

Thuma Telegraph

Wildlife Action Group



Dear All

Greetings from Thuma & Dedza Forest Reserve,

The month of September has been something of a mile stone for us here at Thuma. In our last newsletter you heard about the attack on our Thuma camp along with all our things having been stolen and destroyed. And about the gun shots we kept on hearing. Most people would have given up and cried about such events! But not our brave dedicated scouts. Just days after our attack, WAG scouts tracked and arrested an armed poacher with a fresh kill in our beloved Thuma FR.

Thank you for reading.

Best regards

Lynn Clifford

Armed Poacher Arrested in Thuma

Just days after the terrible attack on Thuma base camp, WAG's dedicated scouts were back on the job as if nothing had happened. It was another day, another patrol set out by myself that morning. We had been hearing single gun shots for some days now, both the scouts and myself were determined to catch whoever was out there.

That morning I woke the scouts extra early, gave them a route to patrol covering a large area and this time moving around the area rather than going directly to where we heard the shots.

In camp at about 7.20 am I heard a gunshot. I waited 5 mins waiting for some communication from the scouts. When I didn't get a phone call, I knew they would be tracking the poacher and it was just a matter of waiting.

Some 30 minutes later I heard further shooting! This time I knew they had got him or them!

Then I got the call, asking to come meeting them at Lake view with the car. They had caught a poacher!

When we arrived we were met with some sight! It was like something from the story "Peter and the wolf"!

A handcuffed poacher who was carrying his kill. This man had killed a beautiful male bush buck, who was in his prime. It was a terrible sight especially as I am now so used to seeing them running through the bush not tied on a pole dead.

Mr Mizeck, 24 year old is from the village of Kaliwanya and was using a shotgun rifle which is licensed to a retired Police man,



named Mr Chimphepo. He crossed into Thuma forest reserve via Dowa in the east. And admitted that this was not his first time to poach here. He and the dead animal were promptly brought to Salima Police station. We will follow this case very closely and hope for a hefty sentence.

Under Malawi Forestry Act 1997 section 66, - any person who pursues, kills, hunts shat be guilty of an offence and liable upon conviction to a fine of 10,000 MK and to imprisonment for a term of five years.



1WAG Scouts & Ranger after poacher arrest – from left – Chifundo, Bitson, Richard, Edward, Olivier, Lammeck, Felix and Joseph (Rangers)

Chilombo Villagers run from scouts in after math of camp attack

Since the 19th Sept the police have arrested a further 4 suspects related to the raid on Thuma camp after after WAG scouts patrol found they were illegally chopping down trees and manufacturing charcoal north of Thuma Base camp. Scouts captured and arrested 2 men in the Chilombo area but were then faced with a large angry mob as they headed for camp. Chilombo area is renowned for its illegal activity in the past and several elephant pits have been destroyed.

Salima Police have assured us that they are still not completed their investigations and on Friday they went to court to request additional time so they can make further arrests of people named.

WAG scouts needed to return to the area to finish the work they had started. On the 23rd they returned to destroy all working ovens by setting them alight and knocking them down. Villagers ran away, scared from the scouts.

We have done several return patrols to this site in the last two weeks to let these people know that we are watching them.



2WAG scout return to destroy Chilombo charcoal area

To make charcoal, many trees are cut down, then stacked and covered with grass. Then they cover completely with sand. This is then set alight and left for up to 2 days. Once this is finished the wood has become charcoal and is ready for sale.

Although charcoal is illegal in Malawi, you can see it being sold on the streets and most houses esp in the cities use it.

We have estimated that an area inside the boundary of Thuma of approx 8 kms long and at least 1\2 km wide has been destroyed by these people.



Those imprisoned face several charges. WAG have requested that the illegal charcoal burning be the main charge, followed by resisting arrest, theft, destroying property and so on.

Letter are gone to various Ministers to raise the profile of this.

Beautiful Elephants of Thuma

Despite all this human drama going on in Thuma, I am delighted to be able to report a record number of sightings of our beloved ellies! There is not a day that goes by when we see them close to camp (maybe they know we are trying to protect them?!) or the scout see them while on patrol. I am lucky enough to be here so I can enjoy watching them plus at night listening to them communicate to each other. Most families that I have seen all have young which is a good indication that they are at one in this environment and that this habitat is encouraging reproduction and natural behavior. This is a credit to all of you that support and enable WAG to manage this area. Here are one photo for you. I promise there will be many more in the coming months.



3A huge family of over 15 spotted on the way to the Gate

Law enforcement in Thuma

Based on Sept 2010 scout operations it shows that our scouts are able to carry out successful operations once given the facilities to do their job. We are very grateful once again to REA Germany for their support enabling us to get Rangers at this period when it is most needed. We have won a major victory in Thuma FR last month and local communities are at the moment scared to come in the reserve. Now is the time that we must step up our patrols, maintain the presence of our scouts and Rangers and patrol every inch of Thuma and Dedza.

See below our results for the last 3 months. We will have a more detailed account of yearly operations at the end of the year.

	Poacher foot prints	Daily Patrols	Snares	Knives/pangas/axes	Arrests	Destroying charcoal ovens
July	2	15	19	1	0	0
Aug	2	16	1	10	0	0
Sept	3	24	33	15	4	10+

*additional 3 arrested with police & WAG scouts

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The Wildlife Action Group (WAG) is registered in Malawi as a non-governmental, non-profit organization since 1994.

Its main objectives are to protect Malawi's wildlife and environment, and to assist and support the Malawi government in the protection of areas like the National Parks, game and forest reserves.

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Our main goal is:

To protect the reserves flora and fauna, and to restore its ecological balance in co-operation with the communities around Thuma F.R. and Dedza-Salima F.R. and enforce the Forestry Act of Malawi.

www.wag-malawi.org



**4WAG scouts with snares collected – top left Felix (DWL Ranger, Edward, Bitson, Chifundo
Bottom: Oliver, Lammeck and Richard**

Best Regards and a big thanks from us all at WAG.