



A Botanist's Take on Conservation NVT Event, Tues 9 November 2021. Union Jack Club

We hear so much about conservation of animals, which is very important, but what about conservation of plants, which is just as important? Without plants, the animals won't survive and neither will the human animal.

After a brief overview of historical approaches to conservation, Jonathan will highlight some of the conservation dilemmas from his perspective as a botanist and ecologist, rather than that of a zoologist. The talk will focus on three main issues:

1. Should we focus on the conservation of individual species, or focus primarily on helping conserve habitats and vegetation?
2. Should conservation be mostly site-based, or focus more on whole landscapes?
3. What is the conservation significance of rewilding and what is the role for just allowing nature to run its course, albeit with some occasional guidance and nudging?

After Jonathan has described the issues, with particular reference to sub-Saharan Africa, we want to encourage an open debate, and to hear your opinions on the various topics raised.

Jonathan has lived and worked as a botanist and ecologist in a number of countries in southern Africa over the last 40 years, including Botswana, Mozambique and Zimbabwe, as well as being involved in numerous projects in Malawi and Zambia. For many years, he was Editor of *Flora Zambesiaca*, the regional flora for south-central Africa (including Malawi), based in the Herbarium at the Royal Botanic Gardens Kew

It should be a lively event!

6.00 Doors open, Gascony Room. Networking, sale of merchandise and cash bar

6.45 Update from Chairman, Tom Lupton

7.00 "Conservation from a botanist's point-of-view" – a discussion led by Jonathan Timberlake

8.00 Networking continues. Cash bar

9.30 Evening ends.

Details of the event can be found at www.nyika-vwaza-trust.org/UJC-2021.html. Tickets for the evening (£16, students £8) 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 included with this newsletter.

Union Jack Club, directions and facilities:

The Union Jack Club is in Sandell St, directly opposite the Waterloo Station ticket hall for the Jubilee underground line. Cross Waterloo Rd at the traffic lights and Sandell St is 10m to your left. The club entrance is 15m down Sandell St on the right. Depending on availability, you can book a table in the restaurant (open 17.00 -21.30) or accommodation for the night. For the restaurant, ring 020 7902 6062



Jonathan Timberlake and colleague
in the field © Jonathan Timberlake

Grant-Funded Research – challenges and surprises

It is good to see progress on all the research that NVT UK has agreed to fund. Paston Simkoko's work on *Prunus africana* and Sopani Sichinga's study of Mopani Woodland at Vwaza Marsh have been completed and can be found on our website - www.nyika-vwaza-trust.org/research. Andrew Kanzanguze has submitted a progress report on the Conservation Status of Juniper on the Nyika Plateau; Olivia Sievert (Lilongwe Wildlife Trust) and Eric Gowero have sent in interim reports on their respective studies, 'Using elephant pathways and dung to investigate human-wildlife conflict', and 'Assessing the spatial distribution, population abundance and vegetation structure of *Lantana camara* invasions at Vwaza Marsh'. Harold Sungani has submitted an interim report on 'The distribution and diversity of aquatic macroinvertebrate assemblages in Nyika and Vwaza reserves'. Lumbani Banda has been funded to evaluate the 'Effects of fire occurrences on vegetation composition and the spread of invasive bracken at Nyika National Park', using remote sensing to reconstruct fire history.

All the above research falls within our specified interests, but are refreshingly varied in subject matter. It is always good to hear direct from the people carrying out the research about their experiences, challenges and surprises. Paston, Olivia and Harold have sent us some insights.

Prunus study - my experience on the Nyika Plateau By Paston Simkoko



The journey to the *Prunus africana* study on the Nyika Plateau started in October 2019. It all began with presenting a concept note to the Faculty of Environmental Sciences. On this day, I thought only few lecturers would be present but, to my surprise, University Hall was full to the brim waiting for me to present my concept note. I felt nervous and had no idea what was going to happen. The Hall was full of lecturers, PhD, and Master students from different faculties. At the concept note level, my topic was titled 'The status of *Prunus africana* in Nyika National Park'. At the end of the presentation, I received very constructive comments. Some comments suggested that I include soil analysis, phytochemical analysis and seed biology studies. When I first heard about these proposed fields, I felt nervous. I thought I had chosen a wrong study field. A number of fears gripped my mind. Phytochemistry and soil chemistry looked too scary to me and I had no idea how I would deal with the two fields.



