

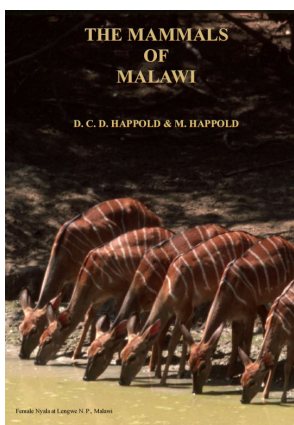


By the time we send the spring newsletter, we usually have a date fixed for our autumn event. This year is different, due to a change in strategy for our funded programmes. *We will* hold an event, but can only confirm the speaker and date once we have firmed up plans and are in a position to offer you a speaker linked to our new strategy. We will email you, as soon as we have fixed details of the event.

Some very good news!

The Nyika-Vwaza Trust (UK) was founded in 2004. In the early years we operated with funds raised from supporters until, in 2009, we received a generous legacy from Ian Hay, formerly the golf pro at Limbe Club. This allowed us to expand our activities. Since that time, we have achieved a great deal in terms of environmental protection and education in northern Malawi, but always knew our role would end when our pot of money ran out, estimated to be by around 2024. Our intention was to leave a body of information that would be of help to Malawians for the protection and enhancement of the valuable ecosystems they enjoy in their country.

Earlier this year, it was a very welcome surprise when we were contacted by Dr David Happold, a long-term member of our Technical Advisory Group, to tell us that he wished to make a significant donation through his Happold Africa Fund, to be used to further the objects of the Trust. He has since donated over £180,500, which we have invested as 'The Happold Fund' to be utilised for environmental projects in Malawi that will have the greatest positive impact. David was a visiting professor at the University of Malawi in Zomba in 1993/4. In collaboration with his wife, Meredith, he conducted long-term studies on small mammals, the results of which appeared in many local and international journals. Their book, 'The Mammals of Malawi' has recently been made available, free, as a pdf file <http://www.doi.org/10.25911/VMQK-QZ31> and is available on our website <http://www.nyika-vwaza-trust.org/>.



Dr Happold's book
© David Happold

As you will appreciate, it will take some time to get the use of this important funding right. We are in discussion with our contacts in Malawi on possible environmental education projects and other possible opportunities to work with the new park managers on the further development of the Nyika National Park and the Vwaza March Wildlife Reserve and the communities in the surrounding areas. We will let you know as soon as our new strategy is in place.

We are most grateful to David Happold and I am sure you will join us in thanking him for this very generous gift.

Jonny Hanson

Jonny Hanson joined The Nyika-Vwaza (UK) Trust in 2017 as a trustee, and has greatly benefitted the organisation through his understanding of Malawi and his studies of wildlife conservation. At home in Northern Ireland, he has developed and run a successful community farm. Having been awarded a 2023 Nuffield Farming Scholarship, he has decided to take his career in a new direction, which sadly means he will no longer have the capacity to fulfil his role in NVT. He has therefore resigned from the board of trustees, but has maintained the link by joining the Technical Advisory Group, specialising in wild cats, large and small.



Jonny Hanson
© Jonny Hanson

Jonny tells us about his new plans. "In the short term, I create, consult and communicate with conservation,

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agriculture and enterprise through my new business, Jonny Hanson Consulting and Communications. But I'm also establishing a nature edutainment startup called Jonny Hanson Ventures (JHV), which is developing a series of linked brands and stories. In-development JHV stories touch on rewilding, snow leopards and Malawi, while brands Malawi Mountain® Gin and Snow Leopard™ Restaurant are at the proof-of-concept stage. It's a very exciting, and very busy, time for me."

Malawi Mountain® Gin (MMG) will be of particular interest to NVT supporters. Jonny comments: "MMG is a premium, purpose-drive brand that will combine sustainable, mostly Malawian botanicals to inspire people about the mountains of Malawi and donate 10% of profits to their conservation. Currently at the recipe development and market research stage, in partnership with a Northern Irish distiller and university respectively, expect to see MMG Chapter 1: Mulanje hitting the shelves in British and Irish markets from 2024/5."

