



Niger Giraffe Translocation Assessment Planning Trip – Operation Sahara Giraffe –

November 2017



Dr Julian Fennessy
Director, GCF

Acronym

AVEN:	Association pour la Valorisation de l'Écotourisme au Niger (Association for the Valorisation of Ecotourism in Niger)
DFC/PR:	Direction de la Faune, de la Chasse et des Parcs et Réserves (Directorate of Wildlife Conservation, Hunting and Protected Areas)
DGEF:	Direction Générale des Eaux & Forêts (Directorate of Water & Forests)
GCF:	Giraffe Conservation Foundation
NGO:	Non-Government Organisation
SCF:	Sahara Conservation Fund
WCA:	Wildlife Conservation Alliance

Acknowledgement

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Niger Translocation Assessment Team

AVEN: Guides (1)

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GCF: Dr Julian Fennessy (Director)
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GCF-SCF: Abdoul Razack Moussa Zabeirou (Programme Officer)
Ahmed Oumarou (Driver)

SCF: Dr Thomas Rabeil (Regional Program Officer)

WCA: Ivan Carter (Executive Director)
Graham Pelham (Board)



Figure. Members of the Translocation Assessment Team, Gadabedji Game Reserve, Niger.

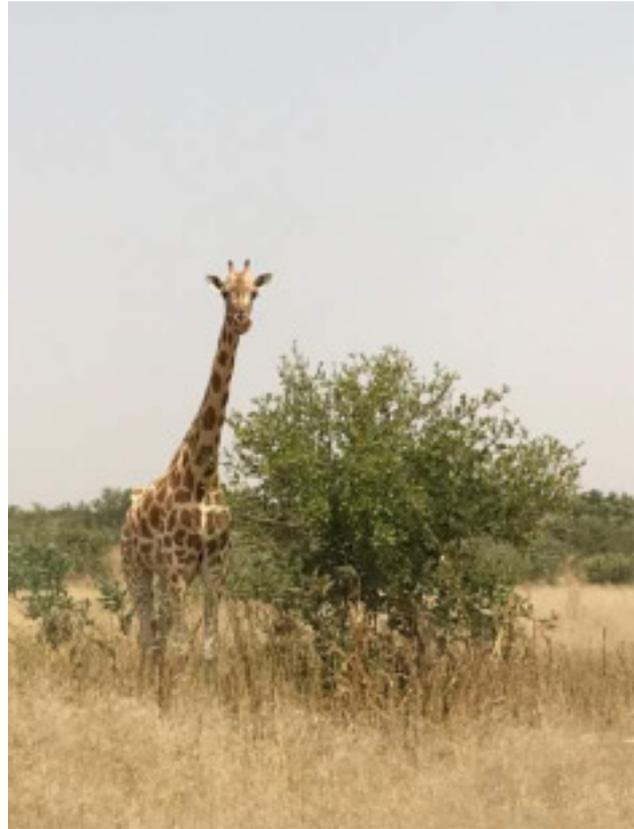


Introduction

The endangered West African giraffe (*Giraffa camelopardalis peralta*) live freely in an anthropised environment in the transition zone of the Biosphere Reserve of Park W, Niger. Demographic pressure and agricultural practices in this area pose a threat through habitat fragmentation of these West African giraffe, prompting them to change their behaviour over the last few decades.

As part of the conservation of the West African giraffe, the Government of Niger with GCF-SCF and local and international collaborative partners (AVEN and WCA) undertook a host of meetings and field-based translocation assessment for the West African giraffe in Niger from 4-11 November 2017 with additional financial support from Saint Louis Zoo.

The main objective of the mission was to meet with relevant local and government authorities, including the Minister, Director General, Governor and Mayors to determine the practicalities and viability of establishing a new translocated population of the last remaining West African giraffe in Niger.



Planning

Below is a brief overview of the mission to discuss, review and assess the possibility of a giraffe translocation to Gadabedji Game Reserve, Niger in 2018.

Saturday 4th November

Niamey, Niger

Introductory meeting of GCF and SCF with the Director General (Ministry), Deputy Director General (Ministry) and Chief of Gadabedji Game Reserve about the proposed giraffe translocation planning efforts in Niger. GCF-SCF provided an overview of their experience in giraffe (and wildlife) conservation and translocation in Africa, highlighted skills and experience of the current and proposed team for any future translocation, as well as detailed the actions involved in capturing and translocating giraffe. Additionally, GCF-SCF presented and discussed the newly designed solar powered GPS Satellite units, their capacity and value in post-translocation monitoring – and regular monitoring for current population. Various discussions were held around the above topics and all present endorsed the project and gave their support for the mission and future translocation effort.

Sunday 5th November

Niamey-Koure Region, Niger

The GCF-SCF team together Ministry and Gadabedji Game Reserve staff visited the 'Giraffe Zone' in the Koure Region on a field trip to discuss current and future giraffe conservation opportunities and the proposed translocation planning trip in Niger with AVEN and ASGN partners in Niger. GCF-SCF





Figure. Preferred boma site for giraffe once captured in the Koure Region, Niger.

provided an overview of their experience in giraffe (and wildlife) conservation and translocation in Africa, highlighted skills and experience of the current and proposed team for any future translocation, as well as detailed the actions involved in capturing and translocating giraffe. Additionally, GCF-SCF presented and discussed the newly designed solar powered GPS Satellite units, their capacity and value in post-translocation monitoring – and regular monitoring for current population. Various discussions were held around the above topics and all present endorsed the project and gave their support for the mission and future translocation effort. During this meeting, additional targeted discussions around giraffe-specific support received to date from GCF were highlighted and a proposal for future opportunities presented.

