



2018 ANNUAL REPORT

DIRECTOR'S NOTE

Despite worldwide efforts to stop the illegal trade of ivory, the insatiable demand continues to be the major driver that will lead to the extinction of the African elephant. New players in the illegal wildlife trade such as Vietnam and Laos are continuing to feed the demand in China and other countries. This impacts even small countries like Malawi and even Thuma and Dedza Salima, over the years have seen their fair share of killing to supply this demand.

However, illegal wildlife trade is not the only driver. In a developing country like Malawi, a massive population growth and the ever increasing need for land for subsistence farming, leaves protected areas under massive pressure and co-existence with wildlife becomes a conflict zone. In the 8 short years I have been working here at WAG, I have seen the negative impacts of this conflict on both the communities and the wildlife in and around the Thuma and Dedza Salima Forest Reserves. Crop damage in areas where food security is paramount to survival resulting in the loss of life of community members protecting their lands and consequently elephants being killed, leading to much anger and pressure from all sides.

One of the priority activities of WAG is securing funding and working with communities to address human elephant conflict by installing solar powered fences to ensure personal safety and food security for those living close to the forest boundaries. By the end of November 2018 we had extended the solar powered electric fence a further 11km on the north and western boundary of Thuma bringing the length of the fence to 85km providing relief and security to many villagers. In addition, we built a camp in this area to maintain law enforcement efforts and monitor wildlife movements. Surprisingly, elephants moved into this area in November and a large number of family herds and bulls are still there enjoying bamboo, grass and newly regenerating trees in peace. It is interesting to note that our figures from 2013 to date show a direct correlation between Human Elephant Conflict and the hunting and killing of these giants. As HEC continues to move into new areas so will the need to extend the fence. Our mission is to complete the fence line before the end of 2019 which will enclose all of Thuma Forest Reserve once and for all, then we need to fence Dedza-Salima Escarpment Forest Reserve.

Our Law enforcement effort in 2018 saw 1637 long and short patrols conducted (16412km all by foot), and the range of patrols ensured for the first time full coverage of Thuma Forest (see maps) and the pushing back of most illegal activities close to the boundaries.



Areas where there is no fence shows highest levels of illegal activity plus known hot spots for gun poachers, elephant poachers and people poaching with dogs, high reliance of forest activity and of course HEC. We invested much effort into training at the beginning of the year introducing and fine tuning skills of rangers. Mid-year we formed a new investigation and intel unit, who are targeting hot spot areas and an informer network is proving fruitful with NO elephant fatalities due to poaching in 2018. We have seen a spike in other poaching types such as snares, hunting with dogs and gun poaching and Charcoal burning has moved from Thuma to Dedza Salima where we are seeing serious deforestation - just along the boundaries. The conflict between rangers and poachers / charcoal burners is ever present resulting in a new camp being attacked and destroyed, although thankfully no one was injured. Our court monitoring system revealed positive changes and most arrests were prosecuted and court outcomes harsh enough to be seen as a serious deterrent at village level. Communities remain at the forefront of our work, and building relations, raising awareness, introducing and working closely on small income activities and securing people crops has become a vital part of our work. Without the support of our communities we cannot protect both Reserves and the wildlife living here. Tracking and monitoring of problem elephants (2) with the support from other conservation partners nationally and internationally, we placed two satellite collars on two bull elephants to enable us to track their movements. The valuable data obtained from the collars is significant and we hope to increase the number of collared elephants to continue to help our effort in monitoring and protecting some of the last remaining escarpment elephants in Africa.

Research and development is very much part of our day to day activities and our data collection assists greatly in adapting management plans and patrols. We had a really pleasant surprise when we discovered a small herd of Eland also living in Thuma and then some months later found 2 new calves born to the herd, showing Thuma is still keeping her secrets from us.

2018 saw first two donations from inside Malawi, big thanks to Skyband and Limbe Leaf.

Certainly our work to protect and restore is far from over, and we have much planned for 2019. We remain dedicated to continue our work to safeguard the habitat, wildlife and communities in and around the Thuma and Dedza Salima Forest Reserves.

On behalf of myself and everyone Wildlife Action Group, I extend my sincere gratitude to all of those who have shown so much commitment and supported us over the years. I Especially thank those working on the front lines as we continue this journey of protection and restoration.

