

# Thuma Telegraph

July 2015

Wildlife Action Group



Dear Donors, Friends and Supporters,

*I hope you have not forgotten us as it has been a long time since we have updated you. Sorry! :)*

*Days, weeks and months are rolling into one and time is flying.*

*In our last news letter we told you about Dixons return and arrest. We appeared in court in November in Lilongwe and Dixon was sentenced to 4 years hard labour in prison. I visit him periodically to make sure he is still inside ☺*

*December we found a lone baby elephant in Dedza Salima Forest and were faced with having to decide what to do. Read on to find out more.*

*November saw Semi precious Gem stones (garnet) were discovered in the Lilongwe River and masses flocked to dig up stones and make some money. Most poaching stopped which took the pressure off us a little.*

*January we arrested two men with 4 elephant leg bones leaving the reserve.*

*Rainy season has come and gone all too quickly. Malawi has been very unfortunate this year and the rains started promising, however, certain areas had too much rain and many areas were affected with floods. People lost their lives, homes and crops. In our area the rains was also too heavy too early which meant the fertilizer was washed away. Despite that by the end of January things looked good when in February the rains stopped altogether and the maize started rotting on the plant! Most people have very little harvest and we are in for a really difficult year with food shortages and possible famine in some areas!*

*In April we held training for our new recruits with Rory Young on tracking skills and investigation methods with funding from the elephant crisis fund through Save the Elephant and Wildlife Conservation Network.*

*End of April Chris Thouless from Save the Elephant visited to assess the project.*

*In May we have had additional training from Rory Young.*

*As well as patrolling, all of the roads were maintained after the rains and regular patrols up to Mount Thuma have shown a great decrease in charcoal burning.*

*Human Elephant conflict was controlled well where the fence was and we placed rangers in hot spots where there was no fence to chase elephants back. Little or no damage done this year. Local population is very happy, even in places where there is no fence.*

*In April we were very much part of Malawi celebrating World Wildlife Day and the near ivory stock pile burn. WAG also took part in a four day workshop to discuss and plan the National Elephant Action plan (NEAP).*

*April also was some major arrests with people selling fake ivory and so it goes on!:)*

*In May and June we have arrested over 50 arrests for various illegal activities. This year we will be pushed to the limits as people outside are struggling to make ends meet.*

*Yours sincerely           Lynn and WAG scouts*



# BABY "THUMA" IS ADOPTED

On the 14<sup>th</sup> December I got a call from one of the patrol teams reporting they have just seen a baby elephant in Dedza Salima Forest Reserve and it was alone. I asked them to keep watching and that the family must be around. Some 3 hours later they still had not seen any sign of any other elephants. From the description this baby sounded like it was under two, so I was very concerned. I asked the scouts to stay there and sent a back up team with food and provisions for them to stay there over night. For the next few days we watched the little one, alone all day and night not moving far.



**Baby Thuma having his bath**

He was close to a stream and as it was just before the rains came there was some grasses around which he was browsing on.

On the 18<sup>th</sup> I crossed over the river and went to see with my own eyes. I was really saddened to see this little mite all alone and really was concerned for his future. After one hour of observing we heard some noise of elephants coming our way. We moved to a safer place and watched amazement as a family of seven arrived. The little one turned his back on them...they stopped very close to him and waited...he ignored them. So they moved on. Next came a large bull who also stopped beside him but the little one did not move. So he moved on. Another family came and they went straight to him and touched him however, he ran away into the long grasses and they were left standing. They moved on. This went on until we counted 87 elephants in the area. They



*all stayed close by huddled in a group, some moved on, but most stayed around. The baby stayed hidden. Then the group of 7 who had 3 young ones came back, one tried to encourage him to come with her trunk but he refused again. Then the rain came pouring down and they all sheltered under a tree close to the baby. After the rain they got wind of us and the group started to run away, the baby started to run too after them.....but at the last minute he turned to the right towards his stream while the group turned left up a hill. He was alone again! We were devastated.*

*A team of 4 scouts from that day onwards stayed 24hrs a day with him.*

*We sought expert advice on what to do. The last thing we wanted was to capture him and maybe have him put in an orphanage!. We were told to wait and watch his progress but his best chances were to be adopted by a group! And only if really necessary should we consider capture.*

*By the end of January Little THUMA (as we called him) joined the group of 7. We have not seen them since but hope to see them over the coming months and hope that he is still alive and well!*

