

# Thuma Telegraph

Feb 2012

Wildlife Action Group



Dear Friends

*So many things have happened since Decemeber I don't know where to start!*

*After our last newsletter we have received new sponsorships for the next year for some of our scouts which is fantastic news. Thank you all so much.*

*We have had some friends visit us. Jurgen and Leen from Belgium, Iris from Holland (it is the second time to visit for Jurgen and Iris) and Christine from Germany, so our camp was buzzing with laughter and lots of activity!*

*In this newsletter we have lots of photos so you can see what we have been up to over the last two months and show how a little bit of money can make such a big difference and go a long way ☺.*

*Our local community have been very much involved in each activity generating very welcome income for many, with the local carpenters making beds and tables for us, local women painting the our buildings in traditional fashion, at another village we have started a tree nursery planting over 10,000 tree seeds. We rebuilt and refurbished the old scout camp (now the new volunteer camp). Our staff slept on mats but with a donation form Holland they all now have new proper beds with mattresses to sleep on.*

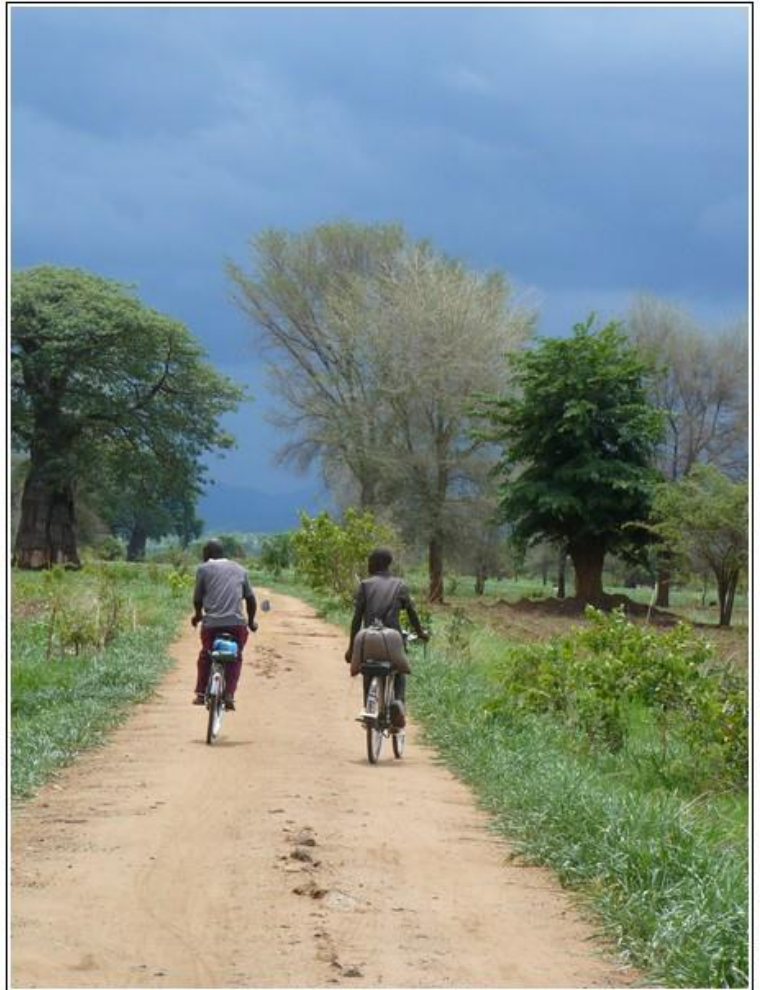
*Our Belgium friends donated money along with lots of school materials. So we were able to donate exercise books for every child along (1500 copy books) to two schools over near our Dedza camp along with other educational materials such as pens, coluring pencils, toys, footballs and lots more!*

