

Thuma Telegraph

Dec 2011

Wildlife Action Group



Dear All

Christmas is only around the corner and I can only imagine the flurry of activity in Europe and other countries.

This time of year brings out many mixed feelings for many of us. For some they are sad as another year goes by. For others they are happy and looking forward to a New Year, a fresh start!

For us in WAG we are very excited about 2012. We have so much work to do, many exciting projects to start, so many volunteers coming to visit. Next year, we hope to extend our fence a further 12 kms to assist with the human-elephant conflict. We also hope to do a lot more work in the local communities to improve their livelihoods which in turn will we hope reduce them coming in to hunt inside the reserves. And of course have more scouts trained.)

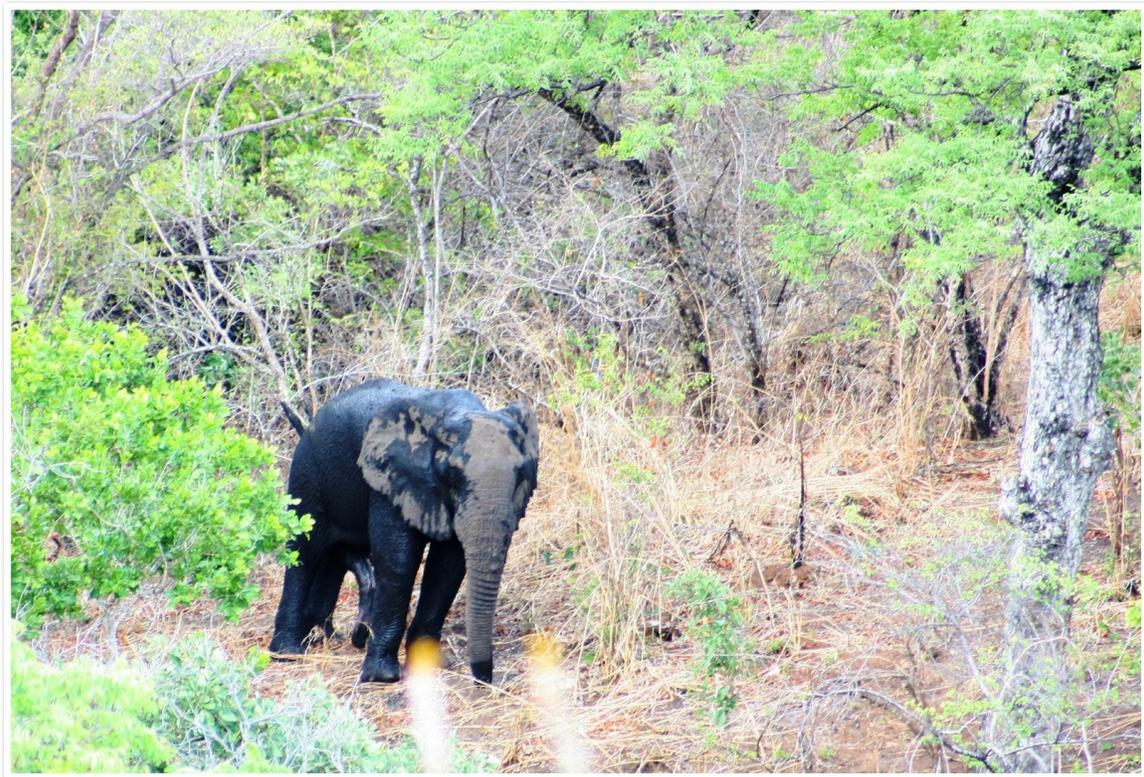
But for now December in Malawi brings not only the festive season but also alot more work with the poaching season at its peak. We are on high alert and out all day and night trying to protect our wildlife.

In this newsletter we talk about the scouts, their work, our achievements over the last year and the challenges we face.

Wishing you all a very Merry Christmas and a Healthy and Happy New Year.

Best regards

Lynn Clifford



Chaka coming out from his bath!

A PROUD DAY FOR US ALL

On the 5th December 2011 the first of WAG scouts passed out from Liwonde National Park after a 9 week intensive ranger training course.