Jonny grew up in Malawi and Ireland, where his interest in the environment came from being encouraged, as a youngster, to adventure and explore. He spent his teenage years amidst the landscapes and mountains of Malawi and he determined to give something back through his work as an NVT UK trustee. He has certainly done that. We appreciate his contribution, look forward to working with him in a different role, and wish him well in his new venture. You can stay in touch with him via mail@jonnyhanson.com and www.jonnyhanson.com.

Conservation is on the school curriculum

In our last newsletter, Clement Manjaaleera reported on the achievements of the six-year environmental education programme, which took place in communities around Malawi's protected areas in the north of the country. Lilongwe Wildlife Trust (LWT) have built on that experience by getting Environmental Education written into the Malawi national primary school curriculum. The first stage was creation of a workbook, which has now been completed, with £36,000 funding from NVT.

The national programme was launched at an event on 15 December 2022, with many important guests from education and conservation:

- Secretary for Education
- Director of Directorate of Quality Assurance Services
- Director of Basic Education
- Director of Secondary Education
- District Education Manager Lilongwe Urban
- Representatives of Department of National Parks and Wildlife, Environmental Affairs Department, Department of Forestry, Lilongwe City Council

- UNDP Portfolio Manager for Resilience and Sustainable Growth
- Representatives of invited NGO's and partners
- Lilongwe Wildlife Trustees
- Directorate and staff of Lilongwe Wildlife Trust
- The press.

The meeting began with welcome speeches from Julie Saunders, an LWT trustee, and Rabi Gaudo, portfolio manager for resilience and sustainable growth at UNDP (United Nations Development Programme).



Presentation at the launch in the new Environmental Education Centre © LWT

Guest of Honour, Chikondano Mussa, Director for secondary and distance learning in the government of Malawi, made her opening remarks, which included: "It is wonderful that LWT is delivering lessons full of fun activities in this beautiful environment. We all know that playing is a great way for children to learn, so with the forest as a playground and classroom, I can imagine lessons here are a very inspiring and memorable experience! I understand that the lessons here involve lots of drama, games and learning new skills. So, as well as learning about the environment, and spending time in nature, our learners can also develop important skills such as teamwork and leadership. I know one of the activities learners do at the Centre is to write their own 'Wish for Malawi's wildlife'. I want to share my wish, which is 'That our young learners gain the knowledge and skills they need to become dedicated citizens and protect Malawi's wildlife and wild spaces for generations to come'."

The national Environmental Education programme was explained by Dorothy Tembo-Nhlema, director of programmes for LWT. "We believe one of the most important ways to achieve this is to work with our government partners in the Ministry of Education, natural resources and environment and our local schools, so our children and young people learn about the importance of looking after our environment and what we can all do to protect Malawi's beautiful forests, rivers and lakes and all our wild animals. This is important, not just because we want to protect wild animals and beautiful places, but because all of us depend on a healthy environment for a good life. If we want to drink clean water, grow good crops and breathe clean air, we all need to take care of our environment."

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The next stage will be teacher training on the material and printing of the workbook for teachers to use nationwide. Dorothy said that LWT had worked with some fantastic teachers in the community education programme, thanked those teachers present for their enthusiasm and support, and said that she looked forward to meeting them again in teacher training workshops for the new workbook.



Where better to learn about nature than in the middle of the forest © LWT

The launch event took place in LWT's new education centre. Although in the middle of Lilongwe, the centre is in a beautiful forest and perfect for hands-on learning, so children can be inspired by the sounds, smells and sights of the trees, plants and animals.

Once the government of Malawi has approved the next stage of the programme, children all over the country will have an opportunity to learn about the impact of the environment on their daily lives.



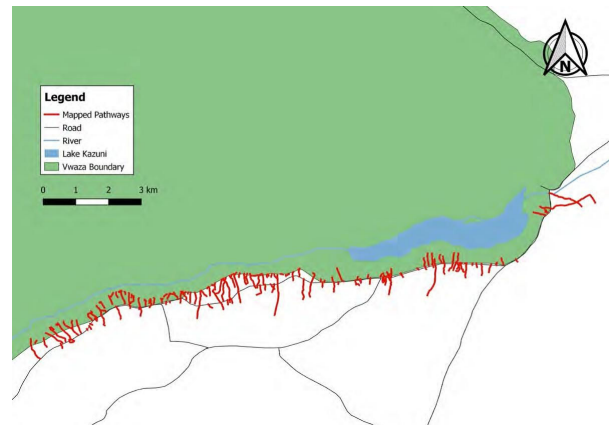
Clement Manjaaleera leading a group on one of the trails © LWT

Research completed

Olivia Sievert's study of elephant pathways and dung investigated human-wildlife conflict around the Vwaza Marsh Wildlife Reserve. Her report has been completed and is now available on the NVT website www.nyika-vwaza-trust.org/wp-content/uploads/Sievert_Elephants-in-Vwaza_NVT-Report-2022.pdf.

