

Country Profile

The Republic of Mali



Giraffe Conservation Status Report

Sub-region: West Africa

General statistics

Size of country: 1,240,000 km²

Size of protected areas / percentage protected area coverage: 3.7%

(Sub)species

West African or Nigerian giraffe (*Giraffa camelopardalis peralta*)

Conservation Status

IUCN Red List (IUCN 2012):

Giraffa camelopardalis (as a species) – Least concern

Giraffa camelopardalis peralta – Endangered

In the Republic of Mali:

Extinct

Issues/threats

The Republic of Mali (referred to as Mali in this report) is a landlocked country in West Africa. Historically, West African giraffe (*Giraffa camelopardalis peralta*)¹ occurred widely in the central parts of Mali (East 1999). The distribution and range of West African giraffe have drastically decreased as a result of anthropogenic pressure (Hasannin *et al.* 2007; Le Pendu 1999; Ciofolio 1995; Dagg & Foster 1976). The main drivers of the decline include human population growth, civil unrest, illegal hunting and habitat alteration, habitat destruction and habitat fragmentation (Hasannin *et al.* 2007; Niandou *et al.* 2000; Ciofolio & Le Pendu 1998; Ciofolio 1995; Happold 1969). The introduction of firearms resulted in extensive hunting of giraffe for meat and hides, while the extension of agriculture, deforestation and infrastructure development caused severe loss of habitat (East 1999; Le Pendu 1999; Ciofolio & Le Pendu 1998; Ciofolio

¹ Although East (1999) referred to *G. c. peralta* and *G. c. antiquorum* collectively as western giraffe, *G. c. peralta* is now assumed to be West African giraffe as referred to throughout this document.

1995, Mauny 1957). Increasing aridity and a series of intense droughts have also contributed to the dramatic decline of West African giraffe (Le Pendu 1999; Dagg & Foster 1976).

Although the mammalian fauna of Mali is poorly understood (Meinig 2000), giraffe is presumed to be extinct in the country (Fennessy & Brown 2010). The last surviving population of West African giraffe occurs in the south-western parts of neighbouring Niger, where they persist in a densely populated, unprotected region that is under severe anthropogenic pressure (Hasannin *et al.* 2007; Le Pendu 1999). With increasing giraffe migrations (and forays), a progressive saturation of the giraffe core range in Niger is suspected to result (Fennessy & Tutchings 2014). As giraffe seek new areas, they are likely to venture into Mali where, despite being part of their historical range, they would be more vulnerable to illegal hunting (Le Pendu 1999).

Estimate population abundance and trends

Historic

The historically reported range of West African giraffe varies from being almost non-existent to widely spread across the continent's north-west (Fennessy 2008). According to Mauny (1957) giraffe ranged across the major part of North and West Africa, now covered by the Sahara Desert, during the Palaeolithic period. According to Dagg & Foster (1976), the former distribution of West African giraffe covered most countries of West and Central Africa, including Benin, Burkina Faso, Ghana, Guinea, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Togo, Cameroon, the Central African Republic and Chad. However, a genetic study by Hassanin *et al.* (2007) concluded that that the giraffe of West and Central Africa belong to two different (sub)species, *G. c. peralta* and *G. c. antiquorum* respectively – the latter encompassing the historical and current populations of Cameroon, Chad and Central African Republic. Hassanin *et al.* (2007) suggested that the ancestor of the West African giraffe dispersed from East to North Africa and thereafter migrated to its current Sahelian distribution in West Africa some 6,000 years ago, in response to the Sahara desert evolving.

Historically, West African giraffe occurred widely in the central parts of Mali: in the Sahel Zone and northern savannah woodlands (East 1999). Although giraffe were still present throughout West Africa in Mali, as well as Gambia, Niger, Nigeria, Mauritania and Senegal by the end of the nineteenth century (Dagg & Foster 1976), a substantial reduction in their distribution was reported by the beginning of the twentieth century (Leroy *et al.* 2009; Ciofolo 1995; Sidney 1965; Mauny 1957).

Recent

According to Ciofolo & Le Pendu (1998) large scale disappearance of West African giraffe was evident by the 1950s. Happold (1978) reported that giraffe still roamed from Gaya in Nigeria to Mali in the 1960s, with the highest population density occurring near Ayorou in Niger, close to the Malian border. By the mid-1960s, West African giraffe were reportedly only found in large numbers in the Mtnaka district and around Aderbissinat in central Niger (ZSL 1965).

In 1969, a few giraffe still survived in Mali's Ansongo-Menaka Partial Faunal Reserve on the Niger border in the east and in Boucle du Baoule National Park in the west (Ciofolo 1995; Happold 1969). However, by the late 1980s they had disappeared completely from Boucle du Baoule National Park and other areas in the west (East 1999).

In 1996, Mali's last remaining giraffe were reported to comprise of less than ten animals in the Ansongo-Menaka Partial Faunal Reserve (East 1999). At that time, giraffe in the reserve were severely threatened by

incursions of large numbers of livestock and encroachment of settlements (East 1999). Although the Malian authorities took active steps in the early 1990s to protect the reserve's giraffe population, including posting a ranger to accompany the giraffe to discourage poachers (East 1999), habitat degradation and destruction prevailed.

Le Pendu made reference to two sub-adult male giraffe crossing into Niger from Mali in 1997, and suggested that they probably came from a relic group of five individuals in the Natural Reserve of Monzonga (Le Pendu 1999). Five giraffe travelled from Sansanne Houssa to Fandou (Niger) in the same year and Le Pendu (1999) suggested that this group could have consisted of giraffe from Mali and/or Niger (Le Pendu 1999).

Current

The small population of West African giraffe in the Ansongo-Menaka Partial Faunal Reserve is now presumed to be locally extinct (Fennessy & Brown 2010). No other population of giraffe is known to persist in Mali and the (sub)species is thus assumed to be locally extinct in the county.

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Map

In preparation.