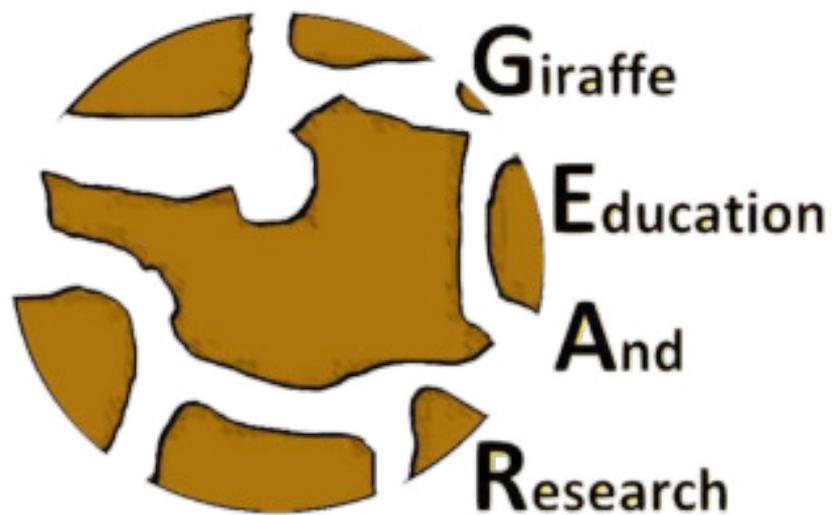


# **Giraffe Education And Research (GEAR) Lake Mburo National Park**



**First Quarter Report**

**2020**

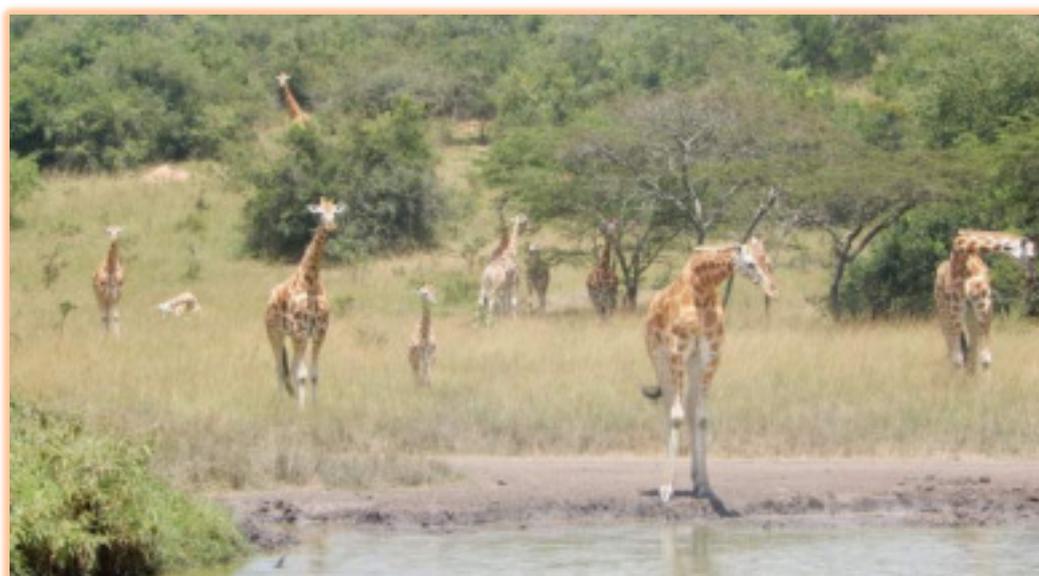
**Supported by**



A new year has started and there is more giraffe work to be shared. This is the third year of GEAR's operations in Lake Mbuo National Park (NP) which has been made possible with the continued support through a grant from the Giraffe Conservation Foundation (GCF).

