

# Country Profile

## Republic of Angola

### *Giraffe Conservation Status Report*



**Sub-region:** Southern Africa

#### General statistics

Size of country: 1,246,700 km<sup>2</sup>

Size of protected areas / percentage protected area coverage: 6.6%

#### (Sub)species

Angolan giraffe (*Giraffa camelopardalis angolensis*) – possibly

South African giraffe (*Giraffa camelopardalis giraffa*) – introduced

#### Conservation Status

##### IUCN Red List (IUCN 2012):

*Giraffa camelopardalis* (as a species) – least concern

*Giraffa camelopardalis angolensis* – not assessed

*Giraffa camelopardalis giraffa* – not assessed

##### In the Republic of Angola:

Giraffe in the Republic of Angola (referred to as Angola in the rest of this report) are awarded full protection by the Combined Executive Decree No. 37/99 of 27 January 1999 (Governo de Angola 1999) issued by the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development and the Ministry of Finances. This decree was approved to provide an updated list of species (including giraffe) whose hunting is prohibited.

#### Issues/threats

Angola has been ravaged by protracted armed conflicts for more than four decades: 14 years of liberation struggle (1961-1974) were followed by 27 years of civil war (1975-2002; Wikipedia 2013; Russo *et al.* 2003). These extended periods of war have not only caused great suffering to people, but also severely impacted wildlife (The Wild Foundation 2013; Kumleben 1996). The widespread presence of land-mines caused injury and death to humans and wildlife alike and inhibited access to land throughout much of the country (Russo *et al.* 2003). National parks were abandoned and, without adequate administration and management, infrastructure lapsed into a state of degradation (Kuedikuenda & Xavier 2009; NFRA 2009). During this time, national parks were invaded and occupied by local people from the surrounding areas (Kuedikuenda & Xavier 2009; NFRA 2009). Bush meat provided a source of food for the poor and illegal hunting reached

alarming proportions (The Wild Foundation 2013; NFRA 2009; NBSAP 2007). Although most of Angola's natural habitats remained relatively intact, wildlife populations were severely overexploited to the point of depletion, especially in the Kuando Kubango Province (Kuedikuenda & Xavier 2009; NFRA 2009; USAID 2008; Russo *et al.* 2003; Kumleben 1996), and Angolan giraffe (*Giraffa camelopardalis angolensis*) were assumed to have gone extinct in the country (East 1999).

The overexploitation of resources and loss of habitat remain major threats to biodiversity in Angola (Kuedikuenda & Xavier 2009; Russo *et al.* 2003). There is excessive human pressure on natural resources in areas where large numbers of internally displaced people have settled (Russo *et al.* 2003). Most of the population lives below the poverty line and depends on biological resources for their livelihoods (NBSAP 2007). Logging for firewood, charcoal, wood production, uncontrolled bush burning and illegal hunting have and continue to lead to biodiversity loss and environmental degradation (Sheeman & Yong 2010; Kuedikuenda & Xavier 2009; NBSAP 2007). Diamond and oil exploitation pose additional threats to the Angolan environment (Kuedikuenda & Xavier 2009; Russo *et al.* 2003).

Today, the impact of anthropogenic activities is notable in all national parks (Kuedikuenda & Xavier 2009; USAID 2008). Although the level of destruction remains unclear, wildlife populations are in dire condition and there is an urgent need for collecting data on the status of the country's biodiversity (Kuedikuenda & Xavier 2009; NFRA 2009; USAID 2008; NBSAP 2007).

Since the war has ended, the Government of Angola has made an effort to re-invigorate some of the national parks through infrastructure renovation, re-introduction of wildlife populations and the training of managers and game guards (Kuedikuenda & Xavier. 2009). In 2000, Kissama (synonymous Quiçama) National Park was re-established as the first, post-civil war national park and eco-tourism destination in Angola (The Wild Foundation 2013; Goertz 2012). Since illegal hunting left the park largely devoid of wildlife, large scale re-introductions of wildlife occurred in 2002 (The Wild Foundation 2013; Goertz 2012). Giraffe were translocated from South Africa and re-introduced into Kissama National Park (R. Goertz pers. comm.). However, these giraffe belong to the (sub)species *G. c. giraffa* (South African giraffe), and not *G. c. angolensis* (Angolan giraffe), which is believed to historically occur in Angola. This extra-limital population is currently the only confirmed giraffe population in the country.

