



FROM LEFT TO RIGHT: Chiefs from the Six Chiefdoms that are in the Project; Chiefs Chitambo, Chiundaponde, Senior Chief Kopa, Kabinga, Bwalya Mponda and Nsamba.

## BANGWEULU HONEY – A Growing Story

HONEY production is one of the three key community enterprises. Bangweulu Wetlands Project (BWP) is promoting among communities in the project area. It has proved to be a lucrative eco-business venture. **(More on Page 4)**



**ADDING VALUE ON THE ANIMAL – LEATHER** processing and crafting, an amazing village industry in the making... **(More on Page 5)**

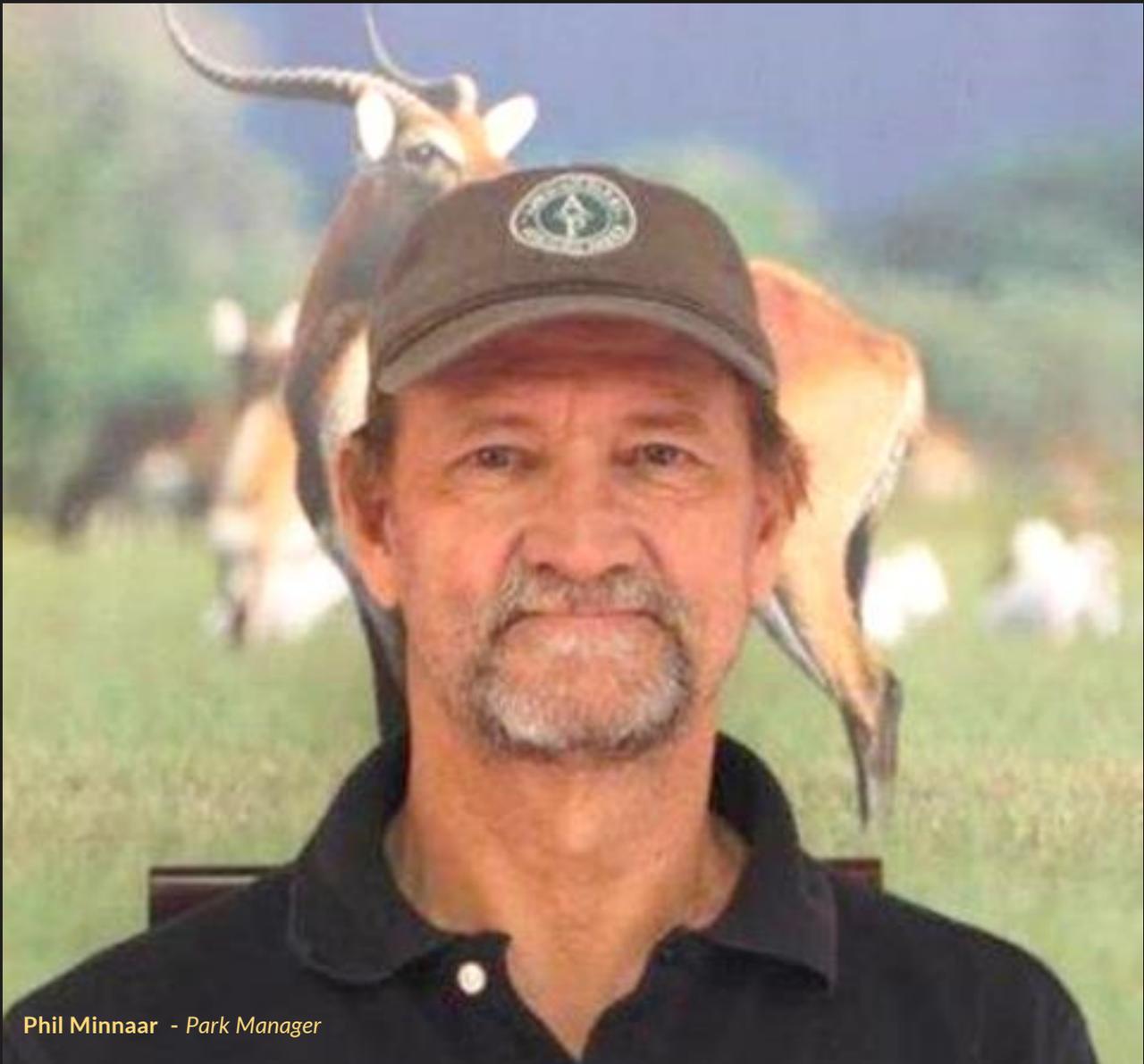
## BWP 2021 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING HIGHLIGHTS

TOWARDS the close of every year the Bangweulu Wetlands Project holds a stakeholders' Annual General Meeting (AGM). The purpose of the AGM is to review events of the year, appreciate achievements and understand challenges the project may have encountered during.. **(More on Page 3)**

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Phil Minnaar - Park Manager

## Park Manager's Message

**I**T is with great pleasure and gratitude to have this opportunity of presenting to our stakeholders and partners some of the events that have taken place in Bangweulu Wetlands Project in the recent past.

2021 was another challenging year in many respects, largely due to the negative impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. It was also a year the Bangweulu Wetlands suffered huge losses, among them, deaths of His Royal Highness Chief Chitambo IV, Patron of Chitambo Community Resource Boards (CRBs) and Asbestos Kampamba, Constructions Manager who had just been transferred to Kafue National Park.

In the face of all the challenges, the Project has encountered, management stood steadfast and ensured that objectives were in no way derailed as we continue to implement projects with renewed energy and conviction.



***"we continue to implement projects with renewed energy and conviction."***

Some of the accomplished undertakings include employing of qualified personnel which is crucial to the operations of the Project.

As a Project we place interest in wildlife conservation, to this effect the project undertook a second translocation of Cheetahs in November, 2021 and the exercise went well. It has been gratifying to see that construction works are going on well with the Self-Learning Modular Centre in Kabinga Chiefdom completed and handed-over to Ministry of Education. The recruitment of community scouts in February 2022 was another milestone achievement in as far as beefing up Law Enforcement personnel is concerned.

The recent acquisition of the Airboat promises to significantly reduce water transport challenges from mainland to the swamps and enhance law enforcement operations.

From the community front there has been exciting innovations in the enterprise side. The beekeeping project saw some improvements in infrastructure, equipment and production. 200 beehives have been built while the honey storage and processing facility saw a face lift. The honey harvest in the 2021/2022 season increased from 2700kgs in the previous season to 3,491.3kgs. The new community leather processing programme has been a spectacle revelation in the project's quest to add value to the animal. Skins from harvested Lechwe

were processed into leather and crafted into assorted leather products. Other enterprises such as fish farming and livestock production are being reviewed for further development.

Partnerships with like-minded institutions particularly Charlize Theron Africa Outreach Programme (CTAOP) and Book Aid International (BAI) has been a productive venture that has added a lot of value to project work in the areas of Adolescent and Youth reproductive health and provision of reading materials for primary schools in the Bangweulu Wetlands catchment. To crown it all the project held a successful Stakeholders Annual General Meeting (AGM) in Mpika on 16th and 17th February 2022 attended by 47 delegates. All the six Bangweulu Chiefs attended the meeting which was officially opened by the Deputy Permanent Secretary for Northern Province, Mathews Chilekwa. In attendance also were African Parks Regional and Country Directors, Martin Rickelton and James Milanzi.

**PHIL MINNAAR**

*Park Manager*

# BWP 2021 Annual General Meeting Highlights

**TOWARDS** the close of every year the Bangweulu Wetlands Project holds a Stakeholders' Annual General Meeting (AGM).

The purpose of the AGM is to review events of the year, appreciate achievements and understand challenges the project may have encountered during the course of the year and propose remedial actions for the following year.

On 16th and 17th March, 2022 the project once again brought together representatives of its partners and government officials to the 2021 AGM held at the Northern Rock Hotel in Mpika. The meeting was officiated by the Deputy Permanent Secretary for Muchinga Province, Mathews Chilekwa who was accompanied by Lavushimanda District Commissioner, Terris Kunda.



Mathews Chilekwa - Deputy Permanent Secretary - Muchinga Province.

Fourty seven delegates converged at the meeting venue to once again deliberate on the events of 2021. The delegates included the six Chiefs who are part of the project, namely Senior Chief Kopa, Chief Chiundaponde, Chief Kabinga, Chief Chitambo, Chief Bwalya Mponda and Chief Nsamba.

African Parks (AP) was ably represented by the Regional Operations Director, Martin Rickelton and the Country Director, James Milanzi. The project management team was led by the Park Manager, Phil Minnaar.

The Department of National Parks and Wildlife was represented by Senior officers who included Senior Wardens and Area Wardens from the Bangweulu Area Management Unit (BAMU) and Luapula Area Management Unit (LAMU).

The meeting discussed a range of issues, including park management, law enforcement, community engaged and partnerships. After two days of intense deliberations delegates concluded the meeting with an action pathway for the year 2022.

At the same meeting the late Chief Chitambo IV received an award post-humus for Long Commitment to Conservation while Kabinga Community Resources Board received the 2021 Best Performing CRB Award.



## Bangweulu Honey – A Growing Story

**HONEY** production is one of the three key community enterprises BWP is promoting among communities in the project area. It has proved to be a lucrative eco-business venture. Initially implemented in Chiundaponde Chiefdom, the project has since been extended to Kopa Chiefdom. There are currently 676 beekeepers in the two Chiefdoms. This number is expected to significantly increase in the coming years due to growing interest among community members.

More and more community members have realized the economic potential beekeeping has at household level. It is a high value venture with low input cost.

The BWP has supported the formation of Beekeeping associations in Chiundaponde and Kopa Chiefdoms and provided training and equipment to beekeepers. There are plans to include Chitambo on the list of participating Chiefdoms in 2022. In an effort to provide inspiration to farmers and encourage them to increase production, the project buys comb honey off the farmers at a premium price. The honey is then processed and packaged at the honey facility at Nkondo camp for resale.

In 2021 BWP in partnership with WWF facilitated production of 200 beehives for distribution to farmers in the two Chiefdoms. The honey storage and processing facility at Nkondo camp has been extended to accommodate expected increase in honey quantities in the coming years.

There are plans to undertake research in the potential for swamp honey. There is growing interest among community members in the island chiefdoms of Bwalya Mponda and Nsamba to explore possibilities of keeping swamp bees.



## Adding Value on the Animal – Leather processing and crafting, an amazing village industry in making



As a way of adding value to the animal, BWP initiated a community leather processing and crafting programme. TIYE Social Business Enterprises was contracted to provide the tanning and crafting skills. 50 community members of Chiundaponde, Chitambo and Bwalya Mponda Chiefdoms have been trained. With these skills the trained community members will be able to produce leather products that will be sold to contribute to enhancement of community incomes.

Indeed, raw animal skins will no longer be considered a waste but a source of wealth for the people of Bangweulu. The leather tanning programme will also encourage communities to go into commercial livestock production particularly goats, sheep and cattle.

The village tanning industry is expected to be rolled out to all the chiefdoms in the Bangweulu Project. It is expected that 400 households will directly benefit from the project in the initial period once it's rolled out to all the six Chiefdoms.



### BANGWEULU

Wetlands has a rich and diverse ecosystem, it is one of Africa's most important wetlands. This community-owned game management area is not just a life source for wildlife, such as the endemic Black Lechwe and hundreds of bird species, but also for the over 50,000 people who live there. The Wetlands are unique as it attracts local communities.

As a way of establishing a collective approach to conservation, six chiefs of the Bangweulu Wetlands catchment agreed in 2008 to partner with the Department of National Parks and Wildlife (DNPW) and African Parks Network (APN) to establish Bangweulu Wetlands Management Board (BWMB) to enter into a long-term agreement of managing the Bangweulu ecosystem for purpose of balancing conservation and needs of the local people who depend on the

resources the Wetlands provides for their livelihoods.

The coming in of the Bangweulu Wetlands Project (BWP) has brought about many advances; poaching has been largely contained, resulting in the recovery of wildlife, particularly increased populations of Black Lechwe and Tsetsebe and increased fish stocks. Other recent developments in the wildlife sector have been the translocation of 195 buffaloes from North Luangwa to Bangweulu in 2019 and the historic re-introduction of the Cheetah in 2021.

In 2019, the project got an approval from DNPW to commence a Lechwe harvesting programme. The programme aimed at addressing Black Lechwe population imbalance and providing affordable game meat to community members. In 2021 BWP got a DNPW permit to harvest 500 male Black Lechwe. The harvest was a huge success.

## Book Aid International supports BWP in fighting illiteracy

**THE** United Kingdom based charity, Book Aid International (BAI) has partnered with Zambia Library Service (ZLS) to provide educational materials to schools in the Bangweulu Wetlands project area.

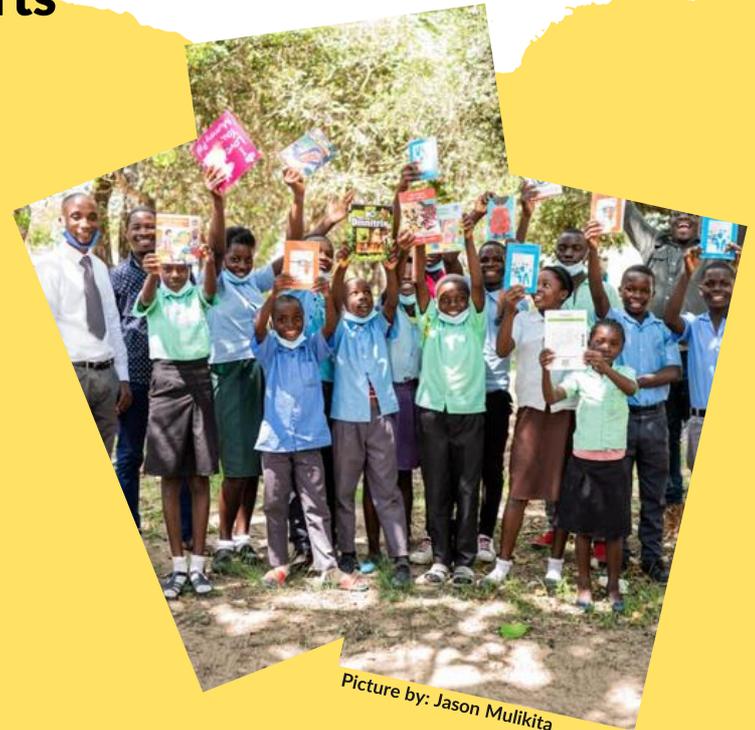
Ten Thousand and Four Hundred Books (10,400) were distribute to 52 primary schools in all the six Chiefdoms in the project area. They included English books shipped from the UK and local language books procured by ZLS. 52 trunks loaded with at least 350 books each were delivered to collection centres in the chiefdoms. Individual schools collected books and handwashing facilities from the central points. Beneficiary schools are expected to establish school mini libraries.

The project is expected to enhancing reading among young learners and ultimately improve education standards in beneficiary schools.

The books are presented in simple illustrations and user-friendly language that meet the needs of primary school learners.



Picture by: Jason Mulikita



Picture by: Jason Mulikita

Community members are also allowed to borrow the books from the school libraries.

Before delivering them to the respective schools the books were handed over to District Education Board Secretaries (DEBS) in the four districts the BWP works, namely Lavushimanda, Chitambo, Kanchibiya and Lunga districts. Lunga District Education Board Secretary Gervas Bwalya received the books on behalf of beneficiary schools in Bwalya Mponda and Nsamba Chiefdoms commented;

Mr Bwalya was very excited and expressed appreciation to African Parks and the Reading Around the Reserve (RAR) project partners for the materials. "Reading skills are very weak among early learners in our district. Being an island district, children have no access to libraries which are mainly in upper land schools. My office will ensure the beneficiary schools and learners put the materials to good use," he said.

## Spotlighting Iconic Shoebill of Bangweulu Wetlands

By Philip Muyoma (WWF)

**STALKING** the swamps of the Bangweulu Wetlands is the prehistoric-like-looking giant bird, the Shoebill stork (*Balaeniceps rex*), which is among the over 400 bird species found in the biodiversity-rich Bangweulu wetlands. The shoebill gets its name from its giant shoe-like bill, which is unmissable. It is with this huge bill that the bird makes clapping calls, by which the locals have named it, i.e. Ipuma Imbao, (Wood hitter, as the call sound like someone hitting a piece of wood).

Shoebills can stand still and motionless for hours in slow-flowing muddy water when hunting. Their diet includes fish, monitor lizards, snakes, even small crocodiles.

A full-grown shoebill stands at a height of about 1.5 meters, with a wingspan of up to 2.5 meters, making it very conspicuous and demanding one to stop and view the magnificent creature, as it evokes a sense of awe and wonder. It is this feeling and experience that has seen many photographic tourists travel to the Bangweulu Wetlands in search of winning shot to immortalize the special moments. In Africa, populations occur around the swampy areas of the great lakes region. Unfortunately, very few Zambians, have heard of, later on, seen this beautiful and unique bird. Given its uniqueness, the shoebill should have received some prominence at the national level, to the extent that it should have been featured one of our currency notes. That would be some pride!

The low small population results from several factors including the breeding pattern and threats from anthropogenic activities. Shoebills lay at most two eggs, and usually, only one chick survives.

Shoebills have this bizarre behavior where they concentrate on the chick that seems to be stronger and bigger, ignoring the smaller and weaker ones, and sometimes even pushing off the nest. This behavior is an evolutionary trait that ensures that only the chick with stronger genes and that has a much higher chance of survival, survives, a form of natural selection. On anthropogenic activities, habitat loss due to seasonal fires are a major threat to the birds, also increase in encroachments due to increased fishing activities

Some conservation efforts are currently being implemented by African Parks under the Bangweulu Wetlands Project, with support from WWF Zambia, which has seen locals being employed as shoebill nest guards, to ensure that the chicks are safe, and the fully fledge and take flight. This initiative has enhanced the participation of locals in conservation and provided a form of livelihood for them. Citizen science has been at the helm of this initiative as it is the locals, especially the fishermen who discover and report the shoebill nests. It is very encouraging to see communities at the center of conserving unique species.

There is a greater need to enhance local and international tourism promotion around the shoebill stork, as it can be a unique selling point for the Bangweulu Wetlands, which has already been identified as an Important Bird and Biodiversity Area (IBA) and was designated a Ramsar site in 1971. Meaning it is a wetland of international importance.

The iconic shoebill has immense potential to lift the tourism profile of the Bangweulu Wetlands, to the benefit of wildlife conservation and the social-economic well-being of the custodians of this beautiful wonderland, the local people.

" Shoebills love living in large, rich, dense, marshes, wetlands and swamps like the Bangweulu Wetlands."



## Charlize Theron supports Bangweulu youths

**THE** larger part of the population in the Bangweulu Wetlands project area is made up of adolescents. If not well managed the population boom may add pressure on the game management area's natural resources base and the survival of the natural environment. It has also been observed that young people in the project communities lack access to youth-friendly spaces and sexual and reproductive health knowledge.

In this remote Bangweulu landscape, youths lack economic opportunities beyond the subsistence-based livelihoods. Furthermore, Bangweulu youths are vulnerable to substance abuse, transactional sex, early marriage, unplanned pregnancies, sexually transmitted infections, and unsafe abortions. Widespread poverty amplifies the impact of these threats on the youth.

In the last few years, the Bangweulu Wetlands reproductive health program has engaged Ministry of Health and other health services providers to work toward reducing illicit vices affecting young people.

In July 2020 Bangweulu Wetlands received a shot in the arm when the acclaimed philanthropist, Charlize Theron, Founder of the Charlize Theron Africa Outreach Project (CTAOP) approved a funding proposal for youth reproductive health programmes for Bangweulu Wetlands. The support, which started as a pilot project in Chiundaponde Chiefdom was later expanded in July 2021 to the island Chiefdoms of Bwalya Mponda and Nsamba. This brought the number of youth groups supported under the CTAOP supported partnership to six. The participating youths are trained to conduct peer outreach activities. The project has also trained trainers in peer education from government rural health facilities found in the three participating Chiefdoms. Key youth outreach activities include, early marriages, teen pregnancies and GBV prevention and family planning and many other pressing adolescent health issues.

Further, youth reproductive health activities provide platforms for co-operation, support and joint actions to address barriers preventing youths from accessing SRH services thereby ensuring young people sexual reproductive health rights. The program has in the last two years reached out to 3,559 youths. The programme has also provided SRH youth groups with bicycles to ease their movements. They have also been supported with funds for income generating activities (IGAs).



# PHOTO FOCUS: BWP acquires Airboat, hands over 6 houses and Kabinga Modular Centre

**BANGWEULU** Wetlands has acquired an Airboat that will be used in law enforcement, the boat was launched and ready to work, African Parks and Department of National Parks and Wildlife (DNPW) are optimistic this will end poaching in Bangweulu Wetlands.



Bangweulu Wetlands Park Manager Phil Minnaar inspects the newly acquired airboat.



One of the six constructed Houses for law enforcement officers in Kabinga.



Chief Kabinga cuts the ribbon with African Parks Country Director James Milanzi and Government officials to hand over the Modular Centre.



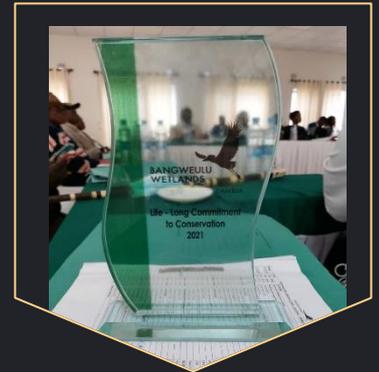
Georgina Daka, a teacher shows pupils how to use the iPads in the Modular Centre.



Aerial view of Kalulu Primary School in Kabinga. Picture by Jason Mulikita



## REMEMBERING HRH Chief Chitambo IV



**On 17th February 2022, Bangweulu Wetlands presented a deserving Award to HRH Chief Chitambo IV posthumously for his life-long commitment to conservation.**



**I**N July 2021 Bangweulu Wetlands Project lost one of its most visionary conservationists, late Chief Chitambo IV.

HRH Chief Chitambo of the Lala speaking people of Chitambo district was born in 1943. He went to school in Serenje district and later acquired training as a Boilermaker artisan at Nkana Division of the then Zambia Consolidated Copper Mines (ZCCM). He served ZCCM for 20 years before moving to a company called Blackwood Hodge. He ascended to the Chieftaincy in 1989.

Due to his commitment to conservation, Chief Chitambo was sponsored by the Kasanka Trust to attend a course in the United Kingdom (UK) in Zoology, Ecology and Conservation.

As Patron of Chitambo Community Resources Board (CRB), one of the six CRBs working with the project, the Chief was a key steward of the Project and supported its innovations in Chitambo Chieftdom and beyond. He was fondly called “King George” by his ardent followers and subjects due to his strong personality.

The Chief sadly Passed, on 26th July, 2021.



# Bangweulu Wetlands Project

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