



## NVT Event in Autumn 2022

Each autumn, the Nyika-Vwaza Trust holds a London event, which features a talk about a fascinating conservation project and then allows time afterwards to network with old and new friends with an interest in Malawi.

This autumn, our speaker will be Dr Leejiah Dorward, a conservation scientist from the University of Bangor, Wales. You will see from the article on grant-funded research in this newsletter, that he is about to undertake a project on Denham's Bustards.

His conservation work means he travels a great deal and he is currently in south east Asia. Once he returns, we will agree a date for our event and be able to let you know more about his talk. It promises to be interesting as, having completed his PhD, he is working on improving understanding of the drivers of illegal behaviour in national parks.

Information about the event will be up on our website when we can confirm details:  
[www.nyika-vwaza-trust.org/UJC-2022.html](http://www.nyika-vwaza-trust.org/UJC-2022.html).



Dr. Leejiah Dorward  
© Dr. Leejiah Dorward

## Lasting legacy for our Environmental Education programme

By Tom Lupton, Chairman

When the Environmental Education project was started in 2016, the NVT UK trustees were not quite sure what to expect, but knew that our new partner, the Lilongwe Wildlife Trust, was the best organisation to make things happen on the ground in Malawi. And LWT has delivered, with a lasting legacy.

The programme with LWT set out to:

- Work with the local communities around Nyika and Vwaza, to create an awareness of the harmful consequences of poaching, deforestation and killing animals that threaten livelihood through crop raids.
- Inspire children and local communities through wildlife clubs and initiatives that encouraged the best conservation practices
- Work with local magistrates to reinforce prosecution of poachers, as poaching will only be stopped if there is understanding of its detrimental impact as well as a meaningful deterrent.

We are delighted the work in the schools is now running smoothly, with trained leaders in place who use the educational materials prepared for the project that we funded. Sensitisation in the surrounding communities is

now well established through the local village council structures. The work in the Rumphi prison continues, with a wildlife club as a means of interesting prisoners in finding new ways of making a living, and being less tempted to return to poaching on their release.

We believe the programme has been very successful and met the targets we set. Headline figures include the setting up of 56 Wildlife Clubs with 11,500 members, distribution of 4,000 Education Modules and lesson plans as well as training 2,000 community members.

The numbers are impressive, but it's not just about numbers. What has been achieved can be seen in the faces of children who have been excited to show off their new knowledge at parades, and who chose to continue looking after the trees they had planted when all supervision was stopped due to Covid.

Our funding of the programme ended on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022. Over the last couple of years we have increasingly worked with other parties and oversight of the School Clubs and Community groups will continue with support from Department of National Parks and Wildlife Environment and Education Officers and with support from the Wildlife and Environment Society of Malawi. We are most grateful to them for their contribution in making our programme a success, and wish them every success in future.

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Now there is another, game-changing achievement, but first let's celebrate the programme with some photographs of the people who were involved.



Bumba Primary school Wildlife Club - playing a conservation game © LWT



Wildlife Club at secondary school, Pachichi © David Billings

Johnny Vaughan MBE, CEO of the Lilongwe Wildlife Trust said: "Inspiring the next generation of Malawi's environmental leaders has been at the heart of LWT's mission since our earliest days. Thanks to NVT's support we are now thrilled to take this work to the next level by working with the Malawi Institute of Education to incorporate our education content into the national primary school curriculum. This initiative will enable us to make a much more powerful impact as Malawi's current school learners will be critical in the country's development over the next decade. They will be making personal, business, and political decisions which could halt the tide of environmental degradation that is stripping Malawi of its economic, social and ecological potential, threatening both natural resources and human development. When it comes to environmental protection, knowledge truly is power. We are excited to embark on this next phase of work and would like to thank NVT and everyone who has made this achievement possible."



LWT Parade © LWT

And now, what about that game-changing achievement. It is excellent news that the Malawi Government has agreed to include Environmental Education in the primary school curriculum. LWT has been instrumental in achieving this important initiative so that all children will be aware of the importance of looking after the wildlife in their beautiful country.

NVT have agreed to fund 80% (£36,000) of LWT's 12-month work programme in designing and producing the first five environmental education modules for the primary school curriculum (using the educational materials already produced for the Environmental Education programme). These materials will be piloted in the schools around the Nyika and Vwaza, and then become the standard materials for the National Curriculum.



Jonny Vaughan MBE © LWT

Six years ago, when we set out on the original Environmental Education project, we did not anticipate that it would leave a legacy beyond the communities around the Nyika and Vwaza. We are delighted that the programme has played a key role in getting Environmental Education included in the National Curriculum, and we would like to thank LWT for all the hard work this has involved.



