

Great Ruaha River Water Level | 2011

April 2011

THE GREAT RUAHA RIVER IS NO LONGER A RIVER IT HAS BEEN DESTROYED - 2011 update



Both these photos are taken from my old camp near Jongomero. You should be familiar now with the stone marker, indicating the depth of the river.

Compare the two photos the one on the left is the **GRR February 7th 2011.**

The one immediately below is how the the GRR looked at the **same time last year on the 14th of February 2010.**

It is obvious that the Usangu water was abundant last year.



Locally, at the onset of the rains in December 2010, the run-off from rainfall into the smaller sand rivers which feed the GRR within the Park, was very poor. **Not so much due to a lack of rain, but due to the nature of the rainstorms themselves.** It has been gentle rain, with few heavy downpours, resulting in it soaking into the land rather than forming massive run-off, which is what is needed to fill up rivers. **This trend continued, plus, it is certainly true that the rains this year have been very inconsistent over the Ruaha River area.**

Some areas have had reasonable rainfall and some have not. **Traditionally, the GRR manages to flow fairly well from the local rain until the massive load comes down from the Usangu Swamp, which is usually in February or if late, in March.**

This year, though the river was poor initially, from the lack of local run off, I was optimistic that the Usangu water, when it came in March, would magically transform the river.

THE GREAT RUAHA RIVER IS NO LONGER A RIVER IT HAS BEEN DESTROYED - 2011 update



BUT THE USANGU WATER NEVER CAME.

Compare the two photos the one on the left is the GRR **March 29th 2011.**

The one immediately below is how the GRR looked at the **same time last year on the 18th April 2010.**

WHAT HAS HAPPENED?



THE RAINY SEASON IS ALMOST OVER, THIS MEANS THERE IS NO HOPE OF THE MTERA DAM FILLING UP.

POWER OUTAGES ARE ONLY JUST BEGINNING, WHAT LIES AHEAD?

HOW MANY BILLIONS OF SHILLINGS ARE LOST BECAUSE OF THIS?

The disastrous state of the River this year could be blamed on **poor rainfall**, it would be **easy to promote** this scenario. However, if one **looks** more **closely** into the situation in the **Usangu area** one can **clearly see** that this is **not the case**.

We need to be aware that:

IRRIGATION AND AGRICULTURE IN THE USANGU BASIN HAS BEEN EXPANDED.

Take note of the following information:-

The rivers flowing into the Usangu basin, from the **MAIN catchment** areas are **flowing well**, with **PLENTY OF WATER**. Therefore, The Usangu wetland,(the Ihefu), should be saturated and flowing over into the GRR. **BUT** Through poor management and **uncontrolled expansion of agriculture** the water is **not finding** its way back into **the Ihefu** and into the **GRR**. **It is as simple as that.**

AS A RESULT, INDUSTRY AND DEVELOPMENT THROUGHOUT THE WHOLE OF TANZANIA ARE FACING MASSIVE FINANCIAL LOSSES DUE TO LACK OF POWER FROM MTERA DAM. Can we really justify the **small profits** obtained by a **few farmers**, and in so doing, jeopardize the **whole** of the **Nations Industry and development** through lack of power?

18th April 2011

The situation in Ruaha National Park has changed slightly over the last 4 days. To my relief, some water has miraculously arrived from the Usangu swamp (Ihefu). It is not much but it will clear out the very dirty water that has been stuck in the few remaining hippo pools; however, I do not think that this water will reach the Mtera Dam. I do not expect this new flow to last more than a month or if we are lucky, two.



Great Ruaha River | Main Bridge | February 2010

The photo above is the river in February 2010, how the river should look at this time. The photo below is the current situation, on 18th April 2011.



Great Ruaha River | Main Bridge | 18th April 2011

The water is extremely dark brown, almost black, which indicates that it has been sitting in the swamp for a very long time with no movement or fresh inflow of new water. Therefore, the flow into Ihefu is very small so far. We will know if the flow increases when the colour of the water becomes lighter.

November 2011



Great Ruaha River | Main Bridge | November 2011

The above photos show a very unpleasant dark rank pool at the main bridge, which is all that the hippos in this area have to live in.

As you can see the water that remains is far from palatable. These two photos were taken on 13th November. I passed over this same spot yesterday, 27th November. The situation is identical to the photos taken earlier in the month; as you can see the situation is not a pretty one. Considering the Great Ruaha River is the focal point of the park and the lifeline for all the animals that it protects, this is a very poor state of affairs.

We do hope that plans are in place to ensure that this wet seasons flows will not be stopped by the massive off takes in the Usangu Basin. Furthermore, we hope that the flows will be sufficient to fill up the now empty Mtera Dam. Perhaps those who are not fortunate enough to be able to afford to run generators will be able to enjoy un-interrupted power this year?

We are all waiting for rain.....

Greetings and best wishes to you for 2012.