



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

Editorial

Already it is September and the Nyika-Vwaza (UK) Trust's annual fund raiser is less than two months away! On an occasion that promises to be bigger and better than its predecessors - and held in the prestigious surroundings of the Royal Geographical Society, Exhibition Road entrance on Thursday 8 November - Professor Colin Baker MBE will be talking about how Lake Malawi and the Shire River have shaped the history of Malawi. See below for details..

In this newsletter, you'll also find our most recent news from the field, as well as a feature article on a new breeding sanctuary down in Vwaza - an exciting development.

I do hope you enjoy learning about our recent activities and I look forward to seeing as many of you as possible on 8 November.

Jane Gallacher (Editor)

Condolences

It was with shock and sadness that all who are involved with the Nyika Vwaza Trusts, both in Malawi and in England, learnt of the tragic plane crash on the Nyika in June.

We offer our condolences to the family and friends of the pilot and the five passengers who died in the crash.

We also offer our sympathies to the directors and employees of the Nyika Safari Company, who operated the plane, and to all who live and work at Chelinda in the Nyika National Park.

November London Promotional and Fundraising Event - By water to the warm heart of Africa

Please join us at our third annual Promotional and Fundraising event on the evening of Thursday 8 November at The Royal Geographical Society in London. Doors open at 6 pm. The Chairman's Welcome and Lecture will start at 6.45 pm.

The Lecture: The highlight of the evening will be a lecture by Professor Colin Baker MBE entitled *By Water to 'the Warm Heart of Africa': Lake Malawi and the Shire River in the history of Malawi.*

In 1858 Dr. David Livingstone found his way up the Zambezi River blocked by the mighty Kebrabasa Rapids. Faced with disappointment, he decided to explore instead a northern tributary of the Zambezi. And so it was that, in early January 1859, Livingstone, plus two expedition companions, turned the tiny 80 foot paddle steamer, the "Ma-Robert", into the duckweed-covered mouth of the Shire River. Thus began the story behind this evening's lecture.

The Waterway route into Central Africa opened the door for a flood of missionaries, traders, planters, adventurers and government officials to reach into modern-day Malawi. The Nyika is an important water catchment area for Lake Malawi and hence the Shire River. The Waterway was subsequently replaced by rail and road routes but the Malawi, Mozambique and Zambia Governments are now investigating the practicality of re-opening it. Professor Baker explores the full circle turn of history that makes this subject topical.

Colin Baker is a graduate in Geography, Law, Politics and African History. He served for 17 years in the Administration of Nyasaland-Malawi, ending his career there as an Under Secretary in the Cabinet Office and Principal of the University's Institute of Public Administration. He is currently Professor Emeritus, Research Professor and Honorary Fellow of the University of Glamorgan. He is the author of 16 books and over 100 articles, almost exclusively concerned with Malawi's history. Together with his wife, Shirley, Colin has travelled on nine of the great rivers of the world, including the Zambezi.

The exhibition and sale of paintings by Malawian artists

Once again the Trust is bringing to London a selection of paintings by a variety of Malawian artists. All the paintings will have been purchased by the Trust thus putting money into the artists' pockets. The Exhibition will help raise awareness of the high quality of the artists' skills and will encourage tourists to Malawi to visit its art galleries. Proceeds from the purchase of the paintings on the evening will go to the Trust and will then be invested in the conservation of the Nyika National Park and the Vwaza Marsh Wildlife Reserve. Thus, every link in this chain will benefit Malawians and Malawi.

Purchases can be made by cash or cheque only - sorry, we cannot offer a credit card facility on the night.

Applying for tickets see overleaf

November Promotional and Fundraising evening — *contd.*

Applying for tickets

Admission tickets are £15 per person.

To apply, please fill in the application form enclosed with this newsletter and return it to us at the address given on the application form.

There will be a cash bar both before and after the lecture with time to admire the paintings and socialise.

Proceeds from the evening will be invested in the conservation of the Nyika National Park and the Vwaza Marsh Wildlife Reserve.

Home sweet home

The Trust's new hostel is now ready for our staff to move into. The Trust Manager's cabin, which has been built with funds from the Beit Trust, is also nearing completion.

As you know, we employ a workforce of around 60 Malawians. Their only accommodation until recently has been seriously inadequate.

Thanks to you, that has changed. Now, our staff have a four bedroomed building (with five sets of bunk beds in each room), along with a kitchen, a dining room, and a shower block with eight showers.

At the request of our staff, the internal walls of the shower block and all window and door surrounds have been painted bright sky blue, which makes the accommodation look warm and welcoming.

Anyone who has experienced the Nyika during the rains, or on a frosty winter morning, will know how good, solid accommodation can lift the spirits. Through funds donated by you, our Malawian staff can now start and end their working days on the Nyika in a degree of comfort they have never known before. Thank you.

