



Welcome to Issue 2 of Nyika-Vwaza News. We hope you enjoy catching up on our recent efforts to conserve the wildlife and habitats of the Nyika National Park and Vwaza Marsh Wildlife Reserve.

A lot has happened since our last newsletter. We have three additional vehicles to transport our Malawian staff as well as materials around the Nyika, making us a much more effective force in the park. We are embarking on a new bridge-building project which will boost anti-poaching efforts on the Nyika. We have also just been awarded a grant by the Beit Trust for building much-needed new staff accommodation. In addition, 2005 saw both the Malawi and UK Trusts organise major social events designed to raise funds for, and public awareness of, our conservation work in northern Malawi.

None of this would have been possible without your generous donations and support, and for this we are enormously grateful.

But there is still much to do to make habitat and wildlife conservation a reality on the Nyika and in Vwaza. We hope that, in reading of our successes so far, you will be encouraged to continue to support us going forward.

Jane Gallacher—Editor

Three baby eles...

Those of you who have visited the Nyika's high plateau will know that a highlight is seeing the elephants there. One of our major aims is to ensure that this unique elephant group gets the protection it deserves. The Malawi Trust has been responsible for monitoring six collared elephants (four in Vwaza and two in Nyika) on behalf of the Peace Parks Foundation.

In October 2005 the senior research officer at Chelinda, Paston Simkoko, reported seeing the collared cow elephant with a young calf. He estimated that the calf was less than 1 month old. The following day, guests on a horse safari were fortunate enough to find her with her calf and five other elephants only 2km from the Chelinda airstrip.



Elephant on the Nyika plateau

It is still unknown how many elephants are within the Nyika National Park but reliable estimates put it at no more than 45. This small remnant population has had a harrowing time from poachers over the last twenty years (numbers in 1990 were estimated at 150) and the stress they have incurred is reflected in these three calves being the first births for a number of years. We hope that these births show that they are becoming more settled and less persecuted.

... and an Oli !

"This is the kind of work I have wanted to be a part of for as long as I can remember and to be given this chance is a dream come true!"

These are the words of Oli Force, our enthusiastic new volunteer Trusts manager.



Oli with a group of Trust staff

Oli is a graduate of the University of Plymouth, where he studied Animal Science (Behaviour and Welfare). Before that, he gained a National Diploma in Animal Care at Paignton Zoo. It was while studying for his Diploma that Oli first came to northern Malawi, where he did volunteer work experience on the Nyika and at Vwaza.

Oli is carrying on what he calls "the good work accomplished by the Trusts" with energy and dedication. He has his work cut out for him in the coming months!

Lilongwe Masked Ball

Dubbed the "society event of the year" in Lilongwe, 21 October 2005 saw the Malawi Trust hold its first major fundraising event. Our Masked Ball was attended by 150 people, including the Director of the Department of National Parks and Wildlife, Mr Leonard Sefu, and the British High Commissioner to Malawi, Mr David Pearey, and their wives.

The "ballroom" was outdoors alongside the Le Meridien Capital Hotel pool and was a perfect setting despite the torrential downpour two hours before the party began! This was the first rains of the year (since March) and, as Malawi's economy is totally dependent on good rains, spirits were lifted rather than dampened.



Guests enjoying themselves at the Masked Ball !

The Director of the Department of National Parks and Wildlife gave a delightful speech thanking the Malawi Trust for all it was doing for the Nyika and Vwaza. Representatives of the Trust then gave a presentation on its recent activities. The revelry went on into the early hours of the morning and for some only ended in the pool!

The evening was a tremendous success not only as a fundraiser (over Malawi Kwacha 1million, about £5,000, was raised) but also in raising awareness of the Trust's activities. That success can be attributed to fantastic organisation by the Masked Ball committee led by Valerie Seekings and Julie Saunders as well as the incredible generosity of the sponsors. These included the Peace Parks Foundation, Bridge Shipping, British Airways, Nyika Safari Company, Kapani Enterprises, Llandt Exports and many others. Alliance One kindly donated one of the very rare maps of Nyasaland by Helen Maclaren for auction.

Active enforcement

The Peace Parks Foundation's law enforcement project on the Nyika is now well under way.

Mike Labuschagne, the PPF's law enforcement adviser to the Department of National Parks and Wildlife, clocked up 50,000km travelling in his first four months on the Nyika! His efforts have already had an impact in reducing poaching, with many poachers arrested and some being given prison sentences. This is because Mike insists on following through the whole enforcement process from arrest to conviction.

Mike believes he will have poaching activities reduced to manageable proportions on the Nyika by mid-2006, when he will start setting up similar anti-poaching operations in Vwaza. Poaching in the reserve made antelope such as the sable extinct there some years ago.



