



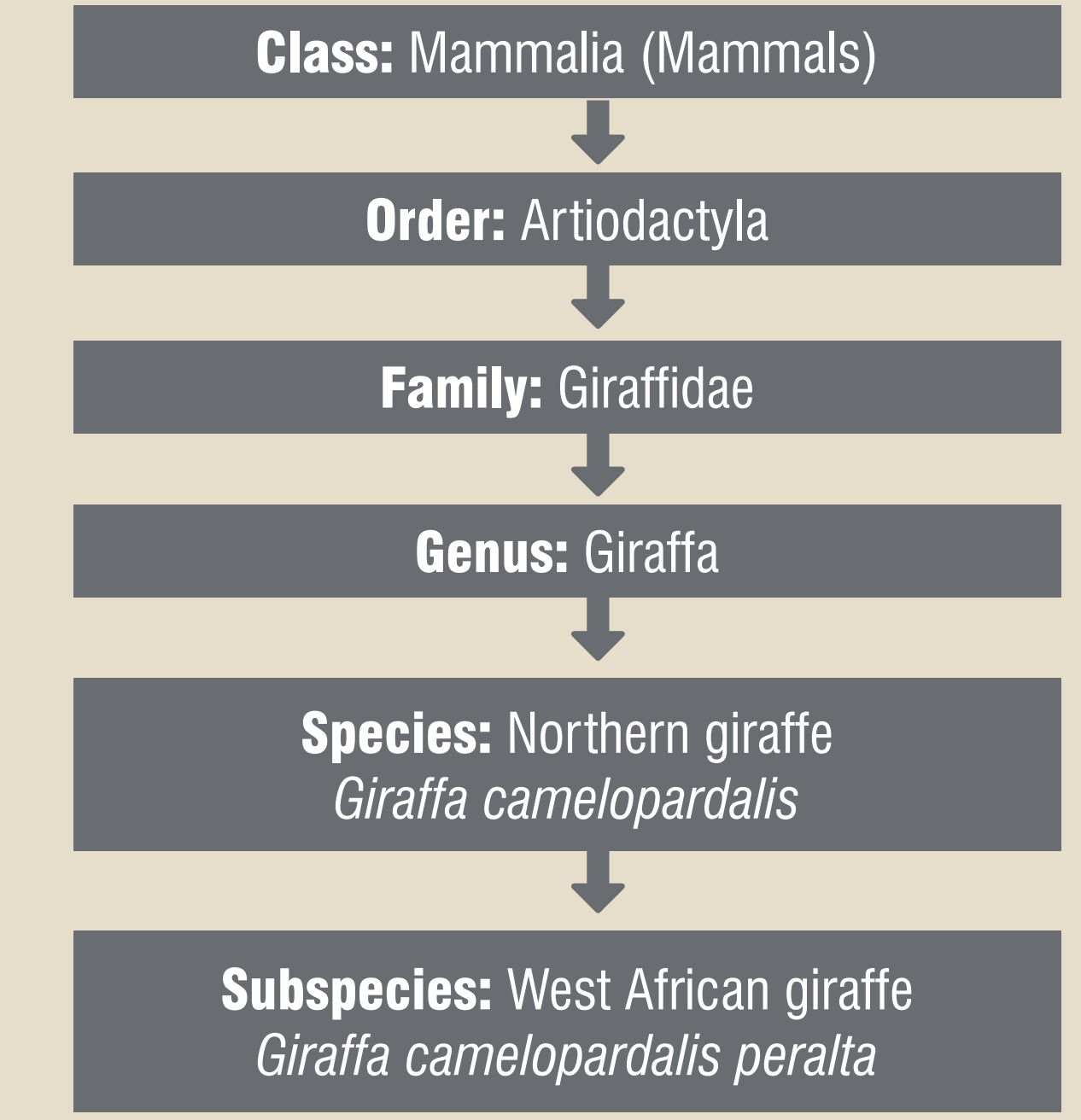
NIGER'S GIRAFFE

Conservation Guide

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