The day started with two herds of elephants having to be chased away from the parade grounds! Maybe they knew these are the new people that will protect them?!

The function was attended by the Honorable D Liwimbe, Minister of Tourism, Parks and Wildlife. The director of National Parks and Wildlife was there and several other VIPs.

The newly qualified Ranger treated us to a fantastic parade in full uniform which was so impressive and they were then presented with their certificates.

Our three men are the first WAG fully trained rangers. The course covered many topics about wildlife management, fitness, and discipline, anti-poaching amongst other things. This course has really made a difference to all three. You can see it in the way they walk, look and talk. One said to me that now he is "Someone". They all passed the exams with flying colours. Because they all have been doing the work for some time this course has given them a greater understanding and new insight to how to do things and why we have to do them in a particular way. WAG are so pleased to welcome our new rangers back home. We hope that we can send more scouts to be trained next year and we will continue to increase our capacity to protect these areas and animals. Thank you all for your help to enable us to do this.



Mr. Geoffrey O Malley (below)
Mr. Medson Gerald (left)





Top row: Bitson, Geoffrey, Frank (NP trainer),
Medson, Richard, Lynn
Bottom row: Lucius, Kennedy, Sam behind camera!
Oliver

Right – Mr. Richard Banda

WAG BRAVEHEARTS

Saturday 10th December - WAG scouts have been tracking gun poachers just 5 kms from camp. They have been out for three days and two nights waiting in ambush for gun poachers to come inside the Reserve. We got word from an informer that 3 men with two guns entered on Friday morning early hours.



As I write I have heard gun shots from our ranger's gun on two occasions but due the difficult terrain sometimes it's hard to actually catch someone. So I wait to hear.

Over the last year WAG scouts have come face to face with gun poachers, hunters with dogs and bows and arrows, hostile villagers who attacked and chased us because we tried to stop them from cutting trees and burning charcoal.

Some scouts have been physically attacked and injured with pangas (big knives) and stones and have fallen and hurt themselves during chases. They have found killed elephants, snared baboons, elephant meat, killed bush bucks and small antelope.

We have made some good arrests and there again some hunters have escaped. It's all part of the job.

Some might wonder why we do it!?

We see sights daily that people only dream about. And when you see animals being killed and forests being destroyed you want try protect it.

Our scouts are the guardians of both Thuma FR and Dedza-Salima FR. Without WAG and our scouts there would be little of no forest or animals.

Scouts who have been here a long time know that and have seen it firsthand.

When in Liwonde National Park last week we saw many animals more than they have ever seen before! One scout asked “can Thuma and Dedza be like this?”. I thought a minute and answered “it will not be the same due to the terrain but “yes! With hard work we can manage. It can be the same same but different”. They all smiled.

WHY WE NEED OUR SCOUTS TO TRY TO STOP THIS KILLING

Some of these photos do not make good viewing however this is the reality of what we face and what we are trying to stop. This year we have seen too much killing and suffering at the hands of poachers. We are currently working with 12 scouts. To enable us to intensify and improve our activities we need to increase this number up to at least 16.



Left – an elephant killed for its ivory



Above–Kudu killed for her meat by snare



Above – various meats found with dog poachers – baboon, klipspringer, genet

A JOB AS A SCOUT

For many of us in developed countries we can only dream of seeing or working with wildlife and living or visiting beautiful protected areas in the world. For most of us we only get the opportunity to visit for a few weeks maybe once in a life time. We spend lots of money to visit these places even if only for a few weeks.

For many African's they have all this on their door step and take it for granted. They know the cycle of nature and its animals. It is in their back yard.

So to be a scout, and to be given money to do something that is easy and natural for you is great. For many people they do not value animals or nature like us. There are many reasons for this but the bottom line is it is because they are struggling to survive themselves and have no time or energy to think about how wonderful it is to see a wild elephant walking in the forest or your garden eating your food.

In the past it could be said that for some scouts working in the forest has been considered to be a job!

Not a passion! Not something they care about.



