

Kasanka Trust Ltd.

Report on the second half of 2011 in Kasanka and Lavushi Manda National Parks



Another spectacular bat season at Kasanka National Park

With the arrival in November of our new project manager work has now started in earnest at Lavushi Manda National Park. A temporary base has been established at Africa Parks HQ in nearby Nkondo and great strides have been taken to upgrade the main access roads. Work starts soon on a permanent base within the park and a picturesque location for the park's first campsite has been identified. Key stakeholder liaison is going well and we are already seeing a significant improvement in anti-poaching results.



Lavushi Manda's new tractor hard at work grading existing roads

We had another amazing bat migration at Kasanka this year. Things started a little quietly, with numbers being a little less than usual for October, but by mid-November we were back up to an estimated 8 million bats with the last bat not leaving until the new year. This is truly one of the world's most spectacular wildlife events.

We had a small but encouraging increase in the number of visitors and researchers who came to see the bats. One party of students and professors drove all the way up from Cape Town, while another university group came all the way from Calgary in Canada.





Filming the bats using a hexacopter

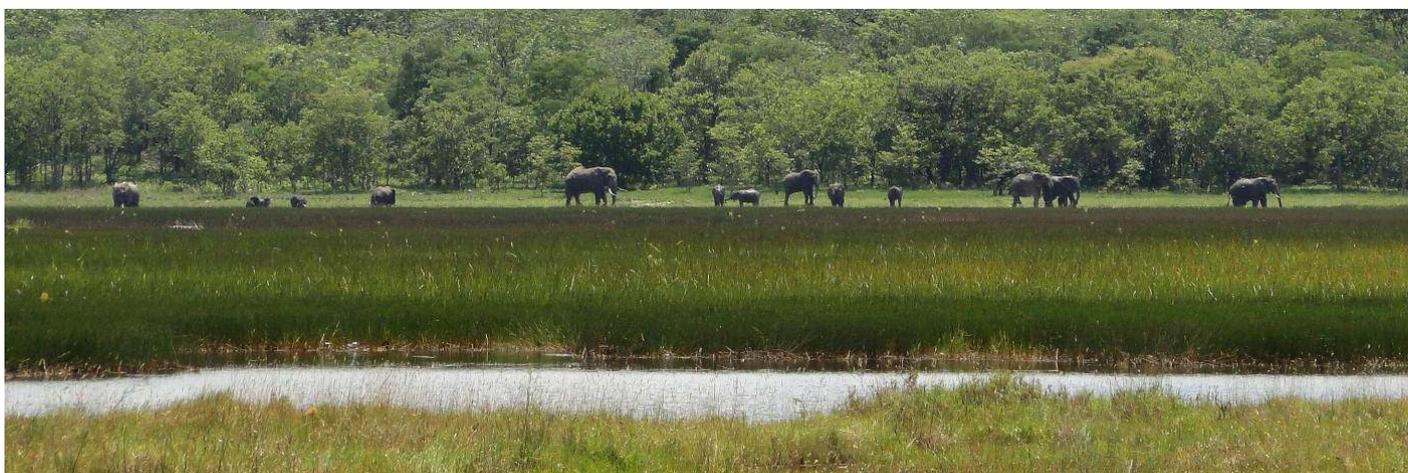
It's currently *The Year of the Bat*, which no doubt encouraged a number of other specialist organisations such as a group from the Bat Conservation International to pay us a visit. BCI and Kasanka are now working on a partnership!

The media interest was represented this year by one German and one Zambian film crew in residence. The German crew used a remote control *hexacopter* to get right in amongst the bats. We haven't seen the results yet but are expecting some amazing footage of the bats in flight.

Wildlife

The annual migration of straw-coloured bats haven't been the only stars of the show in recent months with the Kasanka elephants making a determined effort to take top billing.

It started with an elephant calf being born at Pontoon



campsite early one morning in August. It is a rare privilege to witness such an event and the campers couldn't quite believe their luck. One of our visitors was very misty eyed when she described the moment immediately after birth when the other elephants in the group gathered around to gently help the new arrival to its feet with their trunks.