Klipspringer enjoying better security

The PPF law enforcement project has also had a major boost in the final months of 2005 with the announcement by the Beit Trust of a substantial grant for new housing for National Park game scouts. This will enable scouts to be located at strategic points around the perimeter of the park.

These will be eco-friendly houses with walls constructed with blocks of a compressed mixture of Nyika earth and some cement - internally cool in hot weather and warm in cold weather.

STOP PRESS: Just as this newsletter was going to print, we received notification that the Beit Trust has awarded the Malawi Trust a substantial grant to build accommodation for the Trusts' manager. This is fantastic news! Very many thanks to the Beit Trust for making these funds available to us.

4x4 x 4

Reliable vehicles are critical to any conservation effort. Until earlier this year, we had only the use of a borrowed Landcruiser to transport our Malawian staff around the Nyika.



The "new" Unimog

Thanks to two grants from the UK Trust, that situation has now changed. A Toyota Landcruiser pick-up and a Unimog (both second hand but both in excellent condition) are currently being put to work on the Nyika. Given the vast areas to be covered, the logistics involved in transporting people and materials are enormous. These "new" vehicles will make these tasks so much easier.



The Toyota pickup

The timing of their acquisition could not be better. The season for renewing the fire-breaks and starting the controlled back-burns, which help minimise the uncontrolled devastating fires that threaten to sweep across the Nyika annually, will soon be upon us and, in addition, the end of the rains will see bridge-building start.

STOP PRESS:

John Royle, Chairman of the Malawi Trust, has very kindly lent on a permanent basis a short wheel base Landrover to the Malawi Trust, so we now have four operational vehicles. Work has also begun on construction of a garage for the vehicles and the Malawi Trust will be employing its own mechanic to maintain them.

Marsh news

Lake Kazuni in Vwaza Marsh is the last water available for the wildlife late in the dry season. The rains in Malawi were very poor last year. As a result, the lake never rose to the level necessary to ensure there would still be water available come October for the 150 hippos that reside there, as well as for the rest of the wildlife who come to the lake to drink.

The Malawi Trust was approached by the Department of National Parks and Wildlife for funding to build a sandbag dam wall to try and retain as much water as possible. This proved very successful and, despite no flood waters until late December 2005, there was still enough water up until then.

The Chigwere Cultural Village that the Malawi Trust supports is going from strength to strength as tourists become more aware of it. The enthusiasm of the local communities that own and run it is infectious!

This year, the Malawi Trust hopes to employ a permanent team of labour at Kazuni to follow a similar programme to the one on the Nyika - road clearance and fire management.

Building bridges

It may not be the sexiest of projects but bridge-building in the Nyika National Park is a fundamental platform on which successful species conservation depends.

In the past, retreating poachers have, quite literally, burned the Nyika's bridges. Without bridges at the permanent river crossings, law enforcement and general park management can be a struggle. Also, swathes of the park are closed to tourism - and evidence suggests that the presence of tourists is highly effective in reducing poaching.



A burnt out bridge

We are therefore delighted that the British High Commission in Lilongwe has given us a grant to rebuild some of the Nyika's bridges and to construct signposts at the road junctions across the Nyika. Signpost construction has already started and bridge building will begin after the wet season.

The importance of these new bridges to our conservation work on the Nyika cannot be overstated. They will give faster and better access to the outer reaches of the park. Anti-poaching efforts will become more effective, general park management will become easier and new areas will be opened up to tourism.



Kudu and elephant at Lake Kazuni

London Launches "Malawi: Endangered Beauty"

The scene was a chilly evening in London. The venue was the Malawi High Commission. The date was 14 November 2005. The occasion was the international launch of "Malawi: Endangered Beauty", the new coffee table book of Malawi's national parks and wildlife reserves by acclaimed Malawi-born wildlife artist, David Kelly, and an exhibition of his spectacular paintings.

The idea for the launch was the joint brain-child of David Kelly and David and Robyn Foot. The plan was that the UK Trust would organise the event and David would donate 25% of the sale proceeds from books and paintings to it. The launch was timed to coincide with the World Travel Market to obtain maximum exposure for David's work, the Trusts and Malawi tourism.

It may have been cold outside but the atmosphere inside the Malawi High Commission was warm and lively! The formal part of the evening began with a welcome by Lady Toulson, chairman of the UK Trust, who spoke of the vital work of the two Trusts. Following on, the High Commissioner emphasised the importance of tourism to Malawi and strongly endorsed the valuable contribution of the Trusts. John Douglas, representing Malawi Tourism Marketing Consortium, gave a presentation on Malawi's tourist treasures before David Kelly himself rounded off this part of the evening, explaining that his book was inspired by his love of Malawi's wildlife and his concern for its future. These complimentary addresses demonstrated the commitment of the Government and the private sector to work together for the common cause of environmental and wildlife conservation in northern Malawi.



