



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

There were record rains in northern Malawi in December, the zebras have started foaling and a heavily pregnant female leopard has been observed regularly near the Chelinda airstrip: the cycle of life continues on the Nyika and in Vwaza. So does the work of the Nyika-Vwaza Trusts. During the wet season, efforts have focussed on three projects: construction of the Trust manager's cabin, building the staff hostel and pine clearance/indigenous species regeneration. Meanwhile, in Vwaza, the Hewe channel has been re-directed: it is now flowing back into Vwaza Marsh again, a vital dry season water source for many of the animals there.

As the dry season approaches, work will begin on the annual controlled burns programme. Cutting fire breaks and starting the burns is intensive work for our team of Malawian workers, who now number in excess of sixty individuals. Last year, as a result of our efforts, we saw far fewer wild fires on the central Nyika plateau - long may it continue.

It has been a busy year for us and none of our many achievements in that time would have been possible without your continued support and generosity, for which we are enormously grateful. We hope you enjoy catching up with our news and that you continue to support our work in conserving northern Malawi's precious habitat and species.



Leopard on the Nyika

Jane Gallacher (Editor)

Conservation and Tourism are interdependent in Malawi.

Tourists inject foreign exchange into the economy of Malawi and spend money in the country thus supporting local businesses. The tourist industry is a major employer in Malawi, providing livelihoods for both employees and their families.

BUT

Tourists will not visit Malawi unless the country's parks, reserves and resorts are well conserved and there is an abundant variety of indigenous fauna and flora for them to marvel at, study and enjoy.

In the case of the Nyika-Vwaza Trust, many of our supporters have been, and will continue to be, tourists who have enjoyed an experience of that kind. We need their support in order to help finance the assistance that we give to the Department of National Parks and Wildlife in conserving the Nyika National Park and the Vwaza Marsh Wildlife Reserve.

Lady Toulson, Chairman of the UK Trust, in her address at our London Fund Raising evening last November said:

"Firstly, the Trust seeks to play a strong part in promoting Tourism in Malawi. The lecture by Professor van Riet will explain the transforming impact of Trans Frontier Conservation Areas on the conservation of ecosystems and wildlife, and on tourism, so bringing in this last instance, the much needed economic benefits. The Trust thanks the Malawi and Zambia Governments for their vision in recognising and progressing this visionary work from which has evolved the Nyika Trans Frontier Conservation Area.

Secondly, the Trust's areas of special interest are, of course, the Nyika National Park and the Vwaza Marsh Wildlife Reserve. It is to them that we seek to encourage tourism. The Nyika Safari Company reports consistently to the Trusts on the enthusiasm of its clients when told about, and then shown, the beauty of these areas and their clear conservation needs. The welcome by-product of the conservation of these precious ecosystems, with their biodiversity, is to bring valuable economic support and opportunity to the communities who live close to the borders of the Parks. Both you this evening and future visitors who support the Trust, will provide the core funds needed to fulfil the charities' mission and vision for the country and its people alike."

London Fund Raising Evening 2006

We held a very successful fund raising and promotional event in London on 6th November last year, ably guided by Chris Grimshaw, as Master of Ceremonies. The evening included an exhibition and sale of paintings by Malawian artists, a lecture and the draw of our Grand Safari Raffle, as well as the opportunity to meet friends and supporters of the Trust over a glass of wine.



The Malawi High Commission was not available to us as a venue this year as it has moved premises, but Imperial College proved a very practical and convenient alternative. Over 170 people attended the evening. Our guest speaker was Prof Willem Van Riet, CEO of the Peace Parks Foundation, who spoke on the inspiring work of the Foundation in promoting world-wide the creation of Trans Frontier Conservation Areas (TFCA's), including the Nyika TFCA between Malawi and Zambia. Professor Van Riet made time in his very busy schedule to travel to London especially for the event, at no charge to the

Trust, and we are most grateful for his support. He was also responsible for introducing The Rufford Maurice Laing Foundation to us, resulting in a most welcome donation of £5,000 to our work.

We were also delighted to welcome the Deputy High Commissioner of Malawi in London, Mr Elias Chijota, and the Malawi Government Director of Tourism, Mr Isaac Msiska, to the event. They also did us the honour of drawing the raffle tickets. The raffle raised nearly £8,000: a huge credit to all the people who helped sell tickets across the country. Of course, it was all possible because of the generosity of the sponsors who contributed an enticing array of prizes. The star prize, an all-expenses paid safari for two in Malawi, was won by the Crofton family. Our thanks are due to the consortium of British Airways, The Nyika Safari Company, Heart of Africa Safaris, Manda Wilderness and Ulendo Safaris for this wonderful prize. You will find details of all other prize winners in this newsletter.



