

4

Annual Report 2023/24

The Giraffe Conservation Foundation (GCF) is celebrating 15 years of giraffe conservation and there is much to reflect on.

GCF has evolved over time by being reactive to needs and basing our efforts on the best available science. We have learned along the way, taking each next step with the best intentions and remaining true to our strong organizational and personal values. It has been a learning experience, and we continue to undertake actions with the understanding that doing something based on our current knowledge is better than doing nothing. GCF is not territorial in our approach. Working with partners and sharing information and resources is important for us and in the end, it is part of our success. Our work does not have a political agenda, and we are pragmatic and conservation driven in our approach.

Without blowing our trumpet too much, we can state that before GCF, giraffe conservation did not really exist - or was limited at best. Over the past 15 years we have brought giraffe onto African and international conservation agendas. One of our key conservation findings has been our collaborative taxonomy research, which has highlighted that giraffe populations are more species diverse and as such some are under much higher threat than initially thought. Giraffe have lost almost 90% of their habitat in Africa over the last 300 years and experienced a 30% drop in populations since the 1980s. GCF has been at the forefront of giraffe conservation and given a voice to this silent extinction for 15 years. But our work does not stop here, we are excited to see what the future holds for us and for giraffe. Here is to all the continued efforts, collaborations and success yet to come.

Stephanie Fennessy

The Giraffe Conservation Foundation (GCF) is the only organisation in the world that concentrates solely on the conservation and management of giraffe in the wild throughout Africa.

# We are a voice for giraffe!

MEET THE TEAM BOARD OF DIRECTORS A SHORT HISTORY GCF IN ACTION HIGHLIGHTS **GIRAFFE SURVEYS GIRAFFE SPOTTER** TRANSLOCATIONS SUCCESS STORY TWIGA TRACKER **GIRAFFE CONSERVATION STRATEGIES & ACT** GIRAFFE CONSERVATION HEALTH INITIATIVE **KEY PARTNERS** FINANCIAL SUMMARY DONORS CONTACT

WHO IS GCF?

	3
	5
	5
	9
	11
	17
	19
	21
	23
	25
	27
CTION PLANS	31
E	33
:	35
:	37
:	39
	42



# WHO IS GCF?

## WE ARE THE VOICE FOR GIRAFFE!

GCF is the only organization in the world that concentrates solely on the conservation and management of giraffe in the wild throughout Africa. We are dedicated to securing a future for all giraffe populations in the wild. We envision a world where all giraffe can live wild and free within their historical ranges or habitats throughout Africa and are protected by the people around them.

Currently, GCF is involved in and supports giraffe conservation initiatives in 21 African countries and our work has an impact on over 400,000 km<sup>2</sup> (100 million acres) of giraffe habitat and concerns all four species of giraffe.

Our involvement is wide-reaching and ranges from project implementation to providing technical support to partners, from conservation monitoring to hands-on conservation actions, from environmental education for children to capacity enhancement of conservation experts, always including both direct and indirect support.

# WHAT ARE GCF'S CORE VALUES?

- Creativity and courage
- Respectivity
- Integrity
- Accountability
- Collaboration

# WHAT DOES GCF STAND FOR?

- GCF is an international science-based conservation organization that provides innovative approaches to save giraffe in the wild.
- GCF is the go-to organization for giraffe conservation that is proactive and reactive, with a strong collaborative and dynamic team working within a network of partners on all levels.
- GCF is a leader in supporting a sustainable future for giraffe in/and their natural habitats.
- GCF will continue to organically grow and increase awareness to save giraffe in the wild.

# WHAT DRIVES GCF?

- To be a bold, independent organisation
- To be disciplined and 'always on'
- To be an open book
- To not over-promise
- To be passionate

United under a common goal, GCF is a family of organizations that consists of GCF Trust (Namibia), GCF-USA (Florida, USA), GCF-East Africa (Kenya and Uganda), and Freunde von GCF (Germany). All organizations are legally and financially separate entities with a shared commitment to a sustainable future for all giraffe populations in the wild operating under the umbrella of 'one' GCF.

- To be courageous and ready to push boundaries
- To be open-minded and flexible
- To be adaptable and dynamic
- To build trustworthy partnerships and relationships

# Meet the Team – the people who are a voice for giraffe

GCF's core staff is made up of 18 people of 11 different nationalities, who are based in five African countries. Such diversity is one of our most important strengths. Staff bring their experience and perspective from various backgrounds, education levels and family structures to the table and make it work. As an organization we have put a lot of effort into bringing this team together, overcoming challenges in communication and culture, resulting in a cohesive team.