Paston doing laboratory work © Paston Simkoko

After presentations, I went to see my supervisors and colleagues who had done similar studies. I was then told to craft my proposal in such a way to accommodate all comments. I came up with a title, "*Analysis of population structure, phytochemical properties and seed behaviour of Prunus africana in Nyika National Park*". I was surprised to see that everyone agreed with me when I went for proposal defence in a similar well patronized University Hall. However, my fear was that I had never done laboratory work in life. I took the courage to face the challenge before me. I went into the University of Malawi laboratory in Zomba with only soil samples without knowing what results the soil samples would bring. I stayed in the lab for about 10 days and probably will cherish this experience for the rest of my life. Looking at how things were progressing, it was just an amazing experience to me. Thanks to Nyika-Vwaza Trust for funding this exercise. It has given me real science laboratory experience. I am now confident to do a lot more lab work in future because of Nyika-Vwaza Trust.



Prunus africana
© Paston Simkoko

More elephant and hippo than we expected! By Olivia Sievert



In June our team hit the ground running after an initial slow start due to vehicle maintenance issues. Mapping pathways took longer than expected, due to a larger amount of elephant and hippo activity than originally anticipated. However, we've gathered some great information thus far! In total, 155 pathways making up 43.77 km have been mapped. In June, our team recorded 123 crop fields that these pathways traversed,

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with the most common crops being maize (54 fields) tobacco (35 fields) ground nut (13 fields) and sweet potato (10 fields).

On top of numerous signs of elephant use (122 records in June alone), the team has also recorded signs of hippo, baboon and serval movements on communal land. Thus far, the team has noted that the elephants are using all sorts of pathways including, roads and human footpaths. Additionally, when heading into the fields it appears that elephants use smaller footpaths or travel slowly through uncultivated land, they then use secondary roads as a quick direct retreat to the park, which, has been confirmed by multiple community members. This makes it extremely difficult to thoroughly map each individual movement.



Elephant footprints leading through cultivated land
© Olivia Sievert

Furthermore, initial data has not revealed any crop preference, as Research Assistant Benni Hintz said “Across the southern boundary there seems to be little to no selectivity in foraging areas as tracks lead to both cultivated and uncultivated land. However, a few areas do seem preferential as they experience second and third foraging bouts within a few days’ span”. To help analyse forage preference further we’ve been busy collecting and analysing dung samples, 27% of which have contained crop seeds.



Field Research Coordinator Piliarni and Research Assistant Benni collecting data on elephant dung found near the southern boundary
© Olivia Sievert

Challenges of a first visit to the area

By Dr Harold Sungani



Sampling was conducted in some selected rivers/streams and lakes within Nyika National Park and Vwaza Marsh. During the period the research team had quite a number of issues and experiences.

It was the first time for most of the researchers to travel to Nyika, so they were not very familiar with the terrain, road conditions, weather conditions, and wildlife. Sampling of macroinvertebrates involves specialised equipment, some of which is light while some can weigh up to 10 kgs and, during this mission, researchers carried quite a lot of heavy equipment. As the terrain did not allow vehicles to get to all sampling stations, researchers were stuck with carrying the equipment by hand. However, when students from two government Universities joined (Lilongwe University of Agriculture and Natural Resources (LUANAR) and University of Livingstonia), the challenge was lessened, as the load was split among the team.



The team had to walk long distances
© Harold Sungani

During sampling, we also encountered challenges of road blockages by trees dislodged by elephants. This was a big challenge, especially in Vwaza, where the roads pass through thick forest. Unfortunately, the team had not expected such situations (being new travellers to the area) and so did not carry any pangas or axes to cut the trees in case of such eventualities. However, the vehicles used were 4x4 twin cabs and assisted a lot in overcoming the challenge as they were able to drive off road to access the other side of the road. During the sampling season, Lake Kazuni water levels were shrinking and we encountered large numbers of hippopotamus in the remnant pools. It was such a great experience to witness such big animals in one place.