Silent Auction - Chiku's Tyre

The art exhibition generated huge enthusiasm with 36 of the 49 paintings on display being sold on the evening. These paintings were the work of 12 different Malawian artists, who tackled a wide range of subjects in variety of styles. The exhibition would not have been possible without the indefatigable work of Robyn Foot and Anne Hyatt in Malawi (with many helpers and commercial sponsors) who acquired the paintings and arranged their packing, and the Malawi Government who arranged their transport to England. Claire Grimshaw prepared the excellent catalogue and Mary-Anne Bartlett gave a talk about the artists as well as helping with the hanging of the exhibition. (Mary-Anne runs painting safaris in Malawi and Zambia.) Not only did the sale of these paintings raise funds for the work of the Trust, they also provided welcome income to the artists and exposure for them in London. [Please note: a few of the paintings are still available at discounted prices — for a catalogue, please contact Harry Foot 01752 892632 stowfoots@southdevon.org]



Malawian Village Life

Two of the paintings still available



Mother and Child

Grand Safari Raffle Prizes

The Draw of our Grand Safari Raffle was conducted at 8 pm on Monday, 6th November 2006 at Imperial College, London in the presence of 170 people. The Draw was supervised by Mr. Christopher Grimshaw, Trustee, with tickets being drawn alternately by the Deputy High Commissioner of Malawi in London, Mr Elias Chijota, and by the Malawi Director of Tourism, Mr. Isaac Msiska.

We congratulate the winners who were:

Prize No.	Prize	Winning Ticket	Winner's Name	County
1	Safari for 2 in Malawi	3084	Crofton Family	Oxon
2	Family Portrait by Tessa Traeger	6830	K. Montague	Norfolk
3	Day for 2 at 2007 BMW Golf Tournament, Wentworth	9730	S.Wilson	Tyne & Weir
4	Painting by David Kelly	2262	D. Tandy	Cornwall
5	Weekend for 2 in self-catering cottage on Norfolk coast	0576	N.Black	Essex
6	£200 worth theatre tickets	6129	C. O'Toole	Cornwall
7	12 bottle case of wine	0579	C.Williams	Northants
8	Week for 2/3 in self-catering cottage on Pembrokeshire coast	7216	R.Hoyle	Surrey
9	Spectrum Guide to Malawi + map	6134	S.Lee	Greater Manchester
10	One year Sub to Travel Africa magazine	3126	S.Park	Warwickshire
11	One year Sub to Travel Africa magazine	8619	E.Taylor	Bucks
12	One year Sub to Travel Africa magazine	3096	B.Crofton	Oxon
13	One year Sub to Travel Africa magazine	3710	C & P Finney	Devon
14	One year Sub to Travel Africa magazine	7246	M.Pash	Devon
15	One year Sub to Travel Africa magazine	9740	S.Wilson	Tyne & Weir
16	One year Sub to Travel Africa magazine	9291	M.J & S.M Ward	Staffordshire
17	One year Sub to Travel Africa magazine	6171	M.Chicks	Kent
18	One year Sub to Travel Africa magazine	0291	F.Clarke	Essex
19	One year Sub to Travel Africa magazine	2891	P.Clayton	Somerset

We thank the many generous sponsors who donated the prizes.

First Prize Winner of the Grand Safari Raffle — Crofton Family

Sir Julian Crofton writes:

My son William and I were the lucky winners of a very generous gift that was first prize in the Nyika-Vwaza Trust raffle. The prize was a great adventure and a wonderful introduction to the people and geographical and ecological diversity of Malawi.

We left Heathrow in a very dark sleet storm and, travelling via Jo'burg and Lilongwe, twenty hours later we were sitting in the late afternoon having a cup of tea in the dining room at Vwaza watching and listening to the hippos in Lake Kazuni; that evening and the one after we drove for a short distance around the camp, and in the morning we went for a guided walk through the dripping, dewy bush. We saw hippo, impala, scrub hare, eagle owls, fish eagles, numerous insects and wild flowers and spoor of serval, mongoose, monkey, warthog and hyena. In the afternoon, with Vasco, we climbed the hill behind the camp to see the whole of Lake Kazuni and across to Zambia. The elephant had moved away from Lake Kazuni because of the rains and the roads were impassable but with the sounds of the hippos all night and day, geckos on the wall in the bathroom and insects flitting around candles and hurricane lamps in the evenings it was very definitely Africa.

