



The newsletter of the Nyika-Vwaza Trust and Nyika-Vwaza (UK) Trust
"working for the environment and wildlife conservation in northern Malawi"

"Malawi Today" - a journey of reflection through the country

The talk at this year's NVT evening will be given by Joanna Codrington, who grew up in Malawi. This year she travelled widely in Malawi with friends, curious to know what the country is like today, 50 years after independence.

Date: Thursday 6 November 2014. Time: 6pm - 9pm Venue: Royal Overseas League, London.

There will be ample time to network with old and new friends who share an interest in Malawi. Tickets cost £16 and are available from Peter Lawrance (e-mail: sec.nvt@gmail.com; address: The Malt House, 50 Brewery Road, Horsell, Woking GU21 4NA). Alternatively, please complete the application form at the back of this newsletter. More details can be found on www.Nyika-vwaza-trust.org/ROSL-2014.html.

NVT's essential work in northern Malawi relies entirely on your generous donations and this is an opportunity for us to update you on what you have helped us achieve.

News Update

Beit Staff house build

Due to a generous donation by The Beit Trust, housing for four more permanent members of staff is well on the way at Chelinda. Construction of the structure has reached gable level and the next stage will see completion of the roof, and plastering of the walls. One duplex has already been built and is occupied by Joseph Mhone, Alwyn Nyirongo and their families. Joseph and Alwyn have worked for the trust since 2004. Proper housing is important to permanent staff with Chelinda being so remote.



Staff house at gable level
 Finished duplex in background
 © Sam Banda

Foot Education Fund—Schools Project

Conservation lies at the heart of the Trust's work and The Foot Educational Fund was set up to increase young Malawians' awareness of the value of The Nyika and Vwaza to their country's heritage and the importance of protecting their ecology for future generations. The NVT-sponsored project led by Charity Kumwenda, the DNPW's regional education officer, has just completed its third stage. Nine primary schools are participating so far, with clubs formed to encourage children to grow vegetables and plant tree seedlings. Sustaining production is essential and the children have been learning simple composting and irrigation techniques. To date the Foot Education Fund has provided £3,000 for the project.



School children being shown how to make a compost heap



Lunch in Lincolnshire

In June 2014 Peter and Marianne Overton, of Biosearch Expeditions, kindly invited Nyika-Vwaza (UK) Trust trustees, patroni naturae and friends to lunch at their beautiful home in Lincolnshire. In all 35 people enjoyed good food and wine, dodged the rain, and reflected on the work of the Trust in Malawi. Guests shared many stories of times in Malawi and it was also good to hear of recent experiences. Oli Force, a lecturer from Bicton College, entertained us with an account of a recent trip with college students (See p2), two of whom were at the lunch. His talk gave the day a focus on the future and recognised the importance of getting young people, both from the UK and Malawi, involved in the work at Chelinda.



Oli Force Staff in full flow
 © Harry Foot

David Billing joins as trustee

David has specialised in natural resource management and rural development for over 40 years, spending most of his career in developing countries in Africa, Asia and the Caribbean. He has worked for DfID, The European Commission, World Bank, Asian Development Bank and Danida and holds degrees in Geography, Tropical Agriculture, and Soil and Land Management. We know he will be a great asset to the trust for his experience and his knowledge of organizations and people in Malawi.



Early burn programme

Unanticipated dry season grass fires are hard to control and damage the flora and fauna of the Nyika. An annual early-season controlled burn programme prevents later disastrous fires, provides fire breaks and allows small animals to escape, while grasses and plants recover quickly.

This year, all firebreaks were cleared prior to the early burn although clearing the firebreak around Juniper Forest had to be left until the last minute due to heavy late rains. In all, around 86.37 kms of early burns were completed.

This programme is thought to be one of the most advanced early burn practices anyway in the world but we can learn more. NVT is progressing a research project to understand the effects of fire on the habitats and species and to guide NVT management towards the most appropriate practices to implement.