The cold weather of Nyika was a challenge especially in determining the starting and finishing time of sampling. As temperatures could drop to less than 10°C in the morning and evenings, researchers were forced to adjust

times to allow sampling to be done when waters are a bit warmer, so as to allow most of the invertebrates to be active. The inactiveness of the invertebrates can mean most of them are not easily accessible in a water column as they mostly attach to substrates.



*Student with Hatch Kit water analyser at Chelinda Dam
© Harold Sungani*

However, the accommodation facilities at the Chelinda field office were great. We had very charming caretakers, who made sure hot shower and a fire were always available. It was also nice to wake up in the morning only to find game feeding around the lodge. We did not need to travel long distances to see wildlife, an experience that is very rare from our homes.

The researchers observed increased rate of turbidity by the waters of Lake Kazuni, as a result of immense population of hippopotamuses inhabiting the lake. These animals seem to have reached their threshold, are consuming most of the aquatic vegetation and increasing the disturbance of the ecosystem. From observation, Lake Kazuni also seems to have more activities from the wildlife as there are very few river networks within the reserve and more animals rely on its water for drinking.



*Sampling macroinvertebrates in progress
© Harold Sungani*

It was such a great feeling to meet and work with very experienced rangers in Nyika National Park. Mr Felix Panjani from Chelinda camp and Lucky Kamanga were great. They have rich history of these two parks. We always felt safe in their presence.

When Mr Felix told us the history of Lake Kaulime, the only naturally occurring lake on the plateau, everyone almost froze. We had just gone into that sacred site to sample. "Lake Kaulime is traditionally used for rain making ceremonies and is home to a powerful spirit in the form of an enormous serpent, said to be the guardian of Nyika wildlife" Felix warned us. Fortunately, when he said this, we had already sampled the lake and nothing happened to us, probably because we did not have ill intentions in the park i.e., poaching.



Researchers with Felix Panjani © Harold Sungani

The presence of students from Lilongwe University of Agriculture and Natural Resources (LUANAR) was a great experience, as it was also a practical learning process for them. The students were exposed to different sampling gear and techniques and were guided on timing for sampling so that they could achieve more and meaningful results.

THANK YOU Paston, Olivia and Harold for helping us all feel we can share a little bit of your experience on the Nyika Plateau and Vwaza Marsh.

Sponsor Juliet, our Marathon runner!

The London Marathon is on Sunday 3 October 2021. Please help us raise money for the Nyika-Vwaza Trust by sponsoring Juliet Cornelius-Rumsey who has gamely agreed to run for us once again. She will be undertaking the mass run which starts in Greenwich, London.

In early August we asked Juliet how her training was going. "Well for a start I never thought I would be looking at my calendar and seeing that in 8 weeks' time I would be running 26.2 miles again!!!, 5 years (2016) is a little while ago now and I am definitely not as young as I used to be so running has become a lot slower. I feel more relaxed, as I have nothing to prove. I have travelled the road before and, whereas last time I set myself a target time, this time, as long as I get round before the dustcart sweeps me up, I will be very happy! My main worry is about getting to the venue in time but, once the race starts, generally the nerves go and I focus on my running pace and then enjoy the whole

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atmosphere. To be able to support the NVT and Malawi in this way is a privilege, I spent many happy holidays visiting these parks with my parents. I loved the rolling hills of the Nyika where the air was so clean and fresh. So, if NVT /Malawi can help with conservation projects and protect the natural flora and Fauna of these Parks and educate the local population to support it, then it's worth running for."



Good luck Juliet!
© Juliet Cornelius-Rumsey

Juliet was born in Mzuzu and spent most of her early life on the Viphya Plateau with her family. Her parents lived in the country for over 40 years. We are delighted she has agreed to support the trust because running a Marathon is no easy task, as she well knows.