The greatest threat to Kissama National Park and its wildlife continues to be poor institutional capacity (NBSAP 2007). A lack of financial, human and logistical resources and infrastructure, as well as authority to safeguard Kissama National Park hinder efficient management (Goertz 2010; Kuedikuenda & Xavier 2009; NBSAP 2007). Although environmental control over the park has improved over the last decade, there is still a lack of trained field rangers (Goertz 2012). The construction of two national roads through the park has resulted in habitat fragmentation (Kuedikuenda & Xavier 2009) and developments such as shrimp farming, human encroachment, cultivation, oil production, livestock grazing and charcoal production, all pose additional threats to the environmental integrity of Kissama National Park (USAID 2008).

## Estimate population abundance and trends

### Historic

Giraffe formerly occurred in the mopane and acacia savannas of southern Angola (East 1999). According to Crawford-Cabral & Verissimo (2005), the historic distribution of the species presented a discontinuous range with two, reputedly separated, populations. The western-most population extended from the upper course of the Curoca River through Otchinjau to the banks of the Kunene (synonymous Cunene) River, and through Cuamato and the Mupa area further north (Crawford-Cabral & Verissimo 2005). The intention of

protecting this western population of *G. c. angolensis*, which type locality is located 240km south-west of Humbe (Lydekker 1904), led to the proclamation of Mupa National Park (P. Vaz Pinto pers. comm.; Crawford-Cabral & Verissimo 2005). The eastern population occurred between the Cuito and Cuando Rivers, with larger numbers of records from the southeast corner of the former Mucusso Game Reserve (Crawford-Cabral & Verissimo 2005). Although Crawford-Cabral & Verissimo (2005) documented this population to possibly represent the (sub)species *G. c. infumata*, Dagg's (1971) review of giraffe (sub)speciation showed that *G. c. infumata* was in fact synonymous with *G. c. angolensis*.

Dagg (1962) reported that giraffe were relatively abundant in the Mupa and Cafima areas in the south-west, and between Mucusso and Luiana in the south-east. In the late 1960s, a few hundred giraffe were reportedly surviving in the Mupa National Park/Cafima area in the south-west and the Mucusso area in the south-east (East 1999). By the mid-seventies, giraffe populations had severely declined in numbers, with only 50 individuals estimated remaining in the Mucusso Game Reserve, 30 in the Chimporo/Cafima area and seven in Mupa National Park (Crawford-Cabral & Verissimo 2005). By the early 1980s giraffe had largely disappeared from these areas and by the late 1990s giraffe were assumed to be extinct in Angola (East 1999).

### Recent

In 2001, four South African giraffe were translocated from Madikwe National Park in South Africa and introduced into Angola's Kissama National Park, south of the capital Luanda (R. Goetz pers. comm.). This extra-limital population increased to 11 individuals by 2008 (The Wild Foundation 2013.)

According to Kuedikuenda & Xavier (2009), a small population of Angolan giraffe still occurred in Mupa National Park. However, no census data exist to substantiate this claim. However, as the park was ravaged by poachers and refugees, it is generally accepted that giraffe became extinct there (Kissama Foundation 2013; East 1999; P. Vaz Pinto pers. comm.).

### Current

Giraffe numbers in Kissama National Park increased to 20 individuals in 2013 (R. Goetz pers. comm.).

Other than the South African giraffe, which were introduced into Kissama National Park, uncertainty remains to the presence of giraffe elsewhere in Angola. Incidental observations suggest that trans-boundary movements of giraffe occur between Namibia's Bwabwata National Park and Angola's Kuando Kubango Province (W. Cilliers pers. comm.). Large wilderness areas occupy in the Kuando Kubango Province and recent sightings of giraffe in the south-eastern corner of the province, approximately 50km from the border, indicate that giraffe still survive there (B. Bennet pers. comm.).

Some anecdotal reports suggest that giraffe may still survive in the wilderness areas east of Mupa National Park, while others familiar with the area seem certain that there are no giraffe left in the region (P. Vaz Pinto pers. comm.).

In summary, current giraffe numbers for Angola are estimated at 20 South African giraffe in Kissama National Park, while an unknown number of Angolan giraffe still survive in the Kuando Kubango Province. Uncertainty remains to the prevalence of giraffe in the rest of the country.

## Future Conservation Management

The following are proposed conservation management options for giraffe in Angola:

- Greater understanding of *G. c. angolensis* population numbers, range and conservation status across the country – if any still remain;
- As an extra-limital giraffe (sub)species were introduced to Kassima National Park, it is important that any future introductions into the park (although this in itself should be reviewed in light of its biodiversity conservation for giraffe) should only be the same (sub)species as previously introduced: *G. c. giraffa*;
- Anti-poaching efforts to conserve the population in Kassima National Park;
- Development of a National Giraffe Strategy for Angola; and
- Support for dedicated giraffe conservation, habitat protection, education and awareness initiatives (government, NGO and academic).

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Map

