

# THE ZAMBEZI SOCIETY'S HISTORICAL SERIES.

## EPISODE 10: The Zambezi River Basin – our wider focus

**October 2022**

*In 2022, The Zambezi Society (Zamsoc) celebrates 40 years of conserving the precious wilderness and wildlife resources of the Zambezi River.*

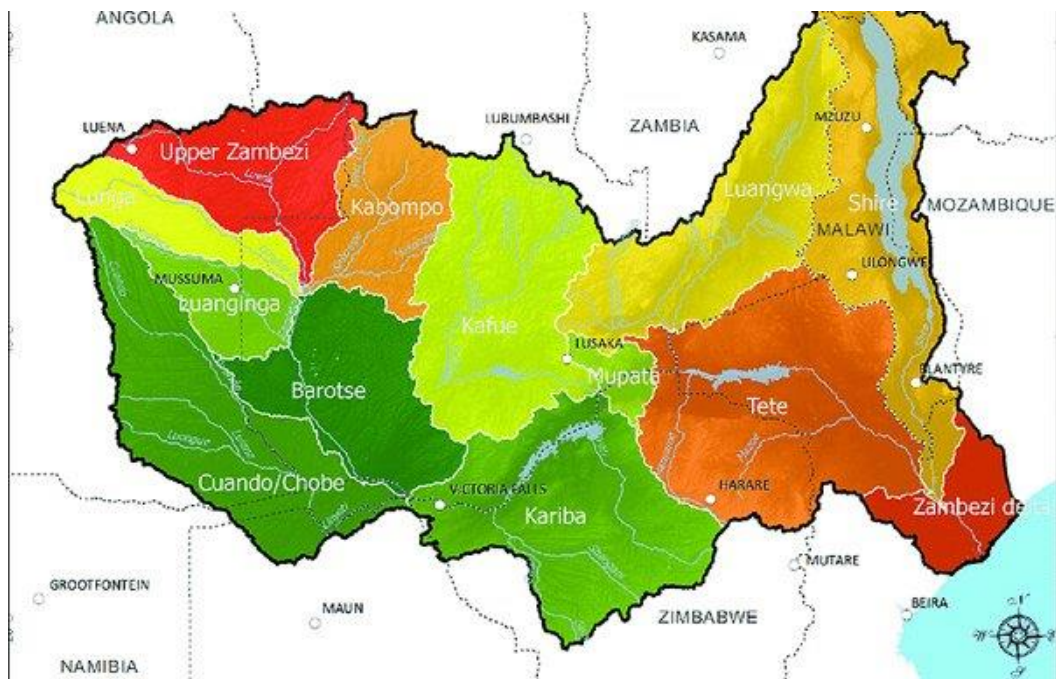
*To mark this important milestone in our history, our series of historical features highlights significant events and conservation achievements that we're proud of, spanning the four decades since the Society's formation in 1982. We are sharing these on our Social Media Instagram and Facebook platforms, with videos on You Tube, on our website and in a special Historical Series of Bulletin mailouts.*

### EPISODE 10 – THE ZAMBEZI RIVER BASIN – OUR WIDER FOCUS

The Zambezi Society has always embraced the much wider vision of the Zambezi as an entire river basin landscape, advocating for the holistic preservation of its unique, and globally-recognised, wilderness values, even though our current operating focus is temporarily restricted to the Zimbabwean sub-basin of the Zambezi River.

