

THE ZAMBEZI SOCIETY

<http://www.zamsoc.org>

BULLETIN

APRIL 2007

WILDERNESS VALUES

A recent letter to National Geographic Magazine about American visitor attitudes towards their country's National Parks system, entitled "Hallowed Ground" provides useful food for thought with regard to the wilderness values of our own beautiful and wild National Parks in the Zambezi region. It reads:

"Conflict between conservation and use in our national parks arises when visitors adopt a consumer's attitude toward outdoor recreation. Consumers envision the parks as nature's amusement parks. They stampede named features, motor across lakes, buzz alpine meadows, off-road over sandy hills, buy trinket souvenirs. True lovers and stewards of our public lands seek not mechanized entertainment in beautiful locations, but the intrinsic value of unspoiled places."

The Zambezi Society has put together a Wilderness Conservation Programme aimed, among other things, at creating greater awareness of the "intrinsic value of unspoiled places" among policy-makers, planners, park managers and the general public. This, together with our wilderness training programme has been submitted to potential donors.



STATUS AND DISTRIBUTION OF CARNIVORES IN THE BASIN

In partnership with Fauna and Flora International, the Zambezi Society has started a review of the status and distribution of carnivore species in protected areas in the Zambezi Basin. This desk-based project will draw upon available literature and public surveys to gain a better understanding of the status of all carnivores, paying particular attention to a set of key species which are either of global importance or where there is little known information. At the same time we are also identifying areas where human/carnivore conflict might occur.

Photo © Dick Pitman

LIAWA PLAINS: DIRECTOR VISITS NORWAY

In 2005 the Society joined five other organisations to develop a large research project based in Liawa Plains, Western Zambia to increase the understanding of the social, cultural and economic values of biodiversity, and how they can contribute to improve livelihoods in the area. We are now bidding for the next round of funding and all the partners met in Trondheim, Norway in the middle of March to fine tune the previous proposal for submission to the next funding call. The Director, who represented the Zambezi Society at the first meeting, was flown to Norway to assist with the project development.

VICTORIA FALLS DEVELOPMENT MORATORIUM

The Zambezi Society is encouraged by recent press announcements of a 6-month moratorium on development in and around Victoria Falls on both the Zambian and Zimbabwean sides of the Zambezi River. For more than a decade, the Society has been worried about the impacts of inappropriate development in this area and has called repeatedly for a halt to all development until proper planning is in place. During the 1990s and early 2000s, The Society contributed actively to several planning processes, the latest of which was funded by the Canadian government. However, when Canada suspended its funding and activities for political reasons in 2002, we publicly expressed our disappointment, seeing little future prospect for wilderness-sensitive planning in the area, and warning that the Victoria Falls environment would suffer.

Map © Zambezi Society



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Now, it seems that the controversy surrounding the mega-hotel and golf-course development by Legacy Holdings in Zambia has shaken UNESCO, the United Nations body responsible for designating World Heritage Sites around the world, into action. UNESCO is at last insisting that all World Heritage Sites, including Vic Falls/Mosi-oa-Tunya should have Management Plans and annual report-backs – a long-standing statutory requirement of World Heritage Status which has hitherto been sadly neglected by Zimbabwe and Zambia. The organisations responsible for such accountability are the Parks and Wildlife Authorities of both countries.

The Zambezi Society contacted ZPMWA's Chief Warden (Scientific) and the Senior Warden for Victoria Falls, who have confirmed that they are indeed working on a joint Management Plan with Zambia. The deadline required by UNESCO is June 2007. We have offered our assistance and they have assured us that they will be involving all stakeholders, including the Society, in the process.

ZAMBEZI RIVER FLOWS: HIGHEST IN 27 YEARS!