The Objectives of the study were:

- To improve the ability to predict hotspot areas of human-elephant conflict so that mitigation could be targeted
- To increase capacity to plan strategic fence patrols and protection measures for the upcoming fencing project in the Vwaza Marsh Wildlife Reserve
- To contribute to knowledge on the effects of availability of resource on elephant crop-raiding behaviour
- To provide VMWR park management with an easily replicable baseline survey for investigating the effectiveness of human-elephant conflict deterrents.



Elephant pathways at Vwaza Marsh © Olivia Sievert

In total, 180 pathways, making up 45.53 km, were mapped. Of the 180 mapped pathways, 132 had at least a portion that were outside the reserve and therefore in community land. These pathways traversed 484 crop fields, with the most common crops being maize, tobacco, ground nut and soybeans. Interestingly, most pathways mapped were also used by humans, with a large majority of them being secondary roads and bicycle paths. Pathways encountered infrastructure 207 times, of which 124 were dwellings. Elephant activity appears to be centred around three hotspot zones. There were 61 cases of elephant-related crop damage.

We hope this research will support DNPW with the management of the elephant population in Vwaza Marsh Wildlife Reserve and enable monitoring of potential conflict around the reserve.

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George Malembo M'Manga has finished his study on honey hunting with Honeyguides. He is currently finalising his report, which will be up on the NVT website as soon as it is complete. We took the opportunity to ask George some questions about his experience.

Was there anything that really surprised you about working in the field?

- The communities were unpredictable in such a way that some were very cooperative while others completely could not give the information. It was very painful to learn that potential respondents that were identified by a community chief could reject interviews.
- A number of potential respondents did not unveil their blowing instruments (see photo) because they were afraid that I might be a game ranger or a spy, since they have been hunters within the reserve.



Blowing instrument
© George Malembo M'Manga

Are there a couple of things that came out of the research that were unexpected?

- The guiding behaviour of Honeyguides is unique, and the sad thing was that one of the respondents in Karonga lost one of his relations because they were guided to a very big snake, which ended up killing one of the honey hunters. Nevertheless, they have learnt the difference in a guiding call depending whether there is an animal or honey.
- Some honey hunters believe wild honey is the best as compared to honey from hives.
- Despite the popularity of modern bee keeping, traditional bee keeping is widely being practiced using clay pots.

What most pleased you about your research findings?

- Despite the popularity of bee keeping around the reserve, those people around the reserve find honey

hunting an important activity to do.

- A few women are also honey hunters, despite honey hunting being deemed to be a male activity.
- Community leaders are also hunters, which shows that they are there to promote culture.
- A very young hunter was found to have experience of the mutualism between the Honey badger and Honeyguides, which is a complex guiding behavior to witness.
- It is very sad that the population of Honey guides has been completely reduced around the communities and the only trusted place to find the Honey guide is the reserve.



Collecting honey
© George Malembo M'Manga

New research grant

Sopani Sichinga has been awarded a grant to carry out research on the Occurrence and impacts of Invasive Alien Plant species on the tropical montane evergreen forest patches of the Nyika Plateau.

Nyika Plateau is the most beautiful montane plateau to be found in Central Africa but it is threatened by Invasive Alien Species (IAS), most of which were introduced as early as the 1950s. These IAS are of great concern to Nyika National Park managers, owing to reported negative impacts on wildlife and biodiversity. Consequently, there have been joint efforts by both local and international stakeholders to try to mitigate the effect of these IAS on the plateau.

The aim of this study is to assess the occurrence of IAS within montane forest patches on the Nyika Plateau, and to assess what threat these species pose to forest biodiversity. Specific objectives are:

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- To identify IAS present and map their spatial distribution across Nyika montane forest patches.
- To determine the vegetative characteristics of each IAS present across Nyika montane forest patches.
- To assess the regeneration/abundance status of each IAS so as to determine their level of invasion across Nyika montane forest patches.
- To provide recommendations as to appropriate management actions to address the IAS issue resulting from the findings.

