



Dear All,

Here is a long overdue newsletter from WAG. I arrived in Thuma one month ago and plan to stay for some time to come. My name is Lynn and I thank you for taking the time to read. The last few weeks have been very exciting and very productive. Our brave scouts are shaking things up in Thuma.! Read on for more information.

*Best regards
Lynn Clifford*

Thuma Base Camp Attacked

Sunday morning 19th September started as a normal day. Our scouts and armed ranger's mission was to return and destroy illegal charcoal ovens in the Chilombo area approx. 5 km from base camp. We had on the previous day arrested and imprisoned one man. On arriving at the site WAG scouts found 4 men working the ovens again and after some fighting arrested and handcuffed two.

As they started back to camp with the arrested men WAG scouts were set upon by a large and very angry mob from the local village of Chilombo. The villagers were armed with stones, pangas and sticks. Our armed ranger fired warning shots in the air and at the feet of the mob but the angry mob started running towards them. Senior scout Mr Oliver Polah said: "I smelt blood in the air".

The situation spiraled quickly out of hand and it was quickly decided by our senior scout and ranger that it was best to withdraw quickly to prevent loss of lives. The villagers followed the scouts who split up into small groups with the intention of getting back to camp but the villagers had the same thing in mind and quickly headed towards WAG base camp.

Meanwhile, driver Chifundo, worker Lucius and Lynn was blissfully unaware of what had happened.



WAG scouts during ambush to arrest charcoal burners 19th



Arrested charcoal burners 19th Sept 2010



Back on the job, destroying charcoal ovens 22nd Sept

Richard Banda senior scout phoned on his mobile camp to warn of the impending attack just 10 minutes before the villagers arrived. We left everything and jumped into the WAG vehicle and left camp. Our biggest concern was that they might burn the car and camp plus we had no idea what had happened to the scouts. We stopped the car after driving some 300 meters to listen. We heard chanting and lots of noise coming from camp which was obviously a large excited mob.

We called the police who asked us to come collect them as they had no transport but that is a 2 hour round trip and we needed to make contact with each scout to ensure they were safe. After 20 minutes or so it sounded like the mob had left camp, we could see no smoke and one by one we contacted each scout and arranged meeting places along the road out of Thuma.

Once we had picked up all the scouts we went straight to Salima Police station to report the incident and activate the police.

The Salima CID rapid response unit were called in and a heavily armed unit, along with WAG scouts was dispatched immediately to the villages of Chilombo.

That first night they found no one in the village except women and children. Monday another operation was dispatched and the local Traditional Chiefs involved. This led to 3 arrests and imprisonments. Tuesday another raid was organized and two more were arrested and some stolen items found including the WAG laptop.

The police have assured WAG that this is a very serious matter and they will do everything in their power to bring these people to justice. This is ongoing at the moment, will keep you updated.

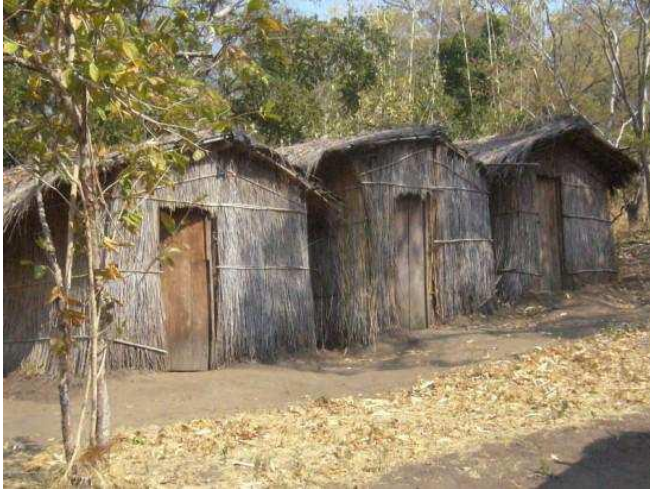
See www.wag-malawi.org to help.



Arrival of known members of terrible attack of WAG scouts and base camp. Man to the right one of the main ring leaders.

REA – Thomas Toepfer Visits Malawi August 2010

We were delighted to have welcomed Thomas Toepfer to spend some time with us gain last month. Thomas stayed at our satellite camp in Dedza-Salima FR and spent a lot of time with our scouts and going on daily patrols. Namwili Camp in Dedza-Salima F.R. is being refurbished to allow 6 full time scouts to live there using funds donated by REA. All labour and local materials will be used bring valuable money for the local community. Thomas kindly gave us his time, shared much of his knowledge and experience and we thank him for this. REA is one of WAGs trusted and dedicated donors and we look forward to our continued relationship with them in 2011.