Lynn Clifford



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Review 2018

68

Total Staff

30

Rangers trained

6

Camps

3

Vehicles

85

Km Fence Line

1'831

Patrols conducted

16'412

Km Patrolled on foot



58

Suspects arrested



29

Custodial sentences



134

Snares collected



0

Elephants Killed by
Poachers



52

illegal Charcoal
activity



66

Human Wildlife
Conflict



11

Km Fence construc-
ted in 2018



2

Satelite collars
deployed



3

Animals
Treated/Rescued



8'567

Children educated



29'000

Trees planted



150

Litres of Honey
harvested by
communities



Wildlife Action Group (WAG) is a registered Non-governmental, non-profit organization working in Malawi to support Government to protect wild areas and the wildlife that live there. WAG are directly responsible for two forest reserves in the central region, Thuma Forest Reserve and Dedza Salima Escarpment Reserve, covering a total area of over 500km². (52,000 hectares). Our major stakeholders are the Department of Forestry and Department of National Parks and Wildlife along with the local communities.

WHAT WE DO:

1. Law Enforcement

With local specially trained rangers and scouts, we protect the forest, wildlife and people living around the reserves.

2. Human Elephant Conflict(HEC)

Conflict and competition for land is an ongoing dilemma facing many countries and the wildlife is at the forefront. Many protected areas are now islands surrounded by humanity and conflict becomes a real security challenge for people and wildlife. Through solar powered electric fences we are striving to mitigate this threat. We are also trying alternative strategies to reduce elephants leaving the reserve such as bee hives and satellite collars.

3. Biodiversity Conservation and Research

Through our work two wildernesses are currently being protected and rehabilitated and wildlife populations are once again increasing. Through ongoing research we are discovering more about the areas, which enables us to adapt good management practices.

4. Wildlife Welfare

Working with other partner NGO's we are able to react to emergency wildlife care, including snare removal, rescue and releases.

5. Community Development and Education

It is important that local communities benefit from the Reserves to ensure its long term future. We encourage this by working in schools, supporting the local health centre, providing transport for local emergencies and working closely with local chief and traditional authorities. We also support income generating activities through training and start up incentives such as sewing clubs, bee keeping, irrigation gardens, tree planting, etc. We currently employ 65 permanent local staff and offer various seasonal short term contracts. We are also teaching conservation education in ten schools close to the Reserves delivering to over 8,000 children.

6. Advocacy

Along with other conservation partners we have been raising the profile of the plight of wildlife in Malawi and further afield. Awareness campaigns include the amendment of the Wildlife Act 2017 and the illegal wildlife trade.

*Our vision is
habitat rehabi
benefiting and
pr*

to see both Reserves returned to their former glory, the
degraded and restocked with wildlife, and local communities
assisting to protect these areas, making them Malawi's
premier Forest Reserves for future generations.



Rangers enforce laws to protect w
habitat destruction, such as ch
buning, mining and logg



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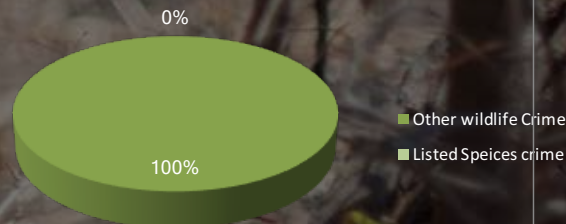
Wildlife + deter
Charcoal
ing.

LAW ENFORCEMENT

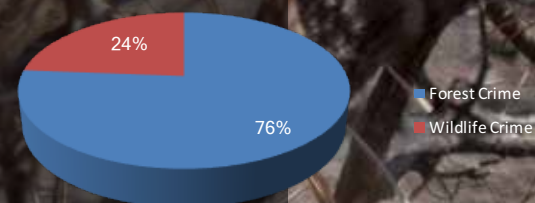
All rangers received refresher training early in 2018. The team is motivated and dedicated and daily patrols saw a huge diversity of illegal activity inside the Reserves. Despite zero elephant being killed by poachers we did see an increase in people using dogs to hunt and kill other wildlife and one arrest led to a camp being attacked and destroyed in retaliation to the arrest. These poachers are moving in large numbers and in formation and are extremely aggressive. Charcoal burning inside the Reserve has decreased however, we are seeing this illegal activity move to Dedza Salima boundaries. Intel and investigation unit has been set up and assisting us to target hot spot areas and identifying high target poachers.

