

# Country Profile

## Central African Republic

### *Giraffe Conservation Status Report*



**Sub-region:** Central Africa

#### General statistics

Size of country: 622,984 km<sup>2</sup>

Size of protected areas / percentage protected area coverage: 13%

#### (Sub)species

Kordofan giraffe (*Giraffa camelopardalis antiquorum*)

#### Conservation Status

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

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

*Giraffa camelopardalis antiquorum* – not assessed

##### In the Central African Republic:

Under Section 27 of Ordinance No. 84/045 on the protection of wildlife and the regulating of hunting in the Central African Republic (l'Ordonnance no. 84 /045 portant protection de la Faune Sauvage et règlementant l'exercice de la chasse en République Centrafricaine), hunting, capturing and/or collecting of any individual listed in List A of the Ordinance, which includes giraffe, is strictly prohibited.

#### Issues/threats

Giraffe in the Central African Republic (CAR) only occur in the north of the country. The north of the CAR is a huge expanse of natural landscape with a very low human population (<0.5 inhabitants/km<sup>2</sup>) (Roulet 2005; Blom *et al.* 2003). The area comprises a network of protected areas consisting of two national parks (Bamingui Bangoran and Manovo-Gounda Saint Floris), a wildlife reserve (Vassako Bolo), hunting sectors and community hunting areas (Bouché *et al.* 2009). This gives the impression of optimum conditions for wildlife, while, in fact, the very low human density and near absence of State authority favour illegal activities throughout this vast landscape (Bouché *et al.* 2011, 2009; Roulet 2005; Blom *et al.* 2003; Ruggiero 1984). During the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, wildlife populations in northern CAR have suffered significantly from continuous uncontrolled exploitation (Bouché *et al.* 2009; Roulet 2005).

The overall large mammal density of the northern CAR decreased substantially between 1978 and 2011, mostly as a result of illegal hunting, a loss of habitat and disease transmitted by illegal movements of livestock (Bouché *et al.* 2011, 2009; Blom *et al.* 2003; Hamilton *et al.* 1985). The extension of cattle transhumance in search of better pastures caused a large rinderpest outbreak among giraffe populations in 1984 (Bouché *et al.* 2011; Roulet 2005). This decimated their population numbers and subsequently they have never fully recovered (Bouché *et al.* 2011).

Protected areas in the northern CAR are located along international borders (Chad and South Sudan); have sparse road networks; lack management plans and on-ground implementation of activities; have insufficient financial and human resources; and lacks adequate anti-poaching measures (World Bank 2010; Bouché *et al.* 2009; Blom *et al.* 2003). This not only makes them effectively open to local illegal hunting, but also more vulnerable to foreign incursions from neighbouring countries (World Bank 2010; Bouché *et al.* 2009; Ruggiero 1984). This low populated area has been used as a refuge for multiple rebellions from the CAR as well as Chad and South Sudan (World Bank 2010; Bouché *et al.* 2009). Ethnic conflicts have increased insecurity in the region and wildlife populations suffered heavy losses due to the widespread proliferation of firearms resulting from the socio-political turmoil (Bouché *et al.* 2009; Roulet 2005; Ruggiero 1984).

Unable to afford meat produced from domestic livestock, most people in the CAR consume bushmeat (Bouché *et al.* 2011). Weak law enforcement and the involvement of some local officials in the bushmeat trade facilitate the availability of bushmeat in urban markets (Bouché *et al.* 2011). In addition to local consumption, bushmeat is also traded from the CAR to South Sudan and Chad (Bouché *et al.* 2009). In community hunting areas, anti-poaching and community based wildlife programmes have curtailed illegal hunting at a local scale, but they do not prevent the international forays of illegal hunters into national parks (Bouché *et al.* 2009).

Porous international borders have furthermore led to illegal grazing by Chadian and South Sudanese pastoralists inside protected areas (World Bank 2010). Additionally, artisanal diamond exploration and uncontrolled bush fires within protected areas have damaged these fragile ecosystems (World Bank 2010).

Without a strong commitment to provide adequate funding and prompt implementation of determined field management, wildlife populations of the northern CAR, including giraffe, will continue to decline (Bouché *et al.* 2011, 2009). More attention needs to be given to capacity building, long-term funding mechanisms, regional collaboration and political commitment to ensure such interventions are sustainable for the long-term (Bouché *et al.* 2011).

### Estimate population abundance and trends

Taxonomic confusion has surrounded the (sub)species occurrence of giraffe in Central Africa. The giraffe population of the CAR were formerly thought to be West African giraffe (*Giraffa camelopardalis peralta*), but it has been recognised that this classification is incorrect, and the population is currently accepted to be Kordofan giraffe (*G. c. antiquorum*) (Hassanin *et al.* 2007). However, further genetic sampling and analysis of the CAR giraffe population, along with other giraffe from the region, is needed to confirm this assumption.

## Historic

According to East (1999)<sup>1</sup>, Kordofan giraffe occurred widely in the northern savanna woodlands of the CAR, but it has been reduced to very low densities or eliminated by illegal hunting over a large part of its former range. An estimated 5,000 – 6,000 giraffe occurred in Chad and the CAR in the late 1950s to early 1960s (Blancou 1963, 1958; Dagg 1962). Anecdotal records indicate that the giraffe population in the CAR was decimated by illegal hunting in the following years (Happold 1969). According to Happold (1969), few giraffe occurred in the Yata N'Gaya Reserve and the Andre Felix National Park in the north-east of the CAR by the late 1960s. Aerial counts carried out in the northern CAR in 1985 covering national parks, hunting reserves and community hunting areas, estimated the occurrence of some 1,757 giraffe in the region (Douglas-Hamilton *et al.* 1985). Of these, 1,731 were estimated to occur in Manovo Gounda St. Floris National Park and 26 in the Vassako-Bolo Nature Reserve in the heart of the Bamingui Bangoran National Park (Douglas-Hamilton *et al.* 1985).

## Recent

Trends in large mammalian density in the northern CAR from 1985 to 2011 showed a decline in giraffe numbers of almost 70% (Bouché *et al.* 2011). Aerial counts carried out in 2005, covering national parks, hunting reserves and community hunting areas, estimated a total of 535 giraffe remaining in the area (Bouché *et al.* 2009). Of these, 254 individuals were estimated to occur in Manovo Gounda St. Floris National Park and 281 individuals in Bamingui Bangoran National Park, of which 12 occurred in the Vassako-Bolo Nature Reserve (Bouché *et al.* 2009; Renaud 2005).

## Current

Numerous reconnaissance flights that have been undertaken to northern CAR since 2008 have shown that wildlife has disappeared from large parts of this area (Bouché 2010). Aerial counts of the area carried out in 2010 estimated a population of only 162 giraffe, occurring in the Bamingui Bangoran and Boungou Ouadda hunting areas (Bouché 2010). Taking into account the threats that the species faces as well as the increasing isolation of the two populations seen during aerial surveys, Bouché (2010) suggested that there is little chance that the actual number of giraffe is larger than this mean estimate. There is currently no confirmed presence of giraffe in the Manovo Gounda St. Floris and Bamingui Bangoran National Parks, and it is likely that the species have disappeared from these areas completely (P.A. Roulet pers. comm).

In summary, current giraffe numbers for CAR are estimated at <170 Kordofan giraffe, mostly occurring in the Bamingui Bangoran and Boungou Ouadda hunting areas.

## Future Conservation Management

The following are proposed conservation management options for giraffe in the CAR:

- Greater understanding of giraffe population numbers, range and conservation status across the country, including (sub)speciation;
- Development of National Giraffe Strategy for the CAR;
- Identification of priority conservation efforts for giraffe conservation, specifically for viable remaining and any transboundary populations; and
- Support to dedicated giraffe conservation, habitat protection, anti-poaching, education and awareness initiatives (government, NGO and academic).

<sup>1</sup> Although East (1999) referred to *G. c. peralta* and *G. c. antiquorum* collectively as western giraffe, *G. c. antiquorum* is now assumed to be Kordofan giraffe as referred to throughout this document.

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Map