GCF is forward thinking and committed to the growth and development of their staff, not just in terms of the conservation issues they grapple with daily, but also in terms of personal and interpersonal growth. The team is open, honest, sensitive and are prepared to do the work of understanding another's perspective as they work with people, from community members to government officials, to do the necessary work to conserve giraffe.



Sara Ferguson Conservation Health

Coordinator

Symon Masiaine Reticulated Giraffe

Programme Officer

Martina Küsters Etosha Heights Conservation Centre Programme Officer



Rigardt Hoffman Southern Africa Programme Officer



Martha Haukongo Environmental Education Officer



Courtney Marneweck Conservation Technology Coordinator







Stephanie Fennessy Julian Fennessy Nicolette McNamara Executive Director

Director of Conservation



Frederike Otten Luangwa Giraffe Programme Officer

Adams Kipchumba East Africa Programme Officer





Timo Mvula Environmental Education Officer

















Kuda Mbaiwa Finance Officer



Arthur Munez East Africa Coordinator



Naemi Antonius Environmental Education Officer



Razack Moussa Zabeirou Nest African Giraffe Programme Officer







# **BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

As GCF continues to grow in impact and in size, we are making sure that all checks and balances are in place to be fully accountable on all levels. Adding valuable skill sets and knowledge to the GCF-USA Board of Directors is a very important part of this process.

GCF's multi-national Board of Directors includes professionals from six countries, four continents and diverse business profiles.

- Julian Fennessy
- Stephanie Fennessy
- ShariLeigh Gordon (Treasurer)
- Till Hollmann (Chair)
- Chris Kelsch
- Lars Markgren
- Tim Tetzlaff
- Lindy van den Bosch



# MESSAGE FROM THE GCF-USA BOARD CHAIR: TILL HOLLMANN

Wow! Fifteen years already. As you read through this annual report, I hope you will share the Board's admiration for how impactful this organization has become. When I first visited Steph and Julian in 2010 in Windhoek, Namibia, GCF was pretty much a two-person volunteer operation, passionate about making a difference.

Not only did this team bring the plight of giraffe to global attention, but they have also been leading the way, in both science and action, to restore giraffe to their historic habitats across the African continent and are now active in twenty countries.

A few board members and I joined the team again in January in Windhoek as the team gathered for a week of strategic planning and team building. The results again are astounding: the translocations and the return of giraffe to Iona National Park, Angola, the ever more impactful African veterinary training course, as well as the work with school children to build environmental awareness. I was amazed to learn that GCF runs the biggest environment education programme in Namibia with regards to participation numbers with their interactive KEEP programme. These initiatives not only help giraffe but impact the future of many other wild animals as well as people throughout Africa.

The Board of Directors and I are honored to serve this passionate team and their noble cause. Most importantly, this work could not be done without our generous donors, unwavering supporters, and GCF's tremendous partners in the conservation world. As always, the Board and I want to particularly thank our donors for their continued generosity to return these iconic creatures to their historic habitats.



# WHERE DID WE START? - A SHORT HISTORY OF GCF

2000s

The origins of GCF lie in the late-**1990s** in Namibia, in particular, the dry and rugged areas of the far and remote northwest. Stephanie and Julian Fennessy met working on the Hoanib River Catchment Study for the Desert Research Foundation of Namibia (DRFN) which focused on understanding natural resource use amidst the complex ecological, social, economic and political aspects of the area.

Julian first arrived in Namibia as an Australian development volunteer and was initially based at the Ministry of Youth and Sport to support the development and implementation of a national environmental education programme. He subsequently moved on to a new placement as a researcher (ecologist) with DRFN.

1990s

Steph first came to Namibia to conduct research for her MSc thesis in Environmental Engineering and Sustainable Infrastructure facilitated by DRFN. She first fell in love with the country, then later, after receiving a six-month contract offer from DRFN to help with community outreach in the Hoanib River Catchment Study, she fell in love with her colleague. The rest is history.

During this time in the Kunene Region, Julian began research for his MSc on the competition for resources between giraffe and elephant. In exploring the possibility of this topic, he realized that there was relatively prolific research on elephant, but almost nothing on giraffe. This seemed like a huge gap and into that unknown arena,

2009

Julian upgraded to a research-based PhD through the University of Sydney, Australia. During this time Steph worked as an environmental consultant and lectured at the Polytechnic of Namibia (now Namibia University of Science & Technology), while regularly assisting Julian in the field.

