



Kasanka Trust Ltd.

Newsletter First half of 2010



You haven't heard from us for a while. During the first few months of the year we didn't have much news to share with our Kasanka friends – it was quiet, very wet (record rains!) and we all went on our leave. But that time has passed and our heads are spinning again with stories of interesting visitors, exciting programs and sightings, and new colleagues ... on which you can read all about in this newsletter!

Great news is that the Global Environmental Fund has approved our proposal to take on the management of Lavushi Manda National Park! The GEF will provide the majority of the funding needed. We are now working with the World Bank on the official agreements. A lot still needs to be done, including finding additional funding but we hope to officially start the project within some months.

Other news is the recent arrival of new colleagues. In April we welcomed the newly appointed general manager Ernst Jacobs. Ernst has worked in North Luangwa Conservation Project, with Conservation Lower Zambezi as a field assistant, and as a professional safari guide in North & South Luangwa and Kafue National Parks. With his appointment Cornelia van der Feen finished her period as interim manager. We are very grateful for her efforts. She will keep working for the trust as a volunteer to help with the much needed fundraising.

Two other new colleagues who we would like to introduce to you are Rhoda Chisengalumbwe and Ruston Mukampola. You will meet them next time you visit us in the lodge: Rhoda replaces Lisa who has moved to Mfuwe to run the Sky Trails café at the airport, and Ruston is filling the gap of a long looked for new guide.

As usual the first quarter of the year was quiet in terms of wildlife sightings. Spectacular was the Greater Flamingo at Lake Wasa in January and a Wild Dog in Lavushi Manda National Park.



Labour Day 2010: one of the first challenges for our new manager!

Record rains created vast areas of swamp and open water. Trips along Kasanka river especially provided us and the visitors with stunning views, an abundance of waterbirds, crocs, Puku's and Sitatunga's. New to the bird list were the Great Snipe and the Greater Flamingo, bringing Kasanka's total to 449 species.

Our big friends the elephant have been heavily visible lately. To our joy, and annoyance to be honest, they have visited every camp in the park and destroyed at least one structure on each of them....Very naughty! The hippos have made their way back to Lake Wasa again after the rains.

Talking about visibility, we have to tell you about the Shoebill storks in Bangweulu! The sightings have been better and easier than ever: visitors arriving by boat from Chikuni airstrip have seen them even before reaching the camp.... The extremely high water levels of the area have made a stay in Shoebill camp an absolute treat but for us quite a challenge. Imagine the logistics of supplying a fully booked camp in the swamps over flooded roads and taking visitors from far-away airstrips because the one close to camp too wet to land on! Of course we managed and we are very proud of David and his team for making each stay and search for Shoebill worthwhile.

As said Shoebill Camp has been very busy. Also at Kasanka we have seen an increase in visitors compared to last year. The number of campers is especially growing. The Pontoon and Kabwe have been completely full regularly. Expanding camping capacity has become a priority for the park's management. We can use some hands here; who would like to spend his/her holiday helping us design and build an additional campsite?! We are also thinking of expanding the group facilities in Kasanka Conservation Centre to better accommodate

big groups such as schools from Lusaka and Copperbelt. The small dormitories and few guestrooms are no longer sufficient to house the students and teachers.

We wouldn't be surprised if we see an increase in visitor numbers for the bat season this year. After the release of the BBC Life documentary at the end of 2009, three more big features on the bats appeared in well known magazines! The South African magazines Go! and Weg! (www.gomag.co.za/flipbook/45/pageflip.html), in Travel Zambia Extra (www.ta-emags.com/V1/Zambia/TZX1) and the March edition of Africa Geographic.

As always we had quite a few memorable meetings: for example a South African lady in her eighties who Ruston had to drive around in a wheelbarrow as the distances between the chalets and dining room were too far for her to walk. She was 2 species short of 800 on her Southern African bird list and managed to get the Ross's Turaco in Kasanka. Or the group of SOVON (Dutch ornithology trust) who, between taking the bus to Kasanka (never again), some serious birding and finding themselves listening to a church choir at Shoebill Camp, managed to hold serious management meetings!



Kasanka Waterworld: young Sitatunga checking out a Jacana

We had two volunteers this period: Michele from the USA and Daan from the Netherlands. The two of them did a variety of jobs such as painting chalets, data processing, road maintenance and even some anti-poaching work on the Luwombwa river (destroying fishing nets and canoes)! Because both are pursuing a career in wildlife management we wouldn't be surprised at all to see them back in the near future.