It gives them an opportunity to have Money... A Job. This is not too easy to have in Malawi. If you have a job and get a monthly salary you are considered as doing ok! I suppose that's the same in Europe just now.

It feeds their family and every month they have some money to buy whatever they need. Most people in Malawi do not have that luxury! If you can call less 1 or 2 euro a day to live on a luxury! Could you feed a family of five and house them and wash them and educate them on this? Either can they...

However, Malawi is changing and more and more people now appreciate the natural resources and wildlife that Malawi has. And they are activated and investing in trying to protect it.

Our scouts are amongst these people.

The more we put into our scouts in the way of education, work with other NGO's, Volunteers and tourists, our scouts little by little begin to understand and appreciate the need to protect their wild places and the animals that live there.

I have seen a huge change in our scouts. I see how proud they are when people ask them where they work, what they do and they love when people visit and they are able to tell them about the animals, trees, tracks and the different things that have happened here.

In any work place it is important that we invest in your staff. Show that they are very much a part of the big picture. Build their capacity to be able to do their job better.

This year we have managed to send some to be trained as rangers and we have also done conservation education in-house. They have been shown some basic car mechanics by Hubertus from Germany. First aid, by another Hubertus from Germany, some electric work from Alex in Switzerland. They have been taught and are now able to use GPS and upload the daily patrols onto a computer. We have done basic map reading and orientation. And I have been learning how to drive the car. Many have traveled to places they have never been



to before – one had never been to the lake which is only 25kms past salima ! Some have never been to the airport so they have now all been there and seen the planes take off and land. Another has come to Zomba with me, been up the plateau and then recently we visited Lilongwe NP. These are experiences they have never had before.

We still have a long way to go... But more important we need to be able to give them a salary and secure their jobs for the future. And we must remember that we are not only

taking about their future but also their family's future and the education of their children.

This is the beginning of our financial year. WAG currently has 7 out of 12 required scouts sponsored. That means we are able to pay salaries for 7 scouts for the next year.

We need at least 5 more scouts to be sponsored.

Please help us by sponsoring a scout through your work, school or do a fund raiser or donate something small so we can continue our vital work here and protect our animals, secure a job for a scout and his family.

WAG ask for a sum of 700 euro to sponsor a scout for a year. That works out at just under 60 euro per month. That covers his salary and helps him support his family plus any equipment we need for him. This also ensures that we can do daily patrol. Your money is not only supporting a family in Malawi but also helping to protect the forests and animals who live there.

So you have a little understanding of costs here see below some items:

A local business woman I know did a calculation of living costs for a family of 5 for food and soap (basic living) and it comes to 49.75 euro per month – that does not include transport, medicine, school.!

1 liter fuel = 1.64 euro

1 kg maize (a scout eats approx. this per day) = 0.16 cent (comes to approx 5euro per month)

1kg rice = 1 euro

1 liter of cooking oil – 2.73 euro (most scouts use at least half liter per month in camp alone)

To send a text by mobile = 0.05 cent

Local transport from Salima to Lilongwe = 3.41 euro

1 bar of Lux soap = 0.99 cent

Wash powder for clothes 1 kg = 2.50 euro

Average scout salary = 55 euro per month = 660euro per year plus they some need equipment

Please go on line at www.wag-malawi.org and see more about our Sponsor a scout program.

ACHIEVEMENTS OVER 2011

It is important that you all know what we have actually achieved over the last year, due to your continued support, generosity and efforts that we have been able to achieve these things. In particular we would like to make a special mention to REA members, Thomas and Kristina who work tirelessly to assist us, WAGI (George and Suzi for all their support and dedication from very far) and our volunteers who have stayed with us have all contributed so much.

Just over a year ago the scouts socks were like rags, boots and uniforms were falling apart. The fence was not working, there was little or no solar power in camps. Roads were in a state of disrepair. Together we have managed in a very short time to turn things around and have managed to supply, repair, replace and add to this project.

The list below are some of the things that you have brought about. These are OUR achievements together and WAG would like to thank you from the bottom of our hearts.