Snare removed	- 134
Hunting incidences	- 46
Charcoal	- 52
Confisgations	- 136
Elephants poached 2018	- 0
Misc. illegal activity	- 119
Total illegal activity	- 487
Patrols	- 1831

% WILDLIFE CRIME - LISTED VERSUS OTHERS



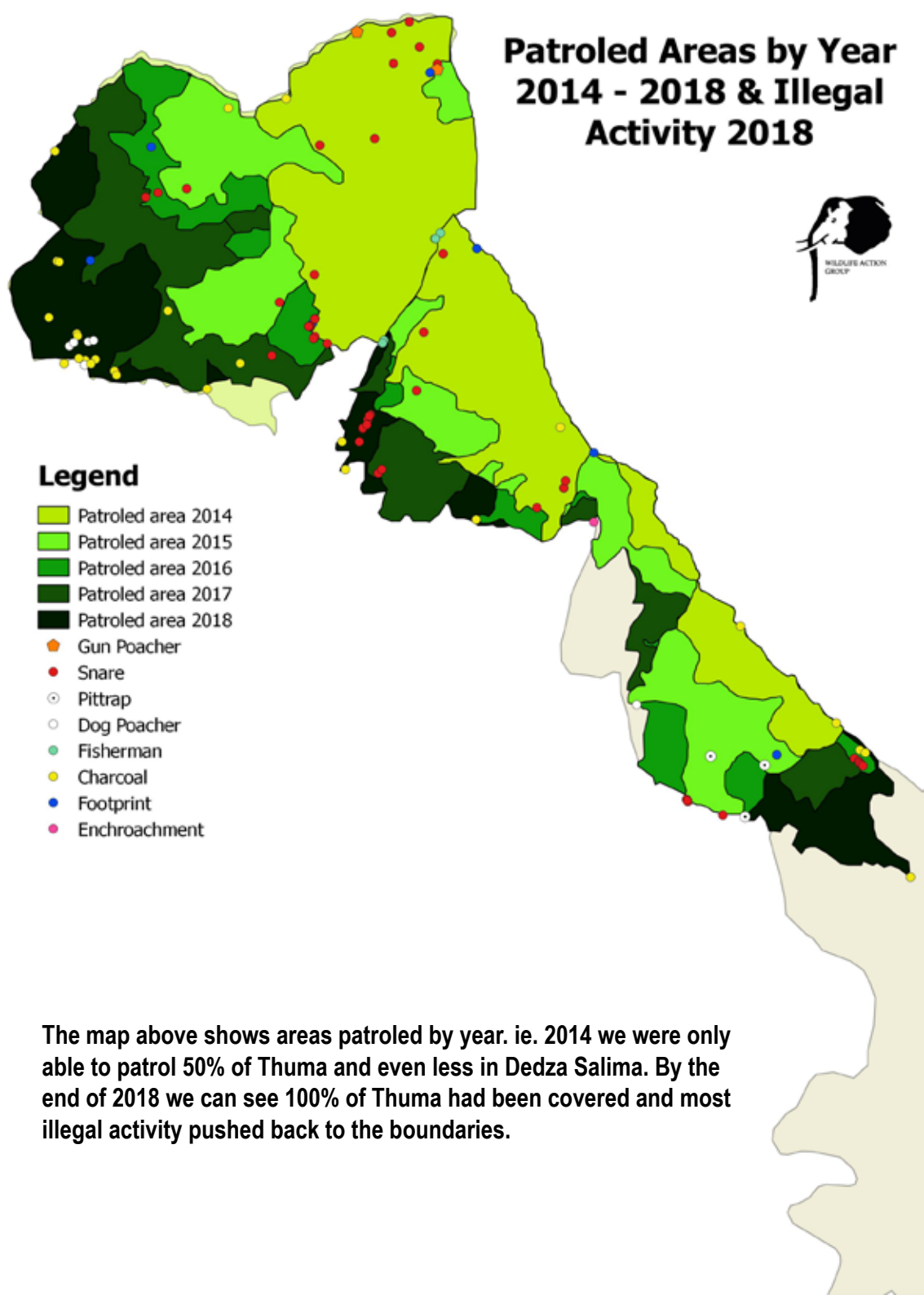
% ARRESTS - FOREST VERSUS WILDLIFE CRIME
2018







Patrolled Areas by Year 2014 - 2018 & Illegal Activity 2018



The map above shows areas patrolled by year. ie. 2014 we were only able to patrol 50% of Thuma and even less in Dedza Salima. By the end of 2018 we can see 100% of Thuma had been covered and most illegal activity pushed back to the boundaries.

