

# Country Profile

## Republic of Cameroon



### *Giraffe Conservation Status Report*

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**Sub-region:** Central Africa

#### **General statistics**

Size of country: 475,400 km<sup>2</sup>

Size of protected areas / percentage protected area coverage: 15.2 %

#### **(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 Republic of Cameroon:

Giraffe in the Republic of Cameroon (referred to as 'Cameroon' in this report) are classified as a Class A species under Wildlife Law No. 94/01 of 1994 to lay down Forestry, Wildlife and Fisheries Regulations. Class A species includes rare or endangered species that benefit from full protection and may consequently not be hunted.

#### **Issues/threats**

Cameroon faces major conservation challenges and despite the country's natural riches, several wildlife species are threatened (WCS 2012). Population growth, war, illegal hunting and habitat destruction have negatively affected the distribution and range of giraffe and other wildlife in the country (WCS 2011).

Cameroon's human population is largely impoverished and many rural communities depend on the hunting of bushmeat for food and as a source of income when sold at local and urban markets (WCS 2012; Kramkimel *et al.* 2004). The large number of people who are involved in the illegal wildlife trade in Cameroon makes conventional law enforcement difficult (WCS 2012). Commercial hunting further decimates wildlife populations across the country.

An ever growing human population results in an increase in development that encroaches upon and fragments habitats, and causes increased conflict between people and wildlife (Omondi *et al.* 2008; Tsakem *et al.* 2007; Kramkimel *et al.* 2004; Mayaka 2002). Several protected areas in Cameroon are surrounded by densely populated human settlements and, as a result, are under severe anthropogenic pressure (Foguekem *et al.* 2010; Omondi *et al.* 2007; Tsakem *et al.* 2007; Kramkimel *et al.* 2004). High densities of livestock inside and at the peripheries of national parks, alongside numerous human activities such as

farming, logging, illegal hunting and other forms of development, are causing rapid habitat loss that is leading to a decline in overall Cameroon's wildlife numbers (IUCN PACO 2011a, 2011b; Foguekem *et al.* 2010; Omondi *et al.* 2007; Tsakem *et al.* 2007; Kramkimel *et al.* 2004; Mayaka 2002).

Cameroon also faces numerous governance challenges (WCS 2012). Illegal activities are aggravated by ineffective and inadequate protection of national parks resulting from weak or nonexistent management structures and law enforcement (Foguekem *et al.* 2010). Very little resources have been set aside by Government for park security patrols and wildlife protection (IUCN PACO 2011a). Lack of motivation, infrastructure and equipment further prevents efficiency (Foguekem *et al.* 2010; Omondi *et al.* 2008). If trends continue, the long-term viability of numerous wildlife species in protected areas may be seriously endangered (Foguekem *et al.* 2010).

Economic and political instabilities across Central Africa further complicate efforts to sustainably manage Cameroon's natural resources (WCS 2011). Rampant illegal hunting across borders, involving organised hunters with modern weapons travelling on horseback, is decimating wildlife species (Nouredine 2012). Waza National Park is located in close proximity to the borders of Chad and Nigeria from where cross-border trafficking and illegal hunting of wildlife occurs (IUCN PACO 2011b). Although incursions of rebels into Bouba Ndjida National Park have been ongoing throughout the years, a major upsurge of illegal hunting occurred in 2012, when hundreds of elephants were slaughtered (Cameroon tribune 2012; Nouredine 2012). These transgressions were allegedly committed by heavily armed Sudanese rebels, while other sources indicate mixed teams of Sudanese and Chadian hunters supported by local hunters (Nouredine 2012). Fortunately, it appears as if this elephant massacre did not negatively affect other wildlife species such as giraffe (P. Bour pers. comm.).

Gold mining activities in transitional areas surrounding Benoue National Park and petroleum exploration on the northern boundary of Waza National Park provide additional threats to park ecosystems and the wildlife they contain (IUCN PACO 2011a,b).

### Estimate population abundance and trends

Taxonomic confusion has surrounded the (sub)species occurrence of giraffe in Central Africa. The giraffe population of Cameroon were formerly thought to be West African giraffe (*Giraffa camelopardalis peralta*) (Dagg 1962), but recent genetic work undertaken by Hassanin *et al.* (2007) suggests that giraffe in Cameroon are actually Kordofan giraffe (*G. c. antiquorum*). However, further genetic sampling and analysis of the Cameroon giraffe population, along with other giraffe from the region, is needed to confirm this assumption.

