



# PEOPLE AND NATURE TOGETHER

**LILONGWE WILDLIFE TRUST STRATEGY 2026-2032**





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# AT A GLANCE

## OUR VISION

Nature in Malawi is secure and thriving for current and future generations

## OUR MISSION

To save wildlife, deter nature crime, and secure healthy landscapes for people and wildlife in Malawi

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## GOALS

- 01 Malawi's people and wild animals are safely coexisting
- 02 Malawi is free from nature crime, positively impacting the region
- 03 Malawi's landscapes are flourishing for current and future generations



# OUR JOURNEY SO FAR

**Since Lilongwe Wildlife Trust (LWT) was established in 2008, we have worked with a range of national and international partners to tackle some of Malawi's most pressing environmental threats.**

We started with a single project, Lilongwe Wildlife Centre (LWC), which is still Malawi's only accredited wildlife rescue facility for animals that are injured, orphaned or rescued from illegal wildlife trade. Over time the scale of the country's environmental challenges became clearer and we realised that, in addition to rescuing individual animals, we could also leverage our networks and expertise to tackle some of the underlying drivers of environmental loss and create greater impact for Malawi's wildlife and people.

We developed environmental education programmes and public campaigns to empower the next generation and influence decision makers on broader conservation issues, especially wildlife crime. At the time, Malawi had been identified as a key transit hub for global ivory trafficking, and had formerly been implicated in some of the world's largest wildlife trafficking seizures. Decades of poaching had driven devastating losses for some of the nation's most iconic species, such as elephants and rhinos.

In response, we helped the Government to develop new wildlife legislation

with stronger penalties and we built capacity in law enforcement and the judiciary to improve enforcement across all stages of the criminal justice chain. New regional partnerships were established to support cross-border collaboration on counter-trafficking initiatives. In recent years, we also applied our approach to wildlife crime to the nation's escalating deforestation crisis, helping to introduce tough new penalties and enforcement initiatives for high-level forest crime.

At LWC, we developed new, nature-based visitor experiences, expanded our environmental education programme, and upgraded our wildlife rehabilitation facilities. In addition to delivering on-site rehabilitation of rescued animals at LWC, we also established a rapid response Wildlife Emergency Rescue Unit to provide veterinary support for emergencies across the country, such as removing snares and responding to human-wildlife conflict. Meanwhile, our biodiversity research programme was set up to help fill critical knowledge gaps on threatened species and inform wildlife conservation strategies nationally and regionally.





# OUR KEY ACHIEVEMENTS



## Nature crime

Our partnerships with government agencies have delivered pioneering initiatives to tackle wildlife and forest crime, including: capacity building, legal reforms, intelligence-led investigations, courtroom monitoring, prosecutions, media campaigns, and anti-corruption strategies. LWT co-led the taskforce that updated Malawi's National Parks & Wildlife Act in 2017. The updated Act and associated regulations, which placed an additional 216 species under protection, were subsequently assessed by CITES as being among the strongest wildlife crime laws in the world.

Since 2015 these interventions have resulted in:

- 90%+ conviction rate for Listed Species cases with a custodial rate on conviction of over 95%
- Average custodial sentences of 5.5 years (prior to the passing of the National Parks & Wildlife Act in 2017 the most common sentence for wildlife crime was a fine of just \$40)
- The conviction of a major trafficking network, the Lin Zhang syndicate, with sentences totalling 56+ years for 14 high-level traffickers, including 14 years for the kingpin Lin Yunhua
- 67% fall in ivory trafficking
- No major seizures of international illegal wildlife trade linked to Malawi
- Rising numbers of iconic species, such as elephants, rhinos and lions
- 2,000+ convictions for forestry crime
- The prosecution of 800+ wildlife cases involving 1,500+ defendants

## Wildlife rescue and welfare

Through Lilongwe Wildlife Centre and the Wildlife Emergency Response unit, we have:

- Rescued 1,000+ orphaned, injured and trafficked wild animals
- Established Malawi's first dedicated pangolin protection programme, spanning rescue, veterinary research, rehabilitation, release and post-release monitoring
- Secured accreditations with the Pan African Sanctuary Alliance and Global Federation of Animal Sanctuaries (GFAS)
- Won the GFAS "Outstanding International Sanctuary" 2023 award



## Biodiversity research

Our biodiversity research programme has:

- Led species monitoring and research of IUCN-listed Threatened and Endangered species, including vultures, lions, cheetahs and pangolins
- Informed national Conservation Action Plans for elephants, vultures and pangolins, and contributed to regional Conservation Action Plans for wild dogs and cheetahs
- Published peer reviewed papers on a range of issues and species, including vultures, elephants, and pangolins

## Education and campaigning

Our national environmental education and campaigning initiatives have:

- Engaged 200,000+ children from 600+ schools in education programmes
- Integrated environmental education content into the national primary school curriculum
- Delivered nationwide advocacy initiatives to secure political and public support for wildlife law enforcement initiatives







# LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

**There has never been a stronger need for our work. Malawi hosts an incredible diversity of wild species and habitats, but its natural resources are under huge pressure.**

Illegal wildlife trade, habitat loss, bushmeat hunting, the illegal pet trade and other threats are still placing many species in peril. For this reason, we will retain our focus on **saving wildlife** through our specialist rescue, rehabilitation and release initiatives. Malawi also has one of the highest population densities in Africa and a comparatively large proportion of land under government protection, with over 130 protected areas representing almost 23% of its total land coverage. Many of these protected areas are home to growing wildlife populations. With communities living in closer proximity to these areas, addressing human-wildlife conflict and promoting co-existence will become a key priority for our team.

We will also expand our work on **deterring nature crime**. Despite achieving success in disrupting and deterring illegal wildlife trade in recent years, the fight is far from won. Organised wildlife crime syndicates are still at large regionally; removing this threat will require ongoing support for investigations and prosecutions. We will also expand our approach to wildlife crime to address other forms of organised nature crime. For example, forests are being stripped at a devastating rate for illegal charcoal production and timber trade, and illegal

mining is destroying wildlife habitats in protected areas. Other biodiversity hotspots, including wetlands, rivers and lakes, are also under threat from illegal activities such as overfishing and environmental pollution. In addition to destroying natural resources, organised nature crime fosters dangerous levels of corruption and insecurity.

Underlying all of these environmental challenges are the exacerbating factors of poverty and climate change. Malawi has one of the highest poverty rates globally and 80% of the population is dependent on rain-fed agriculture for their livelihoods. This leaves the security of millions of people vulnerable to climate change and natural disasters.

The future of Malawi's ecosystems and its people are deeply connected, which is why we are introducing a new programme aimed at **securing healthy landscapes for people and wildlife**. Through this approach, we will work in carefully targeted areas to make positive change – at scale – for the environment, people, and wildlife. We will seek to improve people's livelihoods whilst also protecting critical ecosystems. Our vision is clear: nature in Malawi must thrive in order to ensure the health and wellbeing of current and future generations.

# CAUSE FOR HOPE

**Despite the enormity of the challenges ahead, we know that progress is possible.**

In the last decade, Malawi has seen a recovery in some of its most iconic wildlife species, convicted some of the region's most notorious wildlife criminals, and launched pioneering new wildlife legislation.

We are proud to be part of these achievements. We have worked closely with the Government of Malawi to support these outcomes, and our continued partnership with a wide range of government agencies will be critical to our future success.

Since we started in 2008, our team has also built a wealth of expertise in combating wildlife crime, raising environmental awareness through campaigning and education, delivering species monitoring and research, and running internationally renowned wildlife rescue and welfare services. This provides a solid foundation for the future. To deliver the newer areas of our strategy, we

will develop additional capacity in our team or recruit expertise through partnerships.