HUMAN WILDLIFE CONFLICT (HWC)

HWC is a huge challenge for most protected areas all over the world, and it is where humans come into direct contact with wildlife. This is mostly seasonal. Local farmers are 100% reliant on the crops being grown in their gardens to feed their families. And most human deaths come about when an elephant raids the garden and the farmer tries to chase the elephant away from his field.

2018 saw a lot of HEC (human Elephant Conflict) on the north and north western side of Thuma, where there was no fence. And along the eastern side of Dedza Salima, Chakuse was breaking fences and raiding randomly.

WAG strategically placed rangers outside of the reserve to assist to safely return the elephants back inside the Reserve, we also supply firecrackers to communities free of charge.

In 2018 we tried to address these problems by placing Satellite collars on one known bull who breaks the fence. Chakuse was darted and a collar placed on him. We are grateful to Elephant Crisis Fund and Save the Elephants for advice and collaboration and allowing us to use their tracking APP so we can keep a close eye on him and funding from REA and WAGI for purchasing the collars.

Then in November we were able to build an extension of the fence line a further 11kms with funding from International Elephant Foundation and with assistance from local communities.

In 2019 we hope find funding to extend the fence line a further 15 kms which will see Thuma completely fenced. This fence project is critical and will save lives of both humans and elephants.

No. of reported HWC

66

No. of Gardens
Damaged

28


People Injured / Killed

0



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PROSECUTIONS

When suspects are arrested by WAG, they are prosecuted by Malawi Police Force. The judicial process is normally very quick, except for the more serious crimes ie. crimes related to listed species. WAG tracks each court case (through our court monitoring system) and works closely with and supports both prosecutors and magistrates to ensure the laws are properly enforced and encourage maximum penalties. Law enforcement workshops founded by Elephant Crisis Found, mean stakeholders such as prosecutors are motivated and knowledgeable of the laws.