### Historic

Kordofan giraffe formerly occurred widely in the Far North Region and North Region (North Province until 2008) of Cameroon (East 1999)<sup>1</sup>. Giraffe have historically been restricted to the northern savanna woodlands and Sahel Zone, with the North Region being the species' natural southern limit in the country (East 1999). An estimated 1,000 giraffe occurred in Cameroon in the late 1950s (Dagg 1962; Jeannin & Barthe 1958).

East (1999) reported that Waza National Park protected an important and viable giraffe population. From the early 1960s to the early 1990s, giraffe in the park were generally estimated to number between 1,000 and 2,000 individuals (East 1999). Population trends show a decline in giraffe numbers from 1962 to 1977. The giraffe population of Waza National Park was estimated at approximately 2,000 individuals in 1962 (Flizot 1962). In January 1977, van Lavieren (1977) estimated approximately 1,091 giraffe, while an aerial survey conducted in December 1977 estimated approximately 1,262 giraffe (Esser & van Lavieren 1979). This apparent decline was likely due to the rinderpest outbreak of 1968 and the drought of 1972-73 (Vanpraet 1976; Beauvilain 1989). After being stable between 1977 and 1980 (Ngog 1983), the giraffe

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<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.

population of Waza National Park appeared to increase somewhat over the next decade. Aerial sample counts of the park carried out in 1991 estimated approximately 1,516 giraffe (Tchamba & Elkan 1995).

The first documented ground surveys of Benoue National Park was conducted in 1975 and estimated the giraffe population at approximately 17 individuals (Stark 1977).

### Recent

Giraffe in Cameroon were largely restricted to protected areas by the late 1990s, when an estimated 1,360 individuals occurred in the country (East 1999). Waza National Park remained an important refuge for giraffe, while the species occurred at lower densities in Bouba Ndjida, Benoue and Faro National Parks, and the adjoining hunting zones of the North Region (East 1999).

Giraffe in Waza National Park showed a declining trend since the 1991 census. A wildlife survey of the park conducted in 1994 estimated the giraffe population at approximately 340 individuals (East 1999). However, as this census concentrated mostly on areas around the park's waterholes (East 1999), this could have been an undercount.

During ground surveys of Benoue National Park and adjacent hunting zones one and four conducted in 1999, four giraffe were observed in the park, while no giraffe were recorded in the hunting zones (Gomse & Mahop 2000). Following a ground survey of the same area in 2004, Donfack & Tsakem (2004) reported insufficient observations of giraffe. In 2007, eight giraffe were observed during ground surveys of Benoue National Park, while no giraffe were recorded in the two hunting zones (Tsakem *et al.* 2007).

### Current

During a total aerial count of wildlife in Waza National Park conducted in 2007, 604 giraffe were counted (Foguekem *et al.* 2010; Omondi *et al.* 2007). The survey showed giraffe to occur in high densities in the central part of the park although they were also seen widespread in low numbers, except in the eastern section of the park (Foguekem *et al.* 2010; Omondi *et al.* 2007).

Total aerial counts of Benoue, Faro and Bouba Ndjida National Parks, as well as adjacent hunting zones, were conducted in 2008 (Omondi *et al.* 2008). Six giraffe were recorded in Benoue National Park, 27 in Bouba Ndjida, and two each in hunting zones 16 and 23 (Omondi *et al.* 2008). No giraffe were observed in Faro National Park (Omondi *et al.* 2008). Giraffe in Bouba Ndjida National Park are estimated to have increased to 40 individuals by 2013 (P. Bour pers. comm.).

In summary, current giraffe numbers for Cameroon are estimated at <660 Kordofan giraffe, most of which occur in Waza National Park, with low numbers occurring in Bouba Ndjida National Park and a few in Benoue National Park and the hunting zones outside of these protected areas.

### **Future Conservation Management**

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

- Greater understanding of giraffe population numbers, range and conservation status across the country, including (sub)speciation;
- Development of National Giraffe Strategy for Cameroon;
- Support to dedicated giraffe conservation, habitat protection, anti-poaching, education and awareness initiatives (government, NGO and academic).

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Map

