

Country Profile

Chad

Giraffe Conservation Status Report



Sub-region: Central Africa

General statistics

Size of country: 1,284,000 km²

Size of protected areas / percentage protected area coverage: 10.2%

(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 Chad:

Under Article 25 of Ordinance No. 002/PR/88 on the Conservation of Wildlife, giraffe are classified as a Category A species. Category A species benefit from full protection and may consequently not be hunted.

Issues/threats

Chronic economic and political instability have put severe pressure on protected areas and wildlife across Central Africa (RRF 2010; IUCN PACO 2008). Despite some progress on improving security, the continuing smuggling of weapons and the movement of refugees and internally displaced persons continue to threaten the integrity of countries across the region (Cylkel 2012). Illegal hunting of wildlife plays an ongoing role in this perilous circumstance (Cylkel 2012). Increasingly, militias, insurgents and even terrorist groups are using the easy money obtained from wildlife crime to buy arms and fund insurgencies (Cylkel 2012).

Zakouma National Park in south eastern Chad has been described as one of the last strongholds for wildlife in Central Africa (African Parks 2012). The park provides a refuge for the largest surviving giraffe population in the country (East 1999; Fay *et al.* 2006). However, it is located about 260 kilometres west of the Sudanese conflict area of Darfur, and in the path of recent rebel activity and warfare in Chad (Wildlife extra 2008). Overall security is low and the international border is porous in this isolated region (IUCN PACO 2008; Wildlife extra 2008).

Implementation practices of the government, aided by international organisations, have been insufficient in protecting Chad's wildlife against illegal hunting (Wikipedia 2012). The political and social conflicts in the area have greatly challenged conservation efforts as complex poaching and smuggling systems have been in operation in Zakouma National Park in recent years (RRF 2010). These impacts have been exacerbated by a protected area framework with complicated decision-making processes that have proven inadequate in the fight against illegal hunting (RRF 2010). As a result, animal numbers in the park have been decimated (RRF 2010) and several park guards have been shot and killed over the years (Wildlife extra 2008).

In addition, the extension of cultivated areas and the presence of large herds of cattle along the park boundaries further increase the pressures on Zakouma National Park (Fay *et al.* 2005).

Since 2010, Zakouma National Park is managed in partnership between African Parks and the Chadian Government, and safety conditions have improved (African Parks 2012). There is however a need for ecological monitoring of the biodiversity in the park and its buffer zone and of, among other endangered and vulnerable species, giraffe (Fontaine 2008).

Estimate population abundance and trends

Taxonomic confusion has surrounded the (sub)species occurrence of giraffe in Central Africa. The giraffe population of Chad was formerly thought to be West African giraffe (*G. c. peralta*), but it has been recognised that this classification was 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 Chad giraffe population, along with other giraffe from the subregion, is needed to confirm this assumption.

Historic

According to East (1999)¹, Kordofan giraffe occurred widely in central and southern Chad, but it has been eliminated from substantial parts of its former range by uncontrolled hunting and the effects of drought. The main surviving giraffe population in the country occurs in and around Zakouma National Park in south eastern Chad (East 1999). Although East (1999) suggested that giraffe populations elsewhere in the country are generally low and decreasing, knowledge regarding their occurrence and distribution remains limited.

Prior to the 20th century, vast herds of giraffe were found in central Chad (GIWA 2004). An estimated 5,000 – 6,000 giraffe occurred in Chad and the Central African Republic (CAR) in the late 1950s to early 1960s (Blancou 1963, 1958; Dagg 1962). Although anecdotal records indicate that giraffe were heavily hunted in the following years, subsequently reducing their numbers in northern CAR, giraffe numbers were said to have increased in south eastern Chad (Happold 1969).

Since the mid 1980s, wildlife censuses of Zakouma National Park have been undertaken at irregular intervals and with different sampling rates across different times of the year, resulting in widely varying population estimates for giraffe. However, the general trend indicates an increase in giraffe numbers since the mid-1980s while numbers appeared to remain stable throughout the 1990s. The first aerial survey of Zakouma National Park was conducted in 1986 and estimated approximately 300 giraffe (Bousquet 1986). In 1991, the giraffe population was estimated at 890 individuals (Bousquet 1991), in 1995 at 800 giraffe (Dejace *et al.* 1995), and East (1999) estimated the giraffe population at approximately 839 individuals.

¹ 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.

Recent

In the new millennium, an aerial survey estimated the giraffe population of Zakouma National Park at approximately 800 individuals (Dejace *et al.* 2000). However, in the same year, Planton (2000) counted a mere 154 giraffe inside the park, although, compared to the general trend throughout the years, this appeared to be an undercount. Mackie (2002) estimated the giraffe population at approximately 942 individuals. This was however likely an overestimate as the majority of Mackie's observations was conducted in the north-eastern parts of Zakouma National Park where giraffe concentrate and then extrapolated to the rest of the park (Fay *et al.* 2005, Potgieter *et al.* 2009).

An aerial count of Zakouma National Park in 2005 estimated the giraffe population at 292 individuals (Fay *et al.* 2005), while the estimated population count for 2006 estimated 383 giraffe (Fay *et al.* 2006). A total of 612 giraffe were counted during an aerial survey in 2009 (Potgieter *et al.* 2009). According to the survey report, the 2009 estimate could have been a slight undercount as the authors noted that giraffe were particularly cryptic from the air when they take to the shade of large trees (Potgieter *et al.* 2009). Aerial survey counts for 2010 indicated the giraffe population at approximately 572 individuals (Potgieter *et al.* 2010), while the estimated population count for 2011 estimated 753 giraffe (Potgieter *et al.* 2011). Potgieter *et al.* (2011) suggested that this is likely to have been an undercount. In 2012, an aerial survey of the park counted 703 giraffe (Potgieter *et al.* 2012). As the aerial survey was slightly postponed to the late dry season, giraffe were once again cryptic from the air, which likely resulted in another undercount (Potgieter *et al.* 2012). Potgieter *et al.* 2012 suggested that the giraffe population possibly numbered around 1,000 individuals.

Current

During an aerial total count of Zakouma National Park in 2014, 934 giraffe were counted, mostly occurring in the eastern half of the park (Antonínová *et al.* 2014). The giraffe population in the park has continued to increase and seems to be doing well and with improved management under African Parks, the future for the species in Zakouma National Park looks positive (M. Antonínová pers. comm.; Potgieter *et al.* 2011). However, uncertainty remains regarding the occurrence of giraffe in the rest of the country. In 2014, 6 giraffe (3 adults and 3 young) were observed in the Binder Lere area and another 5 giraffe (3 adults and 2 young) were observed in the Chari Baguirimi area (M. Antonimova pers comm).

In summary, current giraffe numbers for Chad are estimated at <1,000 Kordofan giraffe, mainly occurring in Zakouma National Park, with a few occurring in the Binder Lere and Chari Baguirimi areas, of which the numbers are essentially unknown.

Future Conservation Management

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

- Greater understanding of giraffe population numbers, range and conservation status across the country, especially outside Zakouma National Park and including (sub)speciation;
- Anti-poaching efforts to conserve the key population in Zakouma National Park;
- Development of National Giraffe Strategy for Chad; and
- Support to dedicated giraffe conservation, habitat protection, education and awareness initiatives (government, NGO and academic).

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Map