The Nyika plateau is different. Higher, cooler and drier it smells of grass, dust and curry flowers - and the air is thinner. The wind blows more over the open grassland and the game is clearly visible with only the folds of the rolling hills and a few valley trees to hide in. With so much space and so few roads this is perfect horse country and, after having a coffee with David and Robyn, one of the first things we did on arriving was to go for a ride. The Nyika Safari Company have a superb, well managed stables with horses to suit all ages and abilities and riding out amongst the eland and zebra was an absolute pleasure. Nyika is huge and the following day Samuel and White took us on a whole day drive to the viewpoint at Jalawe. This was a



highlight: we could see sixty miles in all directions - south east to the far side of Lake Malawi, north east to the Tanzanian hills and west to Zambia - and down below, ten elephant browsing quietly. The following day we cycled round the Chelinda plantation, David taught William some fly fishing, we went on our second ride and in the evening went on a night drive in the pouring rain - Nyika is quiet but no-one seems to stay still for long!

Nkwichi Lodge on the Mozambique shore of Lake Malawi is different again. The lodge can only be reached by boat. The lake water is crystal clear, deep blue, fresh and warm and the pleasure of swimming endlessly without salt or chlorine is immense. There are large numbers of fish browsing around the rocks for leisurely snorkelling and many headlands and inlets along the shore for more energetic exploration by canoe, kayak or catamaran. There are lizards everywhere and we saw an iguana by the kitchen, the local leopard was rumoured to sleep on the roof of our rondavel and the cries of fish eagles in the afternoon echoed through the hills and seemed to echo through our souls.

We left Malawi having renewed old friendships and made many new. The country is warm, beautiful and very welcoming - a perfect place to 'get away from it all' but also somewhere in need of help just to stay still. It wasn't until we got home that we fully realized we had been without electricity all the time we had been in Malawi except for four hours each night on Nyika.

Nyika Concession

The ten year concession that the Nyika Safari Company held with the Malawi Government to manage the tourism facilities in Nyika and Vwaza came to an end on 31st May 2007. With the recent Cabinet reshuffle in the Malawi Government there have been some delays in the process of tendering these facilities for the next ten year concession period and as a result the Nyika Safari Company has been asked to continue their operation until 31st October 2007. This will allow the Malawi government time to complete the tender process in the correct manner.

Staff Hostel

With a total workforce of 60 Malawians, up to 40 of whom require accommodation at Chelinda at any one time, we recognised early last year that the need to provide our staff with suitable accommodation was fast becoming our major priority. Funds donated to the UK Trust by our supporters enabled work on this vital project to begin.

The foundations for the staff hostel are complete as are the foundations and walls of the shower block. We are building a forty bed block which will be sub-divided into four rooms containing five bunk beds each. Eight showers will be constructed behind the main building. Four kitchens will also be built to the side of the accommodation block along with four dining rooms, to be sited on the foundations of old houses where the floors and chimneys are still in good condition, which will help to keep costs within budget. The walls will be constructed using compressed blocks made from a mixture of Nyika earth and a small amount of cement for binding. The Peace Parks Foundation has kindly allowed us the use of their block making machine for the production of the blocks.



Once complete, the staff hostel will provide decent accommodation for our hard-working Malawian workers. Without support from you, this project would not have got off the ground.

Trust Manager's Cabin

In October 2006, the Malawi Trust received a grant of £11,500 from the Beit Trust for the construction of a cabin at Chelinda for the Trust Manager. At present the Trust Manager is accommodated at Chelinda through the generosity of the Nyika Safari Company.



The project is progressing well but weather conditions, remoteness and the logistics of acquiring materials can slow the process and increase costs. Materials have to be trucked in from Mzuzu, which is a four hour drive away on a good day. Due to the heavy rains, access roads have deteriorated badly - but we are getting there! It is expected that the cabin will be completed by the end of June.

The cabin will have a rustic feel with the walls made from pine logs. It will have two bedrooms and a study/bedroom as it is anticipated that the Trust Manager will host important visitors/donors over the years to come.