Burn programme recordings in progress before burning starts
© Sam Banda



Head supervisor Nyirongo tightly monitoring burn area
© Sam Banda



Early burn effect along Chosi Loop road
© Sam Banda

Visit from Bicton College

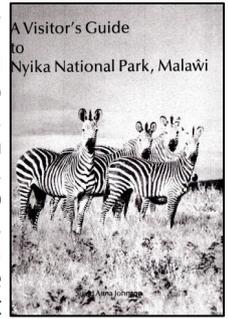
Oli Force, a former NVT Manager in Malawi, is now a lecturer at leading land-based Bicton College in the heart of Devon. Earlier this year he visited Nyika and Vwaza with a team of 18 of his students. They assisted NVT Malawi staff in the construction of the Beit funded Duplex Staff House and in road clearing as well as clearing of invasives. Sam Banda, NVT manager, was extremely grateful for their help in spite of the fact that their contribution was severely affected by persistent rain. Learning about a different culture was all part of the experience, as was the food. Oli told us that a daily diet of Nsima was not to everyone's taste! It is encouraging to see a new generation take interest in the conservation challenges of northern Malawi and we hope many more follow.



Bicton College team making hydroform bricks
© Sam Banda

A Visitor's Guide to Nyika National Park - New Edition

Work has started on producing a new, much-needed edition of the Nyika Guide! The first edition was produced by Sigrid Anna Johnson after she had spent two years living on the Nyika from 1986-8. Sigrid recently retired from the Canadian Diplomatic Service and has undertaken, with her husband Don McMaster (who was a volunteer in Malawi in the 1970s), to produce an updated version. They plan to visit Malawi this September to start the process. We are hoping to have support from Peace Parks in producing new maps, and will be requesting photo's from supporters. While in Malawi, Sigrid will be meeting with Charity Kumwenda, the DNPW Education and Extension officer for Northern Region, to discuss environmental teaching materials for schools - another of her roles in the 1980's and an area that NVT is now supporting.



Roads, structures and invasives

Infrastructure The Trust's main purpose is to conserve the natural environment for the benefit of future generations, but none of this will happen unless there is a workable infrastructure so that staff can go about their essential work. Our Malawi team have been busy grading roads damaged by the unusually heavy rains, mending bridges and improving road signs. In the past six months, 4 km of the Plantation Loop Road have been graded and the Matola bridge has been rebuilt with new timber decking.

Invasives Invasive species on the Nyika Plateau can help control soil erosion, provide habitat and food for other organisms but those benefits are outweighed by the high rate of spread which damages native biodiversity. The recent research carried out by Mzuzu University indicated that priority should be given to eradicating *Pinus patula* saplings which is spreading abundantly due to seeds from the plantations being propelled by the wind. Recent work has focused on clearing invasive species, especially pine seedlings, near the TNM tower and on Plantation Loop Road (0.16 ha) as well as on the campsite and sawmill (0.76ha).



Tow graded Plantation Loop Road
© Sam Banda



Road sign visibility improvement
© Sam Banda

Farewell & thank you to Jane

Jane Gallagher has been an active and enthusiastic trustee of NVT (UK) for nine years, but has decided that she now needs to step down from the role. Tom Lupton says: "Jane has played a key part in the development of the trust, both in her professional capacity as a lawyer and by increasing the profile of the trust through editing this Newsletter since its inception. She has also assisted with the website. We thank Jane for the very hard work she has put into the trust and will miss both her and her challenging questions! We hope to see Jane and Jason at the NVT event on 6 November."

Plight of orchids in Nyika National Park

By Paston Simkoko, Monitoring and Evaluation Officer, Sustainable Management of Nyika TFCA Project



Paston Simkoko

Nyika National Park has the highest diversity of orchids in Malawi. A total of about 214 species have so far been identified in Nyika.

Illegal harvesting of orchids in Nyika started in 2005 and by 2010 over 118 people were arrested in connection with illegal harvesting of orchids.