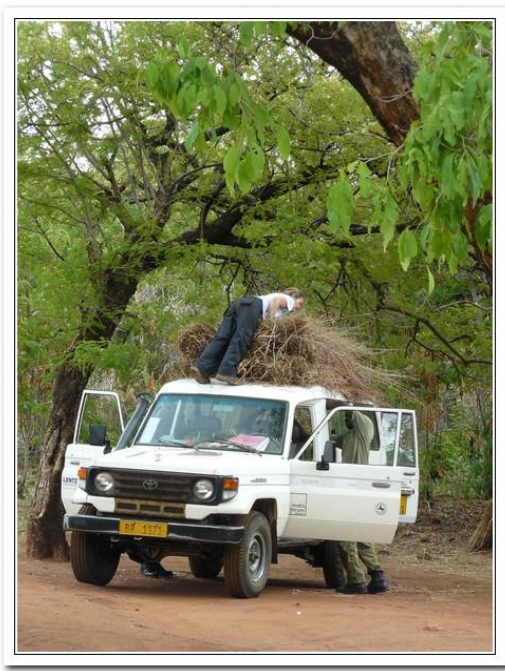
*It has been an amazing few months.*

*Hope you like the photos, we enjoyed taking them and participating in the activities.*

Yours sincerely

Lynn





## ***VOLUNTEER CAMP FROM THE DUTCH!***

Everyone of us has a special day once a year! Our birthday! Most of us receive gifts from friends and family!

Iris an ex volunteer from Holland celebrated her birthday in September but she asked her friends and family to donate some money to help her with a small NGO in Malawi! WAG!

Iris had visited us in 2010 and has stayed in touch with us ever since. She had a vision of doing a small project with us which would enable us to have new quarters to house our volunteers at Thuma.

We had some old buildings that were in a state of disrepair so Iris got on a plane and visited us again for 3.5 weeks in December along with the generous donations she received as her birthday

presents.

The work began in earnest! We had eight traditionally built houses that needed walls to be repaired, they needed new roofs, floors needs polishing, walls painted, furnishing made and paid for, mattresses, chairs, tables to be made, mats to be bought for the floors, rope and bamboo to be collected from the forests, two different types of grasses were bought from our local population, grills to be made in town and shower drums bought and wielded. We had list upon list of things to do and buy.

The full team put our backs into the project (scout helping after they returned from patrols) and within the time frame we have a very nice comfortable volunteer/tourist camp which enables us to have up to eight people staying with us at one time! Amazing!

**(above) Lynn collecting grass for the roofs**



**Iris repairing the walls (above)**

**A lady paints with her hands onto the wall using charcoal with water salt and flour. Her children watch and help. (right)**





**Ladies pounding the charcoal.**



**Painting the walls.**



**Even the children got painted☺**



Before with new roofs



After



**New beds, mattresses, blankets, mats and chairs**

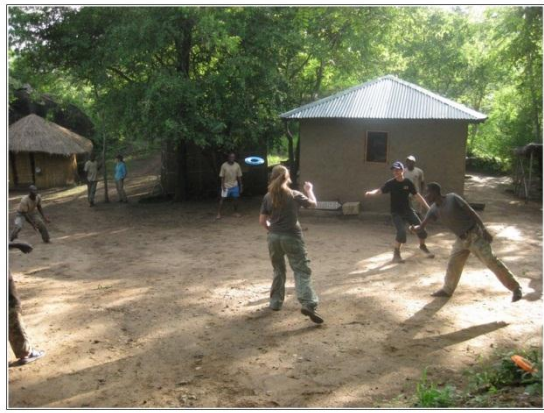
## ***WAG STAFF RECEIVE SOME GIFTS***

Over the Christmas period some friends and supporters from England, Holland and Belgium donated WAG staff some amazing gifts.

We received by post from the UK t-shirts from Jenny Potter with our logo and name on them which are being used as part of our uniform. They look really smart and are really appreciated. Thank you.

From Belgium they received personal t-shirts, caps, each WAG member received a watch (for most this is the first time to own such an item), bracelets for their wives, a football and freezbe to play with.

