

Kasanka Trust Ltd.

Report on first half of 2012



Lake Wasa

With the first day of July upon us, it's time for an update on Kasanka Trust's activities over the first half of 2012. Bookings are picking up with the start of the 'Shoebill' season and the advent of the drier months, which makes for more rewarding game-viewing.

A major highlight was the second annual Kasanka Mountain Bike Challenge. The race saw over eighty participants compete in three separate events and brought unprecedented numbers of visitors to Kasanka during the Africa Freedom Day long weekend.

Easter Weekend was a success with an Easter Braai, game drives, and for the youngsters, a slip 'n slide and Easter Egg hunt. Unexpectedly, our resident Vervet

Monkeys joined in the fun before our staff could have a go, but they left plenty of chocolaty goodness for them to enjoy.

Kasanka National Park

The park experienced below average rainfall over the last rainy season and now the vegetation is rapidly drying up. The annual early burns – controlled burning at the beginning of the dry season by our own teams to prevent destructive late fires - create patches of fresh green growth and are thus attracting wildlife slightly earlier than usual. Sightings of Hartebeest and up to 30 Sable are common at Chikufwe plain, as are Reedbuck and the occasional Buffalo.



Now that the tall grasses of the Chipya have been largely burned, the Kinda Baboons of the Kasanka Baboon Project have proved easier to find. They have several babies at the moment, some of which are bright white.



The Kinda Baboons

The annual burns yielded a sighting of a Caracal at Chinyangali and a Sharpe’s Grysbok close to Kayayi. Leopard has been heard calling in the Fibwe area, and spoor was found even in the middle of Kinda Camp.

Various reports of Zebra suggest there are still at least seven animals in the northeast of the park and at least two in the Luwombwa area. Roan and the nowadays very scarce Waterbuck were also reported on various occasions.

Four different Elephant herds were reported on a single day in June, bringing the population estimate to at least 42 individuals. Sadly, the fresh carcass of a young male was found in the Fibwe area in early April. It is possibly a victim of retaliation to crop-raiding in the local community, underlining the importance of Kasanka’s work to address human/wildlife conflicts. In the same period, the chilli fencing team found remnants of an umbilical cord near Chalilo village and several new-borns were seen recently.



Pygmy Goose

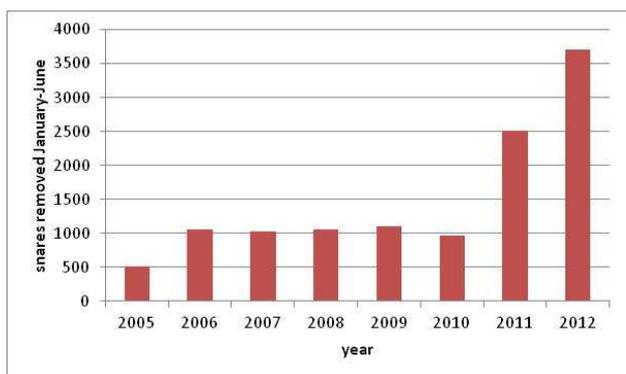
The park now boasts no less than 463 recorded bird species, with the addition of Mottled Swift and Grass Owl in the first half of the year. It is now the second longest bird list of all parks in Zambia (after Kafue NP) despite its small size and lack of altitudinal variation. The reptile list reached 51 species of which 32 snakes, with the recent addition of Cape Centipede Eater. Yellow-spotted Bush Hyrax was reconfirmed for the Park, at Mambilima Fall on the Mulembo River.



Cape Centipede Eater

The Chinyangali bridge has been repaired, allowing better access to the Bupata area. The construction of Bupata scout post near the bat forest, to fight poaching in this hotspot and prevent fires, will be initiated soon.

Bad news is that the first half of 2012 confirms an alarming picture of explosive growth in the number of snares. No less than 3700 snares were removed, almost 50% more than in the first half of 2011 and more than collected per year in any year prior to 2011. Apparently similar increases are found throughout Zambia.



Lavushi Manda National Park

The first year of the World Bank project in Lavushi Manda National Park has passed. Simon has made good progress with his team on road works; no less than 110km of bush tracks have been (re)opened so far, as well as two river-crossings on the Lutimwe and Musekele Rivers. The infrastructure works and anti-poaching efforts will benefit hugely from the acquisition of a second hand Land cruiser and Canter for the Project donated by the Civil Society Environmental Fund.

This coming period the team will focus on constructing a temporary office site and campsites at Kanyanga Falls and the spectacular Kapanda Lupili Fall.



World Bank, ZAWA and Kasanka delegation in Lavushi Manda

In June a delegation from the World Bank visited Lavushi Manda along with members of the Zambian Wildlife Authority and Kasanka Trust to monitor progress of the project. They camped in the park enjoying the prospective campsites and saw several smaller game species, such as Common Duiker, Side-striped Jackal and Kinda Baboon.



