Safaris, Gerry Carbin, Mwambashi River Camp, Royal Zambezi Lodge, Shoprite Zambia, Proflight Zambia, Tunepics, Zambeef, Zamleather and Sausage Tree Camp. Thank you so much, your support allowed for this incredible dusty and action packed day to take place. The event will eagerly be anticipated yet again next year. We could not have hosted such a day without your generous and kind support - so thank you!

No Longer is it just our students who are bright in the EEP centre...

This month light was shed on CLZ's Education Centre from the kind solar installation by Empowered by Light. The team from Empowered by Light spent about 10 days at CLZ Base Camp working hard to deliver and install the new system. CLZ is very excited for its new relationship and partnership with Empowered by the Light where we hope to empower local schools and the surrounding communities through solar power and light.

The system will enable Besa to show educational videos without the use of the generator during school visits. This system not only helps operate the EEP centre but it equally powers our Base Camp from the kitchen, refrigeration, laundry and water pumps, which in turn decreases our carbon footprint. The Base Camp is now 100% green in terms of power and saves us approximately US\$10,000 per year. We look forward to seeing the benefits of this system in the next few weeks and months!





The activity of Swimming Under the Falls can only operate for a few months of the year. As you know from my story, it has started and will run until around November depending upon the rains. It is lots of fun but you need to be a bit fitter than me!

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2015

Livingstone-Sesheke Road

There was a report in the news that the work on the Livingstone-Sesheke Road had been completed but when I looked closely I found out that 97 km was yet to be repaired. Apparently this stretch of road needs some research before it can be done.

I assume that this is the stretch that passes through the mopane forest to the west of Kazungula. It floods all around the watershed of the Ngwezi and Machili Rivers. And it is clay soil.

This road is a major highway which links Zambia to Botswana and Namibia and is part of the Walvis Bay Corridor. Considering that we are managing to build a bridge across the Barotse Floodplain, a distance of around 40 km, I am sure we can manage this road which does not flood quite so badly.

I can only hope that the research is done soon.

The Accountants' Conference Facility

From the Lusaka Times:

The Zambia Institute of Chartered Accountants (ZICA) has made a lot of progress on the construction of a state-of-the-art Convention Centre in Livingstone at a cost of about US\$ 300 million. ZICA president Wesley Beene said the project, whose ground breaking ceremony and laying of the foundation stone took place in Zambia's Tourist Capital last year, was on course.

He was speaking in Livingstone on Friday night at Avani Victoria Falls Hotel during the 2015 gala dinner organised by ZICA, Association of Chartered Certified Accountants (ACCA) and Chartered Institute of Management Accountants (CIMA). This was at the end of a three-day 2015 joint annual business conference which was held under the theme Zambia's development Agenda: the future role of the accountancy. ...

ZICA acquired 48 hectares of land on the boundary of Musi-oa-tunya National Park to set up a Convention Centre which would have capacity to accommodate more than 2, 000 delegates.

The Institute also has plans to construct a five start hotel, a mini conference, an observation wheel and a park within the same land acquired. ...

Power woes to get worse

According to Bloomberg:

Zimbabwe and Zambia will start reducing the amount of water passing through generators on Lake Kariba by 27 percent this week because of falling supplies, a spokesman for a unit of the state power company said.

The Zambezi River Authority, which is jointly owned by the two countries' governments, ordered the cuts, Fullard Gwasira, a spokesman for the Zimbabwe Power Co., said Monday in an interview in the capital, Harare. Water levels in Lake Kariba have dropped to 41 percent compared with 80 percent this time last year, according to the authority's website.

