

Lake Chivero and Manyame Ramsar Site

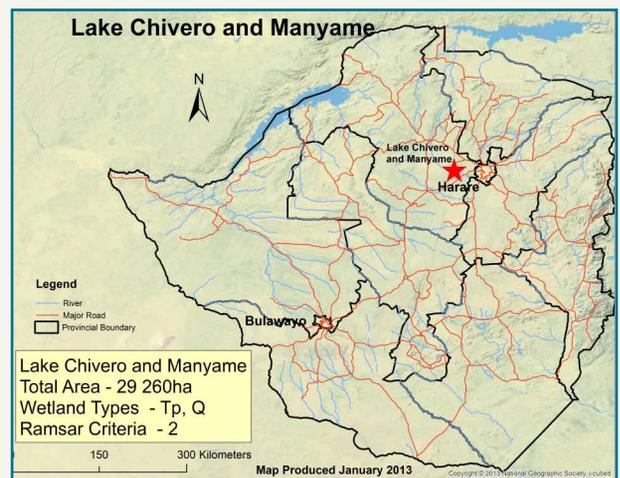
Introduction

Lake Chivero (formerly Mellwaine), was built in 1952 and lies 29 km southwest downstream of Harare, the capital of Zimbabwe on the Manyame River. It has a capacity of approximately 250 million cubic metres, a mean depth of 9.4 metres and a surface area of 2 630 hectares and is Harare's main water supply. Lake Manyame (formerly Darwendale Dam) was built around 1975 lies downstream of Lake Chivero on the Manyame River near Norton town in Mashonaland West Province. The lakes both have recreational parks that act as buffer zones protecting the reservoirs. The two lakes (Chivero and Manyame) are one of the seven Ramsar sites of Zimbabwe. The Ramsar Convention on Wetlands provides a framework for wetland conservation and asks that nations promote the sustainable utilization and conservation of wetlands.

Biodiversity

The site is an Important Bird Area (IBA), an area that is rich in birds and other biodiversity. It provides a habitat for over 400 bird species including a large number of migratory birds. At the peak of the dry season, more than 20, 000 waterbirds can congregate on the two lakes. Some of the waterbirds include cormorants, coots, kingfishers, jacanas, ducks, and teals and nearly all the heron/stork family. Lake Chivero is known to have one the highest densities of African Fish Eagle in Africa. More bird species have been recorded at this Ramsar site than at any other locality in Zimbabwe. The sites rich biodiversity results from the diversity in the habitats. Besides waterbirds the miombo woodlands and open grass areas surrounding the national parks contain species such as the Spotted Creeper, Miombo Tit and Mashona Hyliota.

Over 22 mammal species are found within the site. These include the White Rhinoceros, the globally endangered African Pangolin, ostriches which are nationally vulnerable, giraffe, zebra and a variety of antelope including kudu and waterbuck. There are 26 species of fish in the lakes, including five exotics. The lake is also home to crocodiles and water monitors, the largest lizard found in Zimbabwe.



Map of Lake Chivero and Manyame Ramsar site



Lake Chivero National Park is home to the White Rhinoceros



Left: White Faced Whistling Duck one of the many water birds found at the site. Right: A young zebra and mother.

Cultural Values and Tourism

Lake Chivero and Manyame are used for water-sports, game viewing and bird watching and attract both domestic and international tourists. Approximately fifteen established clubs and resorts are found along the shore. There is a bird sanctuary to the north of Chivero which provides exceptional birding for miombo special birds. To the south there are some granite kopje outcrops containing San (Bushman) paintings on their sheltered surfaces within the Mellwaine Recreational Park.



Some of the fish species caught including a 15kg carp by the South African team at the International Tri-nations Fishing Competition held at Lake Chivero.

Threats

The biggest threat to the lake is pollution from sewage effluent, industrial and domestic waste, fertilizer and pesticide run-off from urban and farming in the catchment area. This has led to siltation resulting in a loss of 20% of Chivero's storage capacity. There are over five invasive plant species found at the site with the dominant being water hyacinth and *lantana camara*. Urban expansion into the lake's catchment area has resulted in degradation and excavation of soil for brick making and building. Rampant tree cutting for commercial purposes is also contributing to deforestation. Waste from recreational activities is increasing pollution levels. Over-fishing and the use of illegal monofilament nets has resulted in a decline in fish numbers and the general biodiversity.



Left top: Water hyacinth on the Marimba River. Above: Illegal nylon fishing nets being used around the lakes. Left: Refuse is increasing with no means of adequate disposal.

Conservation measures

The site is controlled and patrolled under the parks and wildlife management act. Fishery operations and birdlife are monitored by research staff from the Parks and Wildlife Management Authority and BirdLife Zimbabwe. Kuimba Shiri provides an orphanage, rehabilitation and education centre for birds attracting approximately 8000 school children per year. BirdLife Zimbabwe and universities use the site for education and research purposes. Harare Water, the University of Zimbabwe and the Environment Management Agency carry out research on water quality and aquatics.



Left: Visitors enjoying the birds at Kuimba Shiri. Right: Miombo woodland surrounds the lakes.

For more information on The Ramsar Convention or Lake Chivero and Manyame contact:

The Ministry of Environment, Water and Climate

Phone: +2634 701681/5 or 701691/2

The Environmental Management Agency

Website: www.ema.co.zw

Phone: +2634 705661-2

Zimbabwe Parks & Wildlife Management Authority

Website: www.zimparks.org

Phone: +263 4 706077/8

BirdLife Zimbabwe

Website: www.birdlifezimbabwe.org

Phone: +263-481496

Kuimba Shiri

Website: www.kuimbashiri.co.zw

Phone: +263772 990 082

