



Quarterly Report / Update

Date: 15 December 2016

Name of Project: Wildlife Emergency Response Unit: A Mobile Veterinary Unit (Veterinary Care and Education) For Malawi's Rhino, Elephant and Other Iconic Wildlife in Distress

Name of Researcher: Dr. Amanda Salb

Organisation: Lilongwe Wildlife Trust

Location: Based at the Lilongwe Nature Sanctuary, responds to call-outs across Malawi

Date Project began: 01 July 2014

Date of Report: 15 December 2016

Objective of the Project: WERU aims to deliver services within 5 Points of Care: Emergency Response, Human-Wildlife Conflict Mitigation, Research and Wildlife Management Support, Disease Surveillance/in-field Post Mortem Analysis, and Education. These five areas comprehensively support the conservation and management of wildlife in Malawi within the collective mandates of DNPW and DAHLD

Please write 250 words minimum about the past three months including events, successes, challenges and any other relevant information for donors and Trustees. If you have more details within a PDF or on another website, please include attachment or link.

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Objective 1: Continue supporting partnerships between DNPW, DAHLD, and WERU/LWT to develop in-country capacity to deliver the following: wildlife veterinary services, the collection and analysis of data of national and global importance regarding wildlife health, disease surveillance, and analysis of the effects of poaching activities on endangered and threatened species in Malawi.

Activity: A master's student from Norway joined the Lilongwe Wildlife Trust's primate release project from 15 September to 06 November under the supervision of the WERU veterinarian. She collected data to look at the health and survival of this year's release troop. These data included behavioral information and body condition as well as fecal samples that were analysed for zoonotic fecal pathogens.

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Objective 2: Continue to implement a business plan that generates enough revenue to self-sustain the unit with respect to future annual core operational expenses.

Activity 1: The annual operating expenses for WERU and the LWC veterinary clinic have received joint private funding from the Olson Animal Trust and the Born Free Foundation. They have pledged funding for two years.

Activity 2: WERU is partnering with Rift Valley Wildlife Clinics to offer One Health veterinary clinical experiences to veterinary students, similar to the Primate Medicine courses already offered by the LWT. The first pilot course is scheduled for January 2017 and is fully subscribed.

Objective 3: Provide a training course in Wildlife Forensics and Animal Health, in partnership with DAHLD, for Park Rangers in two National Parks with heavy poaching activity.

Activity: While there is continued interest in this course by Park Managers, due to current, pressing animal needs (snaring, collar removal, horn transmitter placement, research support, etc) the majority of WERU vet time in the field has been spent attempting to attend to these matters.

Objective 4: Continue to provide veterinary assistance to any circumstances affecting wildlife health and management across Malawi within the 5 Points of Care.

47 of the last 105 days have been spent in the field (and 20/100 days included annual leave). Activities have frequently been staggered during the day to maximize field time; for example tracking a rhino in the morning and then tracking a hyena in the afternoon/evening. Several activities also represent operations that have been ongoing for several months due to difficulty in finding the target animals in the bush as well as some animals' increased wariness due to having been captured before.

Activity 1: During September, WERU was in Kasungu National Park to help support the LWT's primate research program and the project to assess a hand-reared spotted hyena for release. It was necessary to closely monitor the interactions between the wild hyenas and the captive hyena as well as assessing the health and welfare of the hand-reared individual.



Activity 2: During October and November, WERU was called out to a national park on three different occasions for various activities: look for a snared buffalo, try to replace the horn transmitter for a rhino, and remove the collar on a hyena, and assist with hyenas causing human-wildlife conflict. All of these operations are still ongoing.

Activity 3: On 23 November, Dr. John Knight returned to Malawi to once again radiograph the elderly lions at the Lilongwe Wildlife Centre. WERU assisted him with the procedures. Both lions have evidence of arthritis and potentially kidney disease. Simba has had a long-standing urinary tract infection that has persisted despite aggressive, but no complicating factors (stones, tumor, etc) were identified and he appears to be slowly and steadily improving.



Activity 4: While Dr. Knight was in country with the x-ray, we travelled to a national park to attend to an elephant with a long-standing leg problem. WERU removed a snare from this young bull in September 2014 and observed a soft tissue mass at the snare site at that time. Over the course of the year, the elephant was seen several times in the southern part of the park. It was consistently observed that he appeared to be bothered by the mass – he would throw sand or water on it and frequently touch it with his trunk. We wanted to rule out whether or not there was still wire in the mass somewhere, but that required an x-ray. In 2015, WERU received a donated VHF collar from Africa Wildlife Tracking and placed it on the elephant. Finally, we were able to bring Dr. Knight and the x-ray machine to the park and on 28 November, we located the elephant and were able to attend to it. The x-ray revealed that the leg was free of wire and we used the opportunity to remove the bothersome mass. The LWT are grateful for BFF, African Parks, AWT, and Liwonde Safari Camp for their support of this operation.



Activity 5: On 30 November, WERU was called to the State House again to assist with a spotted hyena that was reported to be caught in wire. Upon response, it was discovered that the hyena was caught in a snare and was already dead. The event was significant in that it drew attention to the snaring problem even within the city and State House grounds. Carnivore Research Malawi is already involved in outreach regarding urban hyenas and will include this event in their communications efforts.

Activity 6: Vervet monkeys have been causing a problem for staff and guests at a lodge in a park and the Park Manager requested assistance from WERU. A WERU researcher was stationed at the lodge on 18 October to collect troop information and identify the individuals stealing from guest plates and raiding the camp kitchens. The researcher recognized that only a handful of vervets out of the troop were causing a problem. An intervention started the first of December to relocate the targeted individuals elsewhere in the park and tag offending individuals. This project is still ongoing and whilst

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in the park, the WERU vet is participating on other ops including the previously mentioned hyena and rhino work.



Activity 7: While WERU vets were in the Park, a lodge guide observed a 7 year old elephant with an injury to its right rear foot. Closer observation indicated that it was likely caused by an old snare wound. On 14 December, the elephant was located in her family group and was darted from a helicopter. The wound was explored and a 6 inch piece of cable wire was removed. The elephant was given antibiotics and anti-inflammatories and she recovered well from anesthesia. Since this family group frequents the area across the river from the lodge, hopefully her progress can be opportunistically monitored.



Activity 8: Also on 14 December, WERU got a call from the LWC about a pangolin in Monkey Bay. DNPW officers had confiscated the pangolin from individuals in a village and requested assistance to appraise the animal. Since WERU was operating in Liwonde NP, I requested assistance from the park manager. It was arranged for the helicopter to bring me to pick up the pangolin. A quick exam revealed a vigorous, apparently uninjured individual. Since pangolin experts recommend immediate release of healthy individuals where possible, the decision was made to release the pangolin in the park immediately upon arrival. Fortunately we were very close to where another pangolin had previously been seen in the park, so it was quickly driven there and released at dusk. A good end to a productive day!



Thank you very much for your continued support!