This maternal group plus an impressive looking pair of males have also been making regular visits to Wasa Lake, giving lodge guests some excellent sightings. They have also been making regular dawn and dusk appearances at the bat forest. It's almost as if they are as amazed as us humans are by the sheer numbers of bats. It made for some great game viewing for our guests.



Elephant football!

Elephants being elephants, they have also given us a few challenges. On three occasions, we have had to rebuild one of the campsites at Pontoon, only to have the facilities knocked down each time by the



elephants. Once an old drum being used by our thatchers to stand on, was used for an impromptu game of pachyderm football!



Scout Henry on research duties

A gaboon viper was spotted along the Kasanka River, downstream of Pontoon - a first for the park and the pair of Wattled Cranes that breed at Chisamba Waponde annually have again successfully raised a chick.

A pilot mammal count was conducted in Lavushi Manda National Park in September and October. Frank and a team of scouts spent 6 days there to obtain a first ever systematic count of wildlife numbers. Several common duikers, several groups of Kinda baboons and a group of vervet monkeys were observed, confirming the current situation of mammals being still present, albeit in low densities.

Two wild dogs were seen along the main road in Lavushi Manda at the end of August. This is only the second sighting in recent times, the previous one being of a lone dog, making this new observation even more significant. Lions roaring have been regularly reported by the road building team and several people passing through the reserve have seen them on the Chiundaponde-Mpika road. Two herds of sable, roan antelope, Smith's red rock rabbit, klipspringer and several other mammal species have been sighted in the park.

White-fronted Plover, Whimbrel, Black-winged Pratincole and Lemon Dove were added to the Kasanka birdlist, bringing it to a total of no less than 461 species; after Kafue and equal to South-Luangwa,

this is the longest list for any national park in Zambia. Other spectacular birding news was the presence of at least two displaying African Pitta males in the bat forest.

Community

In November we played host to a delegation from the Finnish Embassy, who are one of our major sponsors. They were there to assess the efficacy of our Community Project. Frederick and his team have put a lot of hard work and effort into this project and deserve appropriate recognition. Based on initial feedback we are optimistic of a positive response.

An exciting initiative is the Girls Science Club. Anna Weyher the Parks baboon researcher, along with Given, Claudia and Abity from the Conservation Centre, have been leading science related tutorials and lectures at Kasanka Conservation Centre. These have included subjects such as Biology and English and have proved extremely popular. They are also proving to be of benefit in terms of improving



language and communication skills.

Sable antelope in Lavushi Manda

Groups of children from the International School of Lusaka, Baobab College, and Simba College paid us a visit this year - in some cases paying two visits! Using the dormitory facilities at the Conservation Centre as a base, they took game drives, visited Chief Chitambo IV and the local villages, plus took part in quizzes.



Simba was the first school group in many years not to lose at football to Chitima Community school, coming away with a very creditable 2 – 2 draw!



Science club on bat forest field visit

Family Willems, visiting Kasanka for their 40th wedding anniversary also brought a few sets of football shirts and balls with them for the local teams trained by former employees Kebby Kunda and Mabvuto Phiri to sharpen their skills with.

Shoebill Camp

Thanks to two nests on the Lulimala River, visitors have been able to see Shoebills throughout the dry season. The road to these nests frequently yielded sightings of Oribi, Tsessebe and good birds such as Blue Quail. Birding has been excellent as usual, with the most spectacular sighting being a Red-necked



Phalarope close to camp in November,

One of the local teams in new shirts

only the second time one has been recorded in Zambia. The Zebra population in the area continues to grow and tens of animals are often seen on the plains.

The Shoebill research project, in which Kasanka is in partnership with, amongst others, The Percy Fitz-Patrick Institute and the Bangweulu Wetlands Project, has revealed that several Shoebill chicks were illegally removed from their nest. These were destined for international trade, but we are glad to report that the projects staff and the Bangweulu Wetlands scouts managed to confiscate several chicks and arrest some of the key people. One young stork remains at the Chikuni Research House (airstrip) for the time being as it turned out to be too habituated to be released immediately. Two other young have been reintroduced to the wild, however, having first been fitted with a transmitter.