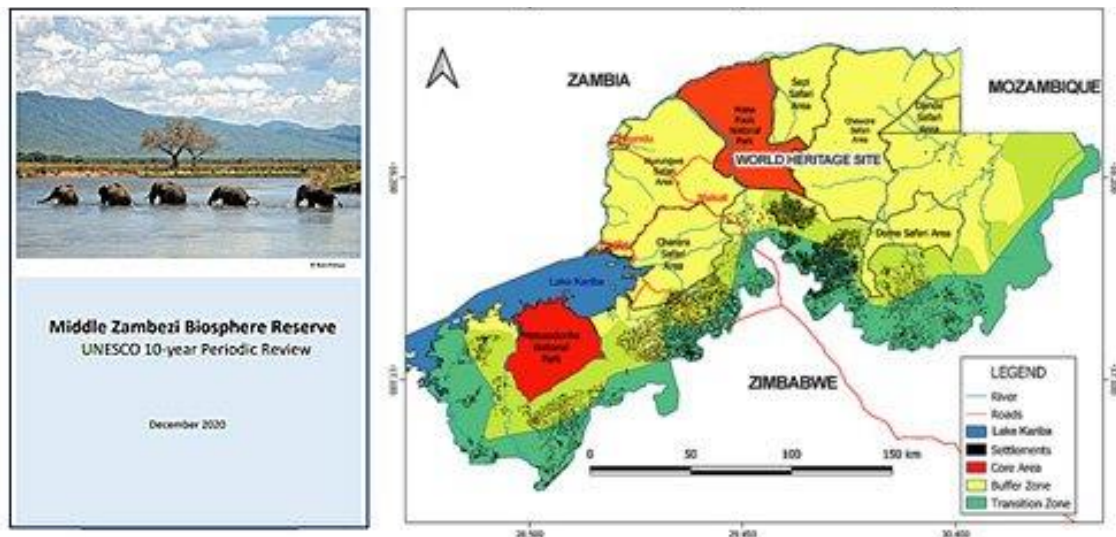
### PLANNING WITH A BASIN-WIDE PERSPECTIVE

We have always argued that planning for the management and development of any part of the river should take place with a wider Zambezi River Basin perspective



*The Zambezi River Basin with its 13 major sub-basins. (Map produced by J.-M. Mwenge Kahinda, CSIR-South Africa.)*

Management planning processes have taken place in areas along the Zambezi River, (e.g. Victoria Falls, Livingstone-Mozi-oa-Tunya, Mana Pools and Lower Zambezi National Parks, but in most cases these are done in isolation and at a National level, rather than with a Zambezi-Basin-wide perspective. The Zambezi Society has provided inputs, over the years, to planning processes for the Victoria Falls, Lake Kariba, Mana Pools National Park in Zimbabwe and Lake Cahora Bassa and the Zambezi Delta in Mozambique. More recently we assisted Zimbabwe's Mana and Biosphere committee with producing the first [10-year Periodic Review for the Middle Zambezi Biosphere Reserve](#) (designated in 2010 and Zimbabwe's first UNESCO-designated Biosphere Reserve). As a major Zambezi Valley stakeholder, we have also provided inputs into the management plans currently being developed for the Mid-Zambezi Biosphere Reserve landscape.



But in all cases, we have argued that planning for these Zambezi River areas with internationally shared borders should be undertaken with a much wider, collaborative, transboundary and holistic approach.

A similar situation applies to UNESCO World Heritage Sites and Biosphere Reserves. Zimbabwe has the Mana Pools/Sapi/Chewore World Heritage Site, inscribed in 1984, and the Middle-Zambezi Biosphere Reserve, designated in 2010, (see map below). Both of these areas include a large section of the Zambezi River which has a shared boundary with Zambia. Yet no such equivalent special status is applicable to any of the land on the Zambian side of the River. This, in our opinion, is a lost collective opportunity.



We have urged the Zambian authorities to pursue their government's application to UNESCO for equivalent World Heritage Site status for the Lower Zambezi National Park as Zimbabwe achieved right opposite with the Mana/Sapi/Chewore World Heritage Site. The same applies with regards to the designation of Biosphere Reserve status. Global support for the conservation of both these extremely valuable Zambezi wilderness areas could be considerably strengthened into the future if these internationally-acclaimed designations were mirrored on both sides of the Zambezi.