In keeping with Trust policy, the cabins are being built using manual labour and hand tools.

Our thanks to the Beit Trust for making this funding available to us.

Bracken control

For some time, it has been our intention, as well as that of the Department of National Parks and Wildlife, to tackle the problem of the spread of bracken fern across the high plateau, which reduces the areas of grassland for the animals to graze. Bracken is an invasive species and is always the first plant to show after a burn. Since the Trust now carries out a yearly controlled burn programme, it is vital to control the bracken to halt its spread across the plateau.

We have now decided to initiate a two-to-five year research programme to discover the best form of control. We have identified eight research plots on the east side of the Chelinda pine plantation. At the end of March, each plot was slashed to remove all bracken stems. The plan is to "weed" each area on a monthly basis as the rhizomes shoot and before they unfurl. A record of the number of shoots will be kept. It is predicted that, over time, the rhizomes will weaken to the point where they die off.

Hewe River Re-channeling Project

In 1999, the local communities to the north of the Vwaza Marsh Wildlife Reserve diverted the Hewe River, by channelling away from the marsh, for fishing and agricultural purposes. This caused considerable drying of the marsh which in turn has had a negative impact on animal and waterfowl species.

Through a collaborative management approach, local communities agreed to re-channel the flow into the wetland ecosystem. They approached the Department of National Parks and Wildlife with proposals for opening up the original water course for a two kilometre stretch. DNPW approached us for funding and the work was carried out during January 2007 by a local contractor.

The project is expected to:

- Conserve wetland biological diversity;
- Improve wetland habitat for waterfowl species;
- Improve conditions for aquatic species - particularly fish, otters and crustaceans;
- Act as a water reservoir for hippo;
- Maintain spiritual links for the surrounding local communities with their ancestors;
- Improve the continuous flow of water along the Luwewe river, resulting in sufficient water at Lake Kazuni and Zara pool, both of which tend to dry up in the dry season.



Lake Kazuni under the aeroplane wing

Anyone who has visited Vwaza Marsh will know that it is one of the most important wetland areas for Malawi, last year recording the highest variety of wetland bird species. With your support and by working with local communities, we have been able to take one small step towards conserving the marsh.

Mechanics' workshop

We received a fantastic early Christmas present in mid December last year, when the Board of Tusk Trust in the UK approved a grant of £6000 from their Small Grants Fund to help finance the construction of a vehicle maintenance workshop and the installation of a diesel tank at Chelinda. We are currently drawing up plans for the workshop and construction will begin soon. As we have mentioned previously, the importance of maintaining our small vehicle fleet cannot be over-emphasised - reliability and efficiency really do go hand-in-hand in our "patch", and without well-maintained vehicles our work would, quite literally, grind to a halt. So we are very grateful indeed to the Tusk for helping us with this project.

Staff Matters

We now employ over 60 staff with about 40 staff working at any one time. Seven are employed on a permanent basis, including a builder, two carpenters, drivers and mechanics and a staff supervisor.



The Trust also now employs 3 teams of pit sawyers (shown at work on the left) on a contract basis. Their job is to produce the sawn timber and dressed logs required for the construction work in and around Chelinda Camp. They are paid well for a skilled and energy-sapping job.

It is our mission, along with conserving northern Malawi's natural habitat, to provide employment for as many people as possible from the local areas. Your donations pay their salaries. Thank you for your support.

Vehicles



The above picture shows the Trust's 4 vehicles in the garage that we built for them.

The divisional manager of the Department of National Parks and Wildlife, Tommy Mhango, has kindly agreed that we can have the use of the Park's tractor and trailer, kept at Vwaza Marsh, on a long-term basis. The tractor will require a complete overhaul and will have to be transported to Lilongwe on a lorry for this work to be carried out. Once this is complete the tractor and trailer will be brought up to Chelinda. It will be a useful addition for us as it is an excellent vehicle for moving heavy loads around the park.

Pine Plantation Clearance and Rehabilitation

Experimentation with ways to reduce the Chelinda pine plantation continues. Approximately 10 acres of timber have now been cleared. A team has worked through cleared areas chopping stumps down to ground level, burning branches and old tree trunks and removing reseeded pine. Following this, grass seed will be collected and sown in experimental patches to see whether the grass can gain a foothold at the start of the next rains. Hygenia saplings may also be planted on the prevailing wind side of the experimental areas.