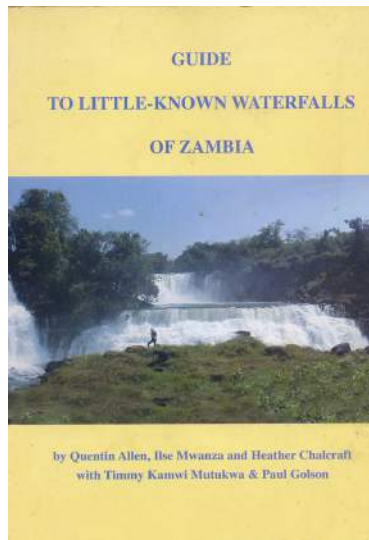
And then from The Post:

Cabinet has directed that electricity tariffs in the country be increased immediately for all consumers, except the lowest users, as a way of overcoming current power shortages. And the government says it is no longer in a position to continue subsidising power supply to the mines.

Little Known Waterfalls

I hope most of you have a copy of Guide to Little-Known Waterfalls of Zambia. Assuming you have, then, get to the shop and buy Volume II. Ilse has just brought me a copy and I am busy reading it.

Quentin Allen and Ilse Mwanza with their constant companions, Matthew Mandandi and Timmy Mutukwa, have been exploring more of Zambia's waterfalls.

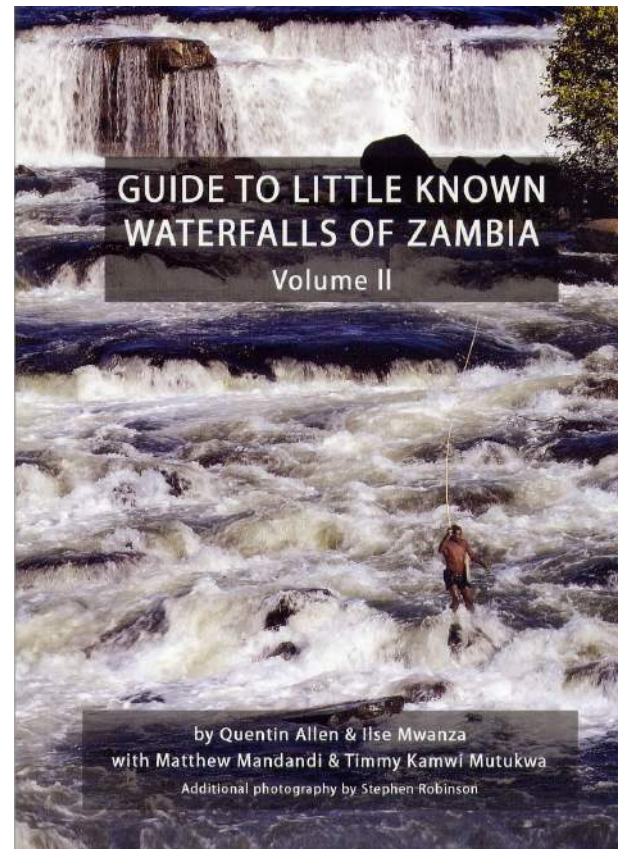


Volume II has short stories about their travels through the bush to locate remote rivers and the waterfalls, some of the treks being 10 days long. They are told with humour understating the difficulties involved in each trip.

It is a real treat to read. It is also an eye-opener to the wonderful environment of Zambia which has not been explored or tapped for its tourism potential. I expect ZESCO is merely identifying them for hydropower as we seem unable to appreciate the beauty of Zambia, our land of rivers.

I know that the book is going to be an incredible resource when researching northern Zambia (which is on my list of places to visit this year). It should be in every library.

If you want a copy, let me know, and I will put you in contact with Ilse.



From the Daily Mail

It's Wild: With SAKABILO KALEMBWE

AS THE sun sinks in the hills on that Saturday, we had just left Magoye, approaching Monze town in Southern Province. In my mind everything insignificant melts away.

My focus is the Lochinvar National Park, which lies south-west of Lusaka, on the south side of the Kafue River.

The beauty of the sinking sun gives me hope that we are nearing our destination. But I am not the driver, and neither have I been to this sanctuary before by road.

Luckily, the Zambia Wildlife Authority (ZAWA) acting director general Kampamba Kombe, who we were with on the vehicle, has been there, probably several times. And he is constantly being updated on the directions by Wildfred Moonga, the area warden for our destination.