*We had the best advisors one could hope for and we wish to Thank Angela Sheldrick, Mr. Mortel in Namibia and WERU vet Amanda and the team at Lilongwe Wildlife Ctr. and the orphanage in Zambia for all their advice, time and support*



## **STEALING ELEPHANT BONES AND SELLING FAKE IVORY**

*Last year we found some elephant bones that had been carved to look like ivory. But, were unable to arrest the culprit.*

*Then January 2015 we saw some men carrying a large sack out of the forest. We stopped and searched them to find 4 leg bones belonging to an elephant. We cautioned them and brought them to the police.*

*They had planned to carve them into a shape like ivory and sell them!*



*The case never got to court and they were released.*



*Then on April 22<sup>nd</sup> I got a call to say two men had been arrested the previous night on suspicion of selling ivory! I did not recognize their names so sent a scout to see who they were! The two men had given false names and both were known to us (one had been named by the previously arrested men with bones).*

*I went to Salima police station to assist with questioning. They mentioned some other people who were involved with they said killing an elephant, removing the ivory, they also mentioned the house where the ivory had been stored and sold from. Someone had come from Lilongwe two nights previously and paid for the tusks.*

*I sent 2 scouts into the bars around Salima and at 9pm I got a call saying they had seen one of the named men who was very drunk in*

*a bar there. I along with the police went straight there and picked up two more suspects.*

*Following that we drove to the house where the ivory was said to have been kept hoping to question the man but he was not there. However, his wife was very helpful.*

*The next day we drove for 6 hours and arrived on the west side of Dedza Salima at 2am. We searched some houses and found two men who had been named as the ones to kill the elephant. We confiscated a man made gun and 50kg of Indian hemp!*

*They denied killing any elephant but admitted to hunting in the reserve for monkeys.*

*Another suspect was picked up a few days later and following his lead the police and I went to Lilongwe where we managed to arrest a further 4 people/ These admitted to buying what they thought was ivory but when they tried to sell it the end user said it was only bones and they refused to buy it! We went to their house where we found two bones carved to look like ivory.*

*They all were arrested for trafficking in protected species specimen however when brought to court the fine was dismal and all but the first 3 paid the fine and walked from court.! 3 men have been unable to pay the fine yet so have been brought to jail until such time as their family can raise the money!*

*Despite the poor sentence this case shows that our stakeholders such as the police are taking wildlife crime seriously. We wish to commend them for the diligence and determination.*

## **A HOSPITAL NEAR THUMA**

The nearest hospital to our gate is exactly 23kms. Some villagers either walk or go by bike. I have seen people actually tied onto the back of a bike to stop them falling off as they cannot hold themselves up right.

Ladies in labour also travel on the back of bikes before and after giving birth.!

In many cases people just die in the village as they cannot afford the transport.

Sometimes we are able to help with transport but in most cases we are not told.

Three weeks ago I was called to a meeting by 7 of our local Group village Headmen (GVH) who told me that the government planned to build a hospital some 5 kms. from the main gate of Thuma. I was delighted. However, the government will supply only part of the materials required. And the local community must supply the rest. They asked if WAG would be in a position to assist them to buy some bricks to build the hospital!

WAG has been in this area since 1996 and are very much part of the community and would like to assist in some way towards this very important project that

will have far reaching effects on people's lives.

We need to raise 2500 euro to buy 500,000 bricks local communities will supply the rest.

The land has been cleared and people have started collecting sand and donating what bricks they have already.

This hospital will be able to help people with malaria, births, post natal care, infections, pain relief.

Please check out our web site for further information as how you can help.

Above photo is Mrs. Blacks less than 24hours after giving birth to her 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> child. She walked in labor to hospital 20km or so, delivered twin boys , however one died. She walked home the following morning.



Right is Irene from Mphizi village. She has terminal liver cancer. She has run out of pain killers and is in constant pain. She can only eat porridge. Now her legs and hands are swelling. She can no longer walk or sit on a bike. WAG brings her for care to Salima Ndi Moyo palliative care clinic and Salima District hospital. Sadly two days later poor Irene died.

Her final days alive were at least pain free and she died in a comfortable bed in hospital rather than in a village on a mat on the ground.



