

# WILDLIFE ACTION GROUP THUMA TELEGRAPH SEPTEMBER 2017

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Sept 2017

Dear Donors, Supporters and friends

The wind and cold days have gone and the sun rises in the morning and gets hotter and hotter until you feel like your brain is being fried.

The forest is dry, animal sightings easier and it is not possible to walk or drive without seeing some species of wildlife. Elephants are everywhere and now moving into areas which had previously been inhabited by charcoal burners.

As we reclaim these areas we find new delights of Thuma Forest, incredible valleys and views to die for, and despite the shocking deforestation we know this area will regenerate and the forest will once again become its former glory.

Most streams are still holding water, however the larger rivers are very low and Lake Malawi has receded over 1 meter.

Over the last few months we have been busy - early fire management of both areas, patrolling, arresting and prosecuting, lots of volunteers joined us, elephant identification, been involved with the first Tourism Expo in Malawi and doing lots of community and educational activities.

We have unfortunately lost one elephant to poaching (read further on.)

28th September saw my seventh year working with Wildlife Action Group. The seven years have gone so fast and when we look back on what has been achieved it is remarkable. We are still passionate and dedicated, and still pushing forward with new ways to protect the forest and the wildlife and finding new ways to support Malawi's Government.

I trust you will enjoy the updates and we really appreciate all your continued support.

Warmest regards

Lynn and Scouts



## Elephant News

I imagine every protected area will boast of having many elephants, the biggest tuskers, tuckless elephants or exceptional family bonds.

We have been monitoring our population for some years now and are always thrilled to be able to identify individuals and find and name new ones.

To date we can ID approx one third of our resident population.

With our continued monitoring we are seeing some very interesting habits and relationships which we believe makes this small resident escarpment population even more special than first thought.

Besides having a large number of females wearing only one or no tucks, and having our largest bull completely tuskless we saw last month a large bull accompanied by a small baby elephant, no others were in the area. I have not read to date of a bull fostering a young elephant...(see below)



### "Baby Sargeant"

One of our elephant families from "Group S" has a small baby who we have named "Sargeant". He is a typical baby and is loved and protected by his mom and the rest of the herd. However Sargeant has suffered a terrible injury which we think could be due to a crocodile bite. Almost half his trunk is

gone. We have seen him many times and he is a happy little chap and still sucking from his Mom and able to use what is left of the trunk. He is able to drink water from streams also. I suppose the biggest worry would be his ability to eat grasses etc as he becomes older.

We have had expert opinions from DSWT who have seen similar cases and they have advised us to leave him with his family and continue to monitor his progress, his chances are good.

If you wish to sponsor little Sargeant please visit our web site on [www.wag-malawi.org](http://www.wag-malawi.org) and hit that donate button.



#### "Mr M"

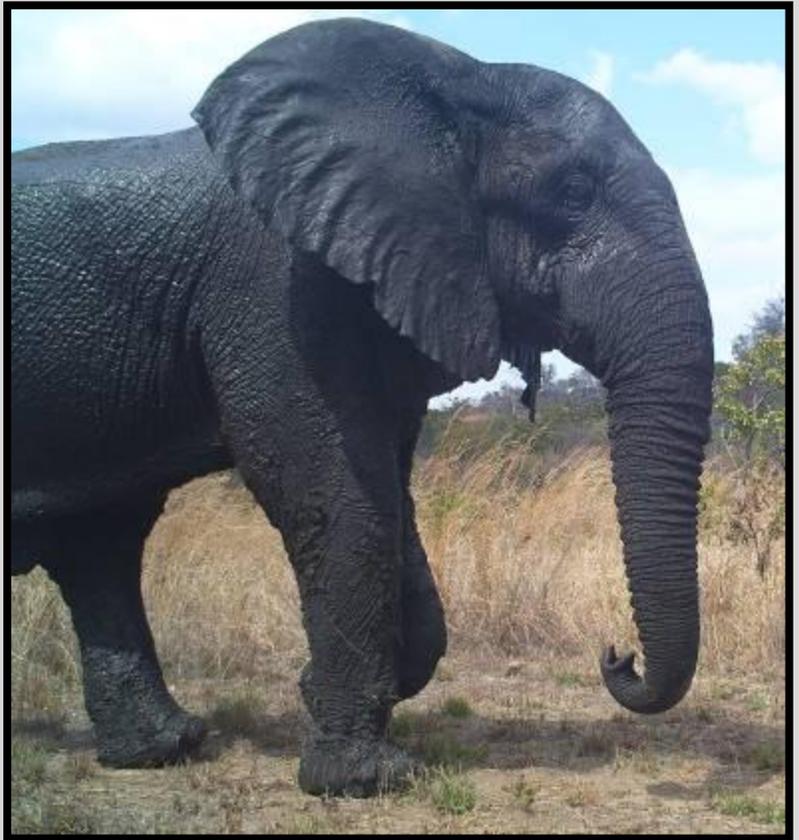
I think you remember the story of the elephant that had been relocated from Liwonde NP in 2016 to Nkhotakota. He somehow escaped and travelled south in February this year, maybe wanting to return to Liwonde. He was located very close to Thuma Forest reserve and our fence was lowered and which enabled him to enter. We have named him Mr M, due to his very distinctive M shape in one of his ears. Since his entrance into Thuma we have had many sightings of him.