Since our inception, we have also developed a strong network of national and international partners and donors who have shown incredible generosity and passion for our work. Our achievements would not have been possible without them and we hope they will support the next exciting phase of our journey.

As the funding landscape continues to change rapidly, we will also seek out new finance opportunities and find innovative ways to deliver impact. We are also encouraged by the growing awareness of the need to balance economic and social development with environmental protection, which is the fundamental driver for our new programme area on 'healthy landscapes'.



# OUR VALUES

**Above all, our work will be guided by a core set of values which lie at the heart of our success.**

## COLLABORATION

We work in partnerships, with respect for all and mutual accountability

## COMPASSION

We value kindness and respect and create positive change for people and wildlife

## COURAGE

We are fearless, optimistic, take risks and push boundaries

## INNOVATION

We are agile and adaptive, open to exploring new possibilities

## INTEGRITY

We strive for excellence, take responsibility for our actions, and promote gender equality and social inclusion





## OUR PROGRAMMES

# SAVING WILDLIFE

**Goal: Malawi's people and wild animals are safely coexisting**

### The challenge

Wild animals in Malawi face a wide range of threats. Although there has been significant progress on tackling high-level wildlife trafficking in recent years, the fight is far from over. Elephant, rhino, and pangolin products are still in high demand.

Other risks include habitat loss, bushmeat hunting, the illegal trade in pets, human-wildlife conflict, and use of animal body parts for traditional medicine. Many of these threats are being driven by rising levels of poverty.

### What we'll do

Some examples:

- Maintain the highest standards at LWC to continue providing life-saving rescue and rehabilitation for wildlife in need.
- Provide rapid response veterinary support for wild animals in distress across Malawi through our Wildlife Emergency Response Unit.
- Support the development and implementation of National Conservation Action Plans for threatened species.
- Deliver biodiversity monitoring and research to support the management and conservation of targeted species and landscapes.





## OUR PROGRAMMES

# DETERRRNG

# NATURE CRIME

**Goal: Malawi is free from nature crime, positively impacting the region**

### The challenge

We will continue our work to tackle illegal wildlife trade while also adapting it to address other types of nature crime, recognising the threat these crimes pose not just to environmental health but to economic and social security too.

Given that some forms of illicit activity – for example, tree cutting for firewood – is driven by a lack of affordable alternative sources, we will focus on nature crimes that are high-level and organised, and which involve institutionalised corruption. This will ensure that we target serious organised crime and the factors that enable it and, at the same time, avoid criminalising people who are trying to meet their energy and food needs.

### What we'll do

Some examples:

- Support the Government to strengthen laws and policies to protect wildlife and prosecute organised nature crimes.
- Support robust criminal justice outcomes through national court monitoring, and training and technical support for magistrates, judges, and prosecutors.
- Conduct ongoing research and monitoring of nature crime to support the development of new enforcement tools and measures.
- Collaborate with regional partners to tackle cross-border nature crime.





## OUR PROGRAMMES

# SECURING HEALTHY LANDSCAPES

**Goal: Malawi's landscapes are flourishing for current and future generations**

### The challenge

Many of Malawi's landscapes are degraded by deforestation, encroachment, and pollution, with climate shocks causing further biodiversity and habitat loss. Droughts and floods, exacerbated by deforestation, cause devastating loss of life and damage to livelihoods.

Climate change will further impact people living below the poverty line. We urgently need to find solutions that enable people to earn an income and improve their quality of life without further damaging Malawi's fragile ecosystems.

### What we'll do

Some examples:

- Work with the Government to identify priority landscapes and ecosystems in need of support.
- Design and deliver interventions which support national and international biodiversity targets and national development goals.
- Combine conservation and livelihoods approaches to tackle biodiversity loss and poverty in an integrated way.



# KEY APPROACHES

**We will work through five key approaches which will be applied across all three programme areas.**

## RESEARCH, KNOWLEDGE, AND LEARNING

Our applied research includes long-term ecological monitoring of key species in the wild, evaluating knowledge transfer and behavioural change outcomes from our community and education programmes, and in-depth analysis of initiatives to tackle nature crime. We will also invest in research to scope projects under our new 'healthy landscapes' programme. The

impact of our work will be recorded and evaluated through a new framework which will support adaptive learning across all programme areas. Ultimately, we aim to be an active learning organisation, developing the expertise of our staff, using research to guide our interventions, measuring the impact of our work, and sharing knowledge with others.

## ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

Our environmental education work aims to equip youth with the knowledge, skills and passion to effect positive change for wildlife and people. We will continue to deliver immersive learning activities at Lilongwe Wildlife Centre and support the Government to embed environmental

education content into the national curriculum. As our 'healthy landscapes' programme develops, we will also adapt our education programme to encompass new community engagement projects that promote sustainable livelihoods.

## CAMPAIGNS AND ADVOCACY

Our campaigns will raise public and political awareness of key environmental issues. Key audiences for our campaigning activities include policy-makers, the media, the general public and communities in targeted areas. Our long-running Stop

Wildlife Crime campaign will continue, while new messaging and activities will be developed to address other forms of nature crime, and other issues in line with our programme areas and goals.

## PARTNERSHIPS

Partnerships will continue to lie at the heart of our success. Our engagement with the Government of Malawi will continue through collaboration with relevant government agencies on wildlife welfare, criminal justice, education and research priorities. We will also continue to implement project activities with local, national and regional partners. As we expand our work into landscapes and

other types of nature crime, we will identify new partnerships, including working with additional government agencies. Our work will be aligned as much as possible with Malawi's national strategies and priorities. And, of course, we will maintain and build relationships with a strong network of national and international donors who share our vision.

## TECHNICAL EXPERTISE

LWT has developed highly skilled and diverse teams to deliver our programmes. We will continue to refine our technical expertise in wildlife welfare, biodiversity research, nature crime and environmental education, through training and

professional development. We will also actively seek to share our knowledge with others. Our new landscapes programme area will require additional expertise which will be either developed in our team or accessed through partnerships.



# THEORY OF CHANGE

## KEY APPROACHES



## ACTIVITIES

### SAVING WILDLIFE

- Rescue and rehabilitation for wildlife in need through Lilongwe Wildlife Centre
- Rapid response veterinary support for wild animals through Wildlife Emergency Response Unit
- National Conservation Action Plans for threatened species
- Biodiversity monitoring and research of targeted species and landscapes



### DETERRING NATURE CRIME

- Support the Government to strengthen laws and policies to protect wildlife and prosecute organised nature crimes
- National court monitoring, training and technical support for magistrates, judges, and prosecutors
- Research and monitoring of nature crime to support the development of new enforcement tools and measures



### SECURING HEALTHY LANDSCAPES

- Identify priority landscapes & ecosystems
- Deliver interventions to support national and international biodiversity targets and national development goals
- Tackle biodiversity loss and poverty through combined conservation and livelihoods approaches



## OUTCOMES

- Lilongwe Wildlife Trust is an international leader for wildlife rescue and rehabilitation
- Conservation status of targeted Listed Species is improved in partner protected areas

- Nature crime is no longer a major threat in Malawi and is significantly disrupted regionally
- Lilongwe Wildlife Trust is a leading expert in deterring nature crimes

- Lilongwe Wildlife Trust's landscape projects demonstrate clear benefits for people and wildlife
- Indigenous species and habitats are protected and restored at Lilongwe Wildlife Centre

## GOALS & IMPACT

Malawi's people and wild animals are safely co-existing

Malawi is free from nature crime, positively impacting the region

Malawi's landscapes are flourishing for current and future generations

Nature in Malawi is secure and thriving for current and future generations



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, deter nature crime, and secure healthy landscapes for people and wildlife 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.