Please support the trust. Donations via Juliet's page on the Just Giving website:

www.justgiving.com/julietcornelius-rumsey, or direct to NVT's bank account: Lloyds Bank plc, (Sort Code 30-90-89), for the credit of The Nyika-Vwaza (UK) account No. 44504860, quoting 'Marathon'

Thank you for your support. Go Juliet!

Conservation Education Programme

Fortunately, Malawi has been relatively unaffected by covid-19 since early 2021, and the education programme had been able to continue in the communities and schools at a reduced level. We are now in year three of the second phase and work is proceeding as expected, with NVT UK maintaining financial contributions.

Year 1 £39,253

Year 2 £38,092 (£8,165 unspent due to Covid-19 limitations, and carried over to year 3.)

Year 3 £20,335 to date.

It is good to know that The Lilongwe Wildlife Trust (LWT) is busy engaging children and teachers with the story of the

wonderful wildlife in their area and the importance of preserving it for future generations of Malawians.

We are grateful to Clement Manjaalera and Dorothy Tembo Nhlema of LWT for keeping us in touch with what the programme means to some of the individuals involved. Clement reported the following heartening stories.

Concerned community member reported illegal wildlife activity to the police

A member of the community assisted the police and Department of National Parks & Wildlife (DNPW) officers in the arrest of suspected illegal charcoal producers. The illegal activity was taking place in a Luwawa forest and when this concerned community member noticed that some people were in the forest producing charcoal, he immediately reported them to the police who came to arrest them. He is one of the trained teachers in environmental education who is independently delivering environmental lessons and engaging learners in micro projects, such as afforestation and permaculture.

Matron teaching other teachers

Twenty teachers from Kazyanthundulu, Lumphawa, Jandalavu, Baliro, Khong'onthelo, Kabulungu, Phangala, Chisimuka, Kanyenjere and Mwanda primary schools (Katowo Zone) were engaged in a wildlife conservation sensitization meeting. The meeting was organized by Mrs. Mkandawire, who is a Wildlife Matron for Kaduku Primary School in Rumphi. It took place at Katowo Teachers Development Centre. During the meeting, teachers learned about the importance of environmental education in schools and why children should be engaged in conservation activities. Mrs. Mkandawire was one of the teachers who attended refresher course in July 2021, when teachers discussed their role of increasing awareness of those teachers not yet trained in conservation education and of schools and communities not part of the protected area environmental education programme. The sensitization meeting is a result of what was discussed during the refresher course and the teachers who attended applauded the initiative as very inspirational, because it provided environmental information on how they can engage children and communities in conservation activities.



Teachers engaged in a Sensitisation meeting © LWT

(Continued from page 5)

School sets up an orchard

A wildlife club at Nkhomboli Community Day Secondary School has set up an orchard as one way of encouraging learners to take part in conservation issues. The orchard will act as a demonstration area for learners, so that they can do the same in their respective homes. The orchard has pineapples, oranges and tangerine trees. The aim of this orchard is to help raise funds for the club to implement other environmental activities and promote education visits to protected areas. It will also help the school with access to fruit.



Lemon tree © LWT

Bee-keeping at Lupalamizi and Miwanga

Lupalamizi and Mibanga schools have established bee-keeping projects. The aim of the project is to provide learners with knowledge and understanding of the roles of bees in society. The crucial roles that bees play in mother nature is not well understood by various parts of the community, so providing knowledge to the children will increase understanding of the important role that bees have for humans. The project will help children and communities to access honey for food. It will also help the school clubs to raise funds through selling of excess honey to support clubs' other conservation activities.



Bee hive at Mibanga © LWT

We appreciate the work that Clement, Dorothy and the team at LWT are doing on this important programme and are always pleased to hear their stories.

Shop at Amazon and earn funds for NVT

If you shop at Amazon, sign up for Amazon Smile and they will donate money to NVT, without it costing you anything extra. The shopping experience on AmazonSmile is the same as on a normal Amazon account and there is no marketing or other promotional contact from the retailer. Amazon will donate 0.5% of the net purchase price (excluding VAT, returns and shipping fees).

