

Newsletter

November 2019



Wildlife Action Group a Malawian NGO, non for profits, is working tirelessly to support the Government of Malawi to ensure the protection of two forest reserves in Malawi. With that protection we are seeing huge changes which are having h positive impacts both inside and outside of the forests.

The massive destruction and disturbance that the forests have seen over the years is something of the past and having just completed our 4th animal count we see that the protection provided has allowed wildlife populations to increase naturally and the habitat now undisturbed is re-generating fast. Due to the ongoing committed hard work and sweat of our dedicated rangers, the forests are now home to +/- 10% of Malawi's iconic giants „the African elephant“ along with many other mammals such as buffalo, Greater kudu, bushbuck, warthogs, bush pig, honey badger, ground horn bill, hyena , over 200 bird species to date, and this list is far from complete.

The value of these forests are sometimes overlooked, despite them providing so many benefits to local populations such as clean water, food security, improved rainfall patterns, and even to people all over the world through clean air and carbon sink whilst also greatly impacting one of the most famous lakes in the world „The Lake of Stars“ Lake Malawi.

Today, we are proud to say that despite Thuma Dedza Salima Forests being one of the less well known conservation success stories of Malawi, they show case how over a period of time through hard work and winning the hearts and minds of the communities surrounding the fo-rests, we can ensure the survival of Malawi's heritage for future generations.

2019 has been jam packed with excitement and high impact developments coming in all shape and forms. This newsletter will give you a brief highlight of the last few months, we trust you will enjoy and continue to support our efforts.

Warmest regards

Lynn and Scouts





Changing people lives

Our ongoing community livelihood projects have ensured massive reduction in deforestation around Thuma Forest Reserve in particular. Nowadays local communities are busy in their fields, growing tomatoes, rape, spinach, onions. These small scale income generating activities help people to buy and sell food locally, eat more nutritional food, pay school fees, buying seeds and at least improving the living conditions of people without damaging the environment, a win win for people and the conservation of the area.



Water is life

The environment is directly linked to the people's health, and one of our top priorities besides habitat and wildlife protection is to work closely with communities, developing alternative income activities and improving the lives of those living closest to the protected areas.

Many villages living close to the forest boundaries do not have access to clean water, some even were dependant on collecting water for inside the reserve which was a serious security concern due to dangerous animals.

In partnership with Marcus Westberg, Nu-Skin Enterprise For Good Foundation (FFG) and SAFI, three areas in two districts have had a life changing donation of bore holes. This was realised through the incredible kindness and generosity of Nu-Skin distributors from all over Europe. They raised funding and in July 2019 donated 3 bore holes to 3 separate areas supplying fresh clean water to over 700 people many of which had never had in their lives. Not only has this improved the quality of many people's lives and improved their health - it is also having a deep, positive impact on the relationship between the population and the protected area.

We wish to continue to identify and fund raise so this extremely important incentive can be replicated in other areas. If you wish to sponsor a bore whole contact www.wag-malawi.org, you can make a difference to many people lives.



Collaring Elephants

November 2019 saw WAG deploy 4 sat elephant collars on carefully selected animals to enable us to protect and monitor these elephants. Collaring elephants is extremely useful tool to protect them from the illegal ivory trade but also is being used to provide information to mitigate human elephant conflicts and protecting crops from being damaged. This project was supported by Save the Elephant and Wildlife Conservation Network through Elephant Crisis Fund. This operation went really well and all elephants are being tracked using GPS tracking systems. A big thank you to in country partners DNPW, AP, Bravo Romeo Aviation Services and LTW for assistance and support before and during this operation.





REA Yearly visit

August 2019 saw chairman of REA Mr Thomas Tofer arrive for the annual visit to Thuma. As usual Thomas arrives with more than four times his body weight in vital equipment for the rangers. The rangers uniforms and boots were in a terrible state of disrepair so we were delighted to see some new boots and trousers and hats. We would like to take this opportunity to thank REA board, members and donors for their kindness. On average a rangers/scouts walks over 3000 kms per year, patrolling the reserve to protect the forest and its wildlife. A pair of boots is 35 euro, If you would like to sponsor new boots and uniforms for our rangers use our donate page on www.wag-malawi.org



THUMA F.R.