## £250,000 of funding since 2017

Many of you will recall that in 2009 we received a very generous legacy from the late Ian Hay. This has been used to fund a significant proportion of our activities over the last 12 years; however these funds have now largely been spent and we expect our reserves to be about £80,000 at the end of the 2021-22 financial year.

The reduction in funds available means that the scale of our programme will be reducing significantly over the next few years, with our expenditure back in line with our income from April 2023 onwards. This fits neatly with the change in the programme we are supporting through LWT, moving from funding the conservation education project through schools in the north of Malawi, to funding materials for the National Curriculum.

We are proud to have contributed the following amounts to the LWT work, with the help of your donations. The dates refer to the financial year ending in March of the year shown.

2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
£28,760	£53,094	£40,758	£44,397	£44,743	£40,461

The total amounts to just over £250,000, a significant sum I think you will agree.

The support to LWT for the next stage of their work with the Institute of Education in Malawi has been agreed as £36,000 for the period to March 2023. This will enable the start of incorporating the Conservation Education Programme principles into the national curriculum from April 2022.

## Research develops a pool of useful information

In our September newsletter, you heard from some of the recipients of grants for research, who told us about their hopes and some of the challenges they expected. We are delighted to report progress on the research projects and that Dr. Harold Sungani has completed his aquatic macroinvertebrate study, which is now up on the NVT website.

The results of his research provided fundamental data on species diversity at the fresh water sites tested, and highlighted the ecosystem services provided by the 19 taxa found.

The work also provided an opportunity to consider a macroinvertebrate monitoring programme that will add to current knowledge on environmental change. The research revealed a highly significant difference in macroinvertebrate communities between Vwaza and Nyika Reserves, due to a number of factors, including altitude and temperature. The team found a higher concentration of solids suspended in the water in Vwaza, which appears to be due to animals overpopulating Lake Kazuni and the rivers, especially during the dry season. Too many hippos in a limited amount of water tends to cause a lot of mud!



Elephant activity at Vwaza hindering research  
© Harold Sungani

Take a look at the full report on [Sungani Aquatic-invertebrates-Nyika-Vwaza NVT-report-2022.pdf](https://nyika-vwaza-trust.org/nyika-invertebrates-Nyika-Vwaza-NVT-report-2022.pdf) ([nyika-vwaza-trust.org](https://nyika-vwaza-trust.org)).

Two new grants have been awarded:

George Malembo M'manga, a biologist from Mzuzu University, is undertaking research on honey-hunting with wax-eating birds called greater honey guides, (*Indicator indicator*). These honey guides cooperate with humans to lead them to bees' nests, which the humans harvest. The remaining wax combs then become accessible to the birds. Cooperation extends to calls used by the people hunting for honey to communicate with the birds, and the honey guides learn to respond to local cultural variation.



Honey Guide © George Malembo M'manga

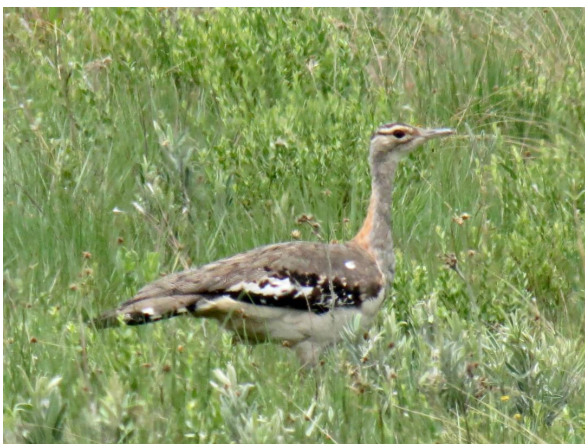
This remarkable human-bird mutualism has been

prevalent throughout sub-Saharan Africa for hundreds of years, but is now known only to thrive in a few places. The research will improve understanding of how human-honeyguide cooperation persists in the context of human cultural variation, and it will help with measures to safeguard the practice. George told us: "I'm excited to embark on this project given that honey-hunting with honeyguides likely still exists in northern Malawi, but has never been documented. I look forward to talking to honey-hunters and learning about their culture, and exploring what the main threats are that human-honeyguide mutualism faces in our country."



George  
© George Malembo M'manga

Dr Erik Sandvig and Dr Leejjah Dorward's research project will explore the abundance and distribution of Denham's Bustard in Nyika National Park, which holds Malawi's largest population of the species. Despite being relatively widespread across sub-Saharan Africa, Denham's Bustard is classified as Near Threatened by the IUCN red list (IUCN 2021). It is suspected to be in decline, due to hunting and habitat loss. Other factors influencing the prevalence of the bird are likely to be fire management regimes and encroachment by invasive species into grasslands.