# MALAWI TAKING GREAT STEPS TO TACKLE ILLEGAL WILDLIFE TRADE AND POACHING?

In 1970 Malawi boasted an elephant population of approx 12,000 wild free roaming elephants. Today sadly Malawi has approx 1800 left.

With 85% of the population reliant on Natural resources Human Elephant Conflict, the need for farm land, Charcoal burning and the illegal ivory trade are destroying the remaining forests and the animals that live there.

Since Early this year great steps are being taken to tackle the illegal trade in protected species and poaching.

Kamuzu Airport as seen a rise in the number of confiscations of both raw and carved ivory being trafficked through the airport.

The British High Commission along with LWT launched a huge campaign at the airports along with training of airport officials which has lead to over 23 arrests.

Malawi Revenue Authority managed to find and confiscate 2.6 ton of ivory being smuggled from Tanzania. Low capacity, weak wildlife act and low fines means this is a haven for poachers and traffickers!

We are seeing a lot of proposed changes to do with Wildlife Law, decisions regarding the ivory stock pile and improved law enforcement.

These changes are being lead by The Department of Wildlife and National Parks along with major national stakeholders such as Lilongwe Wildlife Trust, WESM, Wildlife Action Group and many new stakeholders from outside the country such as Stop Ivory and GIZ.

Lilongwe Wildlife Trust launched a great awareness campaign to stop wildlife crime using TV, radio and the news papers to inform Malawians of the problems.

On the back of this came many other initiatives such as **GIZ** funding a review of the wildlife trade showing how serious the problem is. This review also covered analysis of legislation, traffic chains in country along with causes and aims to develop recommendations to constrain poaching and trafficking. This review has shown that Malawi is in a crisis situation!

Stop Ivory have funded the set up of a inter-governmental agency and have done an inventory of the ivory stock pile, compiling a legislation handbook which is aiming to help prosecutor to present the crimes in a good light, developing a prosecution and sentencing guiding book.



In April 2015 Malawi planned to burn its ivory stock pile. It was felt by most to be very positive step and strong message to offenders to say Malawi are serious about poaching. The burn was cancelled at the last minute due to some case of ivory in the court waiting for trail.

One week later ivory was found in Australia having come from Malawi.

July 2015 saw the court case for the 2.6ton of ivory confiscated from Tanzania. A fine was given of 2 million MK (approx 4000 dollars) equating to 2kg of ivory if sold on the black market. Not a deterrent!

So the front line defenders continue to put their lives on the line to protect this iconic flagship species who are marching closer to extinction and wait to see if political will changes and changes quick enough to save Malawi's Elephants.

# CAMERA TRAPS STILL DISCOVERING



The camera traps are still showing up really interesting and useful information. We are identifying our elephant population for one. We are also seeing some of our elephants having terrible snare wounds showing just how savage and serious these snares are!

When the scouts saw just how much damage these snares do they were horrified. So far this year 3 snare poachers have been arrested.

Also we are seeing that our mammal population distribution are not narrowed to one habitat area but seems evenly spread. Some photos below



**Honey Badgers are showing up in several**



**Hyena who has two cubs**



**Porcupine**



**Genet**



**Serval**



**Buffalo**



**Civet**



# NEW CRUISER ARRIVES

I have never in my life had the pleasure of driving a brand new car. ☺

But thanks to a very kind donor in Germany WAG have just received an amazing gift of a brand new Toyota land cruiser.

She arrived up to Thuma for the first time on 22<sup>nd</sup> July. I was driving ☺

What a delight, no rattles, comfortable seats, a radio!!! :) and central locking..... It is so luxurious ☺ oh and air con!!!!

Besides the luxury she is so strong and sturdy and getting up the road to Thuma was nothing to her.

Trees have been trimmed along the road side so she does not get scratches ☺

We wish to thank REA – Thomas, Danny, Kristina for all their hard work and efforts to get her here and of course the man who donated the car.