### **Jurgen, Lynn and scouts playing freezbe**





**Watches and bracelets from Belgium Scouts with new caps, t-shirts, watches with Jurgen**

Thank you to everyone all of these gifts were received with much excitement and we really appreciate you all thinking of us and our generous gifts.



**WAG logo T-shirts received for Christmas day from UK**



**Scouts testing new mattresses!**

WAG staff live in camp in extreme conditions for up to 25 days per month. Away from family and friends deep in the bush. We do patrols daily in tough terrain and return to camp to cook over fires and with little comfort. Our living quarters have been somewhat lacking and it has been something we have been adding to little by little over the last year or so. In Dec/ Jan with donations from Holland our living quarters have been supplied with beds and mattresses to all our staff along with a table and bench where they can eat in comfort together.

## ***OUR 1<sup>ST</sup> BABY OF 2012***



A photo of our first WAG staff new baby this year. A baby boy! Maybe a future WAG scout! This is child number three for Kickar(scout) and his wife. They already have a boy and a girl. Kickar happened to be at home for this birth. Congratulations to Kickar and his family.

## **OUR FIRST HOME GROWN CUCUMBER**

Back in Oct / Nov we started our own vegetable garden. We made a big cage so animals could not get in. We planted carrots, onions, eggplant, tomatoes, peas, lettuce, beetroot and cucumber. Peas did not succeed, however, below is our first cucumber which tasted really good and all the other plants are coming along really well.



# TREE PLANTING

*BY Christine*

Every guide book tells about the politeness, the warmth and the friendliness of the Malawians.

I discovered how true this is when we went to start a tree planting project with WAG in the local village of Mvululu near Thuma Forest Reserve.

On Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> January myself, Lynn, Juergen and Leen went to Muvulu village to start a tree nursery. The seeds are of a tree called Jathropa known

for its many uses including supplying fruit to eat, used to manufacture the bio-fuel and its success in many countries to deter elephants and bush pigs from destroying and raiding gardens.

On arrival it was very obvious, that the people in the village aren't used to visitors – especially not white ones. The whole village was curious to meet us. And while everybody took seat on the ground, we were invited to sit in comfort on handmade chairs. I felt a bit ashamed and was relieved when the planting started.

At first everyone was quiet as we filled soil in little black plastic bags. There is a knack to filling these as they are open both ends and everyone was keen to show us how to do this correctly after our first unsuccessful attempts.

Soon the whole village began to work, women arrived from somewhere balancing buckets of soil on their heads, men placed seeds in the soil and in no time we were surrounded by children, who were eager to help.

These children were just amazing. Some stuffed the soil in bags themselves, others waited patiently to get full bags from us, escorting them proudly to the planting-side. It was like a competition, who can support us best and do the work better. Even the smallest offered their help. Everyone wanted to be near us and perhaps touching our white hands as if by mistake. No one could talk English, so we communicated non-verbal with facial expressions, hands and feet. I was soon being used as quality-control inspector and every child was holding the filled bags under my nose, looking hopefully at me and wasn't





satisfied till I told them the magic words: “yes, that’s good!” Once that was said their little faces out light up with a wide smile that could melt ice. They were keen on getting to know our names and introducing themselves to us. I had to repeat every single name and they laughed so hard that they had tears coming out of their eyes due to my pronunciation. One time I must repeated something completely wrong. I think I said something like ‘chimschemba’. To my embarrassment every villager was laughing and turning his head towards me. I suppose, I said something quite slippery!

Every villager loved to be photographed. Once we took a photo we had to then show them the pictures on the camera-display. Seeing and recognizing their faces brought much excitement and laughter, it was like a birthday present for them. Some may have seen their reflection for the first time?.

That afternoon we planted 3700 trees (still more to be planted) and made friends with the whole village. As we left the village the clouds rolled in and it started to rain lightly, a sign and hope for us that this project will be successful and the trees will grow. It was a stunning experience, one that I will never forget.



