

Lake Victoria

Lake Victory

The first recorded information about Lake Victoria comes from Arabs traders plying the inland routes in search of gold, ivory, other precious commodities and slaves. Excellent maps known as the Al Adrisi map dated from the 1160s, clearly show as an accurate representation of Lake Victoria, and point it as being the source of the Nile.

Lake Victoria was 'discovered' in 1858 by the British explorer John Speke, after months of valiant dense forests and tropical diseases in his search for the source of the Nile.

Lake Victoria is 68,800 square kilometers in size, making it the continent's largest lake in the largest tropical lake in the world, and the second largest fresh water lake in the world in terms of surface area. Being relatively shallow for its size, with a maximum depth of 84 m and a mean depth of 40 m, Lake Victoria, shared by Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda, was named after the Queen of England. This region of Africa is better known for its large cats and the herds of wildebeests, zebras and giraffes that roam the savannah plains, its most diverse and endangered ecosystems are to be found under water.

Lake Victory ranks as the seventh largest freshwater by the volume, containing 2,750 cubic kilometers of water. It is the source of the longest branch of the Nile River, the White Nile, and has a water catchments area of 184,000 square kilometers. It is a biological hotspot with great biodiversity. The lake lies within an elevated plateaus in the western part of Africa's Great Rift Valley and is subject to territorial administration by Tanzania, Kenya and Uganda. The lake has a shoreline of 3,440 km, and has more than 3,000 islands, many of which are occupied. These include the Ssesse Islands in Uganda. Lake Victoria, shared by Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda, was named after the Queen of England. This region of Africa is better known for its large cats and the herds of wildebeests, zebras and giraffes that roam the savannah plains, its most diverse and endangered ecosystems are to be found under water, hence it becomes very popular destination for tourism.

Early in the 20th century, a few decades after Speke's 'discovery', the colonialists started to exploit Lake Victoria's watershed. They cleared the surrounding natural vegetation, discarding forests and draining swamps, to plant cash crops, such as tea, coffee and sugar.

The plantations attracted migrant workers who settled in the area. As the population grew and fishing methods advanced, overfishing became a problem and catch sizes began to drop. The ecosystem of Lake Victoria and its surroundings have been badly affected by human influence. In 1954, the Nile perrch (*Lates niloticus*) was first introduced into the lake's ecosystem in an attempt to improve fishery yields of the lake. Introduction efforts strengthened during the early 1960s. The species was present in small numbers until the early to mid 1980s, when it underwent a massive population expansion and came to dominate the fish community and ecology of the world's largest tropical lake. Also introduced was the Nile tilapia (*Oreochromis niloticus*), now an important food fish for local consumption. The Nile perch (*Lates niloticus*) proved ecologically and socioeconomic ally disturbing. Together with pollution born of deforestation and overpopulation (of both people and domestic animals), the Nile perch has also brought about a massive transformation in the lake ecosystem and to the disappearance of hundreds of endemic Haplochromine cichlid species. Many of these are now accepted to be entirely vanished. A number of other species are vanished in the wild, with populations being maintained in zoos and aquaria, e.g. as part of the Association of Zoos and Aquarium's Species Survival Plans for these species. Some species which were extirpated from Lake Victoria itself are known to survive in nearby smaller so-called satellite lakes, such as Lake kyago, Lake Edward, and Lake Albert. By the 1950s, popular species, such as Ngege (*Oreochromis esculentus*), had reduced so severely that they had become commercially extinct.

The only outflow for Lake Victoria is at Jinja, in Uganda where it forms the Victoria Nile. The water originally drained over a natural rock weir. In 1952 British colonial engineers irritating out the weir and reservoir. A standard for imitating the old rate of outflow called the "agreed curve" was established, setting the maximum flow rate at 300 to 1,700 cubic meters per second depending on the lake's water level.

About the transportation in 1900s Lake Victoria ferries have been an important means of transport between Uganda, Tanzania and Kenya. The main ports on the lake are Kisumu, Mwanza, Bukoba, Entebbe, Port Bell and Jinja.

Lake Victory as like other water bodies it cause many of disaster especially in the fishing activities and the navigation too, especially the steamer MV Bukoba sank in the lake on October 3, 1995, killing nearly 1,000 people.

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