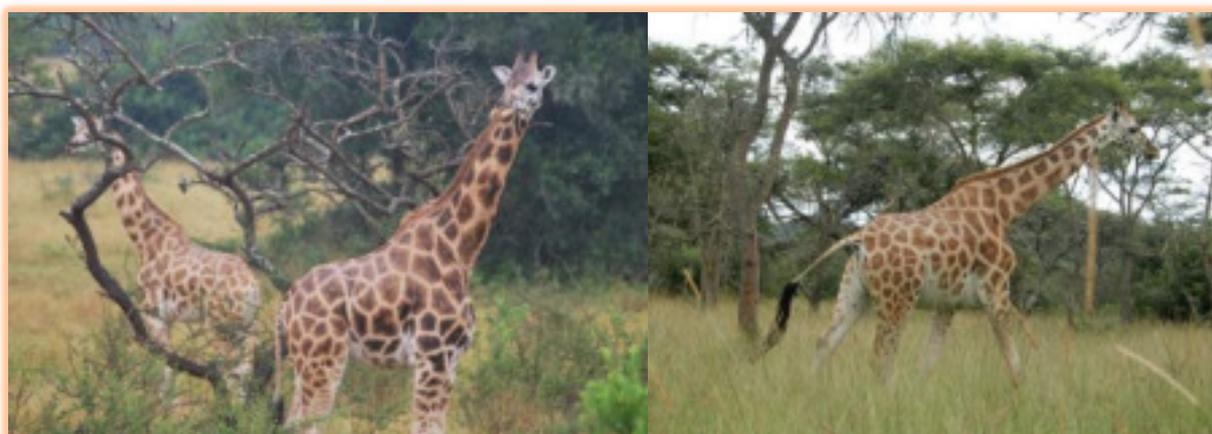
The GEAR team were sad to see Lake Mbuo NP's community & conservation warden, Kirabo Gertrude, leave but we wish her well with her promotion and new position in Kidepo Valley NP. As her replacement, we recently welcomed Biira Olivia who transferred here from Queen Elizabeth NP. The GEAR team met with both Lake Mbuo NP's community conservation warden and research & monitoring warden, Kirumira Dorothy at the start of the year to discuss GEAR's operations for the year. The following activities were confirmed for 2020:

- Continuation of semiweekly monitoring of the giraffe population by GEAR local researcher Natamba Jotham and UWA rangers.
- Quarterly, hour-long, radio chat shows on local radio stations to increase outreach.
- Six school trips for primary schools located along the western boundary of Lake Mbuo NP.
- Development and printing of an education flyer for distribution by UWA to visiting schools.
- World Giraffe Day football match and community awareness event on or around 21 June 2020.



## Research & Monitoring

The twice weekly monitoring of the giraffe population has continued into 2020 with Natmaba Jotham liaising with the UWA research and monitoring department. The calves are growing up fast. The two males can often be seen in the company of the adult males, testing their necking skills on each other or sometimes taking on one of the adult males. As the female calves get older, the adult male giraffe are starting to take an interest in them and have been observed urine testing them. Most recently, Leiden was observed trying to mount Morse's calf. The team is eagerly awaiting the arrival of many calves with most females heavily pregnant.



*Left: A pregnant Valentine in March; Right: A pregnant Juliana in January.*

Juliana was expected to give birth as she was observed with large, swollen teats and very large in January. In February sightings of the giraffe were low and she was not seen for a few weeks. When she was spotted again in March, she was observed mating with the males. We suspect she may have delivered a calf but lost it due to unknown causes.

Darker colouration has been observed on some of the calves, predominantly on their backs. The adults do not show this colouration, only the calves. The monitoring team will continue to monitor any changes.



Due to the Covid-19 pandemic and subsequent precautionary measures implemented by the government of Uganda, monitoring activities were suspended at the end of March. We are awaiting further instructions from the government and UWA as to when our activities in the park can resume.

Since the lockdown started, we have received reports from park rangers that a giraffe was sighted with a very small calf. We have not yet confirmed which individual has given birth. It is likely to be either Ru, Marion or Batgirl as we expected their calves in the next month. Ru was not spotted during the last monitoring trip.