Wasa lodge has had a bit of a makeover with chalets being repainted and the bar getting a new color scheme. The staff has received new uniforms that will brighten up even the dullest days and they look very smart.

Equipment wise we have invested in some solar boilers to be tried at Wasa and Shoebill to have less of a footprint with fire wood collection. So far they seem to be working well, especially at Shoebill where fire wood is already scarce.

Luwombwa lodge has been treated to a new ten horse power four stroke boat engine. This will also help us to have less of an impact on the river as it is much cleaner running and also more fuel efficient.

The Community Project run by Kasanka is going strong: the Finnish Embassy enabled Frederick and his team to develop an elaborate program for 2010. In this first six months they have done a lot of work on the Community Resource Board elections. The project has printed the ballot papers, trained the polling assistants, counted the ballots and compiled the report on the elections. The



project also supported a few farmers to construct new chilli fences in Mulembo village for the protection of their fields against elephants, planted new trees at Kapepa centre and started the preparations for additional fish ponds in Mpulemba and Kasamba.

Justin in his new uniform

In January a new academic year started for Kasanka sponsored students. It was a difficult selection but we managed to choose the 17 most promising pupils for sponsorship. Newly enrolled are three girls, two in high school and one in basic school, and six high school boys. The Kathelijne Children Fund is sponsoring five of the new pupils and the two teachers of Kasanka School. One teacher from Chitimima Community School is sponsored by Kasanka Trust Netherlands for another year.

The Kasanka School now has 42 children attending classes! Twenty-two in preschool, nine in grade 1, and eleven in grade 2.

The education project employed a new education officer, Given Mwambe to manage the school visits in the GMA and the activities in the Conservation Centre.



Local school visiting Wasa organized by Tom

A previous volunteer, Tom, organized school visits of local schools as part of the education activities funded by the Disney Worldwide Conservation Fund in the beginning of the year. This will be continued by Given in July.

Kevin Murphy from Glasgow University is leading a research program to develop a biological water quality assessment program for Southern Africa. This program is using Kasanka National Park as one of the pilot areas. In March the participants from Lusaka, Aberdeen, Glasgow, North West and Cape Town universities, as well as the Department of Water Affairs and Environmental Council of Zambia, and Kasanka Trust met in Potchefstroom, South Africa. In June they came together in Lusaka and visited Kasanka to further their study.

Preparations are also underway for upcoming research projects including Puku research by a German university, Baboon research by an American university and a vertebrate survey of Kasanka National Park by Frank.

Boas with the new engine at Luwombwa

Battling poaching remains one of the main tasks of the parks management. The



cooperation with the local Zambian Wildlife Authority continues well and the Trust welcomes the

appointment of Mr. Kamute Simushi as the new ranger for Kafinda Game Management Area, based at Mplembe station. The Serenje prosecutor has been assisted by Mr. Nestar Phakati, the senior ZAWA prosecutor from Mansa.

Seasonal maintenance work was carried out on the roads in the park: we have filled many potholes and opened up drains. This was especially necessary with the record rainfall of over 1800 mm. Many roads are still closed because they are too wet. Even the main road from Wasa headquarters to Pontoon and Fibwe had been flooded. West of Wasa (Kalamba) a detour through the forest enabled tourists to reach the above mentioned camps. The pontoon over the Kasanka River has not been operating most of this six months period because of the high water levels.

Record rains: the main road just west of Wasa, April 2010



Mechanical repairs are being continued on the vehicles requiring a lot of attention from the workshop. There is a huge need of new vehicles, as this is a continuing problem.

As you can see, we are excited as always and full of stories, but the gloom of financial worries is always nearby. If it had not been for the many generous contributions to the Kasanka Trust Netherlands and Kasanka Trust UK (individuals sending their donations to these trusts) during this period, we would not have managed to cover the recurrent costs of the salaries for 85 staff members, park protection operations, maintenance of the vehicles and lodges and payments to community, ZAWA and government. Thank you all for your much needed help! We are trying to find new ways to further improve our financial sustainability. We hope our new board members will play an active part in that challenge!

Let's keep in touch,

The Kasanka Team
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Flowering plains near Shoebill Island, June 2010