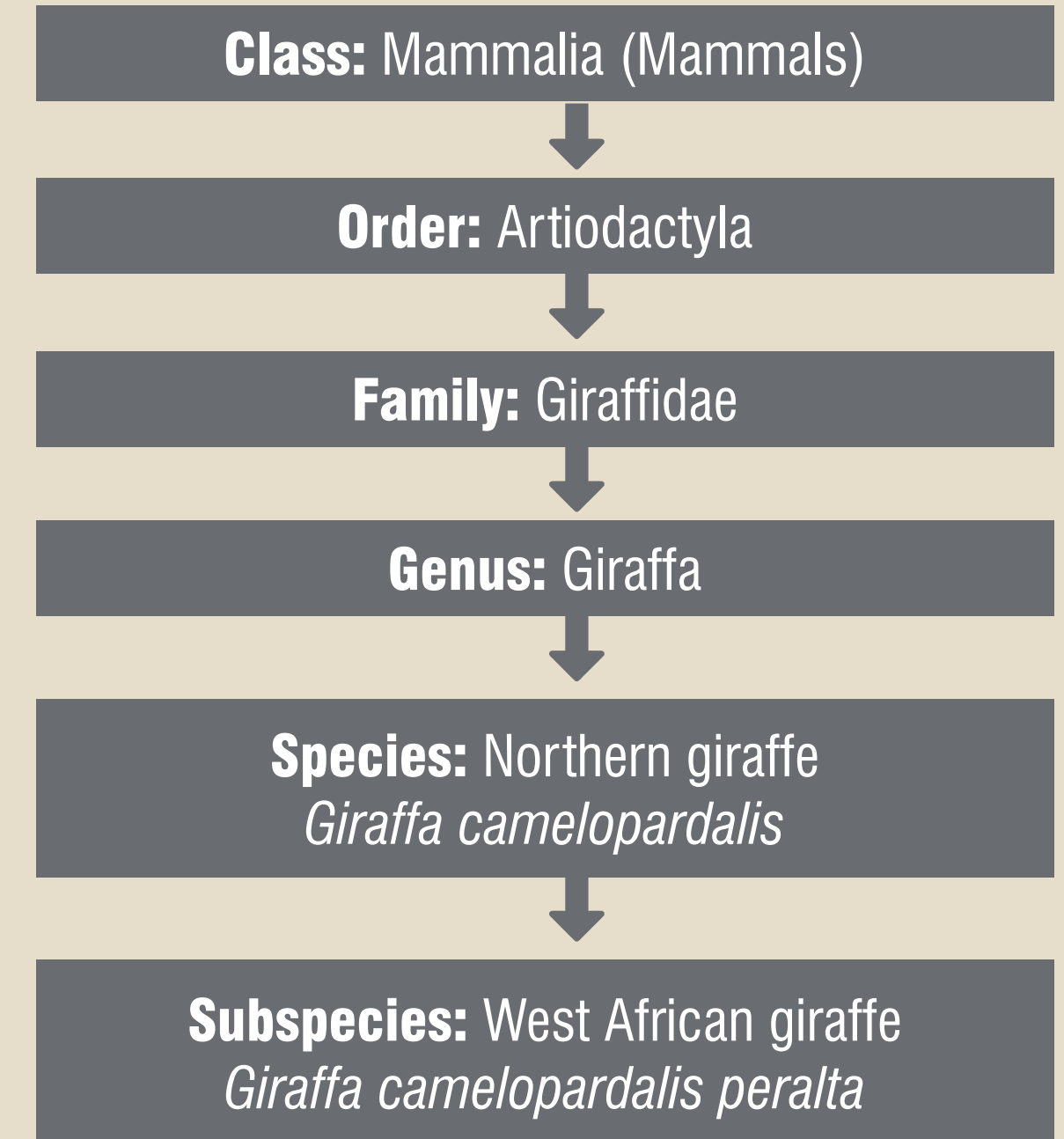


NIGER'S GIRAFFE

Conservation Guide

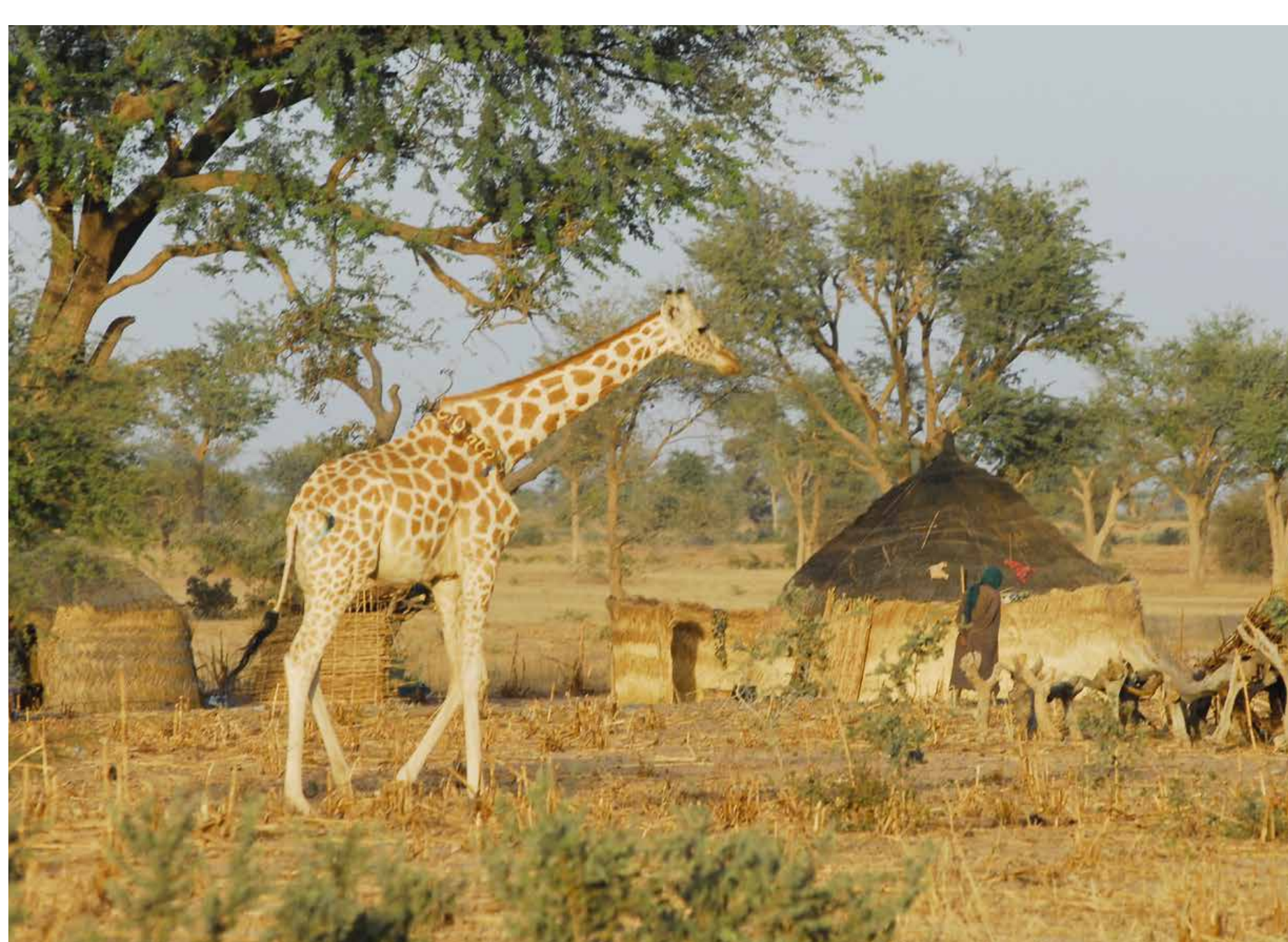
Thank you to Katerina Gasparova, Sean Vigen, Abdoul Razack Moussa Zaberou, Philippe Chardonnet and Cindy Armstrong for providing the images and map.