## ***EXERCISE BOOKS FOR ALL***

Jurgen and his beautiful wife Leen visited WAG base camp for a few days. This was a visit planned for two years. Over this period they collected educational items, toys, money, clothes, footballs, balloons, and many more items for Malawi. There were newspaper articles written about their trip to Malawi and their mission while here. Jurgen visited us in 2005 and Thuma stayed in his mind and he wanted to bring his wife here to see the place and also help with an argo based project in the local villages. We discussed many possibilities regarding what we could





do with all these items. We could have gone and just given them to a school but we decided that it would be more fun if we could hold a football and netball tournament with two schools and make a day of it with plenty of fun. On Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> January we headed over to Chacunda village near our Dedza camp. Here we met the teachers of the two schools. While there, they told us about the daily challenges they meet and the big difference that these donations would make to them. One school has 950 children in it and only seven teachers! In



this school they have 5 class rooms of which 2 do not have a roof! This means when it rains they cannot teach the children.(above) **classroom with no roof** The standard one student's who have just started school do not have exercise book or pencils so cannot learn to write as they have no materials to use. Luckily Jurgen's donations allowed us to purchase a copy book for each child. On arrival WAG scouts took control of the crowds of children, putting them

into lines to hand out balloons to every child there was enough for one balloon for each child. We helped them blow up the balloons so they could play with them, for those who wanted. Some children came back to get a second balloon, but WAG scouts played games with them asking them to turn out their pockets to check if they had received one already, there was much fun and laughter all round. Then the football match started. **Above - WAG scouts handing out balloons** We were given pitch side seats with the best view. In each corner the girl supporters sang and danced, clapping hands to encourage their team to score. While on the pitch the talent and stamina of the players was outstanding. Most had no foot wear and play in bear feet. Some of the moves would have impressed Ronaldo or Ferguson himself, with back flips and impressive headers all over the place. We then had a netball match for the girls and then both schools were presented with the goodies. All the children crowded around in expectation to see! A great day was had by all and WAG hopes to continue to support schools like this around the boundaries of both reserves in the future.

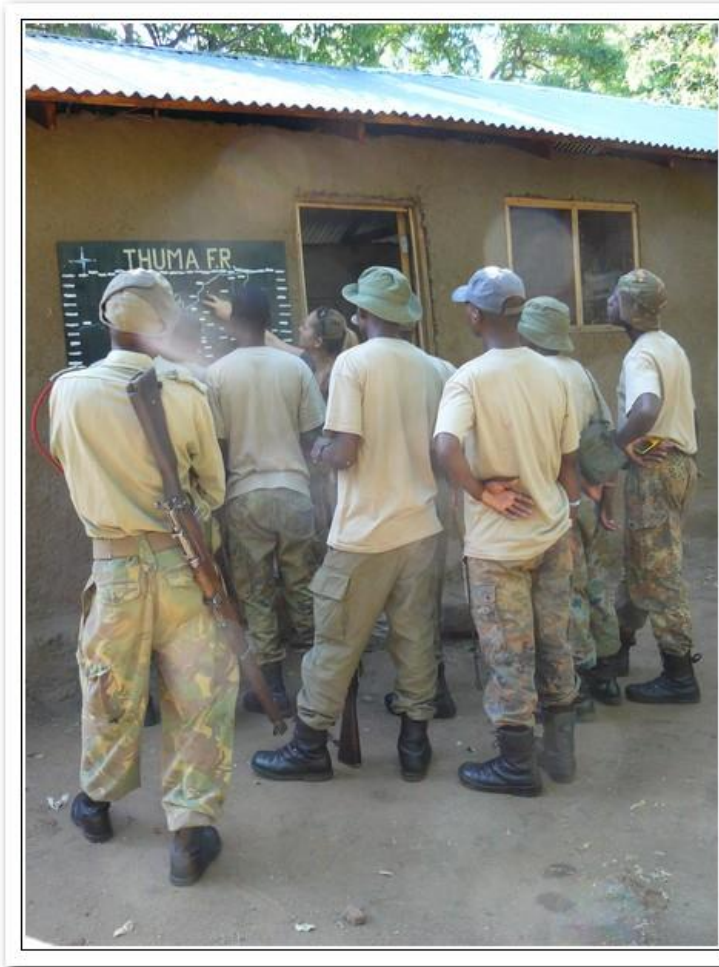


# PATROLS AND PIT TRAPS

Despite our visitors and all the different projects our daily patrols are still attended to. We cannot lose sight of what we are here for and what we are supposed to do. We over a period

of 4 weeks we found and filled some pit traps. This is the season for them and they are dug by persons with the intention to capture some animals. They dig a very large hole some are 3.5 mtrs deep and then they cover the hole with grasses so that some unsuspecting animal will fall down it. In the past baby elephants have been found dead in them but mainly they are meant for buffalo, kudu or smaller antelope. A ranger who was working with us actually fell into one and was lucky enough not to have seriously injured himself.

When we find such a thing we then must fill them in so that an animal cannot fall down it. Over the last 5 weeks we have found 6 traps! So someone or a group of people have been very busy inside the reserve! All have been filled and we continue to check all areas

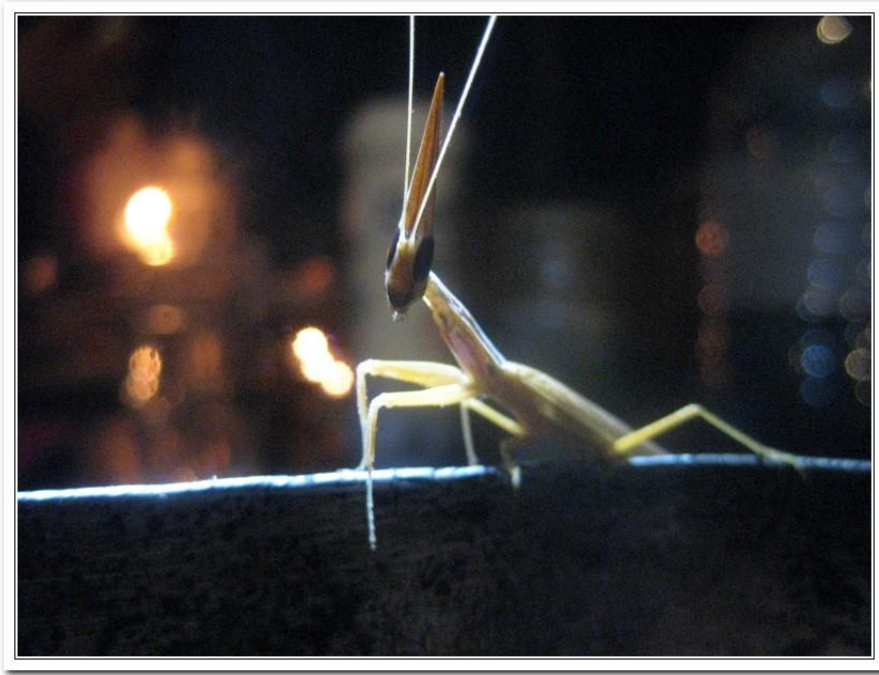


for new ones.

**(Above- Lynn and scouts discussing daily patrols)**



**Pit trap found in Jan 2012 being filled by WAG scouts**



**Above: while having dinner one night we were visited by an alien! ☺ He sat on the edge of our pot and watched us eat, allowed us to take some photos and then left If anyone knows what insect this is we would be delighted to know pls (he looked like a relative to the praying mantas???)**

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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.

**Please help us save**

**MALAWI'S ELEPHANTS  
SPONSOR A SCOUT  
EXTEND OUR ELECTRIC FENCE**

**DONATE WHAT YOU CAN:**

**[www.wag-malawi.org](http://www.wag-malawi.org)**