But there was still worry because of the road works on the Monze-Namwala road, where there are serious detours and diversions.

I am hoping that these do not send us back to Lusaka.

But from the look of things, everything was falling in place. Despite the road works, we cover the 25-kilometre distance from Monze to Lochinvar within 50 minutes and we arrive in the national park just before 22:00 hours.

Wilfred Moonga is not confined; he is jovial and very welcoming, thanks perhaps to the military training and several other interactions he had both locally and internationally.

Otherwise, he would have been like many of my other subjects from Gwembe valley, who still bear large ear piercings looking like 'yo ballies' in old age.

We were not the only hunting party that arrived that night. Another party was trailing us and this one was for hunting enthusiasts like Dr Kamanga from the Ministry of Health, and his friends.

We had a meal by the braai stand slightly before midnight and retired to bed in the warden's house. Don't ask me how we slept, because you don't want to imagine how 15 men would sleep in one house.

The following morning everyone was up by 04:00 hours as per plan. We split, one group heading to the east, and the other to the west.

I joined the one headed west with one Nobert Peleti, the holder of the licence. Upon arrival there, the rules' requirement is that the licensee is accompanied by ZAWA monitoring staff and that is why Mr Moonga, the warden, was part of this team. I don't know why, but suddenly I was in the hunting frenzy as though I have done it before. But what the fuss about, I am here to just witness so that I can do the story. Maybe in future I could just be the one pulling the trigger.

After a few attempts, a male lechwe is brought down; it was a direct shot to the throat, but it does not die right away, it fights a bit, but finally succumbs.

"I am so happy that I have managed to hunt here. It is my first experience here, but all I can say is that it is such a unique experience that I would like to come back," says Peleti.

His previous experience was hunting a hippo in Upper Lupande in 2008.

"I have hunted before but it is way back in 2008 in the Upper Lupande [game management area in South Luangwa].

Resident hunting in Zambia starts on June 1 to December 31 every year. Designated licensing offices sell resident hunting licences to successful applicants in open and wetland areas like the Kafue and Bangweulu flats.

This year, applications were submitted by April 30. Any unutilised game/protected animal quota arising out of failure of a successful applicant by a resident hunting within the stipulated period entitles ZAWA to advertise the quota to the general public and sell the animals on first come, first served basis.

Successful applicants who wish to hunt in selected hunting blocks are required to book in advance and indicate their preferred dates they intend to go hunting.

Hunters' friendship can only be appreciated if you know what it is like to share your experiences with others at the campfire.

Till next week, it's bye for now.

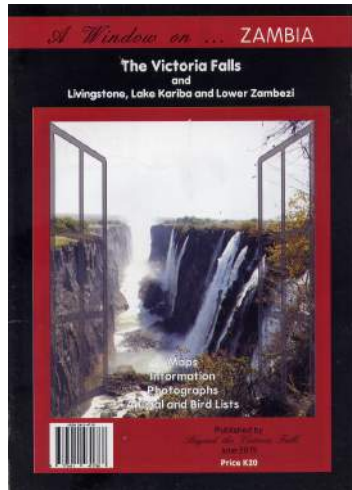
The author is ZAWA public relations officer



Another Guide

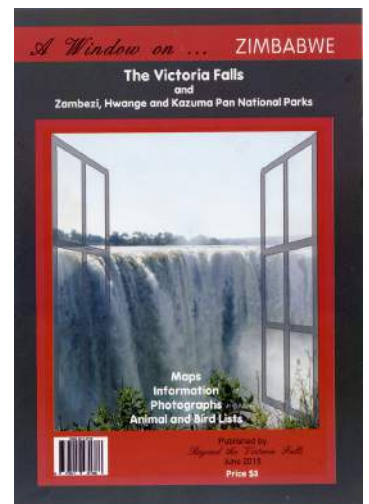
As well as working on a printed guide for Livingstone, I also took on one for Zimbabwe covering Vic Falls Town, the neighbouring park, Hwange and Kazuma Pan National Parks. It is similar to the one I have done for Livingstone but extends to their safari experiences.

So far, the comments have been positive. It will be available in the shops soon as I have left plenty with a distribution agent in Harare. In Victoria Falls Town, Courtney from Elephant's Walk has got a whole load. Any operator in Zim who would like to get some copies can see Courtney.



I am now working on one for Kafue and Liuwa Plain National Parks. Although I had sort-of decided that it was complete, I have changed my mind! I am going to add The Copperbelt into it. I know that the Copperbelt is not a safari experience but it is very popular for domestic tourists who visit friends and family or go to watch football. I also know very little about the area and it is a good excuse to find out all about copper mining ... and football!

For the next few weeks I will be visiting the Copperbelt to do the necessary research and get proper information.



Gwango Safari Lodge

While doing deliveries of my guide around Hwange National Park, I visited Gwango Safari Lodge. Gwango is a new lodge in the teak forest between Hwange Safari Lodge and Main Camp. It overlooks a vlei which is a popular spot for elephants. The main area is a double-storey thatched building; the chalets are scattered in among the trees. I have to go and stay sometime soon. It is still very new with lots of



small things to do on decoration, etc, but it has the makings of a very special place.

The owners are also building a Heritage Centre which is a valuable addition to the tourism attraction to the area. It is not finished yet, and I am keen to see it in a few months to learn about the cultural side of the region around Hwange. I am sure that you, like me, know very little.



Open Air Churches

If there is one thing I always notice when travelling through Zimbabwe is the many open air church congregations with people all dressed up in white robes. I think they are New Apostolic but not really sure. You find these congregations all over the place in towns and villages.

Now it would seem that the Victoria Falls Council has had enough and has decided to ban them around the town.

Town Clerk, Christopher Dube:

We have a challenge with open air churches and they are defiling the environment by cutting down trees.

Since you are aware that we have engaged these churches, we are now going to put sign posts stating that open space churches are illegal on those sites and we have briefed the police about the issue because we can't allow people to defile the environment.

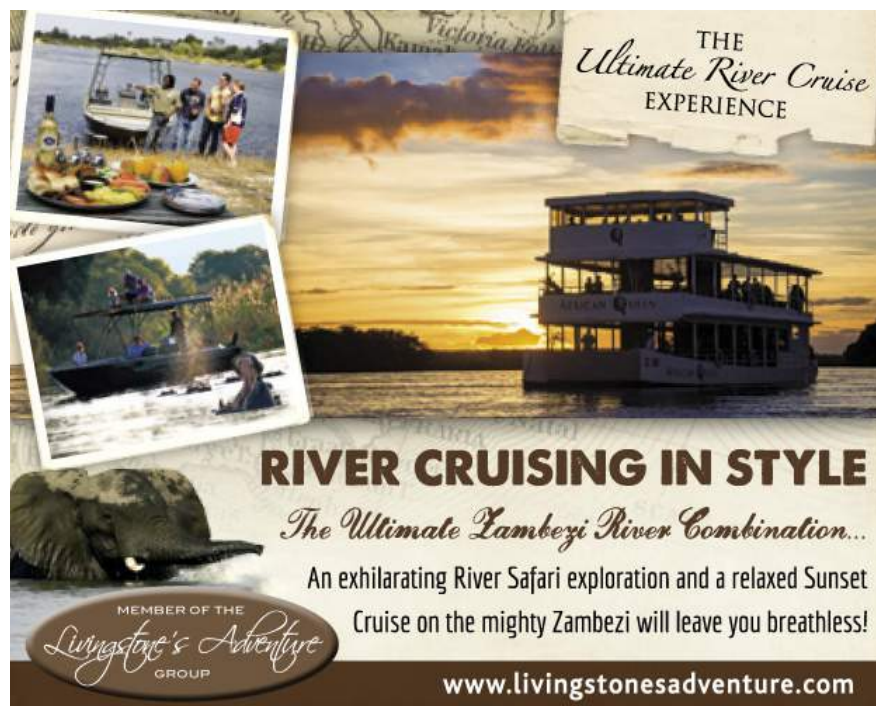
If they refuse they are going to be arrested because we have come up with a by-law which we are finalising and will empower us to deal with them.



Victoria Falls Town to Expand

According to a report in The Chronicle, 1,000 plots are to be allocated in Victoria Falls Town. Some will be along the Kazungula Road and some on the Bulawayo Road. Land is being taken from animal corridors. Vic Falls Council says that it has a backlog of 10,000 applications.

Gill Comment: I find this particularly sad for the future of Victoria Falls Town. The town is surrounded by National Park and forestry areas. There are only jobs in the tourist industry and they are few. By allowing the development of many houses will mean that the small town will have lots of people living around it with no job and no hope of a job. The future could be dire unless these homes are to be used by the well-healed in Harare who use them as holiday homes. I am sure, though, that this is not the case.



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Grant Reed is one of Botswana's top safari guides.

Here is a bit of a story by him:

I have always had a tendency to attract trouble so yesterday's bizarre event should not have shocked me, but it did- and how! So there I am driving between Kasane and Maun on a long forgotten cutline road . 5 hours since I last saw another human, windscreen down, wind in my hair and munching on a box of KFC. Suddenly I hear the whip of helicopter rotors right above me. The military chopper shot low over me at speed, did an amazing 180 and dropped to eye level facing me and daring me to make a false move. I put my hands where they could be seen and stepped out. Immediately 3 soldiers armed and ready dropped out. 2 flanking me and the one approached me directly. The only thing faster than my heart beat was the quivering of my sphincter! The soldier was perfectly polite, requested permission to search my vehicle and questioned me on my odd choice of roads returning home. Satisfied that I was not a rhino poacher and nothing more than a quirky safari guide he signaled his soldiers and choppered out. So rhino poachers be warned, we are ready for you! Tau Tona I salute you and your professional and dedicated troops!



Proposed Development for Dorob National Park

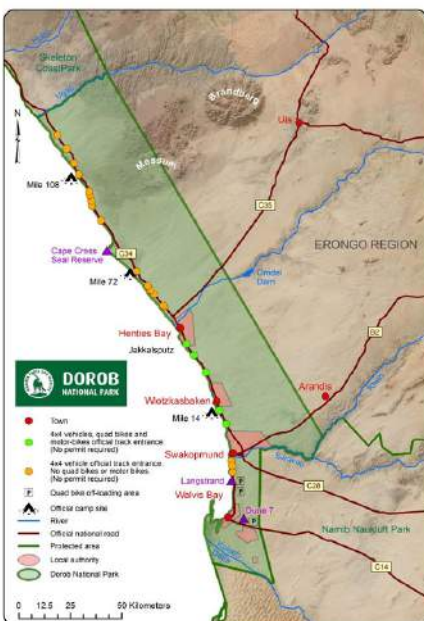
Dorob NP is one of Namibia's best parks lying along the Atlantic Coast. It now seems as if a developer wants to build inside it, near to Swakopmund. Here is an artist's impression of the development.

Conservationists are, of course, a bit cross. Here is part of a letter sent to Namibia Environment and Wildlife Society (NEWS):



A group of greedy, unscrupulous developers are proposing to grab a stretch of coastline zoned as strictest conservation area (IUCN category 1), within the Dorob National Park, to develop a massive hotel, convention centre, golf course and upmarket residential area – Desert Rose. The concerning fact is that their proposal is being entertained. To propose this kind of development in this location is as preposterous as proposing to develop it in the garden of State House.

This is so similar to Legacy Holdings who wanted to construct a similar development in Mosi-Oa-Tunya National Park. Legacy had powerful connections but a small group of us banded together, brought in all the big 'guns' we could muster in international conservation and stood up to them. We stopped it. So, go for it, NEWS!



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A SMILE



Have a good two weeks

Gill