

# IMPACT REPORT 2022-2023



A force for nature in Malawi

**OUR VISION:** A FUTURE  
IN WHICH MALAWI'S  
WILDLIFE AND WILD  
PLACES CAN THRIVE.

**OUR MISSION:** TO SAVE  
WILDLIFE, CAMPAIGN FOR  
CONSERVATION JUSTICE  
AND INSPIRE PEOPLE TO  
VALUE AND PROTECT  
NATURE IN MALAWI.



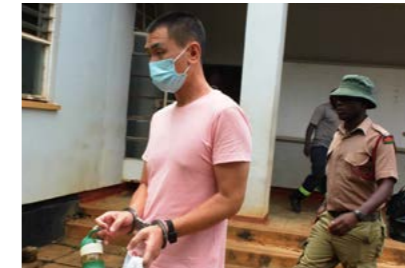
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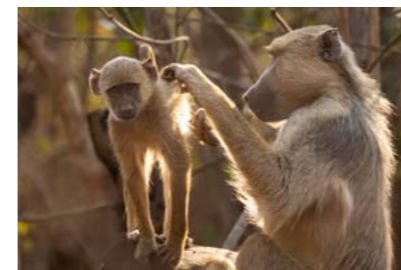
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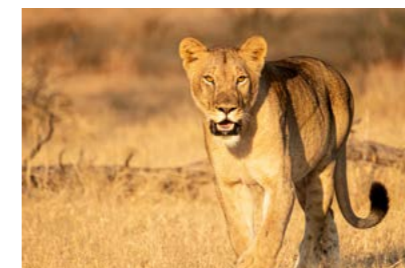
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## A MESSAGE FROM THE CEO

Malawi has been on a remarkable journey over the better part of the last decade. After being singled out as a notorious transit hub for ivory trafficking in 2016, it now has some of the world's toughest laws on wildlife crime and, over the last few years, has earned international acclaim for putting members of major trafficking syndicates behind bars. Most recently it imprisoned several international wildlife traffickers for substantial money laundering – one of the first times convictions of this nature have been secured against high-level wildlife traffickers in Southern Africa and a landmark case for Malawi.

New research we released this year presents encouraging evidence that Malawi's tough approach is deterring illegal wildlife trade. Ivory trafficking dropped by 44% between 2017 and 2020 – a major achievement for a country that was once implicated in some of the world's largest ivory seizures. Meanwhile, national populations of iconic species like elephants and rhinos are on the rise, after suffering decades of decline.

It has been inspiring to be part of this rare conservation 'success story'. In addition to working with government partners to tackle wildlife crime at a policy level, we also provide a lifeline for injured, orphaned and trafficked animals both at our wildlife rescue centre and through our mobile, field-based rescue units. Our dedicated pangolin rescue unit – one of the busiest in Africa – continues to face high demand, and this year we were excited to confirm the first wild pangolin birth we have ever recorded among our released pangolins.

We were also thrilled to open new educational facilities at Lilongwe Wildlife Centre. After almost 10 years of delivering mainly classroom-based teaching, our new programme – set within the unique forest setting – provides hands-on experiential learning for youth of all ages. At the same time, we continued to collaborate with the Malawi Institute of Education to incorporate some of our learning modules into the national primary school curriculum – an exciting initiative with potential to reach millions of children across the country.

As ever, my final word goes to our wide family of donors and partners who continue to make this work possible. To every one of you – thank you. We hope you enjoy reading about our work over the last year, which shows how much can be achieved through our joint passion and commitment.

**Jonny Vaughan, MBE**  
CEO



# THE YEAR AT A GLANCE

APRIL 2022 - MARCH 2023

## SAVING WILDLIFE ►



We are a force for wildlife, rescuing and rehabilitating animals and releasing as many as possible back into the wild.

- 132 animals** rescued
- 204 animals** cared for at Lilongwe Wildlife Centre
- 101 animals** released back into the wild
- 191 clinical procedures** performed
- 99 animals** (all threatened species) monitored per month in protected areas

## EDUCATING AND ENGAGING COMMUNITIES ►



We are a force for knowledge, inspiring our next generation to value the world around us and mobilising communities to defend nature.

- 6,080 children, 509 teachers** and **183 schools** participated in our education programmes
- 21 teachers** trained to deliver environmental education and micro projects
- 7 of our modules** incorporated into a new environmental education learning manual for primary schools

## PROMOTING CONSERVATION JUSTICE ►

We are a force for justice, campaigning for an end to illegal wildlife trade and other environmental crimes.

