



Twiga Tracker Initiative: Giraffe Tagging Report

Boma and Badingilo National Parks, South Sudan

30 March – 18 April 2023

Background

The Nubian giraffe (*Giraffa camelopardalis camelopardalis*) is a subspecies of the Northern giraffe (*G. camelopardalis*) and is listed as Critically Endangered on the IUCN Red List. The total population is estimated at 3,000 individuals, with the major concentration in Uganda's Murchison Falls National Park (NP) and smaller scattered populations in Kenya, Ethiopia, South Sudan, and Uganda.

In 2005, after 22 years of civil war in Sudan the Comprehensive Peace Agreement was signed, putting an end to Africa's longest running conflict and resulting in South Sudan emerging as an independent country. Throughout the period of war, effective management of the country's protected areas was essentially non-existent and the human, physical, institutional, and systemic infrastructure was largely destroyed. Data on wildlife numbers and habitat use in South Sudan is still limited as the last aerial survey was performed in 2016. Critical wildlife species are at risk, and uncontrolled and unsustainable hunting has caused the local eradication of, among other species, giraffe in large parts of the country.

African Parks Network (APN) recently signed an agreement with the Ministry of Wildlife of South Sudan to co-manage Boma and Badingilo NPs. Historically, these areas were reported to host over 9,000 Nubian giraffe. Today, they are estimated to have declined to only a few hundred. The first step in APN's mission to improve the management and protection of these parks, is to gain a better understanding of wildlife numbers and habitat use by surveys and large-scale wildlife tagging missions.

Objective

The largest wildlife tagging operation ever in South Sudan set out to deploy a total of 120 GPS satellite tracking units across 13

species of wildlife in the Boma and Badingilo NPs. Species prioritised included white-eared kob, African savanna elephant, tiang, African lion, Mongalla gazelle, and Nubian giraffe. The Giraffe Conservation Foundation (GCF) provided veterinary and equipment support during the operation, and donated 12 Savanna Tracking tail units to be deployed on giraffe as well as 15 Ceres Trace satellite ear tags to be trialed on various species including five giraffe. This was the first-ever tagging of giraffe in South Sudan.

Results

The larger operation took place from 15 March to 18 April 2023 and in total 126 animals were tagged. The GCF veterinarian Dr Sara Ferguson joined the operation on 30 March and provided hands-on veterinary support for the remainder of the operation. A total of 11 giraffe (nine female and two male) were fitted with GPS tail tags and four of these individuals (three female and one male) were also tagged with Ceres ear tags. Of these, four were tagged in the northern region of Boma NP at the border with Ethiopia and seven giraffe were tagged in Badingilo NP. In addition, Ceres Trace tags were also fitted to African lion (2), Cape buffalo (2), white-eared kob (2), African savanna elephant (1), eland (1) and tiang (1) to evaluate their use in the region and on different species. Tissue samples were also obtained from every individual for future genetic analysis.

Acknowledgements

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Photo credit: Marcus Westberg