Denham's Bustard © Sarah Kettlewell

Leejjah explained: "I grew up on stories of the Nyika from my grandparents (Frank and Rosemary Dorward) who lived and worked there in the late 1950's. So when the opportunity arose for Erik and I to apply to NVT to spend some time on the Nyika surveying Denham's Bustards and other bird species I jumped at the chance. We are both really excited to get stuck in surveying across the plateau finding out more about the bustards population and distribution across the Nyika. As with fieldwork in many places I think our main challenge will be transport in the field, sourcing a reliable 4x4 will be key!"

Dr Erik Sandvig has a doctorate in zoology and is at the Swiss Ornithological Institute, Sempach, Switzerland, and also at the Instituto de Ecología y Biodiversidad (IEB), Departamento de Ciencias Ecológicas, Universidad de Chile. Dr Leejjah Dorward is a conservation scientist from the University of Bangor, Wales.



Dr. Erik Sandvig and  
Leejjah Dorward  
© Leejjah Dorward

There are four more grant-funded research projects in progress:

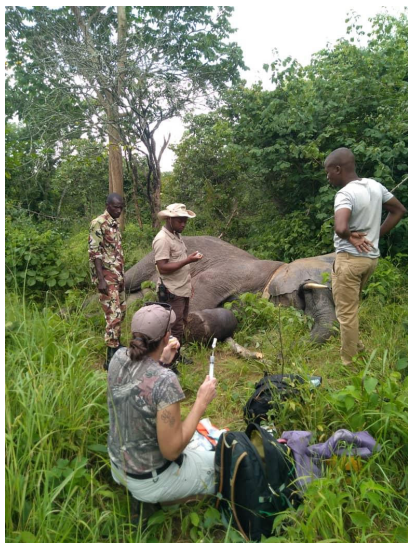
- Andrew Kanzanguze's Conservation Status of Juniper on the Nyika Plateau
- Lumbani Banda's Evaluation of the Effects of Fire Occurrence on Vegetation Composition and Spread of Invasive Bracken at Nyika National Park.
- Olivia Sievert's study using Elephant Pathways and Dung to Investigate Human-wildlife Conflict around Vwaza Marsh Game Reserve. Olivia told us that, due to the rains, the research team have not been as active in Vwaza Marsh Wildlife Reserve as they had hoped. However, they did partner with LWT's Wildlife Emergency Response Unit (WERU) to help treat an injured elephant in February. "We were able to provide this elephant with a satellite collar, allowing Dr. Salb to provide follow-up treatments to the animal, thereby giving it a much higher chance of survival. We hope to remove the collar when the animal has improved. This collar, along with two others will be fitted to bulls in the dry season." See photo on next page.
- Eric Gowero's Assessment of the Spatial Distribution,

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Population, Abundance and Vegetation Structure of *Lantana camera* invasion in the Vwaza Marsh Game Reserve.



Treating injured elephant.  
See bullet point 3 page 4  
© WERU

The importance of the research projects funded by NVT UK, is their role in suggesting plans for management of the Nyika National Park and Vwaza Marsh Game Reserve. The research programme is intended to develop local and international expertise and to leave a legacy of an accessible record for future students.

## Big thanks to Juliet!

Juliet Cornelius-Rumsey did us proud when she completed the October 2021 London Marathon to help raise money for the Nyika-Vwaza Trust. She claimed to be out of practice, since she last ran a marathon for NVT in 2016, but determination paid off and she raised £755, which will go towards our work in Malawi.

As a child, Juliet spent happy times visiting the Nyika Plateau with her parents and remembers the rolling hills where the air was so clean and fresh. Those memories convinced her that helping with conservation projects which protect the natural flora and fauna in Malawi's parks is a cause worth running for.

Thank you, Juliet.



Juliet © Juliet Cornelius-Rumsey

## A botanist's take on conservation

NVT's event on 9 Nov 2021

Chairman, Tom Lupton set the context for the annual event by updating those present on the achievements of the Environmental Conservation programme over the past few years and announced a change in strategy due to LWT's success in getting environmental education on the primary school curriculum. This has been covered in more detail earlier in this newsletter.

The speaker for the evening was Jonathan Timberlake, one of NVT UK's trustees, who has lived and worked as a botanist and ecologist in a number of countries in southern Africa over the last 40 years and was previously editor of *Flora Zambesiaca*, based at the Royal Botanic Gardens Kew. He had promised to be provocative and he certainly got our attention with his original take on the topic of conservation, which he divided into four phases.

**Early phase** (pre-historic to mid-20<sup>th</sup> C): Hunter gatherers protected their resources by leaving nature to recover. For example, Aborigines in low fertility areas were very careful what they extracted. This type of controlled resource protection needs strong governance, as exemplified by Royal Game Reserves, which are the reason we have ancient oaks in the UK. There was little direct benefit for plant species but there was for land types, such as moorland. The Garden of Eden was unsullied by humans!

