

IN MEMORIAM OF RAMESH J. THAMPY

(Who left us on 7 August 2015)

The sad demise of Ramesh J. Thampy indeed came as shock to all of us. He was one of the versatile COVAS - ians of late seventies. We have not only lost a great friend but an incredible talent. He was amazing and dear to all of us. RJT was an in-born artist brimming with natural talent and creativity with a lot of innate vision. Creative and innovative ideas come more easily to some people than to others and RJT was one of them. He was imaginative, motivated and committed with an urge to perform. He was bold enough to resist rules and conventions.

COVAS DAYS





Epicurean to the core

R. J. Thampy

The world is an apple
 I'd like a bite from every part of it
 Gnaw at its shiny roundness
 Until I reach the heart of it
 And when it comes to buying
 I delight in buying as I please
 It scarcely ever matters
 Whether its English, Indian or Portuguese
 And about this nationalism bit
 and support for the local industry
 I'd be glad to comply

Give Indian a try
 So long as it satisfies me.
 Meanwhile, I'll play a Japanese Guitar
 and eat ripe pineapples from Hawaii
 But you won't think me seedy?
 depraved or exceedingly needy
 If I luxuriate in an occasional indigenous Beedi.

Ramesh J. Thampy indeed was a real epicurean to the core as he wrote years back and used to express himself as a true world citizen and I would like to reproduce here one of his poems titled "Epicurean to the core" which he wrote in our magazine in 1979.

The verses reflect his international outlook. With reference to an inquiry regarding a trending theme of those days: "Be Indian, Buy Indian" Ramesh had no second thought to state that "when it comes to buying I delight in buying as I please". Luxuriating in an occasional indigenous (Dinesh) Beedi will not be deemed as a sordid, disreputable and depraved act.

The style of Thampy's writing was unique and marvelous. Even letters received from him had a -'Thampian' touch and most of the letters I received from him are detailed narration of his observations, experiences, places and people around him.

The letters of Ramesh seemed to me like paintings with words. One of the letters he wrote to me when he was working in the Ministry of Livestock Development, Narok, Kenya describes in detail the life in Narok, the heart land of the Maasai Tribes.

MINISTRY OF LIVESTOCK DEVELOPMENT

All correspondence should be addressed to:
The District Livestock Development Office.

Telegrams:
Telephone: Narok 5 and 17
When replying please quote

Ref. No.
and date



OFFICE OF THE
DISTRICT LIVESTOCK
DEVELOPMENT OFFICER
P.O. Box 5
NAROK, KENYA

7/5/58

19

Dear Abu Baker,

In place of an insensitive telegram I decided to write a letter
I am still in Narok with the ministry and in the heart of
Maasai land. The Maasai are an interesting bunch of nomads
who have stuck to their traditions even at the expense of development.
They used to be famous and feared for their prowess in battle and
since they believed that 'Ngai' (God) had created cattle exclusively for
the Maasai, had no scruples about raiding an alien village,
slaughtering the men and making away with the women, children
and their rightful possession — the cattle. All captives were integrated
into the Tribe and by most accounts lived happily ever after.
Times have changed however, the Maasai no longer plunder and the
warrior clan has died all but in name.

The diseases one meets with here are quite varied and among
cattle, include FMD, East Coast Fever, Anaplasmosis, Heart water, Babesiosis,
Trypanosomiasis, Malignant Catarrhal Fever and Rabies in addition to
the rest of the wild bovine maladies.

Narok district teems with wild life and is an inevitable
stop for all visiting celebrities and tourists who flock here to
gaze stupefied at their four legged but equally wild counterparts!
Narok town, where I live is a small but expanding township!

The same is repeated below for clarity of the scanned letter:

("In place of the insensitive telegram I decided to write a letter.....

I am still in Narok with the Ministry and in the heart of Maasai land, The Maasai are interesting bunch of nomads who have stuck to their traditions even at the expense of development. They used to be famous and feared for their prowess in battle and since they believed that 'Ngai' (God) had created cattle exclusively for the Maasai, had no scruples about raiding an alien village, slaughtering the men and making away with the women, children and their rightful possession — the cattle. All captives were integrated into the Tribe and by most accounts lived happily ever after. Times have changed however, the Maasai no longer plunder and the warrior clan has died all but in name.

The diseases one meets with here are quite varied and among cattle, include FMD, East Coast Fever, Anaplasmosis, Heart water, Babesiosis, Trypanosomiasis, Malignant Catarrhal Fever and Rabies in addition to the Bovine maladies.

Narok district teems with wild life and is an inevitable stop for all visiting celebrities and tourists who flock here to gaze stupefied at their four legged but equally wild counterparts!

Narok town, where I live is a small but expanding township.....")

The professional path:

Ramesh J. Thampy joined COVAS after his graduation in Zoology from University of Kerala (1972-1975). The professional career of Ramesh Thampy involved many areas and included diverse functions and tasks. While working as a Project Executive in Lake Nakuru Conservation and Development Project by World Wide Fund for Nature-Eastern Africa from June 1987 to December 1999 he led a team of conservation and development practitioners working in the catchment basin, designed and implemented interventions in the fields of ecological monitoring; environmental toxicology; pollution control; soil and water conservation and environmental education. From January 2000 to August 2002 he worked as a Country Programme Director, Kenya under World Wide Fund for Nature - Eastern Africa to oversee and spearhead WWF Programmes with a focus on wetlands, marine and forest ecosystems.

Ramesh worked for United Nations -FAO and UNHCR for 4 years from June 2003 to July 2007 as Environmental and Livelihoods Consultant. He Worked on a project to reduce the adverse impacts of refugee settlements on the environment of host countries in Uganda and Ethiopia. . He also worked in Southern Sudan on the rehabilitation of returnees in the agricultural sector.

As a Quality Assurance Manager and Head of Communications Unit for Practical Action, Eastern Africa from October 2007 to December 2010 he was responsible for overseeing and supporting Practical Action Programme teams in the fields of pastoral development, water and sanitation and marketing

Ramesh also worked as Senior Livestock and Economic Development Advisor for SNV-Netherlands Development Organization from May 2013 in Northern Kenya leading a team of development professionals involved in promoting livestock production and marketing. Simultaneously from June 2014 he worked as an independent consultant and an associate consultant at Cascade Consulting, Kenya as livestock and rural development specialist.

During his professional life Ramesh has emphatically demonstrated his potentials and skills in the areas of conservation, economic and rural development, international development, program management, leadership and NGO associated activities.

During his career Ramesh has written many articles on topics related to his work areas especially on conservation and development.

Excerpt from –

Droughts need not be as devastating - Ramesh Thampy - Mandera, Kenya, Aug 6th 2011

Droughts are a recurring phenomenon in the arid and semi-arid Lands of north eastern Kenya. The incidence of drought in Mandera had increased fourfold in the last 25 years.



There are Immense possibilities for alleviating the water stress experienced during droughts by better managing existing water sources and by developing new watering points where rain and surface runoff can be harvested.

Droughts need not be as devastating as they currently are. Indeed, it is not unreasonable to entertain the thought that pastoralist's areas can become economic power houses of the future.

Solutions for making droughts an inconvenience rather than a recurring national catastrophe exist. What is lacking is the political will and commitment to achieve this objective. Also lacking is consensus and coordination of effort among all those involved in pastoral development.

As development practitioners we gaze in amazement at the concern of national and international leaders, donors and institutions as pictures of dead and dying victims of drought flash across their television screens. We all knew this was coming. We have all seen it before. Why didn't we do something about it?

And so now the money pours in to save lives that need never have been threatened, to accommodate people who should never have been displaced. Soon the crisis will be over and the issue forgotten.... until the next drought.

The contributions of Ramesh Thampy in the areas of wetland conservation and development were immense. The Lake Nakuru case study is one of them.

Strategies for wise use of wetlands: Best practices in participatory management

WETLAND CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT: THE LAKE NAKURU CASE STUDY

R. J. THAMPY

World Wide Fund For Nature, P.O Box 202440, Nairobi, Kenya

KEYWORDS : Lake Nakuru, land use, environmental impact, sustainable development, ecosystem health

ABSTRACT

Lake Nakuru, designated as Kenya's first Ramsar site in 1991, is a shallow hyper-eutrophic saline-alkaline lake on the floor of the Rift Valley, and is well known for its spectacular concentrations of Lesser Flamingos. The lake lies at the bottom of a catchment basin that has witnessed a relentless intensification of land use over the last three decades. The major threats to the lake originate from human activity in the catchment, resulting in alterations in the water balance and water quality. There is growing evidence that these changes in land use are linked to the frequent and prolonged dry outs of the lake, resulting in alterations in the primary producers and the morbidity and mortality of endemic bird and fish populations. The key to the conservation of Lake Nakuru hinges on the management of human activity within the watershed. A balance must be struck between conservation and meeting the needs and aspirations of the resident human populations.

This paper focuses on four areas:

- Lake Nakuru National Park, a unique and richly endowed wetland ecosystem under stress
- the recent history of human activity in the catchment basin, which has resulted in the park's present predicament
- the nature and scope of past and present conservation measures in the catchment area, and
- ecosystem health, a unifying paradigm to bring about improved understanding of, and countermeasures for, a wide range of negative impacts of human societies on ecosystems.

is the filter feeding cichlid, *Sarotherodon alcalicum grahami*, introduced from Lake Magadi in 1953 to combat mosquito breeding. The introduction of fish substantially increased the diversity of the lake ecosystem by extending the food chain to over 30 species of fish-eating birds. Other organisms, found in varying abundance, include a copepod (*Lovenula africana*), a chironomid (*Leptoichironimus deribae*), three species of rotifers (*Brachionus dimidiatus*, *B. plicatilis*, and *Hexartha jenkiniae*), and three species of water bug (*Micronecta jenkiniae*, *M. scutellaris* and *Sigara hieroglyphica kilimanjaronis*).

Lake Nakuru occupies an area of 44 km², and is surrounded by a buffer zone, which together with the lake constitutes Lake Nakuru National Park. The park is a popular destination for local and international tourists, and receives approximately 200'000 visitors annually. Although the park provides habitat for over 50 species of mammals and 500 floral species, it is best known for its bird life, and for the spectacular assemblages of lesser flamingos that congregate on the shores of the lake. Lesser flamingos account for approximately 78% of the world's total flamingo population, and the alkaline lakes of southern Kenya regularly hold between one quarter and one half of this population.

Until recently, the high primary productivity of Lake Nakuru made it a key feeding ground for this species. Since 1993, however, frequent dry-outs, accompanied by decreased primary production, have rendered the lake unsuitable for feeding, resulting in the migration of lesser flamingos to healthier systems such as Lake Bogoria, located 70 km to the north. The consequences of this increased utilisation, and competition for resources at Lake Bogoria have yet to be determined. Apart from the flamingos, over 50

Ramesh and his team of conservationists developed a model for trace metal exposure in flamingos.

Lake Nakuru is renowned for its huge numbers of lesser flamingo (*Phoeniconaias minor*), as many as 1.5 million at a time, covering the shores of Lake Nakuru in solid pink. Lake Nakuru has no outlet. Toxic trace metals have been implicated as a potential cause of huge number of flamingo kills at Lake Nakuru, Kenya. In August–November 1993 and August–September 1995, 40,000 lesser flamingos died at Lake Nakuru. In 2005–2006, more than 30,000 lesser flamingo have been found dead.



Environmental Toxicology and Chemistry, Vol. 17, No. 11, pp. 2302–2309, 1998
© 1998 SETAC
Printed in the USA
0730-7268/98 \$6.00 + .00

MODEL FOR TRACE METAL EXPOSURE IN FILTER-FEEDING FLAMINGOS AT ALKALINE RIFT VALLEY LAKE, KENYA

YARROW M. NELSON,[†] RAMESH J. THAMPY,[‡] G IDEON K. MOTELIN,[§] JACKSON A. RAINI,[‡]
CYNTHIA J. DiSANTE,[†] and LEONARD W. LION*[†]

[†]School of Civil and Environmental Engineering, Cornell University, Ithaca, New York, 14853, USA