*Left: A family photo: mum Morse, possible father Kule, first born calf and the latest addition; Right: Morse is already receptive to the approaches by the adult males, photograph taken in January.*

## **Education**

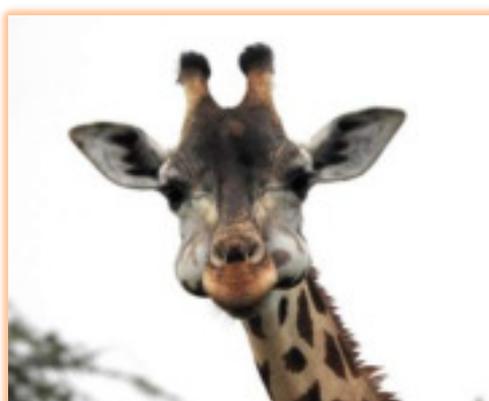
Due to the Covid-19 lockdown and school closures we have not been able to take any school trips to the park as planned. We will keep an eye on the situation and once schools are allowed back, we will liaise with teachers to plan these trips. However, we will need to keep in mind that schools will have to catch up on missed work. We are tentatively planning to run the trips in the second term, hopefully in June/July.



The first of the quarterly radio chat shows was aired on 12 March 2020. It was again a big success with local community members. The combined team of Jotham, Olivia and Dorothy provided a great mix and they were able to answer a variety of listener questions that ranged from giraffe to poaching and compensation for lost livestock. We look forward to the next chat show scheduled for early June which will also serve to promote any World Giraffe Day activities.

*Left: Jotham and Olivia in the radio studio.*

The education flyers for distribution to school trips were developed by GEAR and Lake Mburo NP's community conservation department. These flyers were printed and are ready for distribution as and when schools reopen and visits recommence. It is envisioned that each bus with students could be given five flyers for sharing. The size of the flyers (14.5 x 36cm) makes them a bit more substantial and easy to share. With just over 3,500 flyers printed the current stock would last for over 700 school trips. See Appendix I for flyer design.



## Appendix I



# Lake Mbuoro National Park



Lake Mbuoro was designated a National Park in 1983 but was reduced in size in 1987 to the 370km<sup>2</sup> it is today. It is home to more than 350 species of birds and 68 mammal species living in a variety of ecosystems including lakes, wetlands, grasslands, forests and woodlands.

The park undertakes numerous community conservation activities to benefit both the human and animal communities around the Park. These include:

### Collaborative Resource Management

Benefits, decision making, authority & responsibility of the park and its resources are shared with the local people

Sport hunting revenue shared between land owners, community wildlife association, sport hunting company & UWA

### Revenue Sharing

Demonstrates value to protected areas and conservation.

Ensures strong partnership between the NP and local communities.

602,821,879/-

was shared in 2017/2018 from revenue

### Human-Wildlife Conflict Management

Capture, rescue and translocation of animals




Conflict resolution using scouts and committees

### Conservation Awareness

School outreach

Production of education materials

Incorporation of conservation information into the curriculum







www.ugandawildlife.org

# Giraffes of Lake Mbuoro

In collaboration with The Giraffe Conservation Foundation (GCF), UWA has a countrywide conservation action plan for restoring wild giraffe populations, this includes strategic translocations of individuals. To support Mbuoro's population, UWA, GCF and local CBO, Lake Mbuoro Communities (LMC), established The Giraffe Education And Research (GEAR) project. Weekly monitoring records the population's movements, health, behaviour, diet and new arrivals. Educating the community about these new creatures is also paramount to their safety. This is achieved through radio chat shows, field trips for primary schools neighbouring the park and a community celebration of **World Giraffe Day** on the **21st June**.

Human-giraffe conflict is limited with crop damage being the main issue. They are gentle creatures who help improve soil fertility through defecating, urinating and trampling of soils. Competition with other animals is almost eradicated due to the extreme height at which they feed. They have low water requirements, needing only to drink every few days.

### Nubian Giraffe

Formerly known as Rothschild giraffe

Subspecies of Northern giraffe

Classified as critically endangered

50%

of the global wild population is found in Uganda with almost 1600 individuals in country

### Translocation

2015 translocation of

15

individuals from Murchison Falls NP to Lake Mbuoro NP of 11 females and 4 males.

The population had increased to

25

by the end of 2019

### Threats

- Illegal hunting
- Habitat loss & fragmentation
- Anthropogenic factors e.g. land use change
- Habitat encroachment

### Facts

They are the tallest living animal, males can reach up to

6m

Their tongues can reach a length over

50 cm

A giraffe's spot pattern is unique, no two are identical.






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*This report was compiled in partnership with and supported by:*