Lavushi Manda panorama

A group of American and Canadian students came after visiting Kasanka National Park to pioneer a hike across the escarpment in Lavushi Manda National park. It proves to have amazing potential. Along the way, several reptile and amphibian species were recorded and scores of grasshoppers collected for proper identification. Red-Rock Rabbit, Baboon and Klipspringer were seen, and the fresh spoor of Leopard, Lion, Hyena and many ungulate species encountered. Scouts report fairly regular sightings of Reedbuck, Bushpig, Roan and Sable, and Lion are frequently heard in several locations.

The tractor driver Boxen got a bit more than he bargained for when he came across a Lioness and her cubs whilst working on the park's infrastructure. It seems this sighting pleased us more than it did him!

Community & Education Projects

As Frederick Mbulwe has shifted his expertise to assist in communities surrounding Lavushi Manda National Park, we have appointed Jonathan Yamba as the Community Relations Officer based at Kasanka Conservation Centre. He will work on the two year program called "Strengthening Democracy and Livelihood Capacities in Kafinda Game Management Area" that is funded by the Finnish Embassy. In addition to this new project, the Community Assistant Claudia has done a lot of work on erecting chilli-fences in the



community to protect the crops of local farmers from hungry Elephants. She also visited the Human Wildlife Conflict program hosted by the South Luangwa



Frederick at this temporary camp in Lavushi Manda National Park

Conservation Society in Mfuwe to learn and share ideas. These chilli fencing activities are funded by the US Fish and Wildlife Fund.

The Kasanka Education Project saw 15 students starting the new academic year in high school sponsored through Kasanka Trust. The project also secured external funding for salary of the education officer, and the salary and training of the two Kasanka school teachers.

Shoebill Camp

The Shoebill Research Project in Bangweulu has said goodbye to David Ngwenyama but has welcomed researcher Ralf Mullers from the Netherlands. Ralf is no stranger to spending long days in the field observing birds. We are looking forward to hearing his findings and learning about the status of 'King Whalehead' in Bangweulu.



Tsessebe close to Shoebill Camp

New faces

Daan Smit stayed with us for 6 months as an intern to further his studies in Wildlife Management, assisting the Community Relations Team with the chilli-fencing project.

Sam Phillips, a bat-specialist from the UK, volunteered for us during six weeks during the 2011 "bat season". He and his girlfriend Heather Ashcroft have returned to Kasanka to run the tourism, as well as revamping the Kasanka website and marketing strategy. Sam and Heather were lucky enough to spot Roan on their first day Kasanka, whereas some of us have gone years without spotting this magnificent antelope!



Sam and Heather

Liz Winterton has been appointed Camp Manager of Kinda Camp, while Anna Weyher is back in the USA writing up her PhD. Liz spends her mornings and afternoons tracking, following and observing the Kinda Baboons of Fibwe as part of an ongoing study into their behaviour and ecology. She will be with us until the end of the year and she and Anna are keeping her fingers crossed that the BBC will come out to film their beloved Baboons as a feature in one of their documentaries.

Longterm volunteer Bastiaan Boon is back with us. Bastiaan is currently overseeing the annual early burns programme and the placement of firebreaks to protect the evergreen forests of Kasanka from destructive wildfires.



Other Snippets



Njinga & Bike race

The second annual Kasanka Mountain Bike Challenge proved a success beyond our wildest dreams with over eighty participants entering in the three events; up from 22 in 2011! The main event was won by Stephen Wells, who beat ZamBikes' sponsored Obert Chembwe in an exciting sprint to the finish. As the recipe dictates, the cycling weekend was kicked off by a local 'Njinga Race' in which members of the local community competed for a brand-new Buffalo Bicycle sponsored by World Bicycle Relief. Our very own night watchman Derrick Kunda took the grand prize by covering the roughly 10km from the Airstrip to Mulembo Checkpoint in just over 20minutes! On a rickety old Chinese contraption, mind you! Two more bicycles were raffled amongst the 25 participants and runners up won a number of other exciting prizes and the first twenty contestants all received a brand-new T-shirt! The Kasanka Trust would like to wholeheartedly thank all our kind sponsors and competitors for making this event possible and such an unforgettable experience; a success that exceeded even our highest expectations!



The team also attended this year's Zambian International Tourism Exposition with a stand of our own. The stand hosted by Ernst and Cornelia drew a lively crowd of visitors including the Minister of Tourism himself. Their hard work and efforts paid off and the Kasanka Trust won the award for the best eco-tourism stand and featured on Zambian television.

Two training workshops on biological water quality monitoring were held in Mulaushi in June for in total 25 community members, as part of the SAFRASS project (www.saf rass.com) in which Kasanka Trust is a partner. A research team from Glasgow University and the Scottish Environmental Protection Agency revisited water bodies in Kasanka, Bangweulu and Lavushi Manda previously sampled by Glasgow on flora and chemistry.

Our former employee Lackson Chama was given his PhD last month at Marburg University in Germany. He used to work for the Aberdeen and Glasgow research team in the Darwin project. Congratulations!



*Let's keep in touch,
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The Kasanka Team
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Grass owl