The photograph shows a team at work furrowing a cleared area to prevent soil erosion.



Joseph Mhone - Driver & Assistant Mechanic for the Nyika-Vwaza Trust



Continuing our series on the lives of some of our Malawian Trust workers, here is a short biography of Joseph Mhone.

Date of Birth	5 th February 1976
Marital Status	Family man with two children
Nationality	Malawian
Languages	Timbuka, Chichewa, English

Joseph Mhone was born at Thazima, near the Nyika National Park Gate, in the Traditional Authority Chikulamayembe, Rumphi District. Joseph did his schooling up to J. C. E level. He can speak three languages, English, Timbuka and Chichewa, the traditional language of Malawi.

Joseph was employed as a driver with us in mid year 2005 as he already held a full driving licence. Whilst a driver, he was also working as a temporary *capitao* (or leadman). He has a good basic knowledge of mechanics and has been working alongside the Nyika Safari Company mechanics to gain more experience.

Joseph's hobbies are reading the Bible, newspapers, visiting friends and listening to soft music. His biggest aspiration is to get a public transport licence and upgrade himself to truck driver.

He is happy with his position and with all the good things we are doing on the Nyika and he hopes he will never let down the reputation of the Trust. He has been working alongside Samuel Munthali who has been helping him to acquire a better understanding about the role of the Trust.

Windfall Grant

In late December 2006, we were asked by CFZ whether there were any urgent items or projects that required funding since CFZ had a small amount of grant money that needed to be disbursed before the end of the year. We quickly put together an email requesting funding to the tune of US\$10,000 which included a solar power system for the Trust office, overalls and raincoats, funding for the Hewe Channel Project, grader repair and a set of new tyres for the Unimog. CFZ very kindly made a donation of US\$4,740 to cover the cost of overalls, raincoats, the Hewe Channel Project and grader repair. We are very grateful for this donation.

Income Tax overpaid

Some of you may recall that, in the Summer 2006 issue of Nyika-Vwaza News, we drew attention to the fact that UK taxpayers could now instruct the Inland Revenue to credit to the Nyika-Vwaza (UK) Trust the whole, or any part of, any overpaid tax which is due to be refunded to that taxpayer. We are delighted that one Friend followed this tip and so we received not only the overpaid tax but also the Gift Aid element of it - a total in excess of £350.

If you would like to follow this benefactor's example, insert our charity's unique code - **BAR31JG** - in box **Q19A.3** of the 2006-7 Tax Return form. **Q19A.4** incorporates the Gift Aid element. Please also tick **Q19A.5** to enable us to thank you.

A Date for your Diary

This year we shall be holding our annual promotional and fund raising evening at The Royal Geographical Society, Exhibition Road, London on **THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 8th 2007**.

We are delighted that Professor Colin Baker MBE has agreed to be our Speaker. The title of his talk will be: *"By Water to the 'Warm Heart of Africa': Lake Malawi and the Shire River in the history of Malawi."*

This Waterway, pioneered by Dr Livingstone into Central Africa, was subsequently replaced by rail and road routes, but today the Malawi, Mozambique and Zambian Governments are investigating the practicalities of reopening it. Professor Baker explores the full circle turn of history that makes this subject topical.

This will be a fascinating talk for all who are interested in Malawi, past and present. Don't miss it!

Following the popularity of last years event, once again we shall be exhibiting and selling paintings by Malawian artists.

Information on how to apply for admission tickets will be published on our website www.nyika-vwaza-trust.org in July and in the next issue of Nyika-Vwaza News. However, should you wish to apply now, please write to Harry Foot at Stowford Farm, Harford, Ivybridge PL21 OJD enclosing your cheque. [Admission tickets £15 per person]

Tickets will be despatched from 1st August 2007.

How would you like to receive your Newsletter?

We would like to encourage you to receive your copy of Nyika-Vwaza News by e mail. By doing so, you will save the Trust the cost of postage and paper and you will reduce the quantity of paper that the production of the newsletter consumes.

If you would like to take up this offer, please send an e mail to the Trust at info@nyika-vwaza-trust.org confirming that this is your wish.

The Nyika-Vwaza Trust

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Working for environmental and wildlife conservation in northern Malawi.

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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.

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(for UK residents only)

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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 :-

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Harford,
Ivybridge, Devon.
PL21 0JD

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Friends of the Nyika-Vwaza Trust
Donation Form

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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.