



Quarterly Conservation Update - Kordofan Giraffe (*Giraffa camelopardalis antiquorum*), Garamba National Park, Democratic Republic of Congo.

March 2020

Summary

1. A total of 57 individual giraffe were identified between January and March 2020 – acknowledging that an estimated total population of 55 individuals was recorded in the annual 2019 giraffe population assessment.
2. Four (4) GPS satellite ossicone units were deployed on four (4) adult female giraffe; each representing different giraffe populations in the Garamba Complex. Dr Sara Ferguson from Giraffe Conservation Foundation (GCF), joined the team from 16 - 22 February 2020 to assist with the fitting of the ossicone units.
3. One (1) giraffe (GIR28F) was found dead six days after she had been fitted with an ossicone-unit in DC Gangala na Bodio. It is thought that this was due to a complication following the abnormal way in which she got to her feet.
4. Three (3) new calves were observed between January and March 2020, and added to the giraffe identification database

Programme

A total of 267 giraffe in 74 herds were observed in Garamba NP during this quarter. Of those observed, 57 individuals were identified from photographs using the established giraffe database of 55 individuals' giraffe (population assessment April 2019) of Garamba NP.

Eleven (11) giraffe that had not been observed for several months were seen during this quarter, including three (3) giraffe from Block-10 (GIR32F, GIR33F, GIR35F) which had not been seen in 14 months despite extensive search efforts; three giraffe (GIR58M, GIR66U, GIR11F) and four giraffe (GIR28F, GIR68U, GIR59F, GIR42F) from the GnB DC population that were not seen for 11 months and 10 months respectively; and one (1) giraffe from the south-west of the Park that had not been observed for seven (7) months (GIR62U).



Taking into account the three new giraffe were observed during this quarter, the estimated population size is 62 giraffe. The Annual Population Assessment is to be published in early April 2020. Monitoring efforts will continue to track the survival and health of these individuals.

The giraffe monitoring efforts during this quarter included approximately 30 hours of aerial surveillance (using the Husky and helicopter) and 42 hours of vehicle patrols covering a total distance of 963 km. In addition, 15 hours were flown in the Husky and 5.1 hours in the BK 117 helicopter over the course of deploying the giraffe ossicone units.

Five (5) GPS satellite ossicone units had been donated by Giraffe Conservation Foundation (GCF) to be deployed on the Garamba Complex giraffe in February 2020. GCF's Dr Sara Ferguson travelled to the Park to work with the Park's capture team on how to fit the ossicone units. Four (4) of the GPS satellite ossicone units were deployed on four adult female giraffe; each representing the different giraffe populations in the Garamba Complex. Two GPS satellite ossicone units were deployed in Gangala na Bodio DC on GIR42F (Sambo) and GIR28F; one in the southeast of the Park on GIR20F (Ume) and another toward the southwest of the Park on GIR43F (Mwambe). Two of the giraffe (GIR42 (Sambo) and GIR43 (Mwambe)) had previously been fitted with GPS satellite head harnesses in 2016. It was planned that the fifth ossicone unit be deployed during the subsequent elephant collaring if the team were able to find the isolated giraffe population in Block 10. However, the fifth unit was not providing consistent readings so it was decided that it would not be deployed, nor were the giraffe found in Block 10.

The fourth GPS satellite ossicone unit was deployed on GIR28F. The standard immobilisation dose was given and the antidote was administered within two minutes of immobilization. After the GPS satellite ossicone unit was fitted, the team worked to collect genomic samples and physiological data. However, the giraffe took the opportunity to stand up and threw part of the team off her neck and rolled to her feet. None of the team were badly injured, and the giraffe ran off. Following the immobilization, satellite data from the ossicone-unit showed that the giraffe's movement was relatively slow. After a day, the unit stopped transmitting data, so the monitoring team deployed the Husky to establish the state of the giraffe's health. The carcass of GIR28F was located and reported. A team deployed by helicopter, including a wildlife veterinarian to conduct a post-mortem on the carcass. There were no signs of poaching or predation on the carcass. While the exact cause of death is difficult to determine, a torsion, perhaps linked to how GIR28 rolled to stand up, is plausible. Signs, such as breathing, blood, and energy level when GIR28 stood up and ran off were all suggestive of a healthy animal.

The monitoring of the population of the three adult female giraffe in Block 10 will continue and several dedicated foot patrols will be conducted to follow the group. The Park management still plans to deploy a GPS satellite ossicone unit on one of the giraffe, so that the giraffe movements can be tracked more efficiently, avoiding another period of not finding the group on aerial surveys. However, this largely depends on the current global situation regarding the coronavirus and travel restrictions.

Data collected on the giraffe in Block 10 will be used by management and their conservation partners such as GCF, to determine which course of action to take regarding future translocations. These females are important to restoring the giraffe population in Garamba. Two potential options are: (i) to translocate all the females from Block 10 to the southern section of the Park; or (ii) to translocate a young, strong male to Block 10 to breed with the females.



Figure 1: A big giraffe herd in Gangala na Bodio Domaine de Chasse

Upcoming Quarter

- Ongoing giraffe monitoring will continue by aerial surveillance, GPS satellite tracking using the ossicone-units, vehicle and foot patrols.
- Continue with the genomic data collection samples for future analysis.
- Prepare for World Giraffe Day.
- Present the updated Giraffe Conservation Strategy to ICCN and ANP for approval.

With thanks to our partners:

