



The Majete Story

By Roger Carloni

Majete Wildlife Reserve gained its name from the highest hill in the area – Majete hill. On a clear day you can see the Zambezi river. Clear or not, the Majete Wildlife Reserve is a beautiful sight to behold.

Apart from the Shire and Mkulumadzi rivers, water in the reserve is sparse, however, there are a few man-made water holes along with a series of natural springs which occur in locations around the reserve and which satisfy the needs of the animals.

Interest in game conservation in Malawi was evoked by the "1946 commission" of the colonial government of Nyasaland.

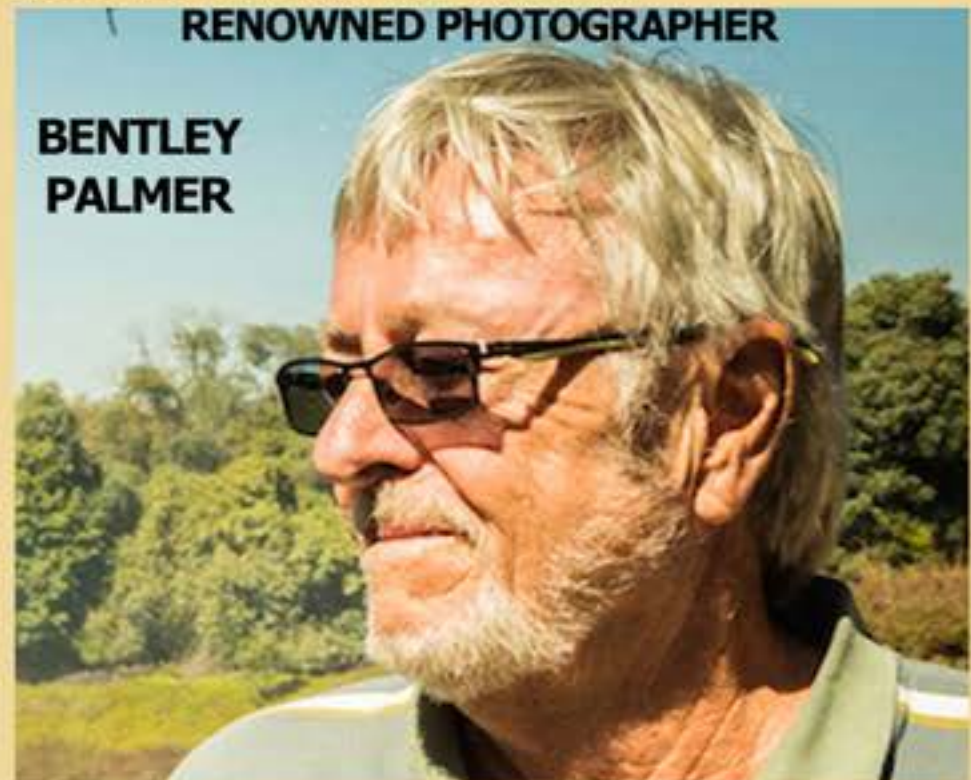
George Dudley Hayes, known to his friends as GD, discovered at the time of the commission that the general government policy was one of "extermination" the eradication of all larger animals outside game reserves. Such eradication was deemed necessary both in terms of crop protection and in controlling the tsetse fly.

Following a letter to the Nyasaland Times in 1945 which was entitled "Game must go", the letter argued that conservationists were starry eyed idealists and that there was no room in Nyasaland for both agriculture and the larger game animals, so the latter had to go. Hayes responded that

"in a territory such as Nyasaland where there are extensive areas of land quite useless for agricultural purposes, it should be possible to find and set aside two or three in which the fauna can be protected". After a long protracted battle with the colonial government of the day GD Hayes was able to get the Majete area proclaimed initially only as a "non-hunting area" in 1952.

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In 1955, Majete was gazetted as a game reserve. This move was principally due to the work of the Nyasaland Fauna Preservation Society (NFPS) led by G. D. Hayes. A note that the NFPS later evolved to the Wildlife and environmental Society of Malawi (WESM) which still operates to this day.