- 86 higher-level wildlife trafficking convictions** secured
- 88% conviction rate for offences against Listed Species** (elephants, pangolins, rhinos) with 91% of convictions resulting in a custodial sentence
- Average custodial sentence of 5 years** and maximum sentence of 15 years (for offences against Listed Species)
- 91% conviction rate for forestry cases**



We are a force for progress, campaigning across society and partnering with policy makers to make conservation a national priority.

- 43 journalists** trained on a range of issues related to wildlife crime
- 321 press, TV and radio articles** secured on wildlife and forest crime
- 3 national campaigns** delivered on conservation and wildlife and forest crime issues



## CAMPAIGNING FOR CHANGE ►

# WILDLIFE LAW ENFORCEMENT GAINS MOMENTUM



This year we were proud to continue supporting the Government of Malawi to make further gains in the fight against wildlife crime. A key milestone in early 2023 was the conviction of three individuals for financial crimes related to wildlife trafficking - including laundering over half a million US dollars. The perpetrators included the wife, daughter and son-in-law of Lin Yunhua, the kingpin of one of southern Africa's most prolific wildlife trafficking syndicates (the 'Lin-Zhang syndicate'), who was sentenced to 14 years in September 2021 for multiple wildlife crime offences after running illicit operations out of Malawi for over a decade.

In addition to these landmark cases, a larger body of evidence confirms that Malawi is making encouraging progress in the fight against the illegal wildlife trade. Last year we published a review of wildlife crime court cases in Malawi between 2017 and 2020. The report revealed that elephant-related cases – and therefore ivory trafficking – dropped by 44% during the period, an encouraging sign that Malawi's robust programme of law enforcement is serving as an effective deterrent. Indeed, the report showed that 94% of cases related to Listed Species (i.e. those with the highest level of protection such as pangolins, rhinos and elephants) resulted in custodial sentences averaging 5.25 years – a sharp increase from the time prior to Malawi's current laws when the average sentence was a fine of just \$40.



The report also found that improved law enforcement at borders, including by the Wildlife Detection Dog Unit, has made the illegal export of wildlife products through Malawi's international airports almost impossible. This is especially encouraging given that, less than a decade ago, Malawi was identified as a key transit hub for ivory trafficking in southern Africa.

While this report covered case outcomes between 2017 and 2020, more recent data tells a similarly positive story, with conviction rates for Listed Species reaching 88% in 2022-23. Overall, these gains represent years of commitment from the multiple agencies involved in the development and enforcement of Malawi's wildlife laws. Their combined efforts are, undoubtedly, making Malawi an increasingly difficult place for wildlife criminals to operate.



# NEW POWERS TO FIGHT FOREST CRIME ▶

Rampant deforestation is taking a devastating toll on Malawi, affecting food security, power generation, environmental health and livelihoods. This crisis was brought into sharp focus in early 2023 when southern Malawi was hit by a deadly cyclone. Cyclone Freddy killed hundreds of people, and whole communities lost their homes, with experts citing deforestation as an exacerbating factor in the disaster.

Government-led efforts to protect the country's remaining forest cover are being driven by a strengthened Forestry Act, which was amended in 2020 following advocacy led by the Malawi Parliamentary Conservation Caucus and LWT. The revised Act has created powers for an associated programme of legislative reform, which LWT is supporting as part of a large-scale project, co-funded by the British and US Governments, that aims to reduce demand for wood fuel, promote alternative energy sources, improve management of forest resources and reduce land-based emissions.

During the last year, in addition to sensitising key stakeholders across both government and civil society on the revised legislation, we also supported the development and dissemination of new tools to improve implementation of the Forestry Act. This included the Government's new Forest Crime Disruption Strategy, a critical tool for driving the country's multi-agency approach to forest crime and ensuring that the provisions in the Act translate



into real protection for Malawi's forests. The strategy provides an overview of the current enforcement landscape, presents key achievements and outlines the enforcement interventions that are required to successfully disrupt forest crime and, more specifically, the illegal charcoal trade.

In addition, we developed new Sentencing Guidelines for Forestry Crimes, designed to support consistent, fair and deterrent sentencing across courts. We also supported the development of a new reference guide which provides practical advice for investigators and prosecutors on common issues surrounding forfeiture of assets in forestry and wildlife cases.

