

## Great Ruaha River Water Level | 2008

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### 12<sup>th</sup> January 2008

I was enormously disappointed to see the depressing state of the Great Ruaha River. These pictures were taken on 12<sup>th</sup> January 2008 at the same location in Ruaha National Park as all my previous records spanning the past 14 years.



### Great Ruaha River | Stone Marker – Sue's Old Camp | 12<sup>th</sup> January 2008

The water you see in the river is all from local flooding of the Jongomero River and the Itiku. There has been no water coming in from Usangu at all.

On 14<sup>th</sup> January I travelled to Usangu and Mbeya to see that the rice paddies are all fully flooded. All rivers flowing into the catchment area were full and flowing very well; some of them were very high. Mbeya has apparently received its highest rainfall on record for the past 8 years. So my question is; why is there no water reaching Ruaha National Park? The answer is quite simple; the wet-season off-take is far too great.

There is no need for irrigation to stop but there is a need for the irrigation system over the whole area to be properly planned. When will we see this action taking place? It is not an impossible task but it will require hands on expertise and law enforcement. If we all pull together we will succeed.

If we are not careful the Great Ruaha River will stop flowing altogether.

### 17<sup>th</sup> April 2008

The Great Ruaha River is looking great, a huge improvement since my update in January. After a bad start with obvious massive off-takes in the catchment area, rains have been exceptionally good this year, so the river in Ruaha National Park is looking wonderful.

However, please note the stone which is just visible. I have always used this as the level 'marker'. It is about a foot out of the water. Ideally this marker should not be showing. In the early 1990's this rock was always covered from January through to the end of April.

The other important and very exciting news is that the government has been working hard to try to protect this important water source, and as a result the Ruaha National Park has been extended to include the Usangu Wetlands, which will hopefully help to keep the Great Ruaha

River 'flowing' right throughout the dry season. The extension has been approved by Parliament; however, we are still waiting for the President to sign the documents.

We are thrilled by this very positive move towards conserving a very important national resource.



Great Ruaha River | Stone Marker – Sue's Old Camp | 26<sup>th</sup> March 2008



Great Ruaha River | Stone Marker – Sue's Old Camp | 26<sup>th</sup> March 2008

I have also included a scenic view of the river near Msembe HQ (see below). I am sure you will all agree that Ruaha is looking magnificent.



Great Ruaha River | Near Msembe HQ | 26<sup>th</sup> March 2008

## **22<sup>nd</sup> April 2008**

I am delighted to be able to tell you that Ruaha National Park has now been officially extended to include the Usangu Game Reserve plus additional land to the south and west. Ruaha is now the largest park in Africa, covering an area of over 22,000 km<sup>2</sup>.

In recent years the Great Ruaha River has been drying up during the dry season due to massive off-takes for irrigation purposes.

As you may know, the catchment area for the Great Ruaha River is in the Usangu Plains, which is an extremely important water resource for Tanzania. It feeds the hydroelectric dams of Mtera and Kidatu, plus being the focal point of Ruaha NP and supporting many lives along its course to the Rufiji Delta. The Tanzanian Government has to be congratulated for taking these difficult, but important steps in conserving its precious water reserves.

However, this is only part of the problem. It is now more important than ever to implement effective measures in curbing the massive over-use of water which has seriously depleted the flow of the Ruaha during the wet season and which completely destroys the river during the dry season.

I understand that there are plans in place to address this problem. I wish the Government and the Stakeholders every success in this important issue.





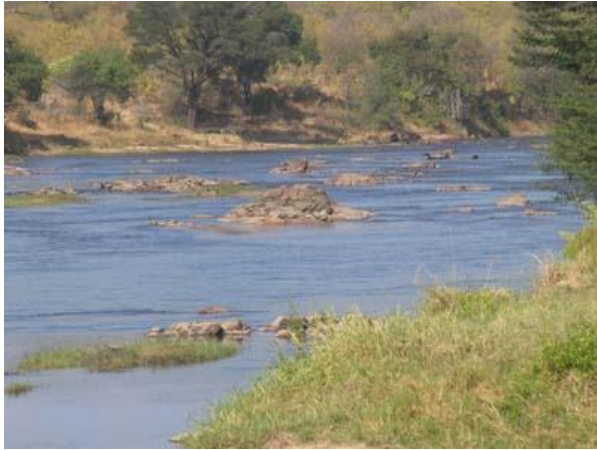
Usangu Wetlands | July 2007

### **12<sup>th</sup> June 2008**

As you can see the river has dropped dramatically in the past 2 months. I estimate it to have dropped by about 5ft. The depth at the deepest points in this section of the river on the 12th June, would be no more than 2.5-3ft deep. If you look at the final picture, though it looks like a lovely river right across, it is deceptive. You can see the colour of the sand showing through, indicating the river is generally very shallow; about 6 inches in most places.



Great Ruaha River | Stone Marker – Sue's Old Camp | 1<sup>st</sup> June 2008



Great Ruaha River | Stone Marker – Sue's Old Camp | 6<sup>th</sup> June 2008



Great Ruaha River | Stone Marker – Sue's Old Camp | 12<sup>th</sup> June 2008



Great Ruaha River | 12<sup>th</sup> June 2008

Please also compare carefully the 7 pictures, 2 of them were taken on 1<sup>st</sup> June, 2 on 6<sup>th</sup> June and the other 3 were taken on 12th June. You can see that in 12 short days the river has dropped by about 6 inches.

This means that more and more water is being channelled off daily for irrigation purposes.



**19<sup>th</sup> September 2008**



Great Ruaha River | Stone Marker – Sue’s Old Camp | 19<sup>th</sup> September 2008

I am happy to say that for this time of year the flow is looking better than usual. The river is still flowing past the gate some 40km downstream of these photos.

Let us hope that it continues to flow for another few months at this level. Traditionally it is about this time of year that the river drops drastically and stops flowing by the 1st of October. We shall see!



Great Ruaha River | Stone Marker – Sue’s Old Camp | 19<sup>th</sup> September 2008