Prosecuted cases

33

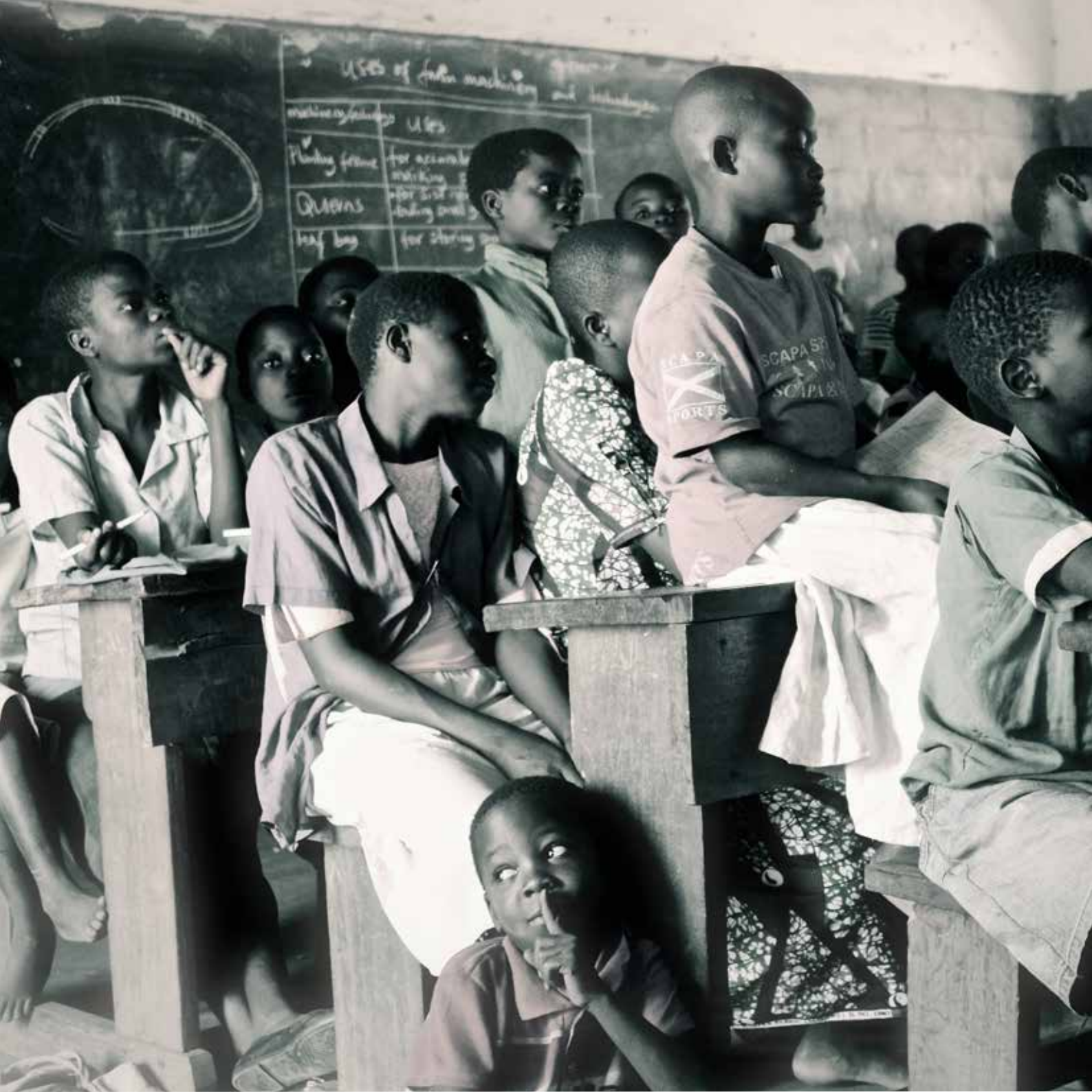
Suspects sentenced

29

Wildlife Action Group arrests suspects for the following crimes.

Elephant poaching, gun poaching, bush meat poaching, hunting with dogs, setting snares, cutting trees, charcoal burning, habitat destruction and more.





USES of farm machinery and technology

machinery/technology	uses
Planting frame	for accurate marking
QUERNS	for soil preparation
haif bag	for storing





EDUCATION

It is beyond doubt that the children are the new generation and will play an important role in the future of wildlife and protection of protected areas. WAG work in ten schools close to the boundaries of both Reserves.

Our education program reaches out to approx 8500 student. Conservation subjects are taught by WAG extension workers, and wildlife clubs are established.

2 School groups took part in day trips which will have lasting memories on each child. One has been sponsored by Polly Mason & Sam Trollope while the other on was sponsored by WAG.

One school roof had been damaged in storms last April and WAG with partners Tuesday Trust were able to assist to rebuild the roof before the rains arrived late 2018.

Trees have been planted, exercise books supplied, vegetable garden inputs supplied to encourage new farming techniques. The school competition „education, conservation and nutrition for our future“ was won this year by Kambiri School in TA Indindi area. The prize of copy books and pens for all students, football and netball kits and ball and chalk and teacher receiving hardback book was well received.

We hope that by engaging with these children, we will inspire future conservationist and activist in these areas.

The new motto in the schools and villages is:

DONT LOOK TO THE FOREST, LOOK TO THE VILLAGE!



GVH Chambakata - the only chief who managed to protect a part of Thuma forest along the western boundary, reading the wildlife act.

COMMUNITY

Community engagement is vital to any conservation effort. With funding from USFWS and working closely with in country partners the USAID malawi funded PERFORM PROJECT, we saw great success with small scale irrigation gardens, bee keeping, tree planting, pass of a goat and the introduction of two poultry projects. These project have replaced the illegal activity of charcoal burning. This was our first year working in one area and has not only financially supported the club members, but the vegetables grown have been sold locally hence supplying food to other community members. A win / win situation.

One lady has managed to send her two daughter to boarding school with money made from the garden. The girls are aged 13 and 16. Bee keeping shows good prospects with over 150 litres of honey on the first harvest. This honey is packaged by WAG and sold in Lilongwe and from camp to visitors.