*A reliable car is vital for our work and we appreciate this so much.*

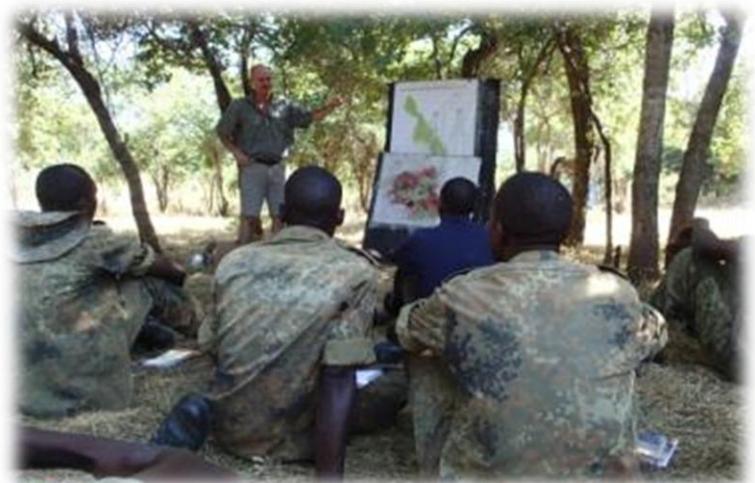
*Zikomo*



# A FIELD MANUAL FOR ANTI POACHING ACTIVITIES WITH RORY YOUNG

Late last year I heard of a man called Rory Young who has co-authored A Field Manual for Anti Poaching.

I communicated with him and he kindly sent me a copy. This manual is very comprehensive and practical for combating illegal activities. One of the things I liked best about this manual was it is very inclusive and respecting of local communities and does not talk about high costly equipment that most NGO;s cannot afford to buy and do not solve poaching problems . Rory polishes and teaches additional skills to scouts/ rangers who are on the ground to help them to tackle poaching on a day to day basis.





Then in May 2015, with funding from The Elephant Crisis fund (Save the Elephant and Wildlife Conservation Network) we were able to have some training from Rory.

Rory Young is an expert tracker with knowledge and practical ability gained over the years living in the bush. His specializes in anti poaching, tracking. squeezed in some time Thuma to do a short but comprehensive training

investigating and Rory kindly to come to very for WAG scouts. We concentrated on tracking and investigations.



The skill set that was passed on by Rory with passion, skill and perseverance at times was incredible. WAG scouts gained invaluable skills that enable them to know by a tracks, the size, weight,



And speed of suspects as well as how to estimate time lapse since they were there. We also covered a lot ambush techniques, investigation techniques and information gathering of the conservation area.

In the evening Rory and myself spent much time discussing the causes and some solutions, which has also helped me to change operation techniques and patrol deployment.

Rory is passionate and determined to fight wildlife crime and has a rare quality which is willness to share his knowledge and skills to anyone who is working in this field, because he cares. WAG is forever grateful to Rory for giving his time and expertise to help us here.

We hope we can do more training with him later in the year. Rory, A BIG Thank you from WAG, for all your time and help!

And by the way it is making a great difference and is working.



# CHRIS THOULESS VISITS FROM SAVE THE ELEPHANT

In April 2015 we were delighted to meet Chris Thouless strategic Advisor for Save the Elephants come spend a few days with us in Thuma to see operations and how the project was going.

WAG received funding last year from The Elephant Crisis Fund which Chris is now involved in.

Chris has a fascinating work record starting with having studied zoology in the UK he then went on to work in the field for several years. He worked with WWF on reintroduction of deer in China, then did research on elephants in Kenya, worked in Botswana and Namibia on tourism development relating to conservation areas and was a senior commission officer with IUCN amongst others.

In Nov 2014 he joined Save the Elephants, Kenya as a strategic advisor.

Chris spent a few days here with us where we showed him our work and operations on the ground. Chris also very kindly helped with advice on various aspect of our work. He was complementary and gave some very positive feedback about how we were managing and also ways forward.

Thanks to Chris for taking the time to come and helping us, it was a real pleasure and honor to meet and spend time with you.