One of the key factors in conserving wildlife is understanding their numbers. In the early **2000s**, the understanding of giraffe numbers and distribution on the African continent was limited and no one was standing tall for giraffe. This was the seed for GCF.

For many years, Steph and Julian spent their spare time on giraffe conservation on a voluntary basis. In **2009**, GCF was

2015

2016

established in the UK as a charity with a voluntary board. This step was instrumental in moving the GCF forward with an institutional home which allowed them to seek project funding, however it was still a voluntary and spare time venture. In 2015, Steph and Julian established the GCF Trust in Namibia in 2015, and it was during this time that a US donor (and former Chair of GCF-USA) with a particular interest in giraffe approached to ask what GCF would do with a small amount of seed funding. The response was to fundraise in the USA through numerous zoos and other conservation organizations, which lead to establishing GCF-USA in 2016. It was during this time that Julian and Steph became the first ever full-time salaried giraffe conservationists in the world. And their story continues today as they strive to save Africa's giraffe.

# GCF in Action

GCF is a voice for giraffe throughout Africa Active in 21 African countries with an impact on over 100 million acres of giraffe habitat

GCF's impact on giraffe conservation in Africa continues to grow. Currently, GCF is involved in and supports giraffe conservation initiatives and programmes in 21 African countries. Our work has an impact on over 400,000 km<sup>2</sup> (100 million acres) of giraffe habitat and concerns all four species of giraffe. Our range of involvement includes project implementation, providing direct and indirect technical support to partners, conservation monitoring, hands-on conservation action, and capacity building and education.

Our work spans the whole gamut of giraffe conservation efforts. As a network organization, we see ourselves as a catalyst. We have no intention of doing all the work ourselves or on our own; instead, we aim to inspire partners to support giraffe conservation. As threats vary greatly between giraffe populations and the countries they live in, there is no blueprint for saving giraffe. Conservation actions and the overall approach have to be adapted to each country, its culture and the specifics of individual giraffe populations and their habitats.

As such, we have designed local, national, regional and continental giraffe conservation projects, programmes and initiatives, and implement these in partnership with others and/or encourage our partners to include giraffe conservation in their existing workplans. As a science-based organization, our conservation approach is always based on the latest available science. We still conduct a lot of research ourselves, but it is important to note that we only engage in research that will directly inform conservation actions.

Our involvement throughout the continent can be summarized into the following conservation actions:





11



## Action Plan / Strategy

GCF works closely with governments, NGOs, communities, and academic partners throughout Africa to secure a sustainable future for all giraffe populations in the wild. Giraffe currently occur in 21 countries with fragmented ranges in West, Central, Eastern and Southern Africa. Giraffe face different threats throughout their range and conservation approaches need to be tailored to local needs and requirements. GCF supports numerous African giraffe range States in the development of National Giraffe Conservation Strategies and Action Plans by providing technical and financial support. These strategies and action plans provide the necessary framework to address and carry out targeted conservation efforts for giraffe on a national or regional level.

### Illegal Trade Prevention

In several countries we partner with local organizations, which have strong networks and community outreach, to provide antipoaching and de-snaring support, surveillance monitoring, as well as direct and covert actions to assess and prevent illegal wildlife trade. Such efforts are targeted and often localized for effective results.



### Capacity Building, Education & Community Engagement (Twiga Wetu)

Supporting and investing in people and communities who share their living space with giraffe is key to the long-term success of giraffe conservation. Towards this goal, all our capacity building, education and community-based programmes are united under the umbrella of our Twiga Wetu (Swahili for 'Our Giraffe') initiative. Twiga Wetu is a holistic, collaborative and community-driven approach to conservation. As giraffe range is not limited to national parks and government-protected areas, large giraffe populations live amongst or next to people in many African countries. Through Twiga Wetu, we employ a country- or site-specific approach, adapting experience and knowledge gained from both GCF's and our partners' programmes throughout Africa. At every opportunity we promote and support innovative community involvement in the conservation of giraffe. For each programme under our Twiga Wetu initiative, GCF collaborates with local (and often international) conservation partners who have a strong track record of community conservation. Ultimately, giraffe can only be saved in Africa - by the people who share their living space with these iconic animals.