Always he is alone and he had not strayed far from the area where he entered. Last month we were delighted to see he has joined up with a bachelor herd including Hastings and Moi. These huge giants have been seen now four times moving together and it seems his new friends are showing Mr M new places around Thuma.

#### The big bold "Chaka"

Chaka is our tuskless bull. He is our biggest and most clever elephant. He has been to date the main breeding bull and has had access to most of the females to mate. Possible explanation as why we

have so many single or tuskless elephants in Thuma. Chaka has been known to us since 2011. He has a sweet tooth and loves pumpkin, tomatoes, mangoes and maize. He has been one of the first elephants that I saw outside the reserve crop raiding. He is known for his ambush techniques which he practices on the scouts who were trying to move him back to the safety of the reserve and mitigate human conflict. He tends to run away then hide on the scouts, then trumpet at them and mock charge them. He is also known for his Houdini exploits and can somehow manage to break through the fence without breaking any of the wires. He is what one would call a lovable rogue! He visits camp several times a year and keeps me awake with his snoring;) Over the last month and a half Chaka has been seen many times alone and also with female herds. Obviously he is well known.



We are hoping to collar Chaka so we can monitor his movements especially to try control his leaving the reserve and eating locals crops.

Maybe you would like to help us to put a collar on Chaka? If so please visit our web site on [www.wag-malawi.org](http://www.wag-malawi.org) and donate to " Collar for Chaka"



### Elephant killed in Dedza Salima

In July we were very upset to find one elephant had been killed. Malawi's Wildlife Investigation Unit found two men trying to sell ivory. Both were arrested and after questioning it was found they had killed one of our elephants. The ivory was retrieved and we found a link to an illegal firearm which



had been used in a previous illegal hunting episode in Thuma. Investigation is ongoing and one suspect is still wanted for questioning. Both were brought

to court and where sentenced to 7 years jail sentence. This is so far the highest elephant killing case out come in Malawi.

### **THUMA WEST NEW CAMP**

WAG are delighted to announce that we will be building a new camp on the western side of Thuma Forest Reserve.

This area has been historically impossible to patrol for a few reasons a) far from our base camp 2) illegal person have been extremely aggressive towards scouts and it has been a running war when ever we go over that side.

Not anymore. Over the last 4 years we have been slowly conducting hit and run patrols. Arresting and leaving quickly.

From late last year we started seeing a change, which I believe is mainly due to the court sentences that have been handed out.



Prior to September last year charcoal burner would receive a small fine and walk free from the court room, they started getting custodial sentence without any option of a fine.

Volia!!! Things started to change.

It is rare to see any smoke coming from inside the reserve these days. We patrol freely all over the area which is relatively unknown to us.

A site has been selected to build a new camp and we thank USFWS for funding this exciting new project and also community projects to support our work in this area.

As you can see the forest has been devastated, all trees have been cut...but this Miombo woodland is very resilient and will regenerate if protected, which we plan to do. Within five years we will see a different story. Watch this space!

### **Sponsor a Scout**

Wildlife Action Group (WAG) have always had a "sponsor a scout" program which allows individuals (or groups of individuals) or large corporate (social responsibility) to become actively involved in

conservation protection through supporting a scout who works daily to protect the forest and wildlife at Thuma and Dedza Salima forest reserves. Our scouts patrol on foot 365 days per year, looking for illegal activity and also supporting and assisting communities living close to the forest through assisting with crop raiding elephants, education and outreach and income generating activities. This is not a job, but is more like a calling. It is a dangerous job and takes strong, brave men to be able to do it.

When you sponsor a scout you are also directly assisting not only our conservation efforts but also assisting a Malawian to support his family and educate his children including in most cases extended family members.

100% of your donation towards a scouts is received by that scout in the form of a salary, including boots, socks, t-shirts, sleeping bag, back pack, uniform, hat and water bottle.

When you sponsor a scout you will receive letters from that scout directly along with a photo of him and if you come visit us, your scout will bring you out to on patrols and also to meet his family so you can see the difference you are making.