Go to smile.amazon.co.uk, select Nyika Vwaza UK Trust as the charity to receive donations from eligible purchases before you begin shopping. Amazon Smile remembers your selection, and every eligible purchase you make through AmazonSmile will result in a donation. If you have a normal Amazon account, please ensure your purchases are made through your AmazonSmile account. AmazonSmile may occasionally inform you about donation amounts disbursed to your chosen charity, or about the programme. For shopping by phone, go to the to smile.amazon.co.uk and follow instructions to download the appropriate app.

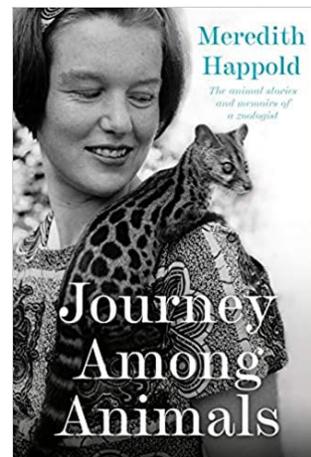
It costs you nothing to donate, so please do sign up.

Amazing animal stories

'*Journey Among Animals*' is a delightful and enlightening collection of stories about Meredith Happold's amazing encounters with animals, set in the context of her life, career and travels, which include Malawi. The book is packed with easy-to-read information. These astonishing stories will help to transform people's attitudes towards animals.

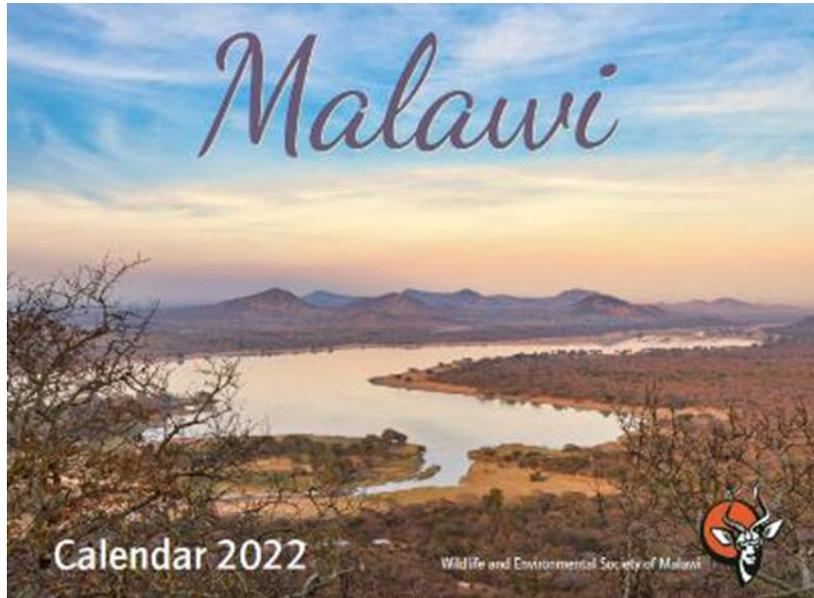
Meredith specialised in animal behaviour, ecology and conservation. She taught at university level, published many papers in zoological journals and a member of NVT's Technical Advisory Group.

Journey Among Animals will appeal to animal lovers as well as professional zoologists. The paperback is available through Amazon.



Calendar 2022

We shall be offering Malawi WESM calendars again for 2022. To be sure of a copy please send your order by email to sec.nvt@gmail.com or by post to Peter Lawrance, 50 Brewery Road, Woking GU21 4NA. We are keeping the same price (as in recent years) at £11 + UK p&p. Please do not send any money at this stage. We will also have a supply available at the NVT Meeting in London on 9 November 2021.



January



February



March



April



May



June



July



August



September



October

Front cover: Vwaza Marsh Wildlife Reserve **MIAC HENRION**
Vwaza Marsh Wildlife Reserve in Rumphi District is especially rich in birds.