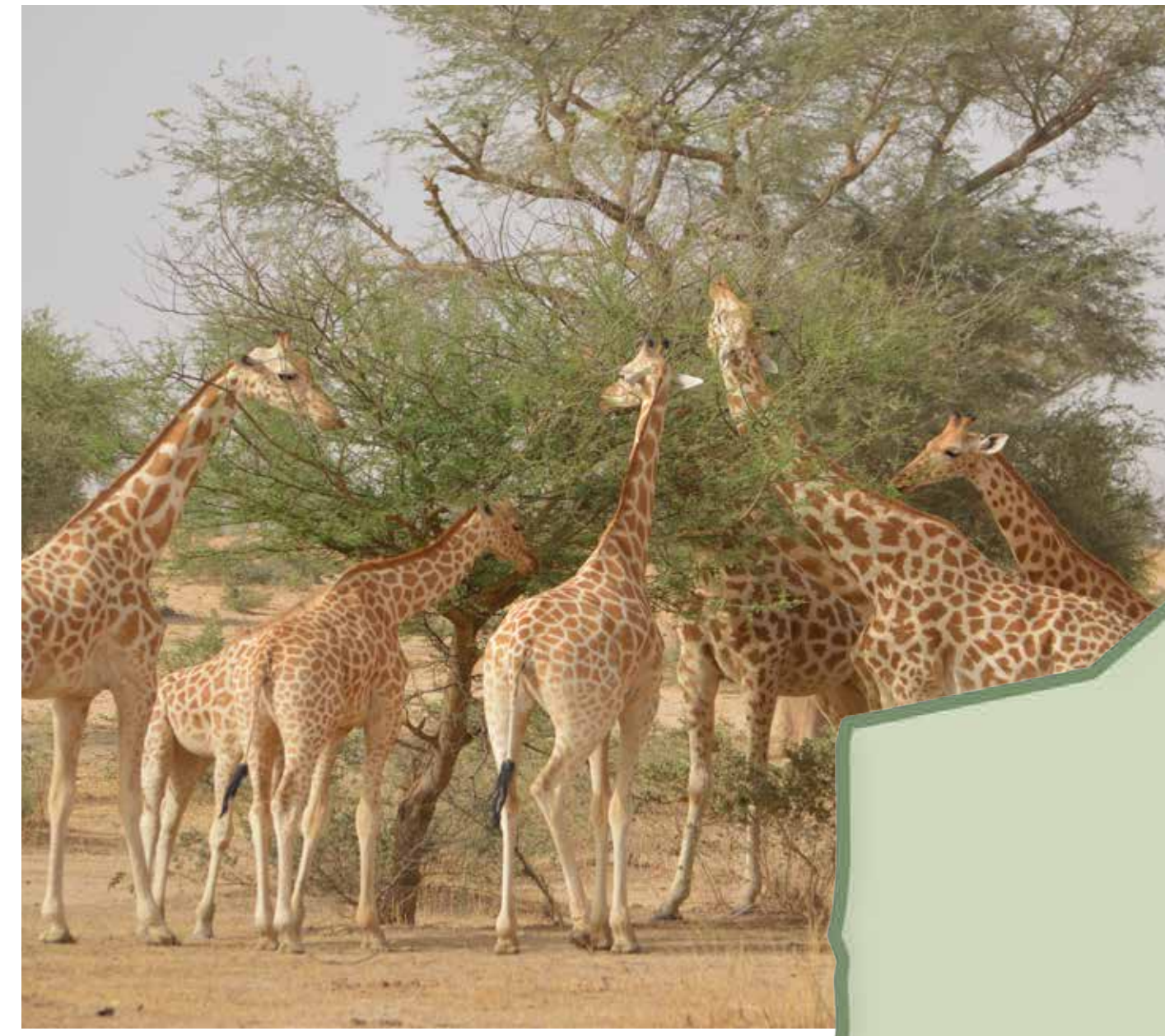


Taxonomy & Populations



Where do you find giraffe in Niger?

