



Quarterly conservation update – Kordofan giraffe (*Giraffa camelopardalis antiquorum*), Garamba National Park, Democratic Republic of Congo

May – August 2018

Summary

1. 40 giraffe individuals out of an estimated 48 individuals (April 2018) were observed since May.
2. Two ossicone-units that were donated by the GCF in April 2018 will be refurbished and deployed during dry season in early 2019.
3. Paper on giraffe research from September 2016 – August 2017 currently being drafted.
4. Giraffe research assistant was selected and is planned to arrive in Garamba National Park mid-September 2018.

Programme

In April 2018, the Kordofan giraffe (*Giraffa camelopardalis antiquorum*) population in Garamba National Park (NP) was estimated at 48 giraffe following ongoing field work and surveys in early 2018 – and as outlined in the first quarterly conservation update of 2018. Over the quarter, a total of 54 giraffe herds have been observed from which 40 individual giraffe were identified. With an estimated population of 48 individuals in April 2018, unfortunately eight giraffe could not be found/observed this quarter.

Due to vegetation conditions and logistical constraints, monitoring of some giraffe herds was limited. Continued giraffe monitoring in the following quarter will provide a better understanding on whether these individuals are still alive in the population or not. A new population assessment (expected in April 2019) will review the observations from this last year and establish new population estimates.

As observed through previous giraffe research efforts, juveniles are vulnerable to predation with sometimes >50% of giraffe calves predated in their first year of life. Monitoring of giraffe calves in Garamba NP has however proven that all calves identified in the population assessment of April 2018 are still alive. This is very positive and a sign that good conservation and management efforts are in place.



Figure 1. Location of Garamba National Park with its adjacent Hunting Reserves, DRC.

Two giraffe solar powered GPS satellite ossicone units were donated by the Giraffe Conservation Foundation (GCF) in April 2018 to aid in the monitoring of the giraffe in Garamba NP. With vegetation being 2-3m high from May until after the fires of dry season in December-January collaring operations are limited to February – April. Therefore, these units are planned to be deployed in early 2019 but before then the units will be refurbished to ensure they are in perfect working condition before being fitted.

To better facilitate monitoring of the highly elusive giraffe in Gangala na Bodio Region of Garamba NP (see map), one female of this population will be targeted as well as one of the three individuals in the northern range of their distribution in Garamba NP for fitting with the GPS satellite units. The latter will help to assess the giraffe's home range and guide a possible translocation to another area of the Park that is now feasible by road through the construction of a bridge in early 2018.

Following the research activities of 2016-17, a scientific paper is being drafted by the lead author Mathias D'haen (Garamba NP), together with his academic supervisors Dr. Karolina Brandlova (Czech University of Life Sciences) and Dr. Julian Fennessy (Giraffe Conservation Foundation).

The paper outlines our understanding about the populations current conservation status and threats, in particular its population dynamics and spatial ecology.

A giraffe research volunteer position, as proposed in the draft National Giraffe Conservation Strategy and Action Plan of DRC was advertised in country and several candidates applied. All short-listed candidates for the giraffe research-assistant position were interviewed and one was identified. Originally from the region around Garamba NP, Achille Diodio graduated from a Bachelor programme at the University of Kisangani (DRC) after which he did a Masters programme at Northwest Forestry University in China. The volunteer position is planned to commence mid-September 2018, and although he will be funded to stay for an initial period of 4 months, it may be likely to make this position full-time to coordinate research long term.



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