



Lake Mbuo National Park

Annual Giraffe Conservation Education Report – 2016

Nubian (Rothschild's) giraffe were first re-introduced to Lake Mbuo National Park (LMNP) in July 2015 by the Uganda Wildlife Authority (UWA) with technical support from the Giraffe Conservation Foundation (GCF). The aim of MCF with support from GCF is to help the local community learn more about the giraffe and minimize any human-wildlife conflict.

Introduction

The Mihingo Conservation Foundation (MCF) aim is simple, to preserve the co-existence of wildlife and humans beyond the boundaries of LMNP. There has long been a history of conflict between the community and the wildlife of the Park. With no buffer zone surrounding the Park, wildlife, humans and livestock live side by side and this inevitably, leads to conflict. Poisoning livestock carcasses killed by a leopard or hyena is a common practice which has seen a marked decline in their populations. Lions historically roamed the area until they were poached to local extinction in the early 1980's. One lone lion appeared around 2009, with many theories surrounding his arrival but importantly for him he stays within the Park and thus avoiding human-wildlife conflict. Other wildlife, including zebra and buffalo, compete with livestock over water and grazing while crops are often raided by bushbuck and bush pigs.

MCF has recognised that the only way for wildlife to continue to exist outside the Park is by attaching a positive association to wild animals and reducing the losses incurred from living in such close quarters.

The fact that wildlife can exist beyond areas designated to them is something worth ensuring continues for many years to come. Local farmers have expressed concern that the re-introduced giraffe might move beyond the Park. This is likely more so in the dry seasons when they might seek water and better forage. However, the lack of knowledge in the community has caused such fear and why it is important to raise awareness regarding the giraffe and any potential conflict that might result.



Project Activities

The project took five schools surrounding LMNP on targeted trips to the Park to educate them on not only the Nubian giraffe but also the other animals, the environment and human-wildlife conflict. During these trips every child was given a Wildlife Activity Book to learn and complete on the day and when back at school a poster task was given to complete for the follow up sessions.



During these sessions, an informal quiz on the trip and associated topics covered during the day trips was undertaken to assess what they learned.

Additional to these school trips giraffe were observed on other visits into the Park and photos taken to allow us to keep a track on their numbers, movements and distribution. Importantly, we met with the Ugandan Wildlife Association (UWA) regularly to share the info that MCF had gathered and compared with their data. It is through this collaboration and the support of GCF to both us and UWA that we have facilitated permission for MCF staff along with a vehicle to go into LMNP.

As a result of undertaking these school trips there has been an increase in the interest in the re-introduced Nubian giraffe. The children from the local schools are now more familiar with giraffe, their needs, threats and behavior, and importantly know what to expect. This change in attitude appears to have resulted in less hostility towards the giraffe and more of a positive attitude towards LMNP, UWA and MCF. These results in the first year was what we were hoping to achieve as this helps build the relationship between us and the local community, and more importantly the protection of the giraffe.

The support from GCF assisted greatly and enabled all five trips to be conducted into the Park. The funding provided assisted with local bus hire for the students, printing of the activity books for all five schools, printing of the 'GiraffeSpotter' pamphlet, materials for children making the



posters, drinks & snacks and pens and pencils for the trips, as well as additional MCF transport.

We do hope that the work we have been undertaking is important and we look forward to building the relationship with the schools and GCF as a way to continue to promote giraffe education and conservation in and around LMNP.