Burning for conservation

The devastating effects of uncontrolled fire will be familiar to all readers, especially following recent tragic events in Greece.

Imagine, then, the responsibility of running a programme of deliberately-set burns which are designed to prevent wildfires from ravaging a fragile wilderness.

Thanks to donations from you, that is exactly what the trust does, every year, on the Nyika along with maintaining firebreaks in strategic positions throughout the park.

It is a period of intense and exhausting activity for all involved. From the beginning of June until the beginning of July, burns are spread across every sector of the high plateau. Controlled burning is not an exact science but early indications are good. So far this year, there have been only two wildfires of significance. In both cases, the firebreaks stopped them dead in their tracks.

Due to unsuccessful burn on the Dembo Bridge road, the area to the west of the road has remained exposed to potential wildfires. At the beginning of September, we carried out a careful, slow and controlled burn to close the gap burning against the wind. This proved successful and shows that late burns are possible given the right conditions and a disciplined approach.



So well done to our trust workers for a successful burns programme and thanks to you for funding this vital conservation work.



Bridging the gaps

Having ridden across a number of the new bridges funded by the British High Commission in Lilongwe on a horse safari to the Juniper Forest in May, the Editor can admit to being seriously impressed with their design and construction. Solidly built, unobtrusive and blending in seamlessly with the landscape, even the horses did not object to walking across them!

Building bridges may not sound like the most thrilling conservation work. But, on the Nyika, their significance can hardly be over-estimated. Not only do they open up remote areas to tourism but also vital anti-poaching and park maintenance work is made so much easier.

In October, our volunteer engineer and designer, Brian Parsons, is returning to the Nyika to oversee the construction of four new bridges. And so the good work continues. Thanks to funding from the British High Commission, this essential work continues.

There are now enough steel spans at Chelinda to construct and complete the North Rukuru, Zungwara and Chelinda bridges. There is also an old chassis at Chelinda which with modification, should be long enough to span the stream at Juniper Forest. All other materials for the construction including carbolinium and nails have been purchased. In October, Brian Parsons, our volunteer engineer and designer is returning to the Nyika to oversee the construction

Chelinda Youth Hostel

For many years there has been a youth hostel at Chelinda. The construction was funded by the Wildlife and Environmental Society of Malawi (WESM) and it's use is solely for educational visits by local schools. WESM has a programme that encourages local schools to form Wildlife Clubs and once these are formed they are encouraged to visit Malawi's national parks and wildlife reserves. During the dry season there are visits by school groups to the Chelinda Youth Hostel over almost every weekend.

Recently the water supply to the youth hostel has been very poor due to wear and tear on the plumbing. With 30+ children at a time staying there this is not an acceptable situation so NVT(Malawi) has funded and implemented a project to completely renovate the water supply system to the hostel.

Conservation Foundation Grant

We have recently received surprise funding of US\$15,000 from the Conservation Foundation. This has not been granted for a specific project but the Foundation has suggested that we use it for capital expenditure. For some time, the Malawi Trust has wanted to remove the need to request the use of the Department of National Parks and Wildlife's tractor and trailer and so it is proposed that funds will be used in part-payment of a NEW tractor for Trust use. Quotes for the purchasing of new tractors will now be sought and we are currently looking for further funds on top of the US\$15,000 in order to be able to purchase the tractor at a cost of US\$35,000. Our sincere thanks to the Conservation Foundation for its generous support of our work.

STOP PRESS!!!

Elephants, elephants!!

As we go to press, we are excited by the news from Mr Vasco Munthali, camp manager at Kazuni camp, VMWR. He reports that a herd of over 190 elephants ambled through the camp the other evening to the delight and amazement of all onlookers!!! This is certainly exciting news.

Trust Manager position

The Malawi Trust is currently looking for a new Trust Manager. The ideal candidate will commit to two years in Northern Malawi. It is a paid position although the salary is small by western standards! A job description is available on request from info@nyika-vwaza-trust.org so if you or anyone you know is interested, please apply now! The position would suit someone looking for a career break or taking early retirement.

How would you like to receive your Newsletter?

We really want to be more environmentally aware and NOT use up resources distributing this newsletter. Can you please make arrangements 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.

Signposts

During August, a team of one carpenter, a driver and a labourer were sent out to fix the signs around the Domwe and Jalawe viewpoint loop. Seven signposts were completed and two partially fixed. In total, 73 signboards were fixed to the posts. Over the next few weeks signboards will be bundled and checked with any missing signs made ready for fixing by Brian Parsons during October.



Road Cutting

Now that the lower Chelinda bridge is built, the road between the bridge and the western edge of ? Is being re-cut. The line of the road has been surveyed and marked and a team has been working on the road during September. The work includes removing trees where necessary and hoeing to level the surface.



The Bambanda/Zaro Sanctuary.