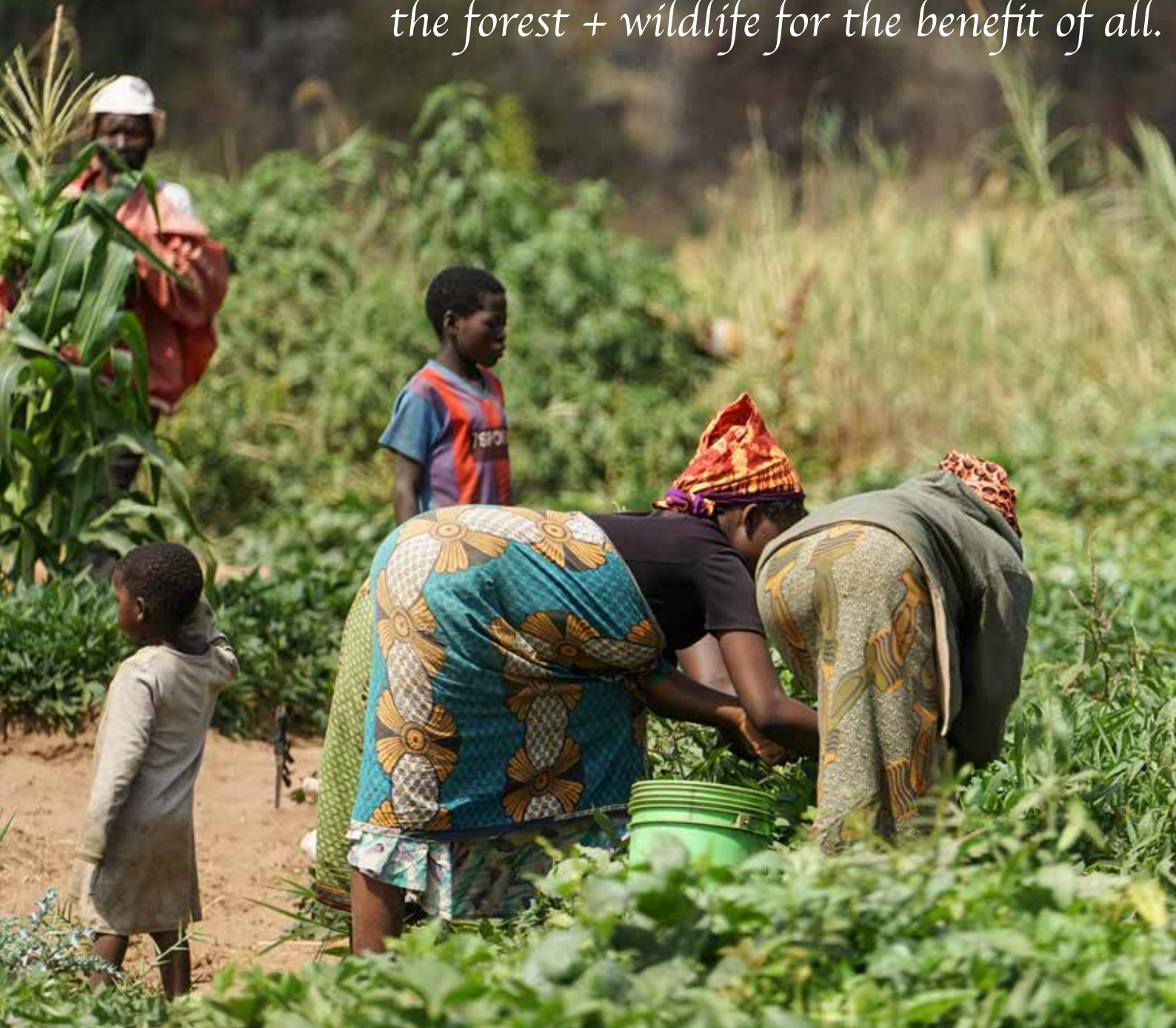
Our reforestation project, started with the aim to encourage communities to plant trees to reduce pressure on natural resources. A total of 29,000 seeds were distributed and planted. Planting out in the villages and schools will take place in January/ Feb 2019

With the upgrading of roads and building of the fence extension over 500 people were engaged in temporary work inside or along the boundaries of the forest brining additional earnings to many families.

A donation was greatly received from Limbe Leaf Tabaco company of three motor bikes which will assist us in community and patrol work.



*Working with communities for the benefit of communities
the forest + wildlife for the benefit of all.*