Taxonomy & Populations



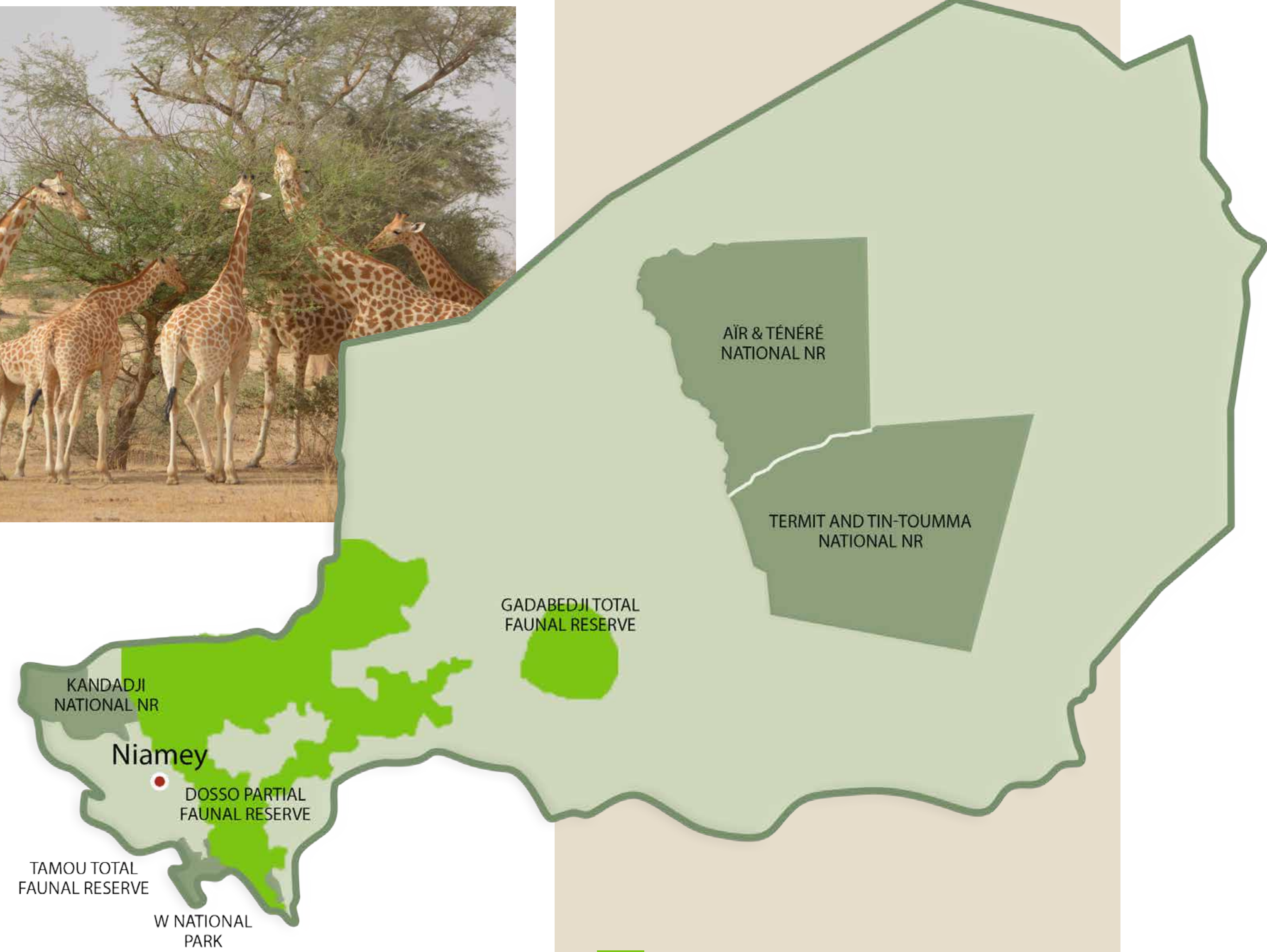
Where do you find giraffe in Niger?