Following the meetings, the team drove within the Koure Region to assess potential sites for the establishment of a boma to hold giraffe after initial capture. Various sites were assessed and one close to Kanare village was preferred as it was close to a secondary road (graded track) which would allow ease of movement for the truck and container. Importantly, from the boma site a vehicle with giraffe chariot will be able to load the giraffe in the field and return them to the boma easily.

Various discussions were held throughout the day around the translocation, equipment needs, role of partners, community support and assistance, and planning next steps. All present endorsed the project and gave their support.

Monday 6th November

Niamey, Niger

The GCF-SCF team were invited for an introductory meeting with the Minister of Environment and his staff about the proposed translocation planning trip in Niger. Similar to previous meetings, the team provided an overview of the experience of GCF in giraffe conservation and translocation, highlighted skills and experience of team for future translocation, detailed the actions involved in capturing and translocating giraffe, and presented and discussed the newly designed solar powered GPS Satellite units. All present endorsed the project and gave their support.



In the afternoon, the translocation assessment team met with Eric Schiano, NAT International, to better understand the trucking and container requirements available. This was a valuable discussion and the valuable support from Nat International is very appreciative.

Tuesday 7th November

Niamey-Maradi, Niger

The translocation assessment team all drove together from Niamey to Maradi (en route to Gadabedji Game Reserve) stopping regularly along the way to assess road conditions, towns, powerlines, etc. and their potential impact on/for the giraffe translocation route. On arrival late in Maradi, the team held a brief meeting with the Regional Director of the Ministry and we similarly present the mission about the proposed translocation planning trip in Niger.



Wednesday 8th November

Maradi-Gadabedji Game Reserve

A morning meeting was held in Maradi with the Governor and his advisors, Regional Director of the Ministry, local business partners and translocation assessment team to present the mission about the proposed translocation planning trip in Niger. Similar information to that presented to the Minister of Environment and others was undertaken and brief discussions held. Importantly, all present endorsed the project and gave their support.

The translocation assessment team then drove from Maradi to Gadabedji Game Reserve, further assessing the route along the way for road conditions, powerlines, towns, etc. The team overnighed in Gadabedji town on the border with the Reserve.

Thursday 9th November

Gadabedji Game Reserve-Maradi

Throughout the morning the translocation assessment team drove around the Gadabedji Game Reserve assessing the site for potential translocation release sites, forage availability, water infrastructure, etc. The Mayor of Gadabedji and his advisors joined the team and together we toured the Reserve and held discussions along the way about the giraffe, livestock, access to the Park monitoring, etc. All present agreed that the Reserve is a good habitat and environment for the giraffe to be released, and importantly part of their historic range until they were made locally extinct. Recent efforts by government and NGOs to secure the area and increase conservation support has been



valuable. The Mayor expressed his excitement to have giraffe soon re-introduced into 'his' area and hopefully it will help to bring tourists. The team left the from Gadabeji Game Reserve late and overnighted in Maradi.

Friday 10th November

Maradi-Niamey

A long day's drive from Maradi to Niamey, with many discussions held along way regarding the way forward and next steps.

Saturday 11th November

Niamey-Koure Region, Niger

The translocation assessment team again undertook a field visit to the 'Giraffe Zone' in the Koure Region to talk with AVEN, see some giraffe and re-assess the proposed sites for the establishment of a boma to hold giraffe after initial capture. All



agreed on the site chosen (see Figure above) and much preparation for the boma will be required with support from the community prior to activities commencing. Simultaneously, an aerial reconnaissance of the boma location was undertaken with the valuable support of Eric Schiano, NAT International, using a ULM Savannah.

Conclusion and Way Forward

Following the field visit and various meetings with local authorities, the core GCF-SCF team and key members of the Ministry and Gadabedji Game Reserve developed a plan and reviewed the way forward needs, resources and activities.

Original discussions between partners had looked at undertaking the giraffe translocation in February 2018. However, due to the logistical and resource requirements, fundraising needs and availability of the entire team, it was agreed that the translocation only be held in November 2018 following the rainy season. A draft Translocation Plan for November 2018 was developed – see below.

Draft Translocation Plan – November 2018

- Day 1 - Arrive in Niamey
- Day 2 - Meetings in Niamey
- Day 3 - Drive to Koure Region from Niamey, set up camp, training of capture team
- Day 4-6 - Capture giraffe
- Day 6-26 - Boma train giraffe for translocation
- Day 7-12 - GPS satellite collar 15 giraffe (Koure, Dallol, Dingazi)
- Day 27-28 - Load and drive giraffe to Gadabedji GR over 2 days
- Day 28/29 - Release giraffe into holding boma (as necessary)
- Day 29/30 - Release giraffe into Gadabedji GR
- Day 30 - Monitor giraffe in Gadabedji GR

Additionally, and in support of ongoing giraffe conservation, post-translocation monitoring and ecotourism developments in the core 'Giraffe Zone' of the Koure Region, it was requested that solar powered GPS satellite units be fitted to giraffe that will and will not be translocated. As a result, one



will not only be able to monitor individual movements of those translocated, but also of some of those in their natural area to compare. Additionally, some giraffe will potentially be fitted with units in the Fandou Region where giraffe have naturally moved into over the last decade.

All in all the trip was important for all the team to have the opportunity to discuss and plan for this important and first-ever giraffe translocation opportunity in Niger. The overwhelming endorsement of local government and community stakeholders was encouraging, and considerable work will be required to ensure the success of the translocation.