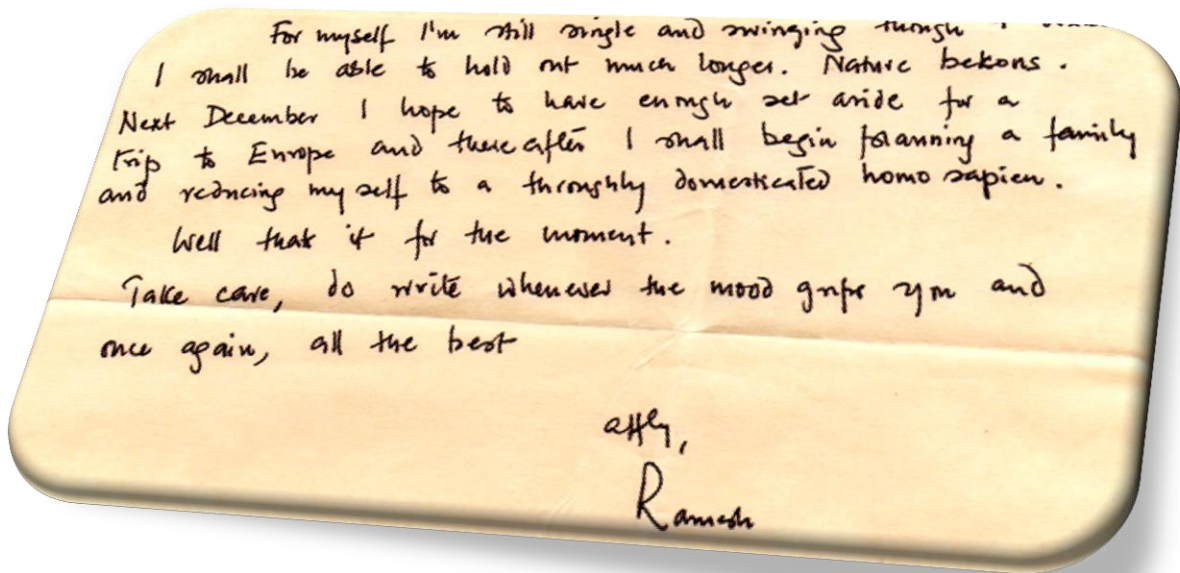
[‡]Lake Nakuru Conservation and Development Project, Worldwide Fund for Nature, P.O. Box 33, Nakuru, Kenya

[§]Department of Animal Health, Box 536, Egerton University, Njoro, Kenya

(Received 14 November 1997; Accepted 8 April 1998)

Abstract—Toxic trace metals have been implicated as a potential cause of recent flamingo kills at Lake Nakuru, Kenya. Chromium (Cr), copper (Cu), lead (Pb), and zinc (Zn) have accumulated in the lake sediments as a result of unregulated discharges and because this alkaline lake has no natural outlet. Lesser flamingos (*Phoeniconaias minor*) at Lake Nakuru feed predominantly on the cyanobacterium *Spirulina platensis*, and because of their filter-feeding mechanism, they are susceptible to exposure to particle-bound metals. Trace metal adsorption isotherms to lake sediments and *S. platensis* were obtained under simulated lake conditions, and a mathematical model was developed to predict metal exposure via filter feeding based on predicted trace metal phase distributions. Metal adsorption to suspended solids followed the trend $Pb \gg Zn > Cr > Cu$, and isotherms were linear up to 60 $\mu\text{g/L}$. Adsorption to *S. platensis* cells followed the trend $Pb \gg Zn > Cu > Cr$ and fit Langmuir isotherms for Cr, Cu and Zn and a linear isotherm for Pb. Predicted phase distributions indicated that Cr and Pb in Lake Nakuru are predominantly associated with suspended solids, whereas Cu and Zn are distributed more evenly between the dissolved phase and particulate phases of both *S. platensis* and suspended solids. Based on established flamingo feeding rates and particle size selection, predicted Cr and Pb exposure occurs predominantly through ingestion of suspended solids, whereas Cu and Zn exposure occurs through ingestion of both suspended solids and *S. platensis*. For the lake conditions at the time of sampling (1.2 g/L suspended solids, 0.23 g/L *S. platensis*), predicted ingestion rates based on measured metal concentrations in lake suspended solids were 0.71, 6.2, 0.81, and 13 mg/kg-d for Cr, Cu, Pb, and Zn, respectively. Higher exposure doses are predicted when metal concentrations are determined from sediment concentrations rather than suspended solids concentrations. Also, decreases in the *S. platensis* population would increase the clearing rate of the flamingos and increase predicted metal exposure via ingestion of suspended solids. For example, with metal concentrations calculated based on average metal concentrations in lake sediments and *S. platensis* concentration of 0.06 g/L, exposure rates would be 13, 10, 4.4, and 38 mg/kg-d for Cr, Cu, Pb, and Zn, respectively. These ingestion rates, except for Cu, are significantly higher than the no observable adverse effects levels.

Keywords—Metal Toxicity Adsorption Filter feeding Flamingo



With regards to planning a family and settling in life he wrote as follows:

..... and thereafter I shall begin planning a family and reducing myself to a thoroughly domesticated homo sapien.....

Only a person with an innate vision can have such an ability of selection of words and expressions! His goodness and courage will never be forgotten.



My dear Ramesh, you walked a wonderful and purposeful journey.....

You will remain in our memory till we return to the world of everlasting peace and tranquility.

dr. p. aboobakar
70817