s and to protect



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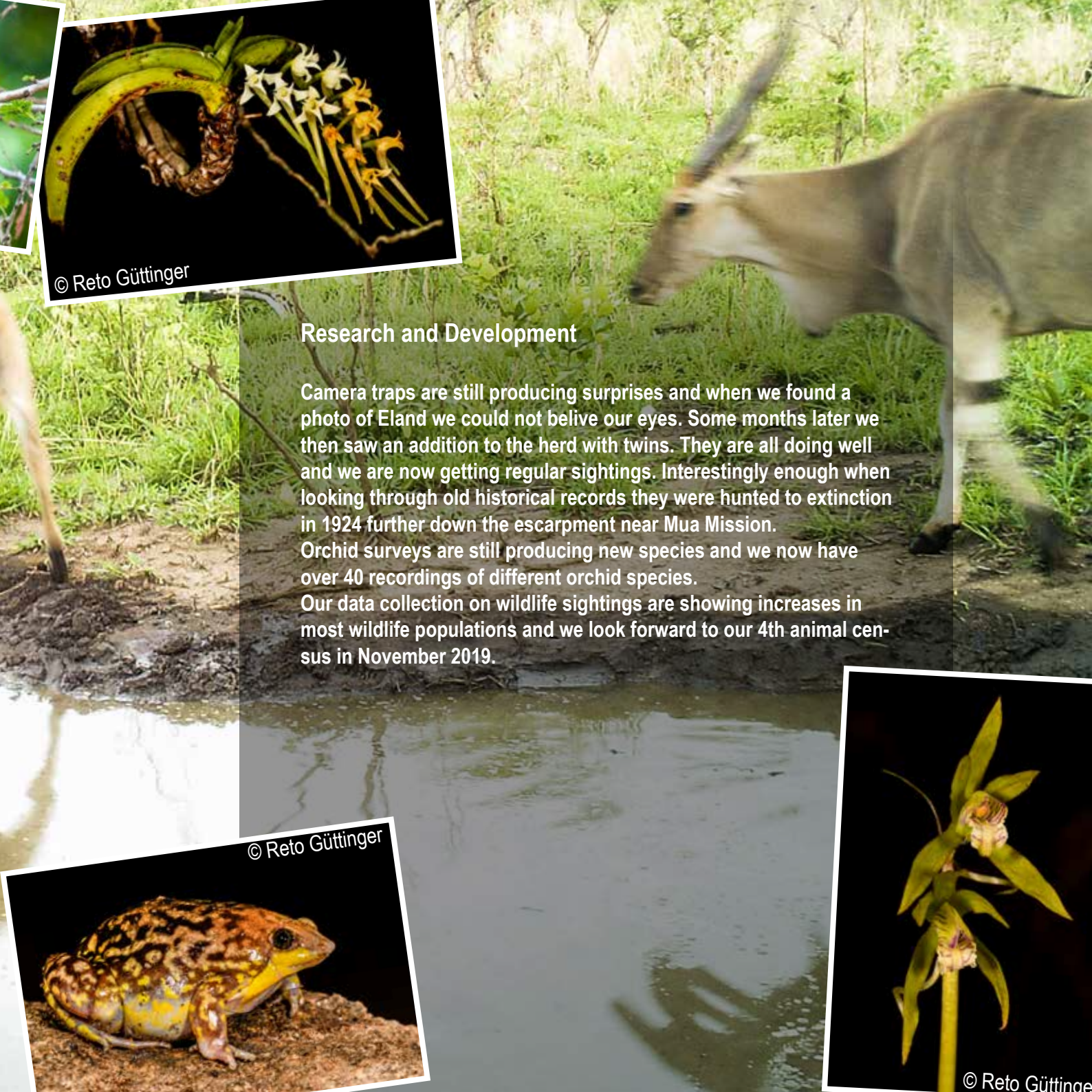
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Research and Development

Camera traps are still producing surprises and when we found a photo of Eland we could not believe our eyes. Some months later we then saw an addition to the herd with twins. They are all doing well and we are now getting regular sightings. Interestingly enough when looking through old historical records they were hunted to extinction in 1924 further down the escarpment near Mua Mission. Orchid surveys are still producing new species and we now have over 40 recordings of different orchid species. Our data collection on wildlife sightings are showing increases in most wildlife populations and we look forward to our 4th animal census in November 2019.



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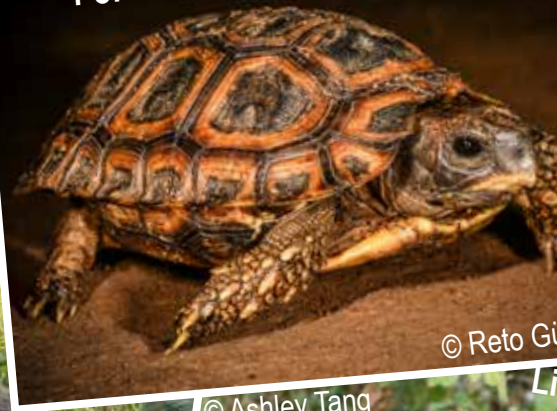


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Barack receiving lifesaving treatment for his leg.

1 of 7 rescued tortoises in 2010



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© Ashley Tang



Sully a 4 week old Vervet Monkey rescued from the pet trade.



© Lynn C

A WAG ranger assisting to place collar on Chakusa

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ittle D one of 5 Common
uikers relised in Thuma
Forest.

lifford



EXCHANGING EXPERIENCES AND LEARNING FROM OTHER PROJECTS IN KENYA

Rettet die Elefanten Afrikas e.V. are a long term donor and have been working in Elephant conservation for almost 30 years. They working with and supporting Amboseli Trust for Elephants, David Sheldrick Wildlife Trust and Save the Elephants. In September 2018 REA aranged for WAG to visit the projects to share, exchange and to learn from each other. I was extremely lucky to visit Sheldricks Trust to see firsthand the incredible work being done with orphan elephants, and one of their anti poaching and dog unit. I then visited Ambosilli Trust, met Vicki and team, and spent some days learning about elephant identification along with challenges community faces sharing natural resource with wildlife and land management. Then up to Samburu to visit Save the Elephant Research camp and to learn about the tracking and monitoring of elephants. Here I achieved a lifelong dream and met and spent time with the King of Elephant Conservation - Dr Iain Douglas Hamilton. Inspiring to say the least.

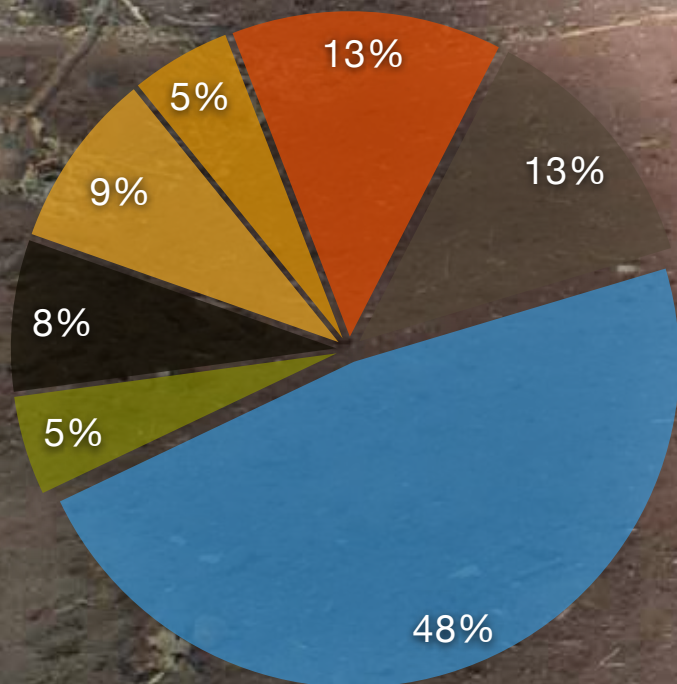
I must thank each project for kindly allowing me to visit, welcoming me to their camps and of openly sharing their wealth of knowledge with me. The work being done all over is more than amazing, and the encouragement they gave us meant me returning to Malawi with more knowledge, ideas and energy. A very special thank you, to Rettet die Elefanten Afrikas e.V. for aranging this.



Finances

BF & income and expenditure		C/F 2018	Income	Expenditure
2018 C/F and income	MK	9'190'092.40	5'840'748.00	
Donor income	USD	147'962.23	79'519.00	
Donor income	Euro	61'991.68	47'475.00	
2018 total expenditure	MK			108'837'266.00

2018 Expenses



- Education and outreach
- Tracking and Welfare
- HEC
- Law enforcement
- Vehicles
- Admin
- Infrastructure and development





Special thanks to Rettet die Elefanten Afrikas e.V., Abraham Foundation (Nancy Abraham), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Elephant Crisis Fund, Kindy French and Ronald Ulrich for their longterm support.

Donors:



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Nancy Abraham
Pip Dunewell
Polly Mason & Sam Trollope
Ronald Ulrich
Sauvez les elephats d'afrique
Schäffer Family
Stefan Plappert
Steven Stone
Tedla Damte
Tracy de la Mater

Partners:



We are very grateful to the Government of Malawi through the Department of Forestry and the Department of National Parks and Wildlife and all our partners and funding supporters who have enabled us to carry out this very important work to protect Thuma and Dedza Salima Forest Reserves and the wildlife living here. Most of you have supported WAG on a long term basis. Due to your ongoing support, the impact on the ground speaks for itself.