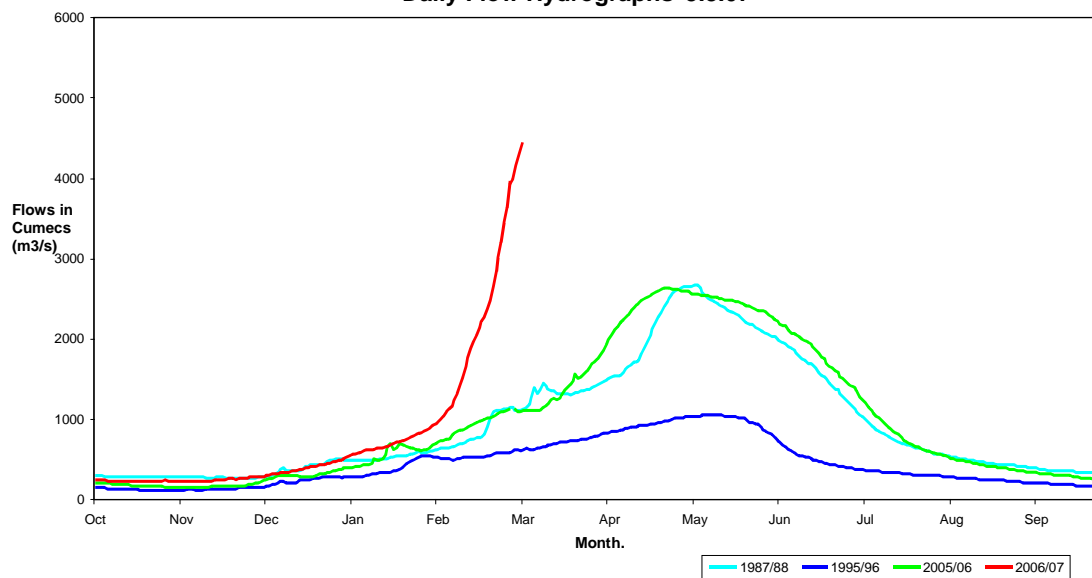
Following heavy rains this year in the Upper Zambezi catchment area in E Angola and N-W Zambia, the Zambezi river has been pouring over the Victoria Falls at more than double its mean annual flow rate in March and April. The Zambezi River Authority website shows that water flow measured over Victoria Falls on 13th March, peaked at 4568 Cumecs (cubic metres per second) the highest level recorded in the last 27 years! Now receding, but only slowly, levels are still way above the mean flow at the same time last year, which, on the same day, was 2169 Cumecs!

The flow of the Zambezi River is seasonal in nature with the lowest flows occurring during the dry months, from June to November and the higher flows occurring during the wetter parts of the year, December to May.

The maximum flow ever recorded at Victoria Falls was during the early construction phase of Kariba Dam in March 1958 at 10,000 cubic metres per second. The lowest flows recorded to date at Victoria Falls were during the 1995/96 season which had an annual mean flow of 390 cubic metres per second, whereas the Long Term Mean Annual flow at Victoria Falls is 1100 cubic metres per second.

Kariba's lake level is currently around 481metres (about 42% full). Local reports indicate that the lake is currently rising rapidly at about 10cms a day, while Lake Cabora Bassa was reported to be 70% full in February this year.

**Figure 2 - Zambezi River peaking At Vic Falls.
Daily Flow Hydrographs 5.3.07**



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KARIBA CROC-FARM - MISINFORMATION

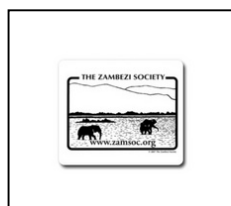
The Zambezi Society has, on previous occasions had to warn its members about the damage that can be caused to genuine conservation initiatives by the spread of rumour rather than factual information. Another such incident recently occurred when a scare-story was circulated worldwide about a new crocodile farm development in Kariba which would cull Kariba's elephants to feed crocs. The person who circulated this story has issued a retraction and has apologised to the Zimbabwean Parks Authority and others that he implicated (copy available from The Society, if required). In his own words, he is guilty of spreading "bar talk" without checking the facts.

We can only stress the importance of checking all facts before spreading such harmful rumours. One of the benefits of membership of the Zambezi Society is that members are able to use this organisation as a conduit to get at the facts in such cases. Please get in touch with us if you are concerned about such stories, BEFORE you pass the information on. We will, as far as we can, check our contacts and provide you with an informed and factual account. Please encourage others to take similar responsible action (and to join the Society, if they are not already members). We have so far received confirmation that there is NO quota or intention by the Zimbabwe Parks Authority to shoot elephants for the sole purpose of feeding crocodiles. We have asked for written confirmation of all the facts.

Please help us to act positively and responsibly for conservation in this part of the world.

BUY A GIFT FROM OUR NEW ONLINE SHOP!!

We are delighted to announce to members and friends that The Zambezi Society website now has an online shop with a small range of gifts and souvenirs on a Zambezi theme. Go to <http://www.zamsoc.org/html/shop.html> and use your international Credit Card to order from a range of T-shirts, mugs, mousepads or caps printed with a choice of exclusive Zambezi Society designs. These include our special 25th Anniversary logo depicting the river at Mana Pools and a range of photo-prints donated by former Director, Dick Pitman, depicting individual Zambezi wild animals including elephant, rhino, hippo, cheetah, zebra and wild-dog. This is a great way to give money to a worthwhile conservation cause, and receive a gift or memento in return. This is the first time The Zambezi Society has been able to offer such a facility, and we are very excited to have made a start! We hope to expand the colour range and variety of products over time, depending on the amount of support we receive. So please – tell all your friends, relatives and colleagues about it and encourage them to visit our website and support our efforts!



Sample products © Zambezi Society

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