Changing attitudes saves Hyenas life

Hyena 1: Poachers 0

We are extremely proud that two local bamboo cutters alerted us to a hyena stuck in a poacher's pit trap (big deep hole) within Thuma Forest Reserve. We immediately sent our nearest group of rangers to the scene and deployed a back up team.

Thankfully the male hyena wasn't injured and looked in pretty good health despite being trapped for some time. However, this meant it was far too dangerous to attempt a rescue without calling in the vet to anaesthetize him. Once darted we were able to lift the hyena to safety, check his health, give him iv fluids and then move a safe distance away while he came round from the drugs. Seeing him wake up and disappear into the forest was incredible. What a success.

We are immensely grateful to wildlife vet, Amanda Lee Salb, for rapidly attending the scene, our rangers and our local friends for reporting the incident. This local support represents a slow change in attitudes from wanting to cut trees down for fire wood or to make charcoal which destroys the forest, to caring for the forest and the animals that live there. It's a slow process but events like this are an extremely positive sign.

Our rangers have already filled in the pit trap to prevent any other animals getting trapped.



All systems GO!

When one of our solar electric fence attendants recently alerted us to an elephant out of the forest moving towards community land our rapid response team leapt into action. WAG rangers were on the scene within minutes to herd the elephant back into the forest ensuring the safety of all people in the area and the elephant itself. This time it was Chakuse a bull elephant we know very well... WAG's alert system and rapid response teams are a critical element of promoting human-elephant coexistence in the areas surrounding the forest. Without these efforts, elephants would find their way into villages and farms destroying essential crops and posing a threat to people's lives.

We are extending the solar powered electric fence a further 20kms before the end of this year, which will completely enclose Thuma forest Reserve. A great win for people living around the boundaries. The funding has come through African Elephant Fund and Elefence in the USA. A huge big thank you to them both.





Education for the future

Resources are so scarce in our local schools; an event such as weather damage to a classroom roof can mean teaching stops for a considerable time while funds are found to repair it. Recently, we were so pleased to be able to assist in repairing the roofs of several classrooms, allowing the children to return to the rooms and learning to begin again.

In Dowa a primary school had only 2 class rooms and over 600 pupils. A new class room was desperately needed. Tuesday Trust and WAG supported the building of a new school block (2 class rooms). Keep watching to see the finished building soon. Another school has been donated children books in an effort to kick start a library along with bookshelves. We hope to continue improving the resources of the schools around Thuma and Dedza Salima to ensure each and every child get an opportunity to learn as much as possible.



Life from a different view

While visiting some community projects I was asked to enter into a traditional small round hut, built of mud with a grass roof. To enter the house I had to almost bend over double as the door was so low. One foot step into this hut and I was in almost total darkness. I tried to move out of the way of the light behind me and was surprised to see something on the ground. I knelt down and light flooded inside. I then saw to my shock a lady lying on the ground. She was looking up at me as she was lying on her back. I said hello and through a translator found out a very sad story. This lady was younger than me and had been sick some three years ago and was left paralyzed. She has one daughter who cares for her but her life was either lying inside on the floor of the hut looking at the roof in the dark or sometimes she was carried outside and lay outside on the ground looking at the sky. After some discussions with her family we tried to source a wheel chair for her. Samantha from Cool Runnings, a local lady who not only runs a private lodge in Senga bay but spends her whole life helping local communities donated a wheel chair. We brought the chair to the village and was gifted with the most spectacular smile from the lady. Now this lovely lady is placed in the chair daily and brought outside and can see community life normally. A huge bug thank you to Cool Sam, who has really changed someone life.



BIG 5 PROTECTION

Tracking experts from BIG 5 PROTECTION, Simon Leak and Owen Dillon conducted some in-house capacity building in tracking and navigation. Both Simon and Owen spent years in the military, serving in the highest tiers of the British Army. Big 5 Protection designed and delivered courses which include Selection & training, Tracking, Navigation and Long Range Patrolling and has an ongoing program to train and qualify rangers to instructor level.

This training was thoroughly enjoyed by the rangers and has left high positive impacts in the ground .

Huge BIG thanks to BIG 5 PROTECTION, we are looking forward to your return soon.