Waterbuck,
Majete Wildlife Reserve
CECIS CLUTHBERT



November



December



January 2022



The Wildlife and Environmental Society of Malawi (WESM) has worked to protect Malawi's huge diversity of animals and habitats for over seventy years. It was founded in 1947 as the Nyasaland Fauna Preservation Society with the aim of protecting wildlife, especially larger mammals. To this end WESM prepared and helped to establish Malawi's first parks and reserves in Longwe, Majete, Macobeli and Nyika.

WESM is a non-profit, non-governmental organisation. It has nine branches throughout Malawi, and a national Secretariat. Each branch is self-governing carrying out its own events and projects.

Calendar produced by WESM Blantyre Branch

www.wesmblantyre.com

Facebook - Wildlife Blantyre

Copyright individual WESM members/photographers as noted.

Editor: Jennie Kettlewell
Designer: Mike Budgen

Nyika-Vwaza (UK) Trust

Promotional Evening with a discussion led by Jonathan Timberlake
at the Union Jack Club,
Sandell Street, London SE1 8UJ on Wednesday 9th November 2021.

“Conservation from a botanist’s point-of-view” – a discussion led by Jonathan Timberlake

Application Form for Tickets

Admission tickets are £16 per person or £8 per student.

I would like to apply for..... tickets to the Nyika-Vwaza (UK) Trust evening 9th November 2021 for the persons named below.

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

Alternatively, you may email your application to the Hon Secretary, NVT UK Trust, secretary@nyika-vwaza-trust.org and make payment direct to the Trust’s account at Lloyds Bank, sort code 30-90-89, account number 44504860, account name The Nyika-Vwaza UK Trust, quoting your name and email and phone contact, and listing your guests.

(Please complete in block letters)

Name of applicant:		Ticket number
Organisation name (if applicable):		
Address:		Date issued
Contact Tel. number:		
Email address:		

Names of other people for whom tickets are requested

Name:		

If paying by cheque please return this form, with your remittance to Peter Lawrance, Hon. Secretary and Treasurer, Nyika Vwaza (UK) Trust, 50 Brewery Road, Horsell, Woking, Surrey, GU21 4NA.

Order Form for Guide to Nyika National Park

To order "Nyika – A Guide to the Nyika National Park, Malawi", payment can be made by £sterling cheque (made out to Nyika-Vwaza Trust), or direct to NVT's UK bank – see details below.

Prices:

UK: £20, incl. p&p, direct to the Trust's account at Lloyds Bank, sort code 30-90-89, account number 44504860

Overseas: direct to Lloyds Bank plc account (IBAN GB94LOYD3090894450), account name The Nyika-Vwaza UK Trust, or by banker's draft) £28, including p&p.

We rely on donations to the Nyika-Vwaza (UK) Trust to fund our programmes, so please consider adding a donation to the amount you are paying for the guide.

Please complete the following:

I would like copies of the book, "Nyika – A Guide to the Nyika National Park, Malawi."

I would like to add a donation of £.....

I enclose my cheque for £.....

Or, I confirm that I have paid £.... direct to the

Trust account at Lloyds Bank plc, sort code 30-90-89, account number 44504860,

Or that I have paid £....sterling by bankers draft,

Please use your last name as the reference.

Cheques must be in £sterling and drawn on a UK bank.

Title: Mr/Mrs/Ms/Other.....

Forename:.....

Surname:.....

Address:.....

.....

.....

..... Postcode:.....

Email address:.....

Please return this completed form to:

Hon. Treasurer, Nyika-Vwaza (UK) Trust

50 Brewery Road

Woking, Surrey, GU21 4NA, UK



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

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

Working for environmental and wildlife conservation in northern Malawi.

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

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 Bank plc, (Sort Code 30-90-89), for the credit of The Nyika-Vwaza (UK) Trust's account No. 44504860, 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.
GU214NA**

for registration and onward transmission to your Bank.

Alternatively you may set up a standing order direct with your bank and advise us of your arrangement by email to:

secretary@nyika-vwaza-trust.org.

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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Telephone No.:

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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 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: