

The Livingstone biWeekly



Dear All

I know this is late. My email address went down. I don't know why and it didn't come back for 5 days. Anyhow, it is back now so this is a little bit of news.

I hope you all had a jolly time over Christmas and that New Year's Eve is a happy one. I notice that shops are selling fireworks as usual. Please make sure your dogs are safe - most of them don't like the bangs from fireworks.

My header is the new Victoria Falls Airport.

LIVINGSTONE

Plastics

According to an article in the Daily Mail, Livingstone City Council wants to introduce a bylaw which will reduce the amount of plastic waste. They would prefer shops to use paper bags instead of plastic ones.

Paper bags, though, are much more expensive and, as soon as they get wet, they disintegrate. What always irritates me is that all the supplies which come to the shops are packed in cardboard boxes. As soon as the boxes are unpacked, they are broken down and put in the skip for onward transmission to the municipal dump. Why on earth don't we order all shops to unpack the boxes and then put them at the door to the shop so that customers can pick up a box as they enter and use it for packing their shopping.



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New Hotel

As you pass by the level crossing in town you will have seen some construction work going on. This is a new hotel – Warm Harbor Hotel. It is another Chinese hotel. According to an article in The Post, the hotel has just been opened by the Deputy Minister of Tourism, Patrick Ngoma.

Patrick Ngoma noted during his speech that *the tourist capital had not yet attained acceptable levels of quality investments in the hospitality industry*. I assume this is 'political speak'. But it does put out negative vibes for Livingstone's tourism industry.

Actually, Livingstone has some excellent hotels and lodges. We only have to note Avani to know that Livingstone offers international-standard hotel accommodation. Along the river we have intimate, first-class lodges like Tongabezi, River Club, Royal Chundu.

News now goes global so I wonder if Patrick Ngoma could maybe have said how pleased he was to see the new hotel and that it would add to the vast array of superb accommodation which Livingstone has to offer. Wouldn't that sound better to potential tourists to Livingstone?

ZAMBIA

Marines on Lake Kariba and the Zambezi River

A while ago I copied an article about Zambia initiating a marine unit within the Zambia Army. It would seem now that they have been trained and ready to commence operations.

From the Times:

The commando marine unit will be deployed in the waters of Lake Kariba and the Zambezi River to guarantee protection of citizens, Zambia Army Commander Paul Mihova has said.

Lt Gen Mihova said the troops would counter any acts of aggression on Zambia's territorial waters in Sinazongwe and Kazungula districts. ...

The marine troops would also help Zambia Wildlife Authority officers curb poaching in the crime-prone areas. ...

Mr Ngimbu bemoaned the rising cases of poaching, and cited districts like Sinazongwe and Kazungula which needed the Government to beef up security personnel. ...

I really hope that this is a benign commando unit. As far as I know the poaching would have to be fish poaching because we have very little wildlife on our side of the lake except maybe at Kota Kota. Our fishermen too can be found going over to the Zimbabwe side to fish; they are caught and prosecuted there. Maybe our commandos can take on some community awareness in the villages about the need to use proper nets (and not mosquito nets); about not fishing in fish-breeding areas to allow the fish to multiply and to inform the fishermen not to stray into Zimbabwe waters.



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Our kapenta rigs too need a bit of education. They should be licensed; they should have life jackets; and they are not supposed to operate close to tourist facilities because the noise of their generators is horrid.

The other big issue are the overloaded boats ferrying people along the lake. Remember when all those children were drowned when a boat capsized in bad weather. The boats now have life jackets but it might be an idea if the commandos make sure that the boat owners are actually putting the life jackets in the boats.

To run a boat is an expensive exercise, so I hope our new crack unit maximises the effect of any sortie onto the water.



ZAWA Abolished

We are now the Department of National Parks and Wildlife Services under the Ministry of Tourism.