There are an estimated 600 West African giraffe remaining in the wild and all of them live in Niger. Almost all of the West African giraffe live in an isolated pocket (the Giraffe Zone) east of the capital Niamey. This is part of the transition zone of Niger's W National Park Biosphere Reserve, which includes the central zone of Kouré, the Dallol Bosso, and the Fakara Plateau. In 2018 GCF, together with the Government of Niger, translocated eight West African giraffe to the Gadabedji Biosphere Reserve to establish a new satellite giraffe population in order to assist the population's growth in number and range. Gadabedji formed part of the historic range of the West African giraffe before they were locally extirpated in the 1970s due to a severe drought and illegal hunting. In Niger, giraffe share their living space with local villagers and their livestock, and as all areas are unfenced, the giraffe can move freely year-round in search of food.

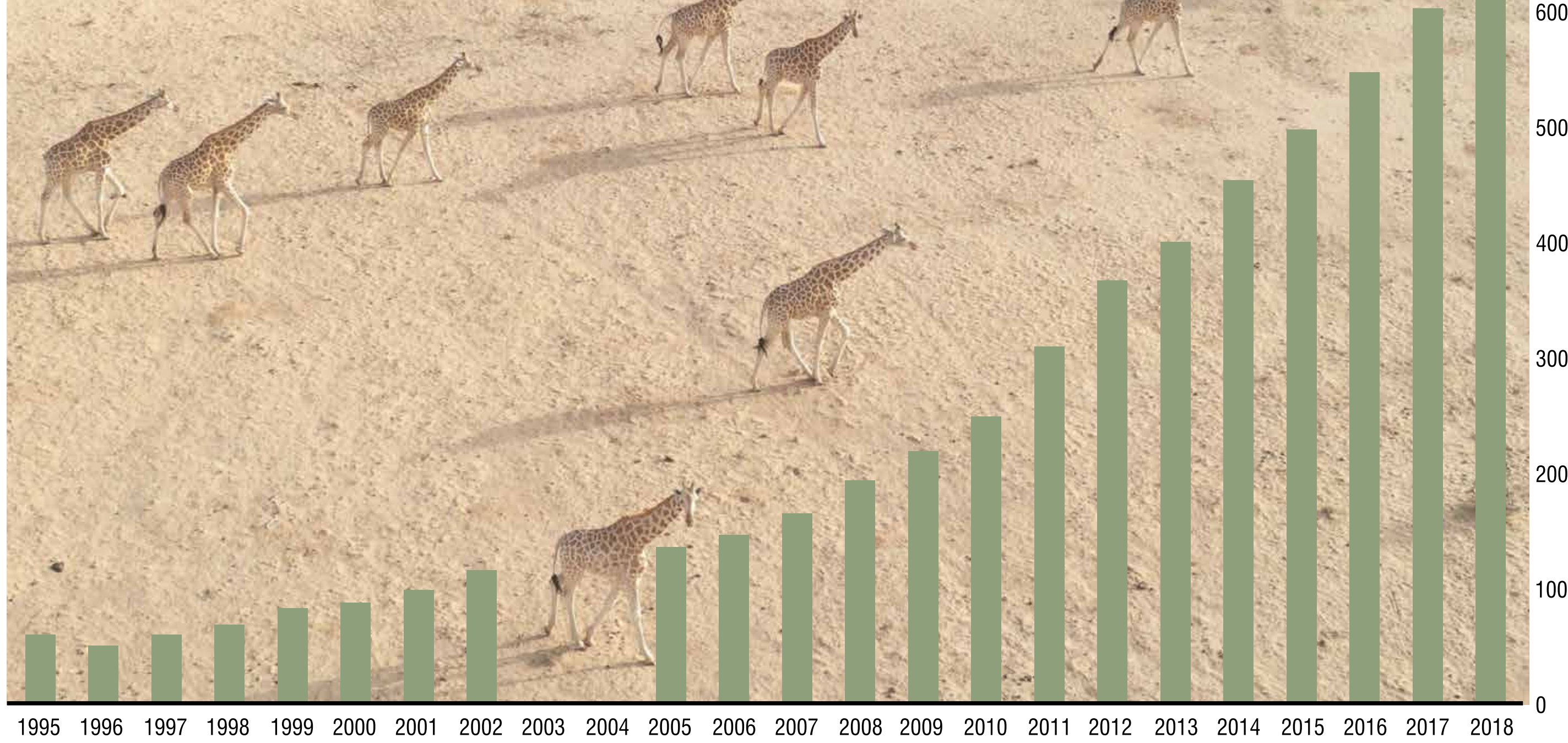


Giraffe in Niger

At the beginning of the 20th century West African giraffe were widely distributed, from Nigeria to Senegal, but by the mid-1990s only 49 individuals remained in the whole of West Africa. These few survivors are now formally protected by the Niger government and their numbers have risen to more than 600 individuals. The Government of Niger is committed to protecting their giraffe and to securing their future in the wild. In 2006, Niger became the first country in Africa to develop a National Giraffe Conservation Strategy and Action Plan, which was superseded in 2015 with a new version. From the beginning, GCF and its team have been involved in supporting the development and implementation of Niger's plans and associated actions.



West African giraffe population numbers



History of Niger's giraffe