**Middle years** (Since 2<sup>nd</sup> World War): This phase saw the advent of state-owned and state-run national parks, which focused mainly on large charismatic species, but with less emphasis on habitats and plants. These areas, to a large extent, excluded people, giving rise to local antagonism and often resulting in poaching. Maintenance costs of national parks are high, but they often do not conserve the full range of biodiversity.

**Later years** (since the 1960s): This period has seen the rise of conservation science with a focus on targets, for a wider range of species as well as habitats. The International Union for Conservation of Nature was established in 1964, and maintains a Red List of threatened species though, in its early years, it covered birds, mammals and reptiles, but few plants until the last ten years. The Red List is a crucial indicator of the health of the world's biodiversity and a powerful tool for active biodiversity conservation. Zoos, though not always approved of, have developed the important function of conserving endangered species ex-situ. Seed banks and botanic gardens protect species for the future, though Jonathan reminded us that you can keep seeds for 200 years and you can't do that with a rhino! We are now looking at the health of whole ecosystems and to identifying threatened habitats such as Nyika montane grassland.

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### Looking forward:

Thinking now favours biodiversity corridors, where species move from area to area. It's not just about the conservation area itself, but the catchment areas around it and the underlying process of how the wider area is interlinked. Conservation is now meant to be a major factor in planning, though it's not always clear that it is. One UN agency has encouragingly suggested that 30% of the world's surface ought to have nature as its priority. A word about 'rewilding', which has become a fashionable subject. As it is not controlled or directed, there are no clear outcomes for this hands-off process, which involves both ecological processes and species. If run well, it is more sustainable and less costly than managed processes, but not easy to do in small crowded areas.

Jonathan's presentation clearly sparked a great deal of interest and the many questions were as provocative as the talk.



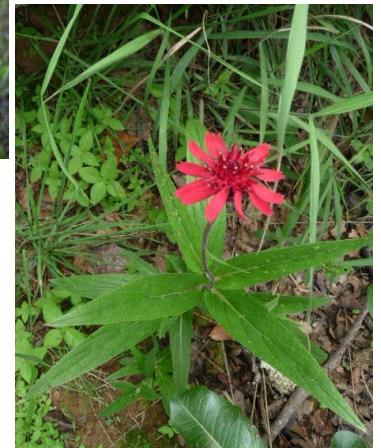
Botanists in Northern Zambia © Jonathan Timberlake



The Nyika plateau © Jennie Kettlewell



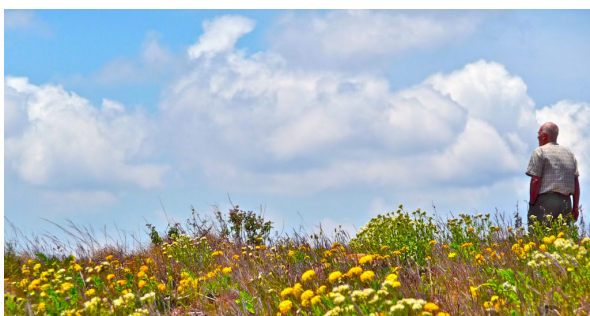
Gerardiina angolensis  
© Jennie Kettlewell



Erythrocephalum zambesianum Hiern  
© Jennie Kettlewell

## Imagine yourself among the green grass and wildflowers

At this time of year, the rainy season will just be ending in north Malawi, leaving the Nyika Plateau's streams and rivers full and the dambos sodden. Thousands of wildflowers will be blooming, as they push their heads above the lush green grass. We can all imagine the beautiful views and wish ourselves back in that magical place.



Nyika Spring flowers © Sigrid Anna Johnson

## Donations for new National Curriculum programme appreciated

We may have altered the focus of our Environmental Education Programme in Malawi, but we still need funds to support the new work with the National Curriculum. We can't do this without you. 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 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.

Editor: Jennie Kettlewell  
Designer: Mike Budgen



## 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

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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.

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Address:.....

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Please return this completed form to:

**Hon. Treasurer, Nyika-Vwaza (UK) Trust**

**50 Brewery Road**

**Woking, Surrey, GU21 4NA, UK**



**The Nyika-Vwaza (UK) Trust**  
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*Working for environmental and wildlife conservation in  
northern Malawi.*

Email: info@nyika-vwaza-trust.org  
Website: www.nyika-vwaza-trust.org

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GU214NA**

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Alternatively you may set up a standing order direct with your bank and advise us of your arrangement by email to:

[secretary@nyika-vwaza-trust.org](mailto:secretary@nyika-vwaza-trust.org).

**Friends of the Nyika-Vwaza Trust**

**Donation Form**

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I enclose a donation of:

Or: I have completed the Banker's Order Form.

Please treat as Gift Aid donations all qualifying gifts of money made.

In the past four years  Today  In future

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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.

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