- ✓ Over 22 arrests for illegal poaching
- ✓ DNPW armed Rangers on site 100% of time
- ✓ Dedza Camp refurb Nov 2010
- ✓ Fence first phase - fully operational and maintained -100% operational all year - zero elephant break through (they walk around it now!!), has been rewired, new batteries, new regulators, new lightening diverters, new sirens, all functional, need new regulator for south fence which will be bought asap.
- ✓ Roads opened - and maintained - roads have been opened, and maintained for first time in over two years

- ✓ Car – our noble steed -the car has had complete service and over haul twice this year - both done with loving care and expert knowledge - the car is in perfect running order and ready for the rainy season.
- ✓ Base camp buildings - all buildings have been maintained for rainy season, several new buildings have been built to try promote some small eco- tourism, new showers and toilets have been built,
- ✓ WAG scouts sent on Ranger training with help of REA and others, funding of fire arms secured
- ✓ 5 day operation working with the Malawian Army – DOF activated and paid for over 40 army personnel to be active in and around Thuma to clear up and arrest and confiscate any charcoal. We had 20 based at Thuma who did patrols with us inside and outside, many bags of charcoal was confiscated
- ✓ Newsletter sent on regular basis
- ✓ Web site has been activated - it now gets regular updates, additions – thank you our wonderful web master in Germany!
- ✓ Volunteer program is doing well with much new interest
- ✓ Working group - we have some self-motivated ex volunteers who are now doing work for WAG, Sophie - marketing, fund raising, face book, , John Pemberton - fund raising,

twitter page,
Iris - funding raising ,
donations,
etc -
volunteer support -
Kristina -
tireless work on
everything from
uniforms to car to
everything,
the German Action Men -



- for their interest and assistance in Thuma, car, pump, building!
- ✓ Wildlife Club Kavinguti school - tree planting and conservation education
- ✓ New boots and uniforms for scouts - supplied by REA/ Kristina (SEE PHOTO ABOVE OF OLD BOOTS)
- ✓ All local sick people in our neighbouring villages get to hospital by bike. This is a gruelling 16 or so kms on the back of a bike over a terrible road. WAG have assisted 3 babies to be brought into the world by getting the mother to the hospital in time to be able to deliver their new babies, another lady had very bad pneumonia and there were several including the chief with malaria who would have died if WAG had not been able to drive them to hospital
- ✓ 2 main signs painted - one put on main road to show how to get to Thuma, a welcome sign at the gate entrance, and some smaller signs placed around and at Dedza
- ✓ Started our elephant identification, updating and adding to bird listing
- ✓ Solar systems working in both camps and at gate

THANK YOU ALL SO MUCH!

WISH LIST FOR 2012

It's that time of year when we all write to Santa and hope that we get something nice that we want or need! ☺

Some of you may think it is a bit cheeky to do this but as the old saying goes "if you dont ask you dont get."

WAG is an NGO, non-profit organization. This means we are completely reliant on donations. Many people have things that are no longer used or wanted and they will help us with our day to day activities and/or enable us to do our job much better. For this reason I am taking this opportunity to kindly ask any of you to consider if you have anything that may be of use to us and is clogging up your house or space. Or maybe you know someone who has something.

There is always someone coming from Europe who can assist by to bring them to us.

- 3 three man tents (green / brown - camouflage)
- 12 sleeping bags
- 6 pairs of small but powerful binoculars
- Any rain or waterproof jackets that are green, grey, brown in colour (camouflage)
- Hand cuffs and keys
- Any army clothes - trousers, shirts, hats
- 12 back packs - must be green, brown or camouflage in colour pls)
- Battery charger
- Rechargeable batteries
- Old mobile phones
- Small computer external hard drive to do back ups of our work
- 2 x GPS
- Torches head or hand ones

If you can assist us on any of these items please could you mail me on lynardc1@gmail.com so we can try to arrange for them to be brought over to us.

***WISHING YOU ALL A VERY MERRY CHRISTMAS AND A
VERY HAPPY NEW YEARFROM US ALL AT WAG***

**THANK YOU ALL FOR READING AND PLEASE CONTINUE TO
SUPPORT US!**

Some bulls in Thuma!