## DONATIONS FROM BELGIUM

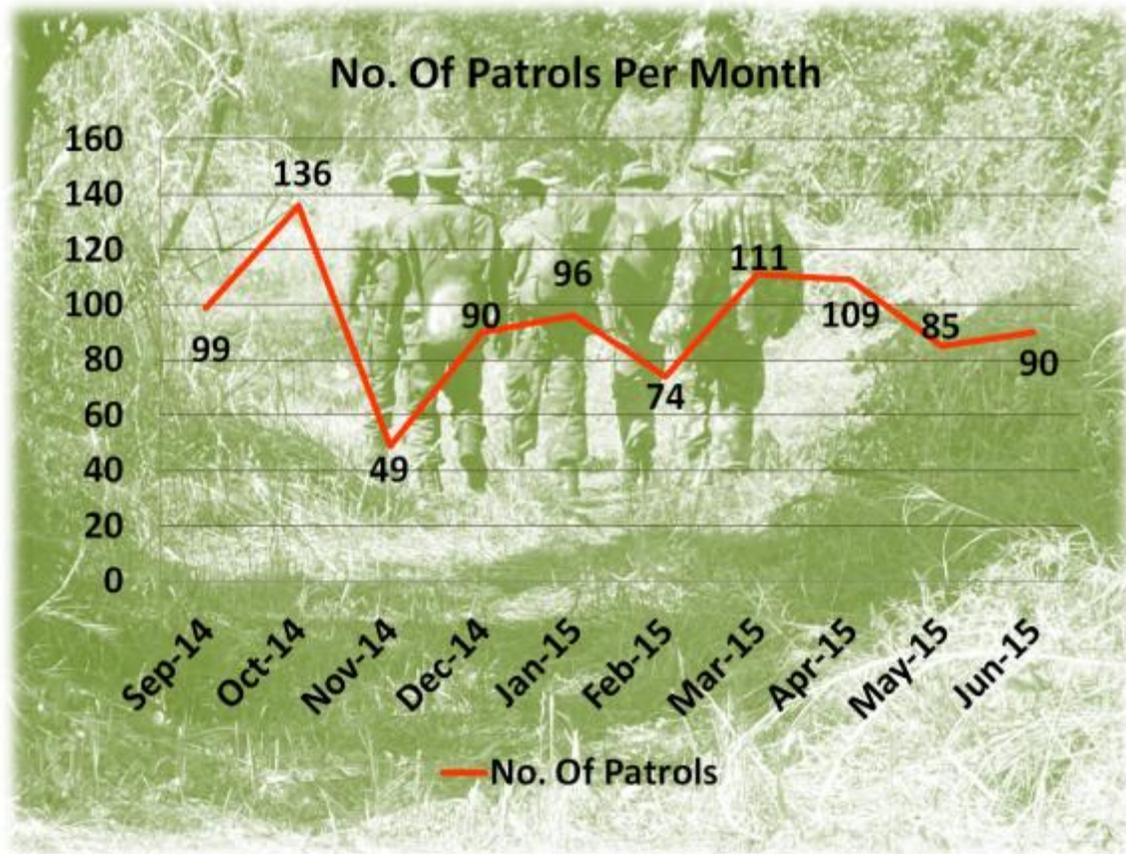
A volunteer called Jürgen visited WAG before my time. We somehow made contact and Jürgen and his Wife Leen visit in 2013 for a few weeks. We have remained in contact and they never forgot their Malawian family back here.

In January we received a box of fabulous donations. A really great camera SRL along with soccer uniforms which we will use for the schools and local football teams☺

Thanks to everyone who donated so kindly and special thanks to Jürgen and Leen. We look forward to your visiting us again maybe next year.



# ANTI POACHING DATA



**Total No of KM per Month**

Sept 14	Oct 14	Nov 14	Dec 14	Jan 15	Feb 15	Mar 15	Apr 15	May 15	Jun 15
908.79	1112.6	378.2	786.6	776.1	557.6	872.1	1487.2	704.3	687.3

**Total Number of Arrest 2015**

	Plank Cutter	Charcoal Burner	Gun Poacher	Bamboo cutter	Snare Poacher	Dog Poacher	Elephant Poaching	Protected Specimen	Ivory Dealer	Tree Cutting	Total
Jan 15					1			2			3
Feb 15											0
Mar 15					1						1
April 15			2					10*		2	14
May 15	4	13								1	17
June 15	1	12			1					1	15

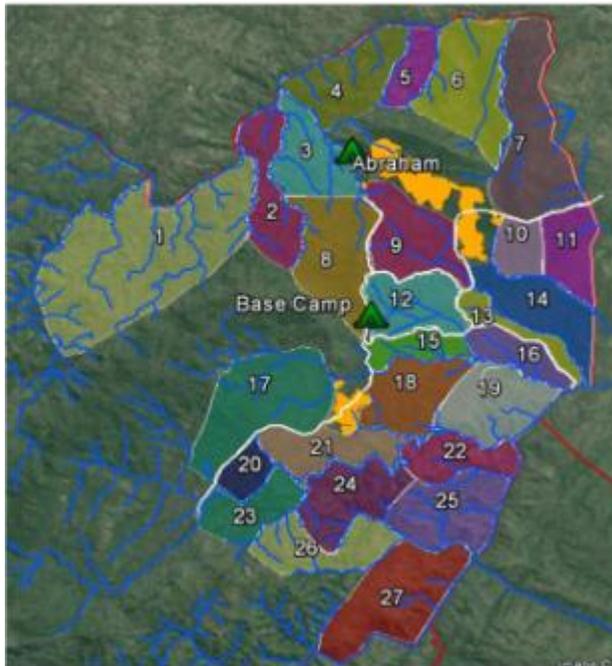
*\*people arrested in connection with removing elephant bones from the reserve and carving them to look like ivory, and selling or buying the fake ivory.*