This is excellent news. While ZAWA existed it became an exercise in how to make money, rather than the protection of the wildlife. As an authority it was expected to earn as much as possible to run the operations of ZAWA. Now, as a department, it means that government takes on much of the responsibility of funding it. And this is as it should be. Our wildlife is a national asset, just like our historic assets overseen by National Heritage Conservation Commission.

We have some excellent parks like South Luangwa and Lower Zambezi where the wildlife has flourished, due largely to the tourist camps which operate in the areas. The tourist camps have assisted the game scouts to operate and have also trained many community scouts to augment government efforts.

Kafue National Park, my absolute favourite, is in a bit of mess with its past of wholesale slaughter. This happened many years ago but the wildlife is only now seeing signs of improvement. Game Rangers International has taken on the huge task of assisting government to keep the wildlife safe from poachers and has helped to train SAPU – Special Anti-poaching Unit. But Kafue National Park is enormous – bigger than Chobe or Kruger National Parks. Also it has no natural borders. South Luangwa and Lower Zambezi have rivers and mountain ranges which form formidable borders to poachers whereas Kafue has mostly open borders going into Game Management Areas which are, of course, very porous.

Let's go through our other National Parks (other than our Big Three):

Mosi-oa-Tunya National Park – our small park in Livingstone. Earns government lots of money.

Sioma Ngwezi – was abandoned during the Angola civil war but is now coming back to life with the help of Peace Parks for the Kavango-Zambezi Transfrontier Conservation Area

Liouwa Plain – African Parks Foundation assists the Wildlife Department and the Barotse Royal Establishment to manage the park. Zambia Carnivore Programme is also working in the park to research the predators. It is also part of the Angola-Zambia Transfrontier Conservation Area promoted by Peace Parks

West Lunga – no facilities but there is a Trust – West Lunga Trust with a mission: *To work alongside communities in the West Lunga Ecological Zone to improve livelihoods and social services and to conserve, restore, and sustainably utilize the area's natural resources.* There seems to be no outside help to protect the park.

Lochinvar. Based on Chunga Lagoon of the Kafue River. The park has no facilities but camping is allowed but you have to be totally self-sufficient. Lochinvar is surrounded by villages and the villagers fish in the lagoon which does cause a bit of a problem

Blue Lagoon. Blue Lagoon is near to Lusaka on the other side, and a bit east, of the Kafue River from Lochinvar. From what I have read, it is quite run down although Zambia Tourism states that there are two chalets for use by visitors.

Nsumbu – This park is on the edge of Lake Tanganyika and is supported by Conservation Lake Tanganyika. It is a big job, and the Trust was only formed in 2013, through support from Ndole Bay Lodge. The Trust is doing sterling work and we can hope for great improvements in the coming years.

Mweru Wantipa. From Zambia Tourism: *Mweru Wantipa National Park, adjacent to the lake, used to harbour vast herds of elephant but poaching however has depleted most of the wildlife although there are still some small herds of buffalo. There are no tourist facilities but it is possible to camp along the lakeshore.*

We have heard in the past that villagers had encroached into the park and that some of it was to be de-gazetted.



Zambia Tourism map showing our parks



Kasanka. This park management was given over to the Kasanka Trust in 1986. Since then it has become world renowned as home to the largest mammal migration in the world – bats.

Lavushi Manda. This park is near Kasanka and Kasanka Trust is helping to bring the park back to life. Again, this will be a long process as according to Zambia Tourism: *poaching over the last few decades has grossly reduced the number of animals found within the park's boundaries and tourist infrastructure and roads are limited at best.*

Isangano. From Zambia Tourism: *This is another of Zambia's defunct parks. Lack of funds, people pressure, no infrastructure, mismanagement and internal poaching have all contributed to its decline.* The good news is that African Parks are working in Bangweulu Wetland, south of Isangano.

Lusenga Plain. There is very little information about this park but it seems like it is a forgotten area of Zambia.

Nyika. This park is an extension to Nyika Plateau in Malawi. There are no facilities.