The problem started in the eastern side of the park because it was easy for Tanzanian businessmen to visit the nearby villages to buy the poached orchid tubers. Now 50 to 60 people can enter the park at any one time to harvest the orchids. Due to shortage of law enforcement staff, one or two people can be arrested with the rest disappearing into the villages. Even if some people are arrested, this does not stop them from coming into the park for orchid poaching. Digging by night using torches is not unknown. The main drive for the problem is money. At the moment, a pail of orchids (20kg) is selling at MK20, 000 which is equivalent to about 50 United States Dollars. This is a substantial amount of money for a community person who has no form of employment.

The problem is compounded by weak legislation. Most of the



Disa robusta
© Paston Simkoko

arrested people are fined about K5000 (US\$12) and some are released on bail unconditionally and never go back to court. The small fines are not deterrent enough to solve the problem because they are able to raise more money than the fines they pay in court. At the moment the problem has become so big such that about 1.2 tonnes of orchids were confiscated from poachers last year - 2013. The illegal digging of

orchids is now spread to many parts of the park. The most targeted species are *Disa satyriopsis*, *Disa ochrostachya* and *Disa robusta*. *Disa satyriopsis* is found in Nyika only and now may be on the verge of extinction.

With the current harvesting pressures, the following actions are needed urgently:

1. Create an orchid task force. These should be local labourers placed in hot spot areas for about a month checking the areas supported by one scout. These should be equipped with walk talkies and possible a bush bike to cover big areas. Their job should be communicating to the base if poachers are seen or scare them off.
2. An awareness campaign in all the affected villages and even the police and magistrate so that they also appreciate the magnitude of the problem.
3. Teaming up with herbarium institutions like Kew to provide propagation skills so that communities grow

their own orchids in the villages to reduce the pressure inside the park.



Disa satyriopsis
© Paston Simkoko



Orchid tubers confiscated from poachers
© Paston Simkoko

Your donations make a big difference!

Right now we need money to fund a new Toyota Landcruiser pickup—only £30,000 required!

But smaller amounts go a long way:

- £50 will buy 38 litres of fuel for the tractor
- £50 will buy 30 hoes to help with the early burn fire control
- £50 will but 10 bags of cement to help with bridge and road drain repairs
- £100 will buy 7 pairs of work boots
- £200 will be one new Toyota pickup tyre
- £500 will buy 35 raincoats
- £1,000 will cover a months wage for 10 permanent staff

To donate fill in the form on the back page of this newsletter or donate online at:

www.nyika-vwaza-trust.org

Some comments and updates on David Happold's article

(Issue no 18)

This is a summary of Professor Happold's comments, a corrected version of the article is available on our website .

Nyika Galago - the correct name? The name of the small galago in Nyika NP is uncertain. Very recent research has show that it is not *Galago moholi* (as stated by Pullen & Bearder 2013, map p. 431) and it is unlikely to be *Galagoides zanzibaricus* (Map 68, Ansell & Dowsett 1988) now considered to occur only in Tanzania. The taxonomy of galagos is controversial and is based largely on differences in vocal calls. *Galagoides orinus* is recorded from the Misuku Hills, and a species living on the lakeshore [as yet un-named] is related to the *Galago granti* group that occurs in southern Malawi. For the time being, *Galagoides* sp. is probably the most accurate scientific name for the small galago in Nyika NP. The small galago in Vwaza Marsh Wildlife Reserve may be *Galago moholi* (Map 67, Ansell & Dowsett 1988) but this determination needs to be reviewed; for the time being, it best to refer to it as *Galago* sp. or *Galagoides* sp.