Our work with the Forestry Accountability Journalism Initiative also continued. The second edition of a dossier - containing in-depth stories, expert opinion pieces and critical facts and figures on the nation's deepening deforestation crisis - will be published later in 2023, following the publication of the first edition in early 2022.



# A RECORD YEAR FOR WILDLIFE RESCUES ►

In 2022 our team at Lilongwe Wildlife Centre rescued 158 animals – the highest number of animal intakes we have ever registered in a year. This is almost double the number of animals rescued just four years ago (83 in 2018), reflecting a steady increase in demand for our wildlife rescue and welfare work in recent years.

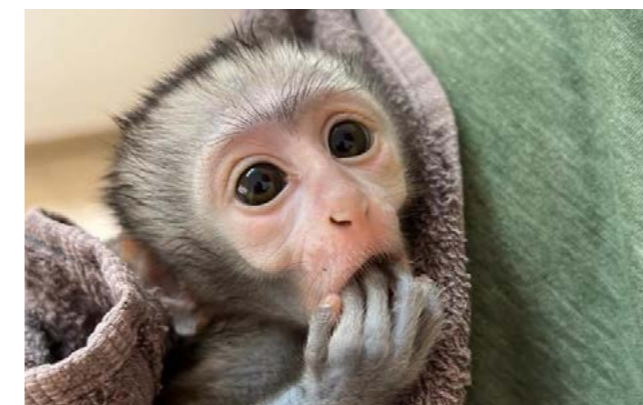
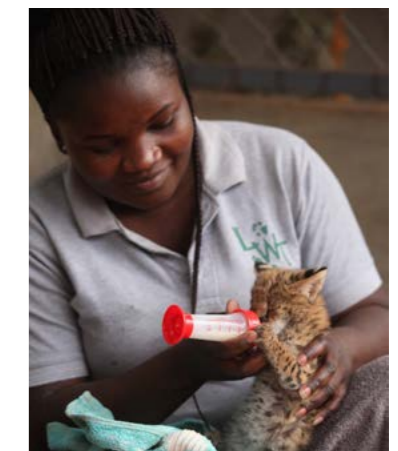


Our pangolin rescue and rehabilitation programme is one of the busiest in Africa, with pangolin numbers making up a third of all of our animal intakes.



Almost all of the pangolins we receive have been confiscated from the illegal wildlife trade. As a result, they often arrive with severe, often life-threatening injuries. Sadly, not all survive. Those that do undergo an intensive rehabilitation programme under the expert care of our small team of dedicated Pangolin Technicians. Our veterinary team has also undertaken several complex surgeries on pangolins, typically to amputate limbs caught in snares, with remarkable success; in almost all of these cases the pangolins have recovered and been released back into the wild. We are consolidating and sharing our growing expertise on pangolin care through scientific papers and presentations with the wider veterinary community.

Last year, in response to growing numbers of rescued pangolins, we also opened a secondary rehabilitation 'hub' in the north of Malawi. Located in a protected national park, this site occupies a large area of natural bush, which provides better foraging habitat for pangolins - a critical factor for their successful rehabilitation. It also means that once pangolins have recovered they can be released straight into the park without undergoing further travel and stress. We have also expanded our work through a similar hub in a national park in the south, where we have trained a small team in emergency first response for pangolins (and other species) needing urgent care in that region.



Other rescues over the last year have included five serval kittens – all of which are now nearing the end of their rehabilitation and will soon be released – and a tiny hyena cub that arrived just one week old. After an intensive rehabilitation, the hyena – now a strong, healthy juvenile – is slowly being integrated with two other adult hyenas at Lilongwe Wildlife Centre.



# A NEW APPROACH TO ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION ►

Last year our brand new environmental education centre opened at Lilongwe Wildlife Centre, with a special launch event presided over by the Ministry of Education. The centre is the focal point of a new immersive education programme, which encourages children to learn through hands-on exploration and discovery, right in the heart of our forested wilderness area. Since opening the site, more than 6,000 schoolchildren from over 180 schools across Malawi have visited the new centre and participated in environmental education lessons.