Namwili camp needing refurbishment

Automatic Guns in Thuma

On 9th September 2010 at 5 p.m. base camp in Thuma was shocked to hear again the sound of automatic shooting to the west of the reserve. Five rounds were discharged and the forest went quiet. It has been reported that ivory tusks have been spotted in Lilongwe recently and once again Thuma and other areas are under increasing threat due to the well organized networks of people smuggling to the Far East.

Wildlife Action Group Malawi (WAG) has been based in the Thuma Forest Reserve since August 1996 and is dedicated to the protection of the reserves flora and fauna. WAG extended its presence into the Dedza-Salima Forest Reserve with assistance of Rettet die Elefanten Afrikas (REA, Save the African Elephant in Germany) to protect the elephants as they move from Thuma to Dedza-Salima away from Poachers. Since the beginning one of our greatest challenges has been to control the poaching within the reserve and we currently have 12 full time scouts who do daily patrols of the reserves. Over the last 18 months it has become increasingly obvious that there has been a dramatic shift in the types of weapons being used. The sounds of guns in the reserve has become a normal occurrence. An armed Game Ranger was immediately dispatched from Lilongwe and both him and our scouts were hot of the tracks of the poachers within 4 hours.



Some of Thuma elephants – near camp on the 8th Sept 2010

REA has reacted to this news immediately with funds to secure the presence of armed

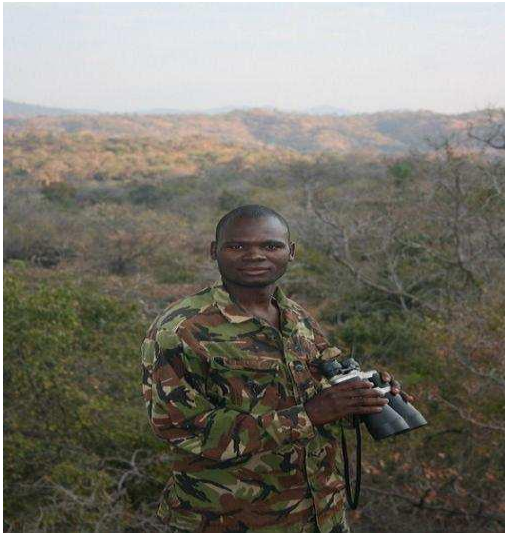
rangers for the reserve up to the end of this month along with a bounty reward of 100 US-Dollars if the poachers are caught. Illegal trafficking in ivory has hit Thuma along with many other reserves in Malawi. Poaching pressures have increased due to the increasing demand. Thuma is most threatened as its proximity to Lilongwe from the western, eastern and northern boundaries and due to its easy access to roads. To ensure the security of our Thuma elephants the Trustees along with the scouts will do everything in their power to protect our elephants. Armed rangers must be an ever presence in Thuma. Please check out our web site to [sponsor a WAG scout](#).

Thuma's Elephants

- As many as 28 dead elephant carcasses may have been spotted in Thuma so far this year.
- Several Elephants now have radio collars in Thuma.

Measles outbreak affects WAG scouts

Aug 2010 just back from his days off after spending it in his village – Kennedy – one of our scouts fell suddenly sick during the night. With a soaring temperature we rushed him to hospital, to find that he was suffering with the potentially deadly disease, measles. Kennedy was admitted to hospital for 2 weeks but we are happy to report that he has made a speedy recovery and is back with us on patrol. However, we would like to express our deepest sympathy to one of our other scouts who tragically lost his nephew to the same illness at the same time.



Kennedy back at work.

Scouts left with nothing!

Scouts returned to base camp to find everything destroyed or stolen. Our solar system –

battery, inverter, laptop, leads, chargers – gone.

These are vital to allow us to communicate while in the field and to the outside world. Scouts quarters were damaged, windows and doors broken, water containers slashed with pangas, basins broken, all plates, cups, forks, knives broken or stolen. Even scouts uniforms and shoes were gone. The scouts personals were also stolen, clothes, shoes, money, mobile phone chargers, credit top up for phones, sleeping bags, washing powder, mosquito nets, all the food in camp missing, pangas, tooth paste, blankets. “We are left with nothing except the uniforms we wore on Sunday to go on patrol before this event occurred”, says Mr Polah. If you wish to help in cash or in kind, please contact us directly!

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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.

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