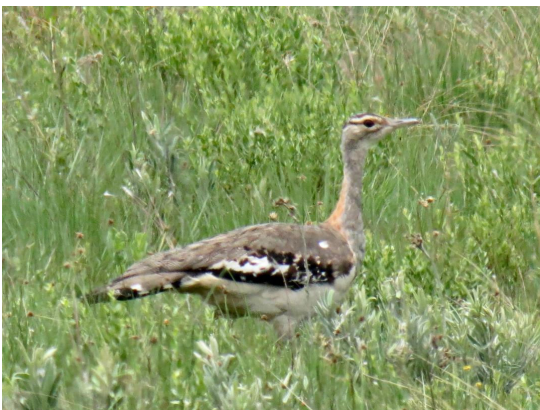
The information from this study will be of value to the Environmental Affairs Department (EAD), which is currently steering the management and control of the alien-invasive species project, under the Centre for Agriculture and Bioscience International (CABI), across the country's protected landscapes and ecosystems. The results will serve a reference point for future monitoring of IAS in Nyika montane forest patches, whilst providing a platform for more advanced studies.



A montane forest patch on the Nyika
© Central African Wilderness Safaris

Research under way

Erik Sandvig and Leejiah Dorward's study to estimate the abundance of Denham's Bustard on the Nyika Plateau was delayed but is now under way. We look forward to hearing about the results.



Denham's Bustard © Sarah Kettlewell

NVT's event 15 November 2022

Chairman, Tom Lupton set the context for the annual event by reminding those present that NVT focuses on three areas: Environmental Education, Research and Advocacy. He explained that, in the past, the Department of National Parks and Wildlife (DNPW) had managed Malawi's parks. Now some parks are already managed by organisations such as African Parks (Liwonde, Majete and Nkotakota). A slightly different model is now being developed for the Nyika National Park and Vwaza Marsh Wildlife Reserve: A Co-Management Agreement. This will be a long-term partnership with the Peace Parks Foundation. Work is now underway on developing a management plan for both areas, and for the first time, this is being undertaken in consultation with the communities around the parks, which will help understanding and management of human/wildlife conflict. He also gave an update on the achievements of the original Environmental Conservation programme and reminded the audience that the focus was now on supporting LWT's success in getting environmental education on the primary school curriculum. This is covered in more detail elsewhere in this newsletter.

For the first time, NVT's autumn talk was offered as a hybrid event, with an enthusiastic audience in London's Union Jack Club and others logging in from around the globe, including many friends from Malawi. Jonny Hanson was thanked for acting so ably as moderator.

The speaker for the evening was Leejiah Dorward, a conservation scientist from the University of Bangor, Wales, with a Master's degree in conservation science and a Doctorate on the complexity of human-carnivore interactions. Leejiah challenged us with his thinking as he debated how conservation had changed and might change in future, in his talk: *"Conservation in the 21st Century; what is it and who is it for?"* He drew on his experiences in different countries, including Northern Malawi.

Leejiah talked us through changes in thinking about conservation:

- 1960 – 1970. Nature for itself. Pristine ecosystems. Nature for its own sake, without interference by humans.
- 1980 – 1990. Nature despite people. Managing threats to nature.
- 2000 – 2005. Nature for people. Ecosystem functioning and services.
- 2010 – People and nature. Socio-ecological systems.

He warned that there was no easy solution, because priorities differed, as did the motivation of different groups, made memorable by his thought-provoking illustrations.



Cattle grazing © Leejiah Dorwood

Leejiah had inherited flora and fauna books from his grandfather, Frank Dorward and had found an article by J.C. Cater in which the solution to elephants being attacked by wild dogs was proposed as killing the wild dogs. This would not only be an interference in the natural lives of animals, but showed how one person valued different animals. He asked why the killing of a lion was viewed as an act of human-wildlife conflict, while the killing of mice was pest control (5-15% of Tanzania's annual maize harvest is lost each year due to rodent outbreaks and it can be as high as 48%). Are our judgements about wild animals still clouded by personal interests? Are conservationists truly neutral?

No solution can be perfect and it is important to take into account the diversity of views of the many parties involved, and to consider the context of cultural history. Changing understanding is a long process, which will be helped if the focus is on impacts, rather than conflicts.