North Luangwa. Save the Rhino works through the North Luangwa Conservation Society to protect the park which has rhino re-introduced in 2003. The park is only open to some operators who conduct walking safaris

Lusaka. The new park just outside Lusaka. Needs some work to improve the environment as the trees have been cut and, from what I have read, is rather desolate. However, it should become self-sufficient from day-trippers from Lusaka.

Lukusuzi. Recently we have heard that squatters have been moved from the park. I expect this is in response to the needs of the Transfrontier Conservation Area between Malawi and Zambia being promoted by Peace Parks Foundation.

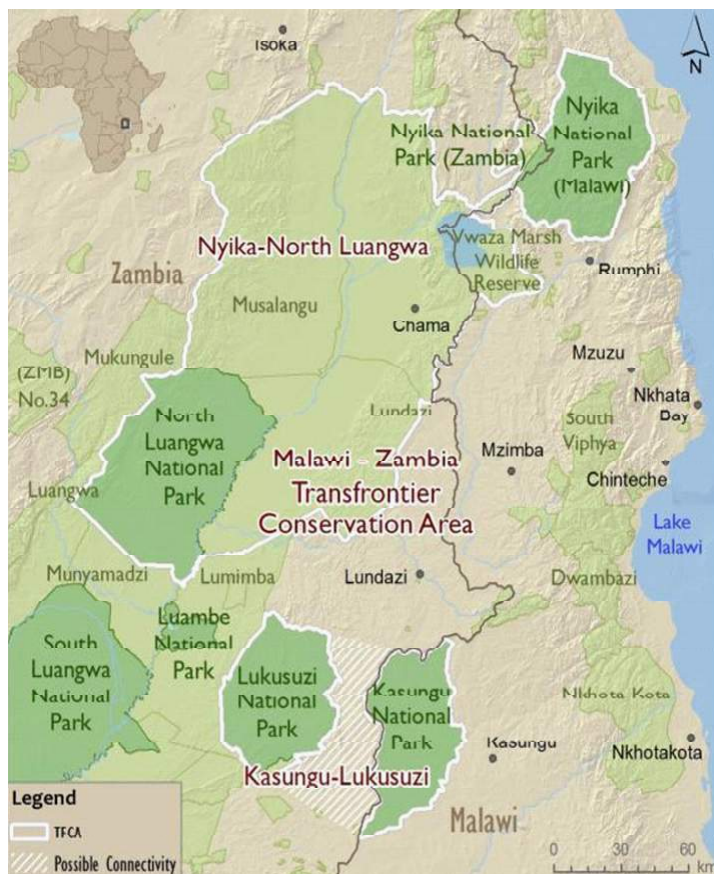
Luambe. There is a lodge – Luambe Lodge in the park and the owners are spearheading conservation measures.

I am passionate about our parks and wish they could all get going again. But conservation is a slow process and it is expensive. The days when donor organisations would give to governments for conservation are long-gone. In order to get funds to the parks it is necessary to form a Non-Governmental Organisation which then lobbies overseas for funds.

This is how Kasanka (Kasanka Trust), Liuwa (African Parks), North Luangwa (Save the Rhino), Sioma (Peace Parks), Lavushi Manda (Kasanka Trust), Nyika (Peace Parks), Lukusuzi (Peace Parks), Nsumbu (Conservation Lake Tanganyika) and Luambe (Luambe Conservation) can make headway towards the protection of the wildlife. Parks like Lusenga Plain, Mweru Wantipa, Blue Lagoon, Lochinvar, Isangano and West Lunga are left to languish.

It is not the fault of government too much because there are so many pressing needs for our growing population to look after. At Independence we had a population of 3.6million. We now have a population of around 15million. We have high unemployment so the people cannot afford to pay for medical or education so government has to provide these services for free (or almost free). What chance does our wildlife have against this backdrop?

Zambia has a duty of care of its wildlife for the benefit of the world, so in order to do this, it has to promote Non-Governmental Organisations to help us.



Map from Peace Parks which shows our parks to the east of Zambia



Map from Best of Zambia which shows Isangano and Bangweulu

Wildlife Camp, South Luangwa



Liuwa Plain

Who said that hyenas were ugly, look at these two cuties. From African Parks in Liuwa Plain. Photo by Will Burrard-Lucas



South Luangwa Conservation Society

Off road wet season extreme driving. A donor visit to Malama to see our human wildlife conflict mitigation program ended up with us getting stuck in a river for 24 hours over night after flash floods. Luckily after sinking a cruiser we escaped with a damaged radiator and fan only. Phew, lesson learnt!!



These rivers were bone dry on our way down, a few hours later after heavy rains they were fast and full rivers.

Chiawa Camp, Lower Zambezi

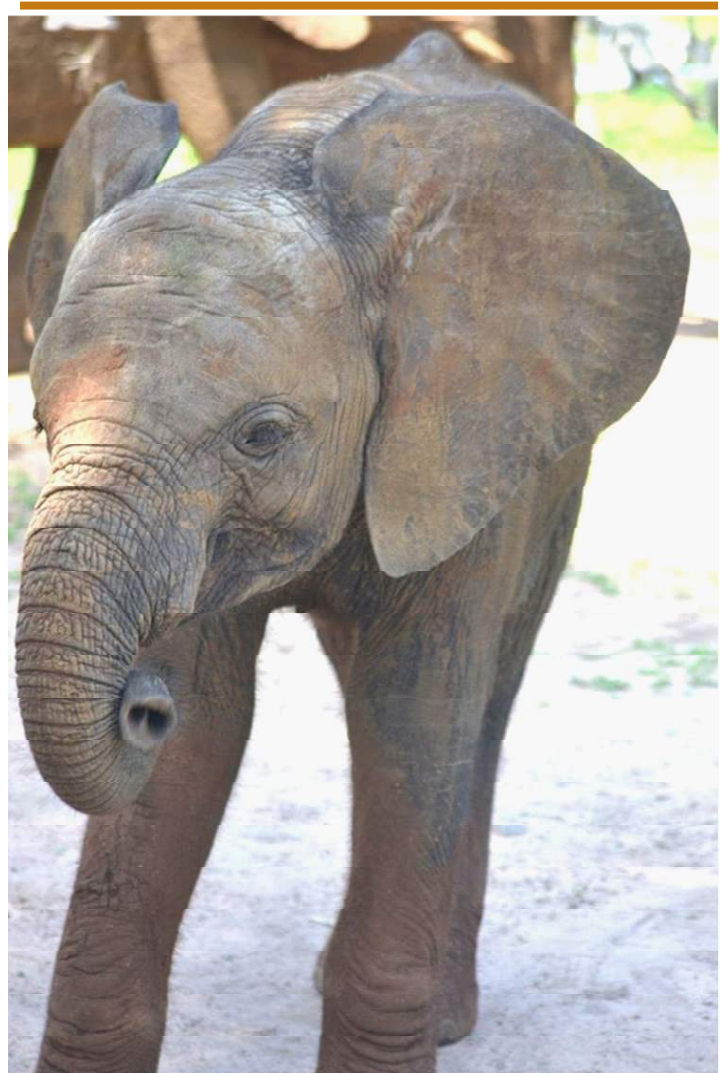
Season has finished but the excitement never stops in the bush. We watched as this male lion swam from Zimbabwe to Zambia across the Zambezi River and shook off on dry ground before scampering into thick bush cover. The grass is always greener!



Game Rangers International

Education is key to increasing understanding, awareness and active participation in conservation. GRI-Kafue Conservation Project: Outreach and Education currently reaches 880 students in 22 schools.

Leonard visits each school on a monthly basis to support the club leaders and deliver "module 4" - a series of lessons contextually relevant to Kafue, using the plight of elephants to guide learners through the topics. Delivering environmental awareness in a club format allows us to produce fun, interactive sessions incorporating art, drama, songs and games, and interspersed with quizzes and competitions.



Zambezi Elephant Trails

At nearly two years of age, the gorgeous MUYUNI has little tusks popping through. Sired by the magnificent BOP - we have no doubt he will be the proud owner of some major pearly whites!

The original six adult elephants were orphaned at a very early age. The two older bulls Danny and Bop, both approximately between 40 and 50 years of age were orphaned during culls in Zimbabwe in the 1960's and early 1970's. They were both found and rescued at Mana Pools National Park in the Lower Zambezi.

The younger elephants all between 30 to 38 years old, Mashumbi, Liwa, Madinda and Marula were left behind by their herds during severe drought and found in Gonarezhou National Park to the Southeast of Zimbabwe adjacent to the Kruger National Park in the 1980's. If you would like to know the full story of the herd and how they came to be under ZET's care, we would love to share that information with you.

Clover, Gerald and the team at ZET are fully committed to the herds care and welfare and appreciate your ongoing support.

Zambia Carnivore Programme

Happy Second Birthday to the Liuwa Lion Cubs!! Lady, Sepo and the cubs enjoy the shade of the ZCP truck out on the sunny plains. Photo by M. Becker



Sable smugglers go home

Zambia Weekly

Seven foreigners accused of trying to smuggle 12 young Sable antelopes out of the country have pleaded guilty to 13 counts of unlawful possession of wildlife and ammunition, making false statements to immigration officials and failure to obey flight rules. They have been fined K200,000 in total.

The six South Africans and one Zimbabwean were caught red-handed at Kotakota Airstrip in Gwembe District about to load the antelopes onto a small specially fitted airplane destined for South Africa. Five of the animals later died due to the stress of the operation.

Initially, it was reported that authorities had acted upon a tip-off from Massimo Selicato, the owner of the airstrip at Kotakota Game Ranch. However, this week, Zambia Wildlife Authority Spokesman Sakabilo Kalembwe stated that some of the South African had been monitored since entering the country, as they had permits to fish, but were carrying dart guns. He explained that Zambian and South African authorities were collaborating on investigating the “complex wildlife smuggling syndicate”. Apparently there have been reports of low-flying planes coming into Zambia for a couple of years from scouts and villagers, but the authorities stated that they never knew when the next flight would be.

Some people with knowledge of the wildlife sector suggested that this operation was uncovered only because an – underpaid – insider got disgruntled. Sable bulls attract large prices of up to \$2 million on wildlife auctions in South Africa due to their long and sought-after-by-hunters horns.

The seven included two managers, Francois Petrus Grobler and Peter Schalk; two pilots, brothers Torrie and JD Potgieter; two drivers, Damian Leroux and Pieter Burger; all from South Africa; and Munyaradzi Tapera, a general worker from Zimbabwe. They all pleaded ignorance; with some saying they did not know the destination, while others claimed they were working under instructions.

The antelopes were bought from a group of Sable at Kyindu Ranch south of Lusaka belonging to Swanvest 234 (Pty) Limited of South Africa. Swanvest has denied any involvement.

The Sable were bought by Louis van der Walt on behalf of Soutpansberg Boerdery Trust of South Africa.

(There is more of this story about Zambia’s sable in Bulletin & Record, now available in Shoprite.)

\$600,000 goes missing at KKIA immigration

Zambia Weekly

An internal audit has found that immigration permit fees of about \$600,000 have gone missing at Kenneth Kaunda International Airport (KKIA) between March and October 2014, reported the Daily Mail. The responsible – un-named – immigration officer apparently failed to deposit the money in the bank. Minister of Home Affairs Davies Mwila explained that an external audit will now be carried out, and that the officer will face disciplinary charges.



Ngonye Falls to become hydropower scheme

Ngonye (Sioma) Falls are to be developed to produce 60MW of power by Western Power Company. The article in the Daily Mail gives few details but I know that this scheme has been on the cards for a long time. I assume now that government has increased electricity tariffs it makes private investment more profitable.

I just hope that we have an Environmental Impact Assessment.

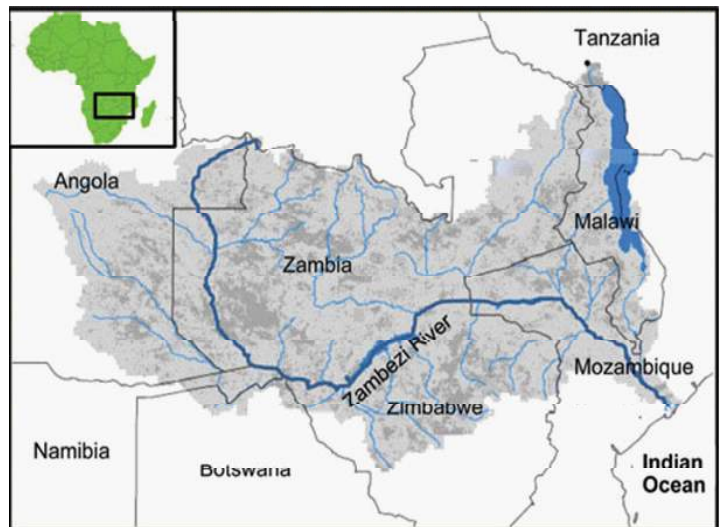
We can be fairly sure that the power will be transmitted straight to the national grid and that the people who live in the area are unlikely to benefit much. Possibly some jobs during the construction and thereafter one or two in the plant. If this detracts from the beauty of the falls, the tourist attraction will die as will many of the jobs which it supports.



Transporting water

According to an article in The Post, Enoch Kavindele, ex Vice President, has stated that we should take water from the north of Zambia to the south so that we can help with power generation in the south. The north of Zambia has a much higher rainfall than the south.

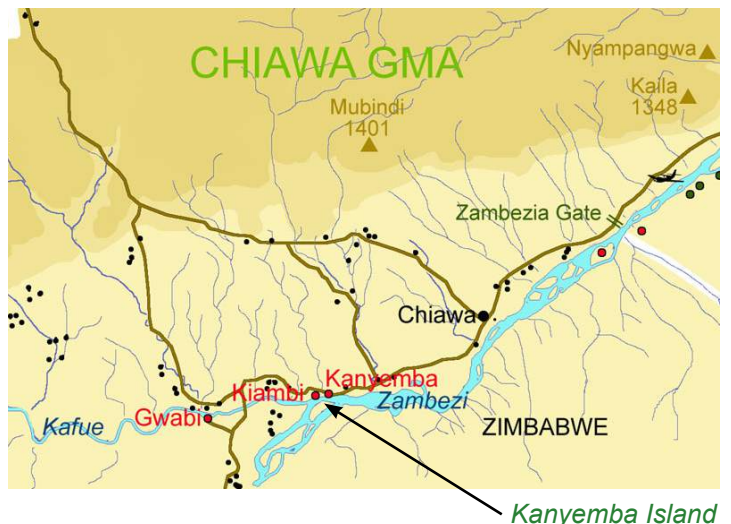
I don't know if this is economically feasible. I do know, though, that experts feel that moving water from one river basin to another is not a good idea. The map from International Institute shows the Zambezi River basin. I know that many countries are busy piping water from high rainfall areas to low ones but my heart tells me that, in the long run, it is not good. It is like robbing Peter to pay Paul. The more we learn to work with nature instead of trying to manipulate it the less likely we are to create long-term problems with our environment.



Buffalo found dead on Kanyemba Island

Kanyemba Island is near the confluence of the Kafue River and the Zambezi River. Kanyemba Lodge has a bush camp on the island. About a month ago, some buffalo were found dead on the island and it was feared that they had died of poisoning. Samples were taken for analysis and it was 'happily' found that they had died from a tick-borne disease called heartwater.

Kanyemba Island is close to the Zimbabwe side of the Zambezi River and there have been some incidences of cyanide poisoning in Mana Pools, not far away. So, although, it is not nice that the buffalo died, at least it was nature at work and not humans.



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Solar Power Projects

China's MCC17 Group is to develop three solar-power projects in the Midlands. The project will add 300 MW to the grid and will, hopefully, be operational by 2017.

MANA POOLS - PREDATOR SURVEY

Zambezi Society

The Zambezi Society continued its collaboration with the Wildlife Conservation Research Unit (WILDCRU) from Oxford University, in undertaking an intensive survey of predators in Mana Pools National Park this year.



The Zimbabwe Cheetah Research Project joined the exercise and assisted both in the field work and in providing some of the cameras.

The exercise began in August and was concluded in mid-October. Its aim was to get 'base-line' data on the large predator species in the Park including total numbers of each species, distribution, male-female ratios etc.



One hundred and sixty-four camera traps, placed in pairs 4kms x 4kms apart, more or less covering the Zambezi Valley floor, were placed strategically on game trails or at water sources - each set of cameras being in place for 40 days. Having two cameras at each site, opposite each other, made it that much easier to identify individual animals, especially leopard, from their spot patterns.

The cameras have motion sensors and are programmed to take a shot every 30 seconds while there is movement in front of the camera. In this exercise, they were also programmed to use 'flash' as opposed to 'infra-red' at night, again to make for easier identification of individual animals.



MATUSADONA ROADS FOR ANTI-POACHING & WILDERNESS TOURISM

Zambezi Society

A Zambezi Society team has been working flat out through the dry season months of this year to improve and open up the road system within the Matusadona National Park. This has been made possible via the purchase, by the Society, of an earth-moving "TLB" (pictured) with a significant donation made by the Africa-wide Elephant Crisis Fund (underpinned by The Leonado DiCaprio Foundation, Save the Elephants and the Wildlife Conservation Network.)



The internal roads within the Park have largely been unused for over two decades. The improvement exercise is designed to allow regular anti-poaching patrols to reach deeper into the Park and for reaction teams to be rapidly deployed where required. The better access will also open up these wilderness areas for adventurous 4x4 enthusiasts and other forms of tourism, which, in turn acts as a deterrent to poaching activity.

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BUFFALO – HERD 21 - WITH TIGHT WIRE SNARE ON LEG – Another one !!!

Kariba Animal Welfare Trust

Towards the end of November Andries advised he had seen one of the sub adults limping quite badly, from the local Herd of 21Buff. It was dusk and they were in the grass so unable to see anything on the legs. We were keeping an eye out for them to try and see if there was a wire on this young boy.

Wednesday 2 Dec a Baobab resident alerted KAWFT to a limping Buff and on checking and then taking close up photos, it was easily seen that there was a tight wire eating its way through this boys back right leg, just above the hoof.

Parks and the KAWFT patrol kept track of the herd that same day. Permission from Parks was given to dart and remove the wire.



The following morning, 2 teams of Parks and KAWFT were put out to locate the herd again and as soon as Andries Scholtz arrived the procedure began. A brilliant shot with dart by Andries, once again.

Thank goodness he was still well in with the herd and had not yet been left behind due to his hindrance with his painful swollen leg, as this makes finding a lone injured Buffalo very difficult.

Another animal was saved from a painfully slow death.

Thanks to all for their continued work and dedication to our wildlife including Residents who contact us with information.

BOTSWANA

Electric Fence too Costly

Residents of the Ngoma-Kavimba Area of Botswana have requested government to erect an electric fence to stop the elephants from reaching their farms and homes. The Minister of Tourism, Tshekedi Khama, has said that it would be too expensive and that the result may be that the elephant would be agitated if their normal migration routes were blocked.

The government has drilled more boreholes in Chobe National Park to try to keep the elephant within the park boundaries and not moving in to the villages.



Botswana is suffering from drought which is exacerbating the problem of elephants moving in to the villages.

Maybe the villages could use the bee idea which is being developed throughout Africa. According to an article the Elephant and Bee Project is already working in Botswana.

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Have a good two weeks

Gill

I will leave you with a couple of photographs of the new Victoria Falls Airport. It is very big !!!