## BIODIVERSITY RESEARCH & CONSERVATION WITH A BASIN-WIDE PERSPECTIVE

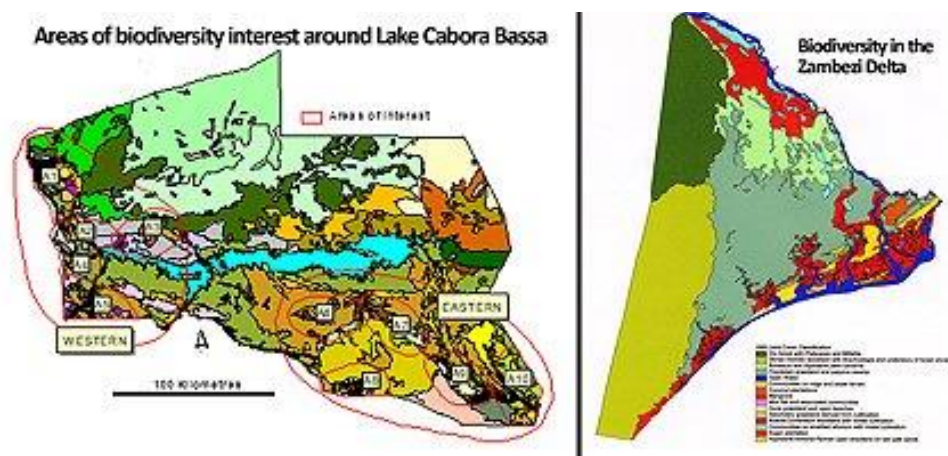
In the late 1990s-early 2000s, The Zambezi Society together with the **Biodiversity Foundation for Africa (BFA)** and **Flora & Fauna International (FFI)** established a partnership programme called the **Zambezi Basin Initiative for Biodiversity Conservation (ZBI)**. This was aimed at providing a transboundary and ecosystem-based approach to the conservation of biological diversity in the Zambezi basin.

The ZBI project focused on an initial pilot area, centred on the mid-Zambezi Valley and including parts of south-eastern Zambia, western Mozambique, and northern Zimbabwe.

The programme (illustrated below) involved BFA specialists acquiring biodiversity information through satellite imagery, aerial survey (using the Zambezi Society's Super Cub aircraft) and ground truthing. A team of BFA ecologists, biologists and taxonomists then undertook detailed ecological survey and biological inventory across appropriate biological groups and taxa. The results were evaluated and biodiversity conservation priorities identified and mapped on the ZBI's dedicated GIS mapping system. The Zambezi Society then produced this biodiversity information in accessible and "user-friendly" format, with simplified mapping, and disseminated it through a range of media for planning authorities in the areas concerned.



Vegetation, settlement, forest sites and other sites of high biodiversity were mapped within a large part of the pilot area. The partnership produced the first-ever vegetation mapping, at other than coarse scale, of the Zambezi River Delta in Mozambique. Elephant movements and habitats, the location of "elephant movement corridors" and other important features were mapped by the partnership in northern Zimbabwe. Initial biodiversity mapping of Tete province, Mozambique, was also completed, and was used by the Tete authorities in developmental planning for the area around Lake Cabora Bassa.



In July 2001, The Zambezi Society held a transboundary stakeholders workshop to plan a collaborative elephant management framework and strategy for three key Zambezi valley districts on the Zimbabwe/Mozambique border.

The partnership then moved on to provide an overview of the Biodiversity of the Four Corners Area (Four Corners being the areas of Botswana, Namibia, Zambia and Zimbabwe centred on the Zambezi's Victoria Falls – the area was later named the Kavango-Zambezi KAZA region). The Zambezi Society produced three Biodiversity Information Packs which interpreted the BFA's detailed biodiversity information for key development planning, educational, land management and other stakeholders in the Four Corners area.

The relevant project reports produced during this partnership programme can be found on the Zamsoc website's RESOURCES section under [RESEARCH DOCUMENTS](#).

## ADVOCACY WITH A BASIN-WIDE PERSPECTIVE

For the past 40 years of our organisation's history, The Zambezi Society has acted as an independent watchdog, monitoring any developments which could have a detrimental impact on the biodiversity or wilderness values of the Zambezi Basin as a whole. We actively take part in any Environmental Impact Assessment processes, mobilising support by reaching out to our local, regional and international support base through Social Media and other outlets. We make constructive suggestions to mitigate damaging impacts, and, if necessary, will strongly oppose developments or behaviours that we consider unsuitable.

Some examples of cases where the Zambezi Society has taken action to oppose unsuitable development or behaviours which could impact on the wider river basin include:

- Initiating the SAVE MANA POOLS campaign in opposition to the development of a 72-bed Protea Hotel development on the banks of the Zambezi River in Zambia opposite Mana Pools National Park. The project was ditched in 2010.
- Providing support to Zambian NGOs in opposition to the development of the Kangaluwe copper mine proposed within the Zambezi escarpment hills on the Zambian side of the Zambezi River opposite Mana Pools (see map below left). Although the Zambian government have subsequently approved the project, it's go-ahead is still being challenged.

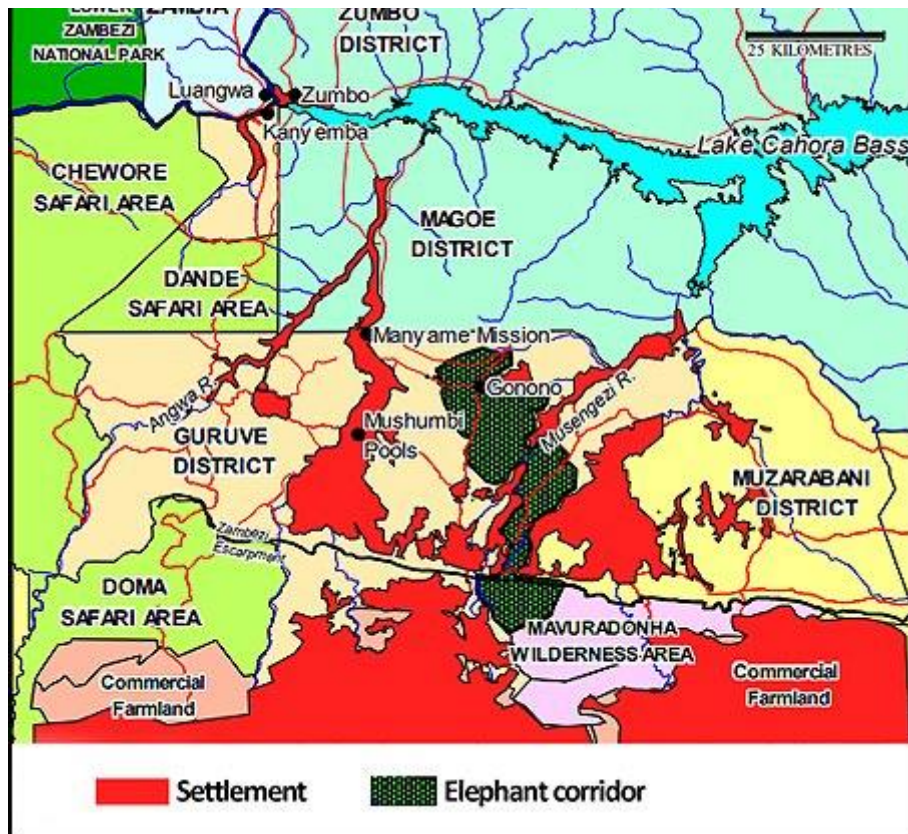


- Opposing the development of Nkupe Campsite in Mana Pools National Park for a tourism lodge, which would have removed a Public campsite and impacted on public tourism access to the Mana River Mouth (see map above centre). The development was moved to an alternative site downstream.
- Opposing a proposal for the mining of Heavy Mineral Sands in the Ruckomechi (pictured above right) and Chewore Rivers which are major tributaries to the Zambezi River in Zimbabwe. This would have had major impacts on the World Heritage Site area and potentially downstream along the Zambezi River itself. The proposal was subsequently withdrawn, but the threat of future mining initiatives is ever present.

## COLLABORATING WITH A BASIN-WIDE PERSPECTIVE

The Zambezi Society continues to this day to take an active interest in any activities or developments within the Zambezi River Basin states which may have potential impacts on the natural ecosystems or wilderness values of the Zambezi River in its entirety. As far as possible, and when relevant, we engage and collaborate with other government and non-governmental bodies, particularly those in Zambia which shares so much of its Zambezi River border with Zimbabwe. This has included:-

- Engaging with Zambian and Mozambican authorities in 2001 at a transboundary stakeholders workshop on the Zambezi River at Kanyemba to discuss strategies for elephant conservation and management including a proposal for a trans-boundary elephant corridor and wilderness area in the Magoe District area.



- inviting members of the Zambia National Parks authority to take part in our 10-day Zambezi Valley Wilderness Training seminar, held at RIFA camp, on the Zambezi River in 2006;
- holding a stakeholders seminar in Zimbabwe in support of Zambian NGOs to create awareness among government and private sector representatives about the threat posed by the proposed Kanguwe copper mine in Zambia opposite Mana Pools/Sapi/Chewore World Heritage Site.
- engaging on a regular basis with Zambian NGO **Conservation Lower Zambezi** (which operates on the Zambian side of the Zambezi River opposite Mana Pools) on issues of a transboundary nature.

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