Many prehistoric rock paintings and engravings across the region indicate that giraffe were once prolific throughout West Africa. The giraffe rock engravings in Dabous on the western side of the Air Mountains in north-central Niger are the most impressive on the continent. The Dabous giraffe are believed to have been carved 6,000 years ago. In more recent history, giraffe were widespread through parts of central Niger and in the north-west near the Malian border. However, a combination of factors such as increased illegal hunting, persistent drought conditions, and increased deforestation to expand agricultural lands to accommodate the growing human population caused a sharp decline in giraffe numbers from the 1970s until the mid-1990s. In 1996 only 49 West African giraffe remained in the wild, and all of them were concentrated in the Giraffe Zone.



West African giraffe - approximately 600 *Giraffa camelopardalis peralta*

Protected area



Threats

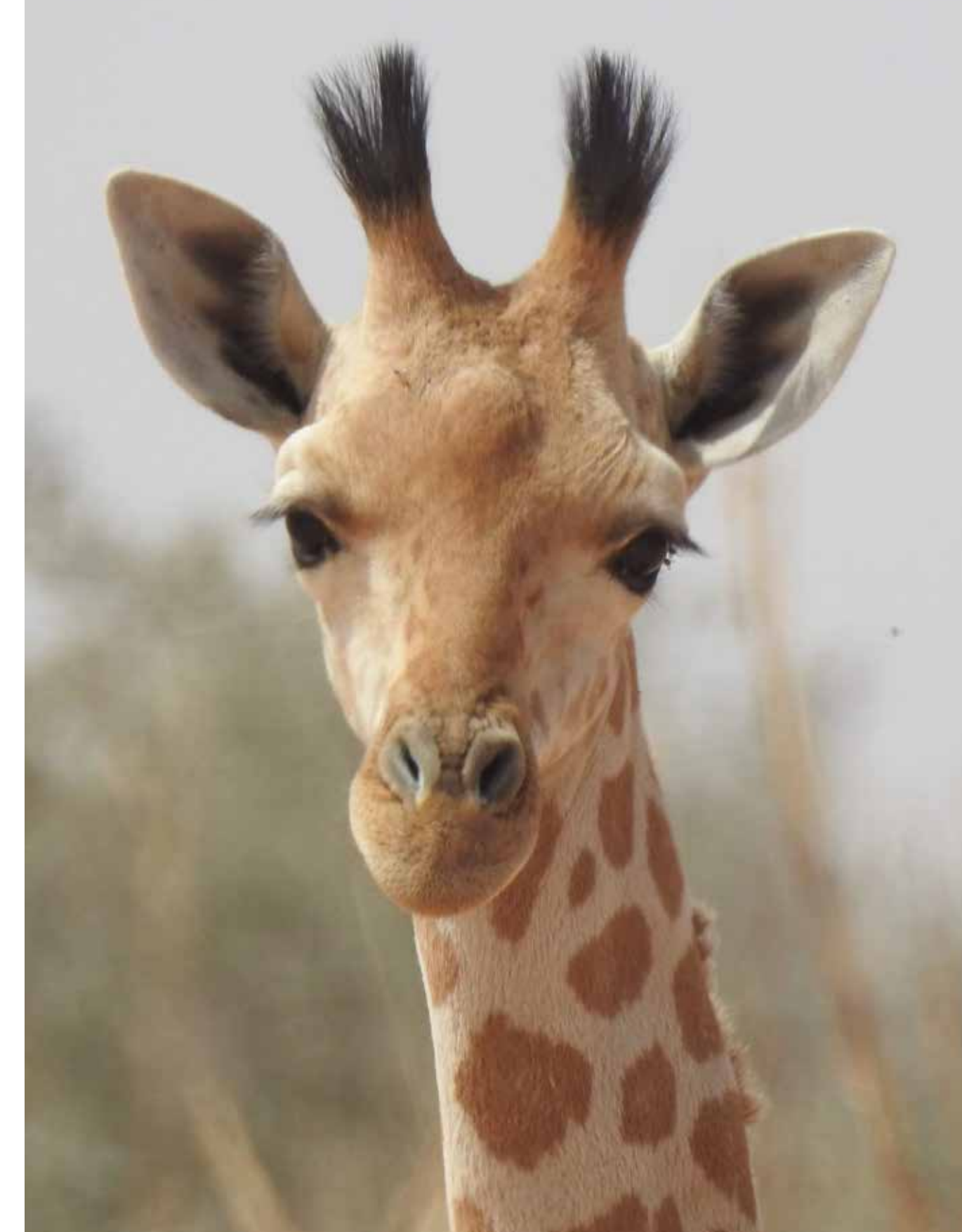
- Habitat loss and fragmentation**
As more and more natural 'tiger bush' is converted into agricultural land and an increasing need for fuel wood in Niamey and its surrounding areas causes deforestation, giraffe habitat shrinks and only disconnected or fragmented small islands of these habitats remain.
- Human-giraffe conflict**
While giraffe are generally not perceived as a threat, they conflict with local farmers as they raid their crops when feeding. Giraffe show a particular liking for beans and mangoes and sometimes trample millet. Often, farmers chase the giraffe away, which can lead to injury or even death.
- Traffic accidents**
As giraffe share their habitat with people and their livestock in open and unfenced areas, traffic accidents, although rare, can pose a threat to giraffe.
- Illegal hunting**
Since the mid-1990s illegal hunting (poaching) has continually decreased and today incidents are rare to non-existent. As the giraffe numbers are increasing, their range further expands into areas of higher insecurity and less protection. It is important to recognise that illegal hunting may become more prevalent if the situation is not monitored and managed appropriately.
- Climate change**
A combination of rising temperatures and more severe droughts related to climate change may have an impact on Niger's giraffe. This could in turn increase other threats such as habitat loss and fragmentation, human-giraffe conflict, and illegal hunting.

Habitat and ecology

West African giraffe's preferred habitat type is 'tiger bush', which is characterised by alternating bands of trees (*Boscia*, *Combretum*, *Piliostigma*, *Senegalia* and *Vachellia spp.*), shrubs and grassland. Seasonally, the giraffe move into the Dallol Bosso seasonal river system, where they forage on *Faidherbia albida*, *Balanites aegyptiaca* and *Ziziphus mauritiana*, amongst other species. Ongoing conservation monitoring and research, including the use of GPS satellite technology, show that West African giraffe have large home ranges – some of these ranges are the largest in Africa. During the rainy season, the giraffe tend to move more in search of food. And now, as their numbers increase, they are moving even further afield, where a definite expansion of their range can be observed.

Niger - a giraffe conservation success

The increasing West African giraffe population in Niger is a true conservation success story. With only 49 individuals remaining in the whole of West Africa in the mid-1990s the Government of Niger, supported by national and international conservation organisations, committed to a concerted effort to save them. Since then, giraffe numbers have steadily increased, based mainly on community-based conservation efforts led by the local communities who share their living space with giraffe and who were afforded the opportunity to benefit directly from these giraffe through alternative livelihoods and development support. In 2008, the West African giraffe was listed as *Endangered* on the IUCN Red List; however, in 2018 it was downlisted to *Vulnerable* based on increasing numbers and their conservation success story.



The Giraffe Conservation Foundation (GCF) is dedicated to a sustainable future for all giraffe populations in the wild. GCF is the only NGO in the world that concentrates solely on the conservation and management of giraffe in the wild throughout Africa.

giraffeconservation.org