Other facilities at the education area include an elevated boardwalk to give a 'canopy eye-view' of the river and forest, a series of wildlife sculptures made out of recycled materials, a playground and new interpretive signage installed along a network of forest trails. Our education programme is delivered through an action-learning approach across eight different lessons covering everything from wildlife crime and biodiversity to climate change and waste management. Students take part in fun, experiential activities that include guided forest walks, drama, story-telling, games and hands-on conservation work.

One of our site-based conservation projects is monitoring river water quality, run in partnership with citizen science organisation Earthwatch. Teachers and students from schools around Lilongwe have been trained on water quality testing and are now collecting data at sites along the Lingadzi River. The Government will include the data for reporting on Sustainable Development Goal 6 on clean water. We are also supporting a small number of schools in Lilongwe to implement green projects such as orchards and vegetable gardens.

Last year we also continued working closely with the Malawi Institute of Education to incorporate seven of our core learning modules into the national primary school curriculum. After undertaking an audit of the existing curriculum, the taskforce responsible for this project, including LWT, is now developing a comprehensive 'sourcebook' – for use by teachers and students – which will be piloted in 2023-24. With an estimated three million primary school children in Malawi, this initiative has the potential to create change on a huge scale.



# OTHER HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE PAST YEAR

## Emergency lifeline for wildlife

Our Wildlife Emergency Response Unit saves animals injured by bullets, traps and snares across Malawi. Last year we received an emergency call about an elephant spotted in Vwaza Marsh Wildlife Reserve with a debilitating snare on its foot. After the elephant was darted our team managed to remove the snare and treat the wound, with the animal making a full recovery. In total, we removed snares from five elephants last year, and also placed tracking collars on two elephants as part of a research study into human-elephant conflict.

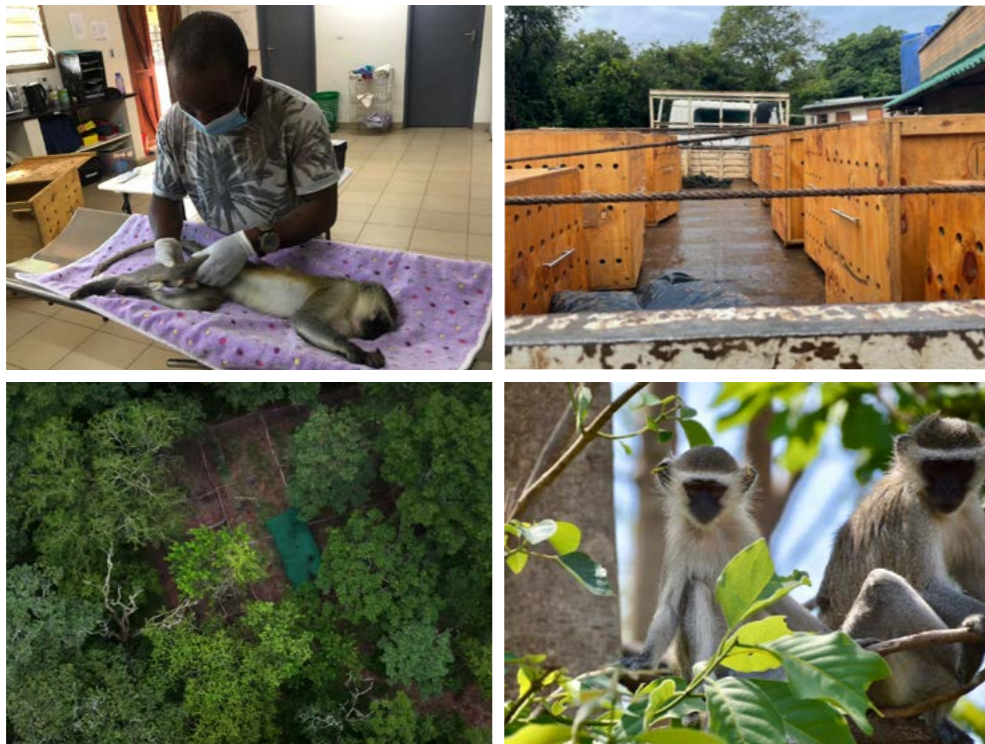


## Post-release pangolin monitoring

Post-release monitoring of released pangolins using tracking devices continues to deepen our understanding of their ecology and how these animals adapt to their new environments. On several occasions, tracking devices alerted us to the fact that pangolins were in dangerous proximity to an electrified fence line, enabling us to retrieve and re-locate the animals to safer areas (accidental electrocution is one of the biggest threats to pangolins after poaching). All tracked pangolins receive health assessments and weigh-ins for a six-month period after release. During one such check we were delighted to discover that released pangolin May had recently given birth to a baby – the first wild birth we have ever recorded among our released pangolins and encouraging evidence that pangolins are not only surviving, but also reproducing, post rescue and release.

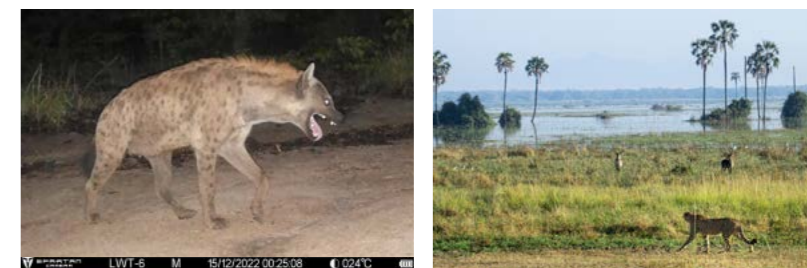
## Vervet troop release

In early 2023 we released a troop of vervet monkeys into Kasungu National Park. Most of the troop members had been rescued from the illegal pet and bushmeat trades, and our team worked hard over the last couple of years to gradually integrate each monkey to form this cohesive group at Lilongwe Wildlife Centre. The troop spent a few weeks in a special pre-release enclosure in Kasungu acclimatising to their new environment before being fully released.



## Monitoring biodiversity in Liwonde National Park

Our research team conducts biodiversity monitoring in Liwonde National Park to ensure that wildlife populations remain stable and healthy. During the past year they logged over 2,500 reports through a combination of radio tracking, camera trapping and visual sightings. Camera trapping alone enabled us to identify 17 new hyenas and capture sightings of rare species, including an African palm civet and a Rüppell's vulture. We also assisted with the capture of five lions to fit tracking collars which will enable closer monitoring of the park's growing lion prides, and we supported the park's biennial aerial survey, resulting in a total count of 14,082 animals.



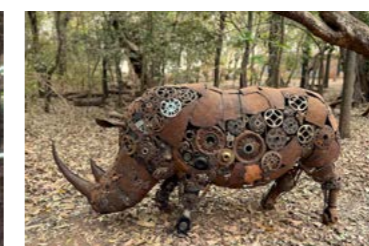
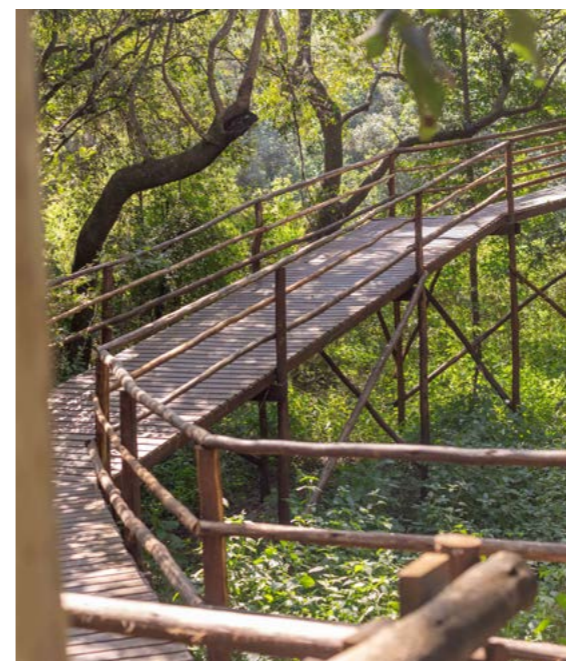
## Vulture research

We continue to work with regional partners to gather data on the movement, breeding and foraging of Critically Endangered vultures in and around Malawi. To date we have deployed 23 tracking units and 53 wing tags on vultures from four national parks, resulting in records of vulture movement across Malawi, Zambia, Tanzania, Mozambique and South Africa – and the first recorded sighting of an Endangered Egyptian vulture in Malawi. As poisoning is one of the main threats to vultures, we have trained over 90 rangers across five parks in vulture species identification and wildlife poisoning response. We are also conducting interviews with communities to understand more about the use of vulture parts in traditional medicine, and will soon be supporting the development of Malawi's first Vulture Conservation Action Plan.



## Lilongwe Wildlife Centre

Further developments at Lilongwe Wildlife Centre included the construction of a second elevated boardwalk offering scenic views over the Lingadzi River, a wildlife sculpture trail and new interpretive signage which showcases some of the site's unique ecological features and conveys critical conservation messages. We also continued to work on a forest management strategy and a new tourism development plan with a view to enhancing the ecological and economic potential of the site.





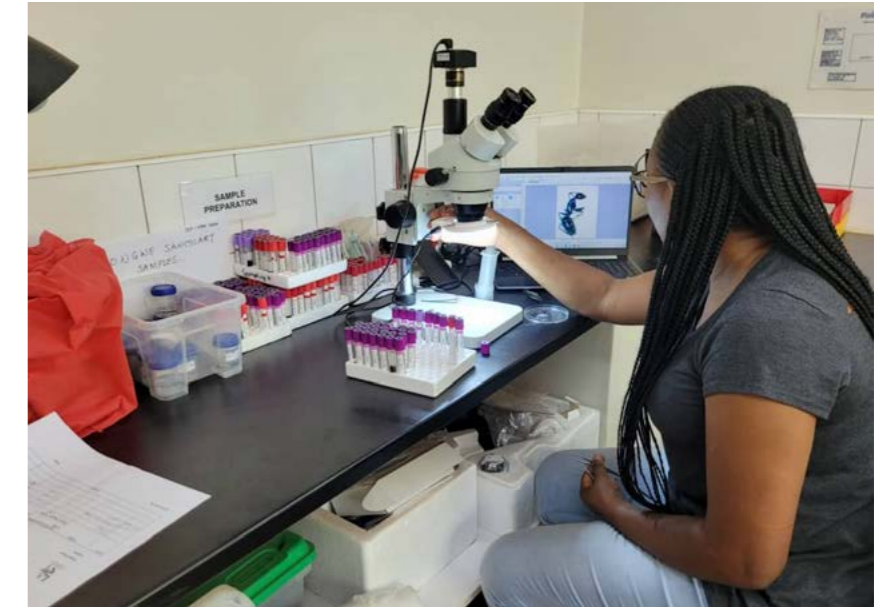
## Wildlife Detection Dog Unit

Last year the unit expanded its deployments to several new areas, including new border posts and national parks, as well as key shipping ports, islands and passenger and cargo boats around Lake Malawi. Following refresher training with the American Society for Canine Trainers International, the unit's operational ability was rated 'exceptionally strong' and the kennel management of the dogs was given an A+ rating. In March 2023 several members of the unit travelled to the south of Malawi to support the police and army in their search and rescue operations in the aftermath of Cyclone Freddy.



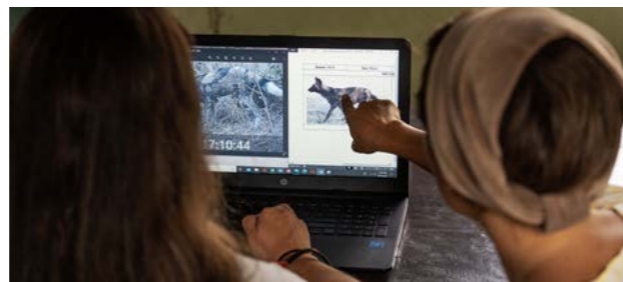
## Supporting young conservationists

During the year our veterinary team continued to provide hands-on training on wildlife medicine for students at the Lilongwe University of Agriculture and Natural Resources. We also supervised research projects for two Malawian students: an undergraduate thesis on the dietary overlap of large carnivores in Liwonde National Park, and an MSc dissertation on the composition of pangolin diets, which will help to inform the selection of release sites for our own pangolin work. Our education team also introduced a new internship scheme for aspiring young educators, with seven interns completing placements during the year.



## Placement programme

Last year volunteer numbers tripled from the previous year, a positive sign that our international placement programme continues to recover from the COVID pandemic. Our new research expedition to Nyika National Park gave people the chance to monitor roan antelopes, zebras and vultures, while our continued partnership with Biosphere Expeditions brought a new group of community scientists to Vwaza Marsh Wildlife Reserve. During the trip the group captured camera trap images of two African wild dogs in the reserve. While wild dogs are known to move through this landscape, to our knowledge this is the first record of wild dogs in the reserve in at least 20 years! With just an estimated 1,400 mature individual African wild dogs left in the wild, this was a hugely encouraging sighting.



## Campaigning

We are leading national communications for a government-led project to manage invasive alien species (IAS) in protected areas. IAS damage biodiversity and threaten the ecosystems that underpin Malawi's food and energy security. Through posters, radio jingles and workshops, we are informing stakeholders in targeted protected areas about the impacts and management options for IAS. Other campaigning work in the year included working with the Malawi Parliamentary Conservation Caucus on several events, including a tree planting day in the capital city and a high-profile panel discussion exploring the role of corruption in wildlife and forest crime.

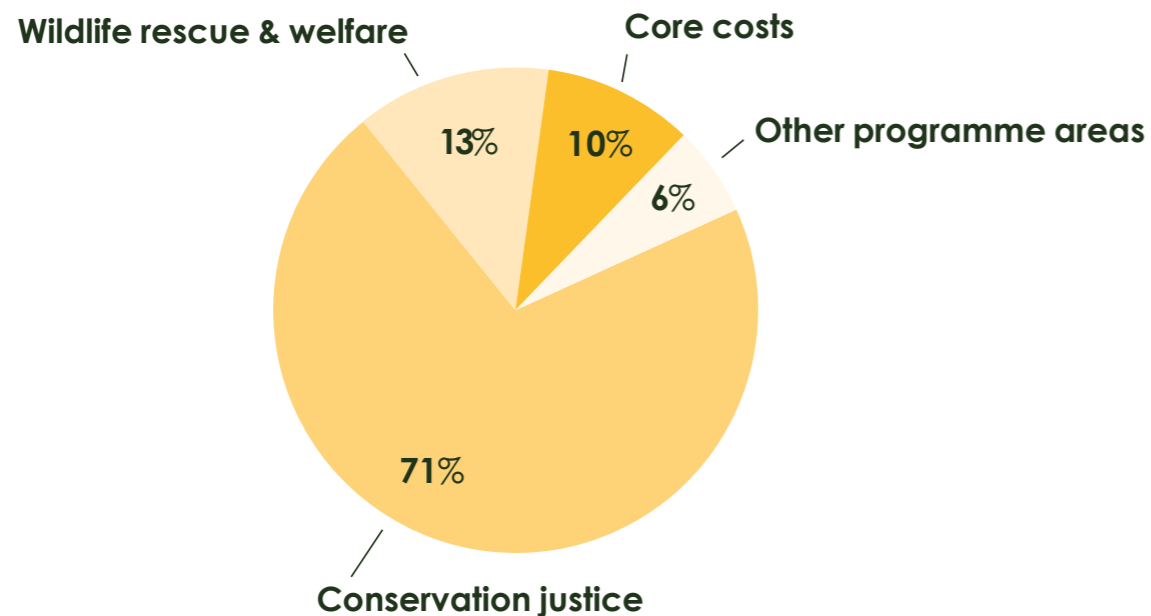
# FINANCIAL SUMMARY

In our last financial year, **\$4,155,653** was raised for Malawi-based conservation initiatives, thanks to the support and generosity of our donors and partners.

Direct project costs accounted for **90%** of our spend with **10%** on administration/core costs.

For full audited accounts please contact [trust@lilongwewildlife.org](mailto:trust@lilongwewildlife.org)

## EXPENDITURE BREAKDOWN



## OUR NETWORK AND TEAM

### DONORS & PARTNERS

**Donors:** Animal Welfare Institute, The Beit Trust, Born Free Foundation, Central African Wilderness Safaris, Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (UK), Earthwatch, Elephant Crisis Fund, Ernest Kleinwort Charitable Trust, Fondation Brigitte Bardot, Fondation Segré, Fondation Segré through IUCN Save Our Species, Holtzman Wildlife Foundation, International Conservation Caucus Foundation, International Fund for Animal Welfare, International Primate Protection League, Lion Recovery Fund, Marchig Animal Welfare Trust, Nyika-Vwaza Trust, Olsen Animal Trust, Pangolin Crisis Fund, 'Partnership against Wildlife Crime in Africa and Asia', implemented by GIZ on behalf of the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) and the German Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Nuclear Safety and Consumer Protection (BMUV), Paul Allen Family Foundation, Perivoli Trust, The Prince Bernhard Nature Fund, Rosemarie Nathanson Charitable Trust, Stichting Amfortas, Tusk Trust, United States Agency for International Development and the United Kingdom Foreign, Commonwealth, and Development Office through Tetra Tech in the implementation of the Malawi Modern Cooking for Healthy Forests project, US Agency for International Development, US Fish and Wildlife Service, US Forest Service, US Department of State INL, World Bank Global Environment Fund, Wildcat Foundation, The Woodtiger Fund, The Zebra Foundation.

**Individuals:** Ian Campbell, Edward Ellis, Evelyn Frey-Royston, Sallyann Garner, Christine Hake, Marie-Claire Hughes, Jeffrey Silver, Nona Valiunas, Liz and Jeremy Venable, Paul and Glynis Young.

**Partners:** African Parks, Association of Environmental Journalists in Malawi, Basel Institute on Governance, Biosphere Expeditions, C4ADS, Conservation South Luangwa, Elephants for Africa, Endangered Wildlife Trust, Environmental Investigation Agency, Forestry Accountability Journalism Initiative in Malawi, Global Law Alliance for Animals and the Environment, Hawk Conservancy Trust, Kuti Wildlife Reserve, Lilongwe City Council, Lilongwe Society for the Protection and Care of Animals, Natural Resource Conservation Network, North Luangwa Conservation Programme, PAMS Foundation, The Peregrine Fund, Platform for Investigative Journalism Malawi, Tikki Hywood Foundation, Wildlife Action Group.

**Government partners:** Anti-Corruption Bureau, Department of Animal Health and Livestock Development, Department of Education, Department of Forestry, Department of National Parks and Wildlife, Directorate of Public Prosecutions, Environmental Affairs Department, Malawi Police Service, Office of President & Cabinet.

### IN MEMORY

We were incredibly sad to lose both a dog handler and one of the dogs from the Wildlife Detection Dog Unit this year. In July 2022 K9 handler Boniface Mtonga was involved in a fatal road accident. Boniface had been a member of the unit since its inception in 2018, working closely with his canine partner, Nikita. He is sadly missed by his WDDU and DNPW colleagues and will be remembered as a skilled dog handler by everyone who worked with him. We also said goodbye to detection dog Bubba who passed away towards the end of 2022. Bubba, known for her prowess in detecting hidden contraband, had dedicated four years of service to the unit and will be sorely missed.

### ACCREDITATIONS & MEMBERSHIPS

LWT is a member of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature, the Malawi representative for the Species Survival Network and the Secretariat for the Malawi Parliamentary Conservation Caucus. Lilongwe Wildlife Centre holds full accreditations from the Global Federation of Animal Sanctuaries, Pan African Sanctuary Alliance and Born Free Foundation's PAW initiative.

LWT is a member of Malawi's Inter-Agency Committee for Combatting Wildlife Crime and Malawi's CITES Expert Advisory Group (acting Scientific Authority). The Wildlife Detection Dog Unit - a partnership between the Department of National Parks and Wildlife, the Malawi Police Service and LWT - is accredited through the American Society of Canine Trainers International and locally for animal welfare standards through the Department of Animal Health and Livestock Development and the Lilongwe Society for the Protection and Care of Animals.

### PATRONS

HRH Prince Richard, Duke of Gloucester  
Dame Virginia McKenna, DBE

### TRUSTEES

Mark Sprong (Chair), Simon Cousins, Ton de Rooy, Anton Evans, Gerard Grant, Rod Hagger, Brighton Kumchedwa, Julie Saunders, Bev Trataris, Laurie Webb, Jonny Vaughan, MBE (CEO), Arthur Nyirenda (Secretary)

Lilongwe Wildlife Trust is a Malawian not-for-profit trust, registered under the Trustee Incorporation Act of Malawi since 2008 (No. TRNR 3Z3TZ6) and has been a Council of Non-Governmental Organizations of Malawi member since 2009 (No. C466). Malawi Wildlife Trust is registered with the UK Charity Commission (No. 1176185).

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Lilongwe Wildlife Trust was established in 2008 when we opened the doors to Malawi's first wildlife sanctuary, Lilongwe Wildlife Centre. Since then we have grown to become one of the country's leading conservation NGOs.

Our mission is to save wildlife, campaign for conservation justice and inspire people to value and protect nature in Malawi. Working in collaboration with local and international partners, we respond to urgent conservation challenges as well as drive long-term social and institutional change.

Visit [www.lilongwewildlife.org](http://www.lilongwewildlife.org) for more information.

