

Volunteer with



Wild Dog Conservation Malawi

New experiences, new friends, new skills

1. Welcome to the Wild Dog Conservation Malawi volunteer programme

Thank you for your interest in WDCM. Volunteers can play a vital role in helping us to achieve our aims. We need as much help as we can get to make a difference for wild dogs and their habitats in Africa, we are a small team with a big task ahead. In return it is our hope that volunteers will enjoy volunteering with us, meet like-minded people and develop some new skills.

2. Why African wild dogs?

The African wild dog (*Lycaon pictus*) is one of Africa's most endangered carnivores. Wild dogs have undergone severe declines in the last 50 years and viable populations are believed to be limited to only six of 34 previous range countries. The causes of decline are habitat fragmentation, human-wildlife conflict and competition with other predators (Creel & Creel 2002). The conservation of remaining wild dog populations is outlined as the highest priority for the conservation of the species (Woodroffe *et al.* 1997). The IUCN wild dog conservation action plan recommends the important first step in devising strategies for wild dog conservation is to survey their distribution and status.



Despite regular sightings in Kasungu National Park (KNP) and its potential importance as a viable population, to date no comprehensive studies have been conducted on African wild dogs in Malawi. The presence of a unknown breeding population of wild dogs, low densities of competing predators, and the

potential to enhance the link to the Zambian population make the Malawi dog population particularly important. Research is urgently required to assess the status of the Malawi population and determine the site-specific ecological factors limiting wild dogs to facilitate the conservation of wild dogs in Malawi. WDCM is conducting a crucial first assessment of the status and distribution of the wild dog population in Malawi. We are conducting the only long-term wild dog ecological study, threat assessment and conservation programme in Malawi, based in KNP and Nyika National Park (NNP). Specifically, we will provide the first information regarding abundance, distribution and density of wild dogs and competing predators in KNP and raise awareness of the importance of wild dogs and their conservation in communities in unprotected areas. Results will contribute to IUCN action planning for the species providing crucial data of a previously unstudied population. This information is crucial for accurate IUCN assessments of species status globally, enabling prioritization of conservation actions and strategies for the long-term survival of the species.

3. Who are Wild Dog Conservation Malawi

Wild Dog Conservation Malawi (WDCM) is a non-profit conservation project based in Malawi, created in partnership with the University of Bristol, UK. The project falls under the umbrella of the UK Charity Conservation Research Africa (CRA). WDCM and CRA were founded by Dr Emma Stone from the University of Bristol UK. WDCM works in collaboration with Lilongwe Wildlife Trust (LWT) and the Department of National Parks and Wildlife Malawi (DNPW) and conducts three core activities:



1. **Applied research for wildlife conservation management:** by establishing a long-term wild dog and carnivore monitoring project to assess species status, threats and provide conservation recommendations; as well as a number of smaller student projects to facilitate and inform long-term conservation management of carnivore populations and

their habitats. Project results are used to update IUCN species status reports and assist DNPW in long-term population monitoring and protected area management.

2. **Education and awareness** of wild dogs and competing carnivores, human wildlife conflict mitigation, biodiversity and related issues through comprehensive community based education programmes and teacher training workshops in collaboration with Lilongwe Wildlife Trust (LWT) and their Eco-schools programme.
3. **Capacity building**: to increase project effectiveness and long-term success by building capacity in ecological research, biodiversity monitoring and management for DNPW, students from the Lilongwe University of Natural Resources through training courses, attachment programmes and postgraduate research projects at MSc and PhD level.

4. Why volunteer with us ?

Work with expert scientists

WDCM is led and founded by scientists from the University of Bristol, UK. The project leader Dr Emma Stone has been conducting research in African ecology and conservation since 1998 whilst working in the remote Kafue National Park in Zambia. She is a member of the internationally renowned Mammal Research Unit Lab at the University of Bristol, where she completed her PhD thesis in 2011.

Emma has been conducting applied conservation research for over 16 years particularly in Africa, including research on brown hyaena in South Africa and African wild dogs on South Luangwa. This is a unique opportunity to work alongside



established internationally renowned research scientists and assist in applied conservation research and community conservation.

Unique bush experience in the heart of Kasungu National Park

Volunteering with us gives you an unique opportunity to work in a remote unspoilt African wilderness with very few visitors, untouched by mass tourism as found in Kenya and Tanzania. The WDCM research camp is located on the shores of the lifupa dam in Kasungu National Park.



The park harbours an variety of wildlife including elephant, reedbuck, waterbuck and sable, hyaena, hippo, buffalo and zebra. Living in camp you will be on permanent safari, with regular visits to camp by elephants, warthogs and vervet monkey. Our "office" is an African paradise.