### **Conservation Health**

Veterinarians are increasingly gaining in importance in conservation efforts throughout Africa and GCF's Conservation Health initiative aims to address knowledge gaps in giraffe conservation. We are tackling this from a veterinary science and conservation medicine perspective to provide African veterinarians with more hands-on wildlife experience. Our Giraffe Conservation Health initiative incorporates a wide range of actions, including evaluating the best field immobilization practices for giraffe, addressing disease threats and health issues in wild giraffe populations, enhancing capacity building for the next generation of Africa's wildlife veterinarians, using conservation genetics to assess giraffe health, and assisting in the development of new technology for satellite tracking. We are committed to sharing our experience and expertise on a wider platform, including open access data and publications through key collaborations.

### **Field Resources**

Ô

For field teams to be successful, they need to be appropriately equipped. In support of giraffe conservation monitoring and analysis throughout most countries, GCF has provided a range of much-needed field and technical equipment such as cameras, GPS satellite tags, hand-held GPS units, IT equipment, uniforms, capture equipment including field chariots, immobilization drugs, darting equipment and much more.



### Survey Support

We can only conserve what we know; therefore, gaining a better understanding of giraffe numbers, trends and distribution is critical. GCF was the first organization to bring all giraffe data and survey results together. Some giraffe population numbers single handedly doubled overnight, simply by applying better counting methods or collating the data in an organized manner. As GCF has managed to generate increased interest in giraffe, they are more often included in regular game counts or larger counting efforts (e.g. the Great Elephant Count) with increasing amount of data shared to help assess their status. Furthermore, the GCF team conducts surveys of key giraffe populations throughout the continent, and as part of ongoing capacity building and field support, we regularly train African conservationists including government staff, rangers, members conservancy and eco-guards in effective giraffe monitoring and continue to provide valuable funding support to their surveys and monitoring initiatives. Collaboratively we monitor more than 100 populations across all four species, and more than 20,000 individual giraffe.

## Technical Support

As the experts in all aspects of giraffe conservation in the wild, GCF provides technical support and expert advice to a range of giraffe programmes, governments, universities and organizations on the African continent. As an organization, we play an important role in supporting giraffe conservation and management initiatives in all giraffe range countries. For 15 years, GCF has continued to be involved in some shape or form in providing technical support and expert advice in all giraffe range states in Africa.





### Translocation

Translocations have an important place in our conservation toolbox and can be highly beneficial for (re-)establishing new or bolstering small existing giraffe populations. They often are truly collaborative efforts and GCF is at the forefront of giraffe translocations in many parts of Africa. Translocations bring giraffe into areas where they have gone locally extinct, they only occur in low numbers or to increase their range. Together with governments, NGOs and other partners, GCF has successfully translocated giraffe in several giraffe range countries. In addition to pure conservation aims, these translocations can support tourism and sustainable development efforts, as well as local communities. To date, our collaborative conservation translocation programme has increased and/or augmented over 11 million acres of giraffe habitat throughout Africa.



### Twiga Tracker

GCF's Twiga Tracker initiative is the largest GPS satellite tracking study ever conducted on giraffe. Over the past 15 years a growing network of research partners, spearheaded by GCF, has deployed over 570 specially designed GPS satellite units on all four species of giraffe in Africa. The data collected from these studies has been instrumental in guiding giraffe conservation strategies throughout their range by providing a better understanding of their needs, their movements, and preferred habitat. The Twiga Tracker initiative is also critical in post-translocation monitoring to ensure the giraffe settle in, how they move in their new environment, and most importantly, if they are still alive. Tracker design remains an important part of this initiative, and we work with several specialist suppliers while designs continue to evolve over the past few decades from collars, to head harnesses, to ossicone units, and now tail and ear tags. Ultimately, the data gathered and lessons learned from our Twiga Tracker initiative allows us and our partners to better save giraffe in the wild.





### **Vehicle Support**

In a remote field situation, a reliable vehicle can be the most important conservation tool and ultimately make the difference between life and death. Providing a reliable vehicle such as a 4x4 field vehicle, a translocation truck or a field chariot, supporting vehicle maintenance, insurance and fuel supplies makes all the difference for giraffe conservation. At times, this support is the deciding factor in whether or not monitoring, translocations, surveys, or veterinary interventions can take place.



# Highlights of GCF's work in 2023/4

Twiga Wetu ('Our Giraffe') Initiative – Capacity Building, Education & Community Engagement

### GCF supports and invests in the people and communities that live with giraffe as giraffe can only be saved in Africa - by African people!