A homestead © Leejiah Dorwood

Leejiah's talk, to a very engaged and knowledgeable audience, provoked a lively question and answer session, which further demonstrated a diversity of views.

This brief article cannot do full justice to the subject and Leejiah's presentation can be found on:
http://www.nyika-vwaza-trust.org/wp-content/uploads/Dorward_NVT_pres_compressed.pdf

Donations appreciated

Funding is still needed to get the workbook printed for the primary curriculum and to train up teachers to use it. The Happold Fund will be used for a new initiative, and we need your help to kick off the school curriculum programme.

We are most grateful to all of you who have already made donations and hope that this newsletter will encourage others of you to support this important work. You can find a donation form at the end of this newsletter, or you can make a direct donation to the Nyika Vwaza (UK) Trust account at Lloyds Bank, sort code 309089, account number 44504860, IBAN GB94LOYD30908944504860

A very big 'thank you' for your support.

Storm Freddy

We were very concerned to hear about the devastating effects of Storm Freddy in Malawi, which was declared a state of disaster, with at least 200 dead. Contacts in the country told us that it was hard to believe what had actually happened, with many injured or missing and over 350,000 people displaced. Everyone was traumatised as the rain continued to fall and no-one was sure what would happen next. Most told us that their families and relatives were OK, though one told us that he had lost a family home. Power was disrupted and infrastructure damaged but, fortunately, the Lilongwe Wildlife Centre was not as badly hit as it was some years ago.



We send best wishes to all our friends in Malawi and have been thinking of them in these very difficult times.

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 GB94LOYD30908944504860), 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:.....

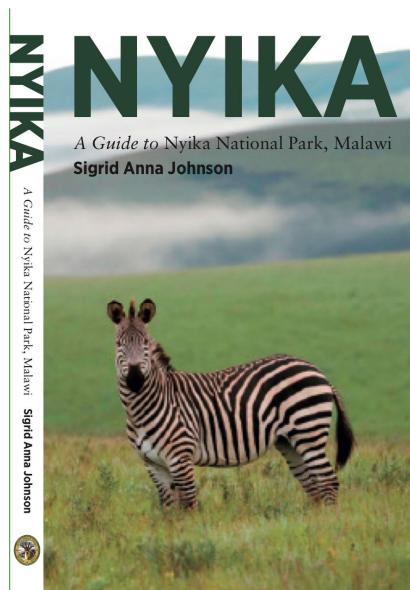
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..... Postcode:.....

Email address:.....

Please return this completed form to:
Hon. Treasurer, Nyika-Vwaza (UK) Trust
50 Brewery Road
Woking, Surrey, GU21 4NA, UK



The Nyika Guide
© Sigi Johnson



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

The Hon. Treasurer/Secretary
50 Brewery Road,
Woking,
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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)	Friends of the Nyika-Vwaza Trust Donation Form PLEASE PRINT YOUR DETAILS IN CAPITALS
<p>To:- Bank plc, (Please insert the name and address of your Bank in the space above)</p> <p>Please pay to Lloyds Bank plc, for the credit of The Nyika-Vwaza (UK) Trust, Sort Code 30-90-89, account No. 44504860, the sum of:</p> <p>£ on (Please insert date above)</p> <p>and thereafter every month/quarter/six months/year <i>(delete as appropriate)</i> until cancelled by me in writing.</p> <p>Name of Account to be debited</p> <p>.....</p> <p>Account Number</p> <p>Signature</p> <p>Date</p> <p>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.</p> <p>Alternatively you may set up a standing order direct with your bank and advise us of your arrangement by email to sec.nvt@gmail.com.</p>	<p>Title: Mr/Mrs/Ms/Other:</p> <p>Forenames:</p> <p>Surname:</p> <p>Address:</p> <p>Postcode:</p> <p>Telephone No.:</p> <p>Email:</p> <p>I enclose a donation of: <input type="text"/></p> <p>Or: I have completed the Banker's Order Form. <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Please treat as Gift Aid donations all qualifying gifts of money made.</p> <p>In the past four years <input type="checkbox"/> Today <input type="checkbox"/> In future <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p><i>(Please tick boxes you wish to apply)</i></p> <p>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.</p> <p>Signature:</p> <p>Date:</p>