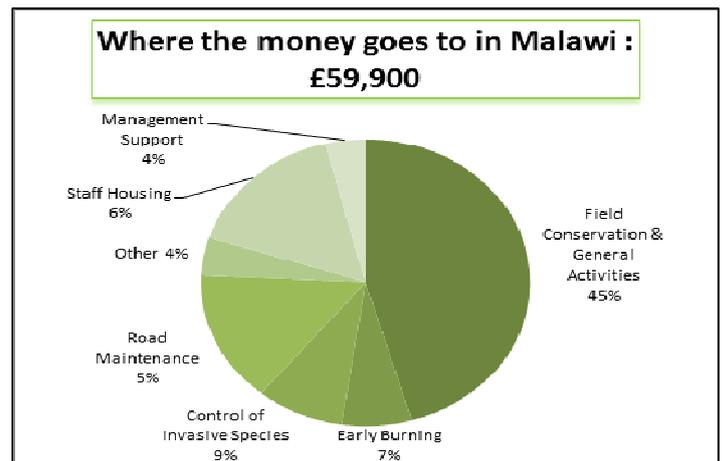
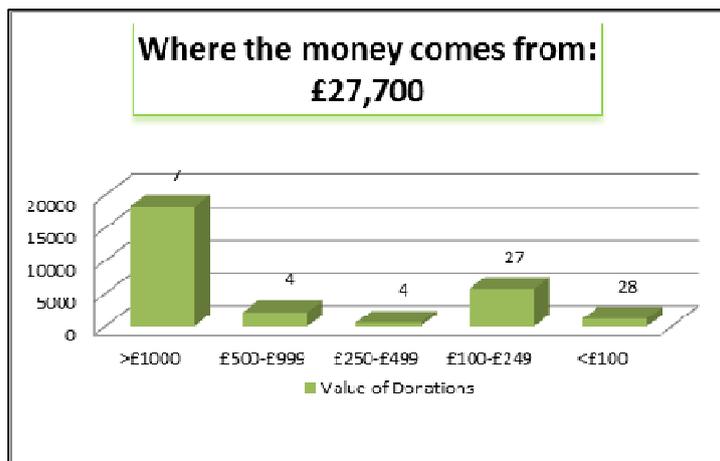
Caracal. Although the Caracal was listed as a species considered not to be part of the mammalian fauna of Nyika National Park (Table 2), an email from David Foot indicates that the species does occur in the Park. David Foot wrote:

'Driving out of the park for the last time (during late morning in May 2008) I was probably 10-12km from Thazima when I saw a small creature in the middle of the road. It moved to the side of the road as I approached and to my surprise I then had an incredible view of a caracal. A wonderful way to end my time on the plateau but I was not surprised that the Nyika continued to reveal new, interesting and exciting things right to the end!' (Email received 28 March 2014). Thus Caracal should be listed in Table 1 (Mammals of the Reserve), rather than Table 2. However it must be considered a very rare species.

Tree Hyrax. This species was listed in Table 1 (Mammals of the Reserver), based on the comments in Young 1953. However, it seems it is more likely the "hyrax" referred to was the Bush Hyrax *Heterohyrax brucei*. The evidence suggests that Tree Hyrax *Dendrohyrax arboreus* does not occur in Nyika NP and therefore should be removed from Table 1. Ansell & Dowsett (1988) do not record *Dendrohyrax arboreus* in the Nyika-Vwaza area.

David Happold is grateful to Bob Dowsett, Françoise Dowsett-Lemaire, Simon Bearder, and David Foot for their comments and corrections.

Where your money goes—August 2013 to July 2014*



* These figures are for the past 12 month, as this is our most up-to-date information, and do not relate to a specific set of annual accounts.

Where the money goes to in Malawi: During this 12 month period the Trust remitted £59,900 to the Nyika Vwaza Trust in Malawi to carry out the Trust's activities on the Nyika and to a lesser extent at Vwaza. The breakdown of expenditure on the pie chart speaks for itself, but it is worth adding that 'Staff Housing' includes completion of the first duplex house for permanent staff at Chelinda as well as water supply improvement for Chelinda housing and improved solar panels to upgrade the power supply.

Expenditure in UK: We keep expenditure in the UK to the minimum needed to administer the Trust. The Trust incurred net expenditure in U.K. of £2,800 on the promotional evening and merchandise, local administration and for the first time supported a visit by a UK trustee to review operational activities and organisation on the ground in Malawi, to give assurance to the UK trustees that our support to Malawi is being properly administered.

Where the money comes from: The Trust's operations were funded by donations from supportive individuals and organisations. The bar chart above shows how the total of

£27,700 breaks down by value of donation. Of that total, £17,500 is restricted, being donations given for specific aims or activities. The balance of the funds spent in Malawi is sourced from the Trust's investment portfolio, created through a generous legacy from the late Ian Hay and other legacy donors – hence the figures above showing greater expenditure than donations for the period.

Foot Education Fund: During this period the Trust supported two further projects in association with the Wildlife and Environment Society of Malawi (WESM). This is in addition to the expenditure shown in the pie chart above. Activities for the schools project are described on page 1 of this newsletter. In addition, the Trust supported a further research project by the University of Mzuzu Forestry Students Society to conduct a survey of invasive species across parts of the plateau to help with the Trust's work in that field. This was described in more detail in Issue 18 of the Newsletter.

The Nyika-Vwaza Trust
Registered in Malawi

The Trust Manager
Box 577
Mzuzu
Malawi

Tel: +265 (0)1 310 180
Email: manager@nyika-vwaza-trust.org
info@nyika-vwaza-trust.org
Website: www.nyika-vwaza-trust.org



Working for environmental and wildlife conservation in northern Malawi.

The Nyika-Vwaza (UK) Trust
Reg. charity no. 1105105

The Hon. Treasurer/Secretary
50 Brewery Road,
Woking,
Surrey.
GU21 4NA
Tel: +44 (0)1483 714130
Email: sec.nvt@gmail.com

Email: info@nyika-vwaza-trust.org
Website: www.nyika-vwaza-trust.org

BANKER'S ORDER

(for UK residents only)

To: Bank plc.
.....
.....
.....

(Please insert the name and address of your Bank in the space above)

Please pay to TSB Bank plc, 40 High Street, Alton, Hants, GU34 IBQ (Sort Code 30-90-15), for the credit of The Nyika-Vwaza (UK) Trust's Account No. 01192885, the sum of :-

£ on

(Please insert date above)

and thereafter every month/quarter/six months/year (*delete as appropriate*) until cancelled by me in writing.

Name of Account to be debited

Account Number

Signature

Date

Please return this completed form to:-

Hon. Treasurer,
Nyika-Vwaza (UK) Trust,
50 Brewery Road,
Woking,
Surrey.
GU21 4NA

for registration and onward transmission to your Bank.

Friends of the Nyika-Vwaza Trust Donation Form

PLEASE PRINT YOUR DETAILS IN CAPITALS

Title: Mr/Mrs/Ms/Other: _____

Forenames: _____

Surname: _____

Address: _____

Postcode: _____

Telephone No.: _____

Email: _____

I enclose a donation of:

Or: I have completed the Banker's Order Form.

Please treat as Gift Aid donations all qualifying gifts of money made

In the past four years Today In the future

(Please tick boxes you wish to apply)

I confirm I have paid or will pay an amount of Income Tax and/or Capital Gains Tax for each tax year (6 April to 5 April) that is at least equal to the amount of tax that all the charities or Community Amateur Sports Clubs (CASCs) that I donate to will reclaim on my gifts for that tax year. I understand that other taxes such as VAT and Council Tax do not qualify. I understand the charity will reclaim 25p of tax on every £1 that I give on or after 6 April 2008.

Signature:

Date:

UK taxpayers are asked to send donations to the UK Hon. Treasurer, other donors either to the UK Hon. Treasurer or to The Trust Manager, Box 577, Mzuzu, Malawi.

Achievement!
Rebuilding the bridge at Matola



Where is the bridge?
Before work started
© Sam Banda



The new bridge nearing completion
© Sam Banda