David Kelly signing books

While David was busy with a steady demand for signed copies of his book, the wine (brought from South Africa by our generous sponsor, UTi (Malawi) Ltd) flowed freely as friendships were renewed. The evening drew to a close with an auction of one of David Kelly's prints of Zambia's Luangwa Valley followed by an uproarious raffle draw - presided over with great aplomb by Chris Grimshaw, one of the UK trustees. It was a memorable ending to the evening.

We were amazed and overjoyed by the number of people - over 200 - who attended this, the UK Trust's first major fund raising/public awareness event.

Special thanks to the Malawi High Commissioner, H.E Mr Ibrahim Milazi, and Catharine Mungoni and all the staff of the Malawi High Commission for their patient and invaluable assistance, to David Kelly for his steadfast commitment, and to all our volunteer helpers who gave so freely of their time and who ensured that the evening went smoothly. Many thanks also to you all for coming along, and to those who encouraged you to do so, especially Jo Pope, Heather Wallace, Lynne Royle, Alex Hammersley and Robyn Foot.

We still have copies of "Malawi: Endangered Beauty". If you would like one, they cost £30 (25% to the Trust) plus £5.35 postage and packing (UK). Please make your cheque payable to "Nyika-Vwaza (UK) Trust" and send it to Harry Foot at Stowford Farm, Harford, Ivy-bridge, Devon, PL21 OJD.



Reedbuck on Nyika by David Kelly

A new initiative ... Go on safari and help the Trusts

If reading this newsletter has filled you with the burning desire to visit Malawi's wild places as soon as possible, read on...

African Safari Roots and the Nyika Safari Company have put together two new safaris for 2006. Importantly, a proportion of the proceeds from these trips will be donated to the UK Trust.

The first safari, Rift Valley Explorer, visits Vwaza Marsh, the Nyika Plateau and the North and South Luangwa National Parks and departs Lilongwe on 10 June 2006 for 14 nights. The second, Highlights of Malawi, explores Vwaza Marsh, the Nyika Plateau, Lake Malawi and Liwonde National Park, and departs Lilongwe on 24 June 2006 for 14 nights.

For more information, contact Rob McDowell of African Root Safaris (Tel 01736 367635; Mobile 07957 381783; E-mail rob@africanrootsafaris.com).

We welcome as new trustees of the UK Trust Mrs Claire Grimshaw and Ms Molly Jackson. We also welcome Rodger Voorhies and Chris Walker as new trustees of the Malawi Trust.

Working together ... our appreciation

The Trustees thank the many individuals and organisations that have supported us both in Malawi and in the UK, either with finance, in kind, with practical help or with advice. Your individual and corporate contributions are combining to produce positive and encouraging results. With your continued help, and with the help of others whom you persuade to join us, the conservation of the Nyika and the Vwaza will become an African success story.



"I hear the Trust is going to repair that signpost.
Good for them!"

If after reading this newsletter you would like to make a donation to either of the Trusts please use the form on the back of this page—or pass this newsletter to a friend.

The Nyika-Vwaza Trust

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*Working for environmental and wildlife
conservation in northern Malawi.*

The Nyika-Vwaza (UK) Trust

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The Nyika-Vwaza Trust can only continue with the vital task of helping to conserve the Nyika and Vwaza Marsh with the continuing support of generous donations. We welcome further donations from current Friends of the Trust but we also endeavour to widen our scope for funding so please pass on copies of the newsletter to your friends and relations.

BANKER'S ORDER

(for UK residents only)

To: Bank plc.
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(Please insert the name and address of your Bank in the space above)

Please pay to Lloyds TSB Bank plc, 40 High Street, Alton, Hants, GU34 1BQ (Sort Code 30-90-15), for the credit of The Nyika-Vwaza (UK) Trust's Account No. 1205669, 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,
Stowford Farm,
Harford,
Ivybridge, Devon.
PL21 0JD

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: _____

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I enclose a donation of:

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

I am a UK taxpayer and want the Charity to treat this donation and all subsequent donations I make as Gift Aid donations until I notify the Charity otherwise.

I am aware: -

1. that I must pay an amount of income tax and/or capital gains tax at least equal to the amount of Basic Rate tax that the Trust will reclaim on my donations; and
2. that if I pay tax at the Higher Rate I may claim further tax relief through my Self Assessment tax return; and
3. that I can cancel this declaration at any time by notifying the Hon. Treasurer in writing.

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.