If you are interested in sponsoring a scouts please contact [manager@wag-malawi.org](mailto:manager@wag-malawi.org).

Make a difference, club together with friends and family, tell your employer about this wonderful opportunity to help protect some of the last remaining escarpment elephants in Africa through sponsor or scout. I know you can do it. !

1 100 euro per scout!

10 people get together and pay 110 euro that's one scout salary for ONE year!

20 people paying 55 euro each that's one scout

salary for ONE year!

We are so thankful to our current sponsors who are named below, many who have been long term sponsors of their scout.

1. Maartin J van Strien
2. REA aV x 4
3. Margrit Harris (Nikela)
4. Edgar Mackels
5. Ingbert Palm, Anita Gommers, Sarah Palm, Oswald Palm, Samatha Palm, Kevin Palm, Andy Clayburn, Cecile Bowmer, Anja Pitz
6. Sascha Stock, Siegmund Dorner, Devin Johnson, Mathias Huttmann, Staphan Ritz, Dirk Thomaere, Peter Stoger, Malgorzata Broskewitz, Marie Berlin
7. 4. Mario Mackels, Nicole Maas, Peggy Bulat, Mandy Krahl, Isabel Wolfel, Thomas Freidrich, Jorg



Hennicke, Claudia Classen, Wim Gerrits, Gaby Andreas, Hazel Richardson,

8. Cris Ba Beek, Henn Walburga, Philipp Heck, Dajana Ban Beek, Bernd Van Beek, Ulli Keller, Marianne Biedermann, Ernst Paulis

### Creating awareness about the newly amended National Parks and Wildlife Act 2017

The Malawi Government (GoM) is committed to protecting the

future of its people, animals, birds, plants and trees and to ensure that there is a long term sustainable environment for all Malawians. To reflect how seriously the GoM regards crimes in these areas it has amended the National Parks and Wildlife Act and the Forestry Act has been reviewed to safeguard the protected areas. The amended National Park and Wildlife Act clearly indicate what can be done in the protected areas, what is classified as an offence and highlight the grave consequences of anyone convicted.



Wildlife Action Group have close relations with the local population living nearby to the reserve and when the National Park and Wildlife Act was amended in January 2017 and the sentences being handed out were very strong we felt it was very important that we brought these changes directly to the Traditional Leaders who in turn could inform their subjects and then people could make informed choices about taking the chance to enter a protected area and break the law, knowing if caught it could have very serious detrimental affects on not only them but their families.

Communities living close to protected areas are directly affected by wildlife both negatively and positively. As such they are well placed to be the guardians of the areas for their families and on behalf of the Nation of Malawi.

Equally, it is because they have direct access to these protected areas and the resources, these communities are most likely to break the law and suffer the consequences of being caught. Breaking the law has huge long term detrimental effects on everyone and it impacts the environment for the future generations of Malawians.

A booklet was designed to create awareness of these newly amended laws and the ramifications of breaking them. It also promotes the benefits of upholding the laws - preserving Malawi's natural heritage, mitigating climate change, securing the future of the forests and wildlife for subsequent generations and to promote tourism. With this handbook, traditional leaders, have promised to embrace this initiative, inform all their chiefs and villagers and work hard with local and national authorities to protect forests and the wildlife that live there.





WAG visited four districts surrounding both Thuma and Dedza Forest Reserve and met with over 200 Senior chiefs presenting the amended act. We also covered such topics as human elephant conflict and reward for information, asking people to assist us with any information regarding anyone who is known or seen to be carrying out illegal activity inside the forests. The meetings were interactive,

videos shown (thanks to LWT for allowing us to use their video Elephant I miss you), presentations from Salima police prosecutor and first grade magistrate Kantiki who accompanied us throughout and we tried to address many people's concerns regarding the Act and other questions they may have had.

As well as meeting all senior chiefs (GVH), we distributed over 1800 booklet which had been translated into local Chichewa language so every



chief under each GVH, would also receive a copy of the new act and could in turn inform their villagers.

This incentive was really welcomed at all the meetings. 100% of the people we met did not know that the law had been changed or in most cases what the law actually was.

The meetings have not only informed



people of the amended Act but also established sound relations between law enforcers and local communities.

We wish to thank Elephant Crisis Fund for supporting the financing of this project and also a big thanks to MSK Media in Germany (Hendrick and Nadine who worked day and night to design this fantastic booklet).



Thank you to all our donors, supporters, the volunteers who assisted us this year and of course the team who are here on the ground day and night working hard to continue this work.



Ronald Ulrich  
Friedman French  
Foundation  
Tracy and Donald  
Goldenberg

Kindy French  
Judith Friedlaender  
Steven Stone