Oli Force (past manager of the Trust) has spent the last 8 months working as a volunteer for the Peace Parks Foundation. His primary role has been to supervise the construction of the Bambanda/Zaro Sanctuary. His report follows:

The Peace Parks Foundation, in its role as the main facilitator for the creation of the Nyika Trans-Frontier Conservation Area, recognised at an early stage that it would be crucial to increase the wildlife numbers in the area in order for the project to be a success. To this end they first supported a Law Enforcement Support Project (headed up by Mike Labuschagne) to assist in combating the poaching in the parks. The second phase has been to construct a breeding sanctuary allowing the restocking of nucleus breeding populations of certain wildlife species.

After much debate between the Malawi and Zambia governments, it was finally decided to construct the sanctuary in the southwest corner of Vwaza Marsh Wildlife Reserve, crossing the international boundary into the Lundazi Forest Reserve in Zambia. The approximate size of the sanctuary is 5000 hectares. The area is ideal as it contains a good variety of habitats: wide open grasslands along the Luwewe floodplains, rocky gulleys and ridges in the Mururu basin and extensive brachystegia woodlands interspersed with some mopane forest. This will suit a large variety of wildlife species.

Before construction could begin, the area had to be walked in order to establish the exact line the fence would take. Then the line had to be cleared by hand!

The clearing of the fence line started in May and three experienced kapitaos (supervisors) were brought in and the rest of the labour was employed locally. Near the end of the clearance stage Mr. Amos Chimseu joined the fencing team. He is a Department of National Parks and Wildlife scout and helped to build the fence for a similar sanctuary at Liwonde National Park. His expertise became invaluable in the finishing of the clearance and with the construction of the fence line itself. He is now to become the second in command of the completed sanctuary under Ranger Bovax Kachali of ZAWA (the Zambian Wildlife Authority)

The fence is 32km of top grade, high tension fencing using galvanised wire and fenceposts. Where it borders on village communities it is a 15 strand, 1.8metre high fence with an additional four live electrical wires and two earth wires. Where the fence borders on protected areas, it is a 6 strand, 1.4metre high fence with four live wires and two earth wires.

In addition to the fence line, other infrastructure has had to be constructed to service the sanctuary and this has been supervised by another volunteer, Paul Barnes. This includes Kambombo Camp (named after Chief Kambombo of the Northern Region of Zambia who gave the land on which it is being constructed) which will house both ZAWA and DNPW scouts and officers. They will be responsible for the law enforcement in the area. In addition, gatehouses are being constructed as well as artificial waterholes. These waterholes will be crucial to provide permanent water in the sanctuary during the late dry season.

The first animals arrived on 4 September. Initially puku, impala, zebra, waterbuck and sable are being translocated into the sanctuary but at a later date other species will be brought in including buffalo and possibly black rhino. These animals are being translocated from Liwonde National Park and from various areas in Zambia.

A number of species already exist in the area including elephant, roan, kudu, lichtenstein's hartebeest, impala, reedbuck, leopard, hyena and the odd lion.

This breeding nucleus will provide the animals for restocking the whole of the Trans Frontier Conservation Area and so is an important building block in the success of the TFCA.

It is too early to give you a full progress report on how the translocated animals are responding to their new surroundings but we will keep you posted.



Nyika-Vwaza (UK) Trust

The Nyika-Vwaza (UK) Trust Evening at the Royal Geographical Society,
Exhibition Road entrance, London SW7 2AR on Thursday 8 November 2007.

Application Form for Tickets

Admission tickets are £15 per person.

I would like to apply for _____ tickets to the Nyika-Vwaza (UK) Trust fundraising party on 8th November 2007 for the people named below.

I enclose my cheque for £ _____ made payable to the Nyika-Vwaza (UK) Trust.

(Please complete in block letters)

Name of Applicant:		Ticket No:
Organisation Name: (if applicable)		
Address:		Date Issued:
Contact Tel. No:		
Email Address:		

Names of other people for whom tickets are requested (see also Continuation Sheet):

Name:		Ticket No:
Organisation Name: (if applicable)		Date Issued:
Address:		
Contact Tel. No.		
Email Address:		

Please return this form, with your remittance, a.s.a.p. to Harry Foot, Stowford Farm, Ivybridge, Devon, PL21 0JD.

((Please complete in block letters))

Name of Applicant:		Ticket No:
Organisation Name: (if applicable)		
Address:		Date Issued:
Contact Tel. No:		
Email Address:		

Name:		Ticket No:
Organisation Name: (if applicable)		Date Issued:
Address:		
Contact Tel. No.		
Email Address:		

Name:		Ticket No:
Organisation Name: (if applicable)		Date Issued:
Address:		
Contact Tel. No.		
Email Address:		

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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.

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: _____

Postcode: _____

Telephone No.: _____

Email: _____

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.