Gain new skills, build your CV and develop your career



We conduct a variety of research projects giving you the opportunity to gain a diverse range of skills. We conduct research on all carnivores and their prey and have ongoing projects including:

- Spotted hyaena behavioural ecology project
- Urban hyaena research project and
- Serval relocation project

During your placement you will have the opportunity to gain many new skills including field research techniques such as carnivore acoustic surveys, carnivore radio tracking (servals and lion), hyaena tracking (habituation and spoor tracking) camera trapping, habitat mapping using GIS, small mammal trapping and handling, vegetation surveys, and large mammal transects.

Due to the rare nature of wild dogs you are unlikely to see them during your placement, but there are plenty of other carnivores regularly seen including leopard, hyaena and honeybadger!.



5. Where will you be based?

Volunteers will be based at the WDCM research camp in Kasungu National Park. We are located at Lifupa Campsite, a on the banks of the Lifupa Dam. Camp is rustic but very comfortable with canvas safari tents, equipped with beds, mattresses, linen, comfy sofas and solar power. Showers and toilets are located nearby. Volunteers share a large tent which can sleep up to 4 people, or smaller private tents may be available on request. Based in Kasungu National Park with so much to see and do you won't be disappointed.

6. What will you be doing?

Volunteers are an important part of WDCM and we hope to give everyone a fun and rewarding experience. Whatever your background, there is plenty you can contribute with a range of activities to match your interests and abilities. Our volunteers undertake a range of carnivore surveying and monitoring activities, as well as community education and awareness activities. There are 9 key areas of work volunteers undertake:

1. Camera trapping for carnivores (setting and checking traps, processing pictures and identifying animals)
2. Acoustic call in surveys to census carnivores
3. Spoor tracking surveys (for carnivores)
4. Large mammal transect surveys (to assess prey abundance and distribution)
5. Spotlighting surveys (for carnivores)
6. Radio tracking (at certain times when collars are on hyaena)

7. Vegetation surveys and habitat mapping

8. Community questionnaire surveys

9. Various lab based activities including: GIS mapping, data entry

7. Health and safety information

All volunteers **must** be vaccinated against Tetanus and Rabies to participate in the volunteer programme. We also advise you to be vaccinated against Typhoid, Meningitis, Hepatitis A & B, and Polio but up to date professional advice must be sought.

Malaria is a serious problem in Malawi and in some cases it can be life-threatening. You will need to seek advice from a qualified travel health professional. You should get appropriate prophylactic tablets. The medication is normally started before you leave and continued for a short time after you have returned. Please consult your GP or travel clinic, as there are several different options available to you, at different costs. Once you have chosen one they will prescribe it for you.

Our team are very experienced and have lived and worked in the remote African bush for over 12 years. We always work with armed scouts when conducting surveys at night or on foot and conduct a full risk assessment for each volunteer that arrives. We have a medical evacuation procedure in place and conduct a comprehensive safety briefing and training period for each volunteer, covering dangerous wild animals and snake bite. We keep volunteer group sizes very small (maximum 4) to ensure maximum safety and a high staff to volunteer ratio.

8. How we support you

From the moment you send us an inquiry or application form we are always just an email or phone call away. You can contact our dedicated volunteer coordinator **Richard** on volunteer@wilddogconservationmalawi.org who will answer all your questions and look after you before and during your placement.

9. Optional extras

Explore Malawi

If you wish to venture further afield we can advise you on plenty of holiday destinations in Malawi worth a visit. Malawi is an amazing country; known as the "Warm heart of Africa" it is culturally and ecologically diverse with plenty to see from mountain rainforests to the lake of stars, you won't be disappointed.



A trip to Malawi would not be complete without snorkelling in the crystal clear waters of lake Malawi, infamous for hundreds of endemic cichlid species. Relax on the beach or kayak out for a stay on one of the remote islands in Lake Malawi National Park. A visit to Nyika plateau when the orchids are in bloom or down to Mount Mulanje at 3000m high with its endemic upland rainforests are also a must.

10.How to apply

Download and complete online application form at www.wilddogconservationmalawi.org/volunteer and email it to us at volunteer@wilddogconservationmalawi.org.

Once we have received your completed application form we will contact you to confirm dates, costs, and send you a detailed volunteer information pack with all the information you need before you arrive.

To confirm your placement we will need a £200 holding deposit, once received you can get started organising your trip. Our dedicated volunteer coordinator will assist you with this and send you all the information you need, but there are a few things you will need to put on your to do list:

- Book your flights and insurance
- Visit a doctor/travel clinic for advice on vaccinations
- Go shopping for your kit, we will send you a recommended kit list, you will not require any specialist kit, but there are still the odd bits and pieces you might need
- Check if you need a visa, we can also advise on this

Thanks for your interest in WDCM, we look forward to hearing from you.



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