# FOREST MAPPING AND FIRE ZONES

Thanks to Jim Randle we have some really great mapping and data that is helping us to manage and make plans for the forest.

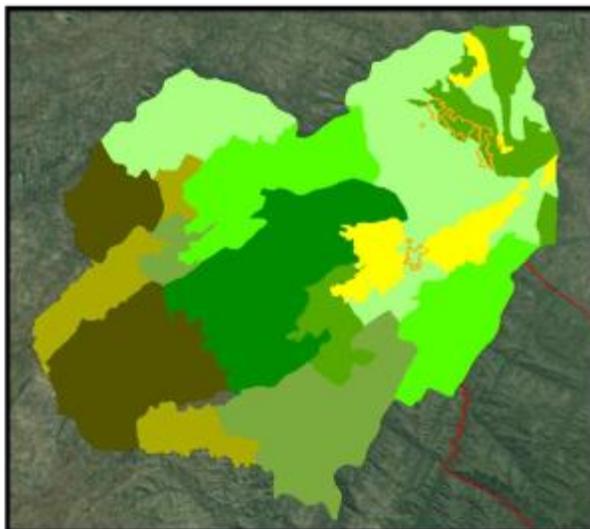
See below fire management zoning and habitat mapping.

## Thuma Fire Management Zones



Zone	Name	2015	2016	2017	2018
1	Udud East	Burn	Burn		
2	Chilombo			Burn	Burn
3	Mdize West	Burn	Burn		
4	Mdize East			Burn	Burn
5	Nambere	Burn	Burn		
6	Chilombo Hill			Burn	Burn
7	Chikato	Burn	Burn		
8	Mhira			Burn	Burn
9	Njatho Main Road	Burn	Burn		
10	Old Road			Burn	Burn
11	Lunga	Burn	Burn		
12	Myena Road South			Burn	Burn
13	River Road Mhambwe	Burn	Burn		
14	Mhambwe-Kawungu	Burn	Burn		
15	Tobofoto	Burn	Burn	Burn	Burn
16	River Road Njatho			Burn	Burn
17	Kachere			Burn	Burn
18	Capital Hill			Burn	Burn
19	Chigati	Burn	Burn		
20	Kachere South	Burn	Burn		
21	Lake View South	Burn	Burn		
22	Kalira			Burn	Burn
23	Domas North			Burn	Burn
24	Vomere South			Burn	Burn
25	Chilombo East	Burn	Burn		
26	4 Barabab	Burn	Burn		
27	Uthape West	Burn	Burn		

## Thuma Forest Reserve Vegetation Zones



Key	Vegetation Type	No. of Areas	Total Area (ha)	%
	Bamboo	5	160.5	0.8
Miombo/Brachystegia Woodland				
	Dense Miombo Woodland	1	2742	14.2
	Semi-Open Miombo	1	578	3.0
	Open Ridge-Dense Valley Miombo	2	2378	12.3
	Deforested Scrub Miombo	5	1441	7.5
	Deforested Bare Miombo	2	2738	14.2
	Steep Rock	1	41	0.2
Mixed Acacia/Combretum/Bauhinia Woodland				
	Dense Woodland	2	1195	6.2
	Semi-Open Woodland	5	4278	22.2
	Open Ridge-Dense Valley	2	2975	15.4
	Open Woodland/Grassland	6	938	4.9

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.

**Thank you to all our donors, supporters and friends for all your support and donations.**

Rea  
Abraham Foundation  
USFWS  
Save the Elephant/ Wildlife Conservation Network  
Ron Ulrich  
Judith Friedlaender  
Frelander foundation  
Kindy  
Steven Stone



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