Kapotwe: the first ever wild (though slightly habituated..) Shoebill ringed

People

We are delighted to confirm that our colleague Cornelie van der Feen has been appointed as the Trust's new Executive Secretary. Cornelie has worked tirelessly and selflessly for Kasanka for the last 20 years and this exciting new appointment sees her moving to Lusaka to carry on her good work in a strategic and logistical support capacity.



MEET THE LAVUSHI MANDA TEAM:



Simon Pitt, Project Manager Simon originally trained in wildlife and natural resource management in Australia. He has worked in National Parks for most of his career, the last seven years in South Luangwa, Zambia. He is an experienced guide and wildlife tourism manager as well as being a dab hand in the workshop. We are lucky to have him join the team and look forward to Lavushi Manda blossoming under his leadership.



Frederick Mbulwe, Community Relations Coordinator Frederick, or Papa as he is affectionately known, had a very successful career as a teacher and trainer based all around Zambia before he joined Kasanka Trust in 2005. Many of you may already know him as the avuncular head of our Conservation Centre at Mulaushi as well as the leading light behind many of our successful community farming initiatives. We are very pleased to announce that he will be applying his wealth of experience and boundless enthusiasm to good effect on the Lavushi Manda project.

Lazarus Chimponda, our senior mechanic retired in October after 10 years of loyal service. We wish him a long and happy retirement.

Sam Phillips, a senior bat ecologist from the UK, joined us as a volunteer during the bat season, where he used his wealth of knowledge on bats to inform visitors on guided walks to the bat forest. His services and enthusiasm were very much appreciated.

Ian Gatenby, a civil engineer turned conservationist, managed the lodge for us during the bat season. We could not have managed without him.

At the moment Kasanka Trust is looking for a volunteer workshop manager. So many vehicles and machines to be worked on! Please email trust@kasanka.com for the 'job description'.

Other Snippets

After a very successful inaugural event last year, we are pleased to announce that the Kasanka Bicycle Challenge will be held again in May. It takes place over the long weekend of 25 May. Whatever your standard; from beginner to semi-pro mountain biker; kiddie to grand parent, there will something for everyone. There are three race routes to choose from: 50km, 22km or 3 km. An exciting programme of other activities will also be available, including bush walks and game drives. Or why not just chill out on the veranda of our lodge, or on the balcony of your own chalet overlooking the lake?

So, why not dust off that bike, get your Lycra shorts on and make a weekend of it with us here at Kasanka?



Last year's winner of the local race Greward Chalwe



Exciting news from the very north of Zambia: a new conservation NGO, similar to Kasanka Trust, has been created to support and improve the protection of the Zambian part of Lake Tanganyika. The area includes Sumbu National Park and Tondwa Game Management Area. It hosts a unique flora and fauna including a huge variety of cichlids endemic to the lake. Funding is now needed to support their activities. Have a look at www.conservationtanganyika.org.

Fundraising

Thank you very much to everyone, and every organization, that has made donations to the Kasanka Trust in the last six months. Particular thanks go to the organizers of the *Elephant Charge* who have provided us with funding for new radio control equipment: equipment that is essential for effective scout deployment. For those unfamiliar with this annual fundraising event, it is an exciting 4x4 orienteering bundu jamboree, held each October in aid of conservation charities in Zambia. Please check out their website www.elephantcharge.org.

We have also received very welcome assistance from the Civil Society Environmental Fund (www.csefzambia.org) for strengthening the organization of the Trust, and from The African Elephant Program by U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (www.fws.gov/angered) to support our anti-poaching activities and the community based chilli fence project.

We are grateful to Kathelijne Fund and the many individual donors of the Kasanka education project for making it possible to sponsor fifteen talented students through high school and run Kasanka School this year.

Steve Thompson from Samfya kindly installed a new hand pump at Luwombwa and instructed the staff how to prevent sulphur stagnation in the future. Steve donated his team's time and pump free of charge which we are very grateful for.

As always, all and any donations to our conservation or community development work are extremely welcome. Donations are tax deductible in Zambia, UK and Netherlands – please see our website www.kasanka.com.

Keep updated through Facebook (Kasanka Trust Zambia)

The Kasanka Team (trust@kasanka.com)



Malawuzi dambo in the central Lavushi Manda mountains