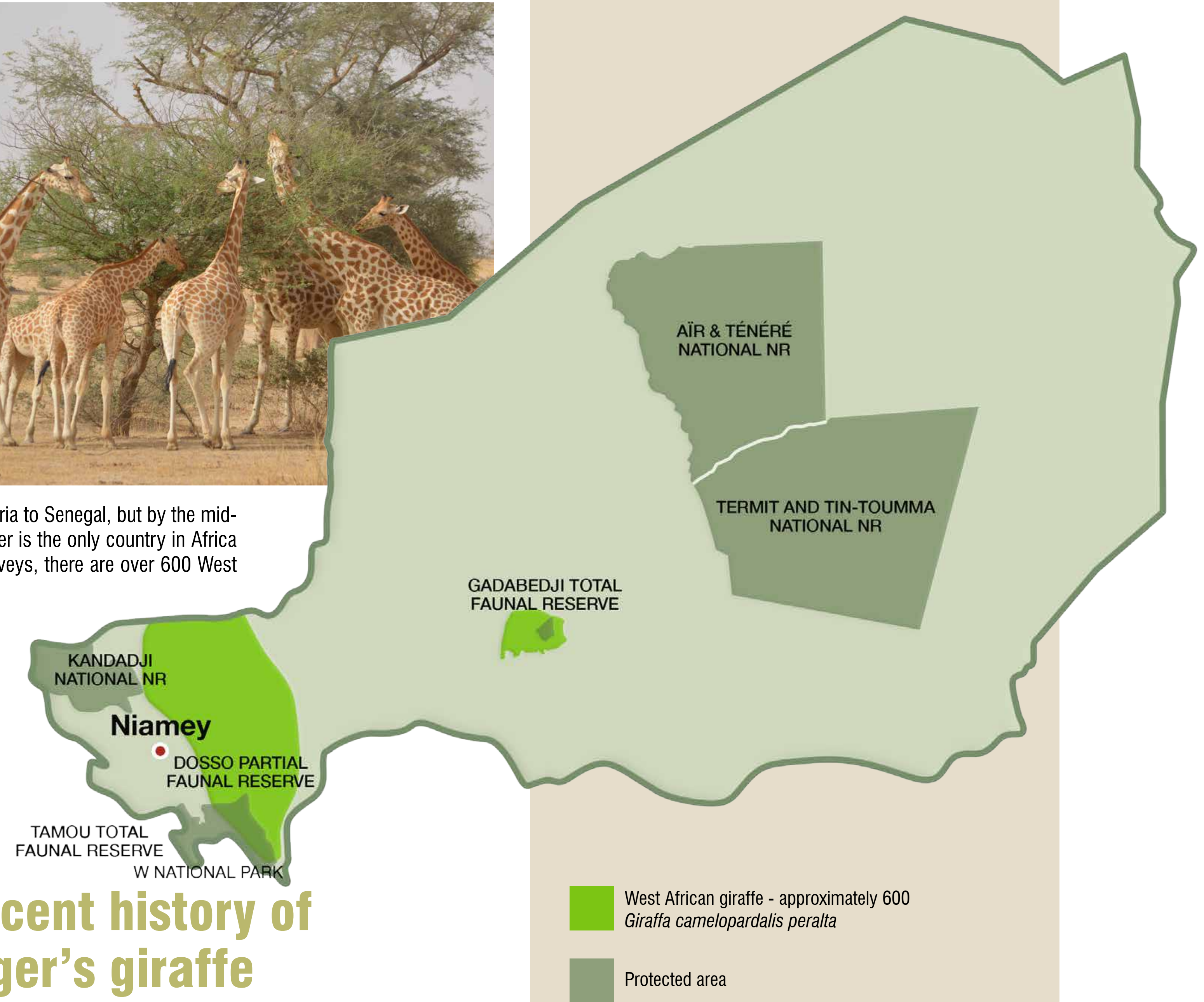
There are only approximately 600 West African giraffe remaining in the wild and all of them live in Niger. Almost all of the West African giraffe live in the 'Giraffe Zone', which is an area ~60km south-east of the capital Niamey located within the transition zone of Niger's W National Park Biosphere Reserve. This area includes the central zone of Kouré, the Dallol Bosso, and the Fakara Plateau. In late 2018, GCF in collaboration with the Sahara Conservation Fund and other partners in support of the Government of Niger established a second West African giraffe population in the Gadabedji Biosphere Reserve in eastern Niger through the translocation of eight animals from the 'Giraffe Zone'. Gadabedji formed part of the historic range of the West African giraffe before they became locally extinct in the 1970s due to a severe drought. In Niger, giraffe share their living space with people and their livestock, and as all areas are unfenced, the giraffe can move freely throughout the seasons in search of food.



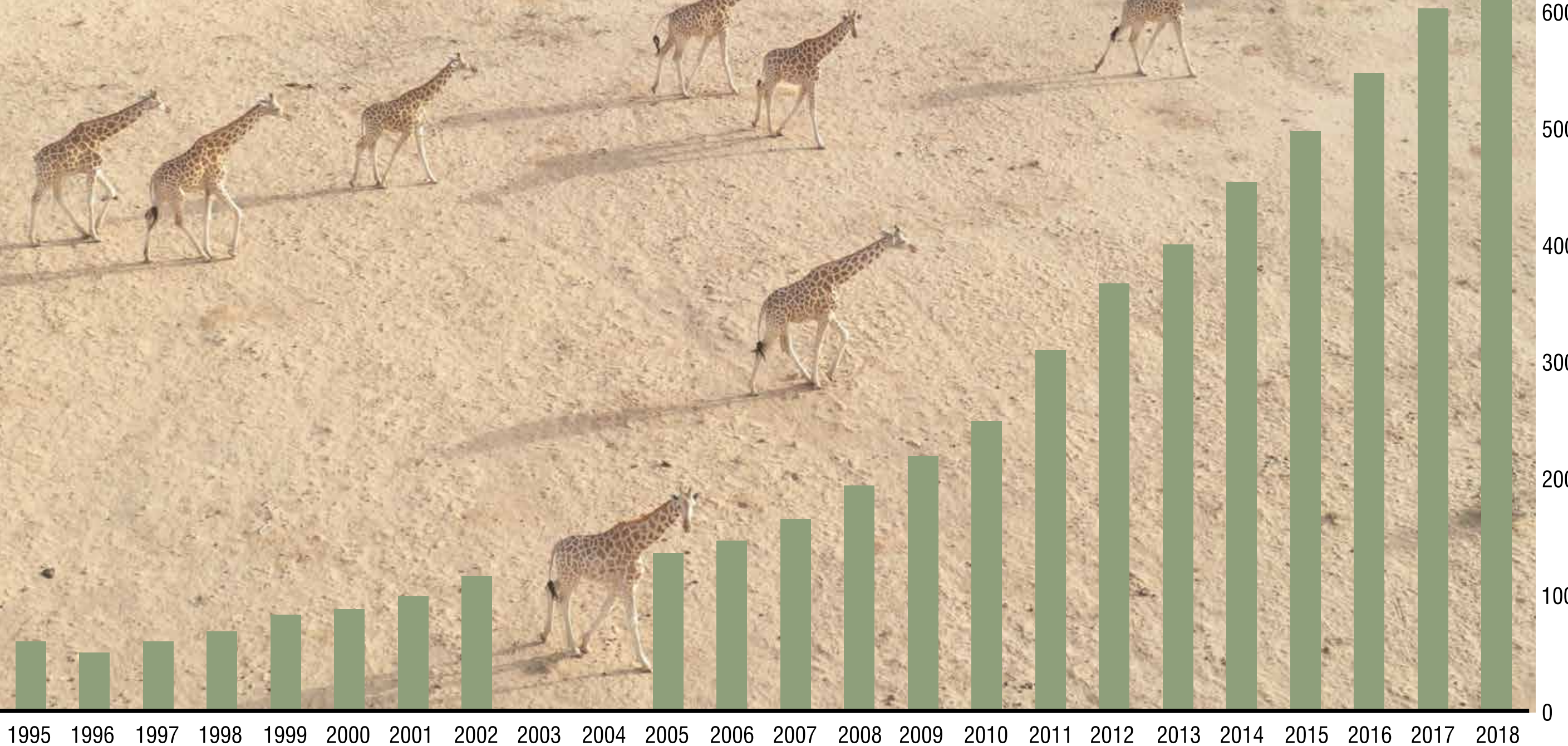
Giraffe in Niger

The West African giraffe is a subspecies of the Northern giraffe (*Giraffa camelopardalis*). 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. Niger is the only country in Africa where this subspecies now remains. And now, based on recent surveys, there are over 600 West African giraffe in Niger.

Proudly, West African giraffe are fully protected under Niger's law; therefore, giraffe cannot be legally hunted. 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. In 2015, a second Strategy and Action Plan superseded the first 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



Recent history of Niger's giraffe

Many prehistoric rock paintings and engravings across the region indicate that giraffe were once prolific throughout West Africa. In more recent history, giraffe were widespread throughout 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, which were limited to the 'Giraffe Zone'.



Threats

- Habitat loss and fragmentation**
As more and more natural 'tiger bush' is converted into agricultural land and deforestation occurs in order to supply fuel wood for Niamey, the giraffe habitat shrinks and is ultimately lost, resulting in areas becoming disconnected or fragmented.
- Human-giraffe conflict**
While the giraffe are not perceived as threatening, they conflict with local farmers as they crop raid for food, especially beans and mangoes, and trample millet. Often the giraffe are chased away, which sometimes leads to injuries and/or death.
- Traffic accidents**
As the giraffe live alongside local farmers and their livestock in a habitat that is open and unfenced, traffic accidents, although rare, are a threat to them.
- Illegal hunting**
Since the mid-1990s illegal hunting (poaching) has decreased to almost zero; however, while the giraffe range expands as populations increase amidst regional insecurity threats from terrorism, it is important to recognise that illegal hunting may result if it is not monitored and managed.
- Climate change**
A combination of rising temperatures and more severe droughts related to climate change may have an impact on Niger's giraffe, which could lead to other threats such as habitat loss and fragmentation, human-giraffe conflict, and illegal hunting.

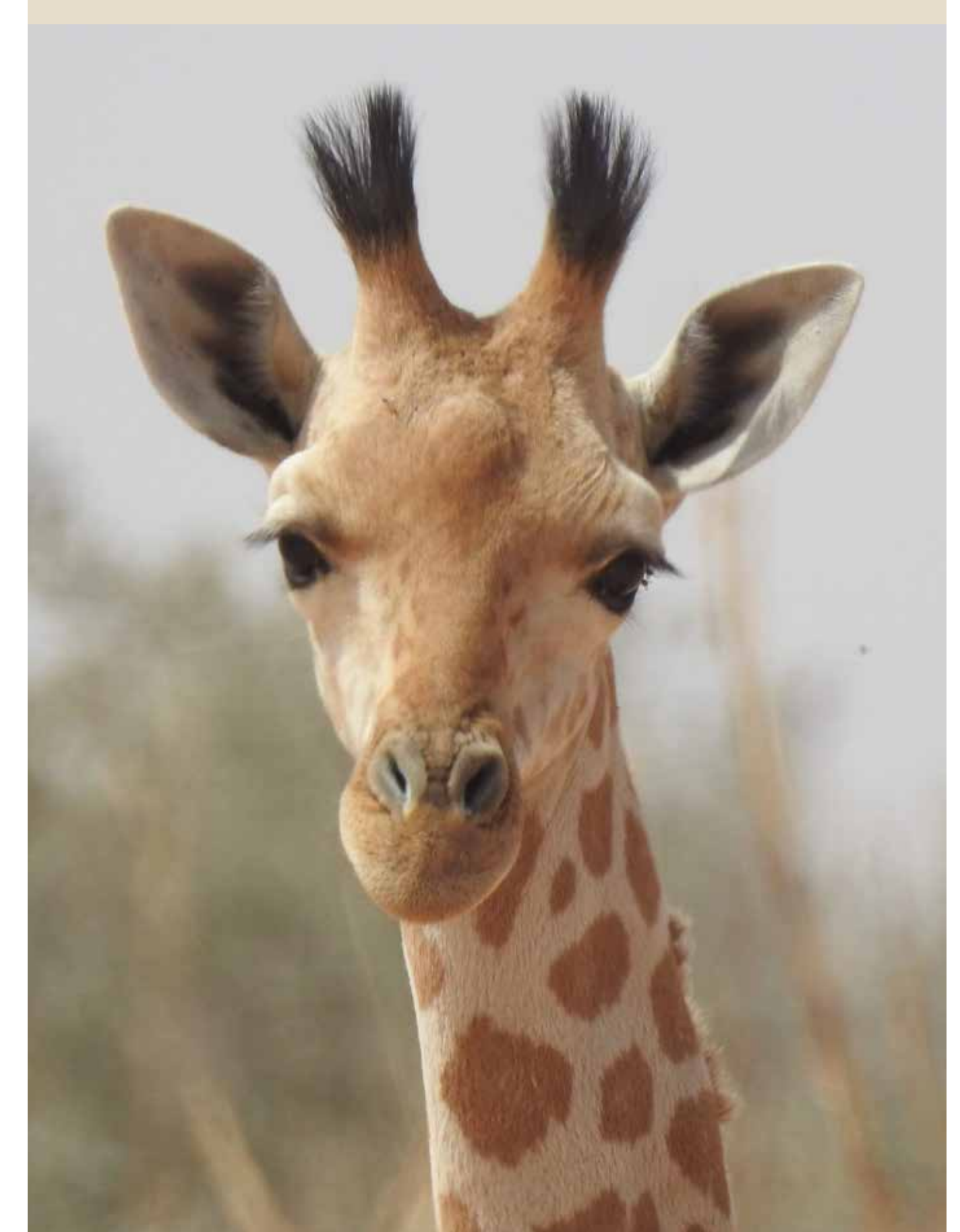
Habitat and ecology

West African giraffe's preferred habitat type is 'tiger bush', which is characterised by strip-patterned vegetation or alternating bands of trees (*Acacia (Senegalia)*, *Combretum*, *Piliostigma* and *Boscia* spp.), shrubs and grassland. Seasonally, the giraffe also move down into the Dallol's (ephemeral/seasonal river systems) where they forage on *Faidherbia albida*, *Balanites aegyptiaca* and *Ziziphus mauritiana*, amongst other species.

Ongoing conservation monitoring and research of their distribution using GPS satellite technology indicates that West African giraffe have large home ranges – some of these ranges are larger than any of the other giraffe species and subspecies. They tend to move more during the rainy season in search of greater forage opportunities.

Niger - a giraffe conservation success

The increasing West African giraffe population in Niger is a 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 undertook a concerted effort to save the last West African giraffe. Since then, numbers have steadily increased. In 2008, West African giraffe were added to the IUCN Red List as *Endangered* and of high conservation importance. However, following their increase in numbers, in 2018 they were downlisted to *Vulnerable*. This downlisting is positive, and it can be attributed to the ongoing efforts of the Niger Government and its conservation partners to protect giraffe. The foundation for this successful conservation initiative was achieved through close partnerships with the local communities who live alongside the giraffe, where an understanding of the importance of giraffe for the ecosystem and the local economy has been imparted.



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