Lake Chivero (formerly Mcllwaine), 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 250.4 10^6 m^3, a mean depth of 9.4 m and a surface area of 2 630 ha 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 in the Chivero National Park. 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.
Cultural Values and Tourism

Lake Chivero and Manyame are used for water-sports, game viewing and bird watching and attracts 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 Mcllwaine Recreational Park.

Threats

The biggest threat to the lake is pollution from sewerage 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. In addition excavation of soil for brick making and building. Rampant tree cutting for commercial purposes is also contributing to deforestation. Waste from recreational activities has contributed to pollution levels. Over-fishing and the use of illegal monofilament nets has resulted in a decline in fish numbers and the general biodiversity.

Conservation measures

The park is controlled and patrolled under the parks and wildlife management act. Fishery operations and birdlife are monitored by research staff from Parks and Wildlife 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.