As part of our mission, GCF supports and invests in the people and communities that live with giraffe and can have a significant impact on the long-term success of conservation efforts. Twiga Wetu ('Our Giraffe") is the GCF initiative which focuses on people. Giraffe can only be saved in Africa, by African people. Working collaboratively and enhancing the capacity of Africans and Africa's future conservation leaders is at the core of GCF's conservation model and it is a key component of our Twiga Wetu initiative.

Through Twiga Wetu, we employ a country- or sitespecific approach, adapting experience and knowledge gained from both GCF's and our partners' programmes throughout Africa. At every opportunity we promote and support innovative community involvement in the conservation of giraffe. For each programme under our Twiga Wetu initiative, GCF collaborates with local (and often international) conservation partners who have a strong track record of community conservation.

While community engagement is an important aspect of our conservation work, the following examples highlight our partnerships under this initiative:

In Cameroon, we continue to support the local NGO Biodiversity, Environment & Social Development (BEDD) to implement a community-led approach and spearhead the use of technology to safeguard the Kordofan population in the Bouba Ndjidda NP in the north of the country. Education and awareness, foot patrols and camera trap surveys are at the centre of this initiative that highlights the importance of involving local communities in conservation efforts.



In Kenya, GCF supports Twiga Walinzi (Swahili for 'Giraffe Guards'), a community-led conservation programme working with local pastoralists. The large community field team conducts giraffe monitoring of the reticulated giraffe population, manages a network of camera traps across various communal conservancy areas in northern Kenya, and leads community-based school outreach and giraffe conservation education programmes. Twiga Walinzi was developed by the San Diego Zoo Wildlife Alliance together with local partners in northern Kenya. Together with the Wildlife Clubs of Kenya, we facilitate school outreach and park visits of school children. In 2023, over 1,500 children were supported through this initiative. Additionally, we continue to train African rangers, conservancy members and local ecoquards throughout Kenya in effective giraffe immobilization, monitoring and surveys to gain a better understanding of their status in the country.



In Namibia, GCF implements the largest environmental education programme in the country with regards to participation numbers. The Khomas Environmental Education Programme (KEEP) focuses on school age children and aims to ignite their passion for the environment. The environmental exposure provided through the programme highlights the country's beauty and encourages students to take up the responsibility of saving their own environment. In 2023, 3,218 school children and 165 teachers participated in the KEEP programme and they spotted giraffe on 85% of all field days. Inspiring and educating young people is paramount for the long-term conservation of Africa's wildlife and wild places. The KEEP workbook received very positive feedback, which initiated the development of a more broadly targeted Nature Workbook that is now being used for environmental education throughout Africa. This fun and informative educational resource is electronically available to all our partners' community outreach and education programmes throughout Africa. This year we distributed 9,385 Nature Workbooks to school in all 14 regions of Namibia as an additional teaching resource.



In Niger, GCF has supported a long-term communitybased conservation programme with local (AVEN, a local guides' association) and international (Sahara Conservation and Wild Africa Conservation) partners to monitor the remaining West African giraffe in the Giraffe Zone and the reintroduced population in Gadebedji Biosphere Reserve. These programmes also focus on education and awareness, which is closely linked with the diversification of rural livelihoods and local income generation.



In Tanzania, GCF partners with Traditional Ecosystems Survival Tanzania (TEST) in supporting communities to better understand the distribution of and threats to giraffe on village lands between the Serengeti National and Ngorongoro Conservation Area. Additionally, the TEST field team implements site-specific conservation education programmes throughout the region to schools and communities.



In Uganda, GCF partnered with the Snares to Wares initiative, a Ugandan non-profit organization, which employs local community members to remove wire snares from the wild in northern Uganda and repurpose them into pieces of art as an alternative source of income. Our collaborative Twiga Wetu programme in Uganda employed the holistic approach of reducing the impact of poaching by linking community support, education and awareness with on-the-ground antipoaching patrols, snare sweeps, and veterinary treatment of ensnared wildlife.

GCF provided ongoing training and capacity building support on an ad hoc basis throughout Africa and well as through our African Bursary in Conservation (ABC) grants, where we continue to support African and international students and young professionals in their career with the aim to train the next generation of giraffe conservationists and professionals who can support this cause.







# **Giraffe Surveys**

# **Provide essential information for giraffe conservation**

Counting giraffe should be easy, but is it really? To effectively conserve giraffe, it is vital to have as much information as possible available.



GCF continues to build on a solid foundation of data by working with partners throughout Africa to survey and monitor giraffe populations. Surveying giraffe plays a crucial role in informing conservation actions aimed at protecting these iconic and threatened species, preserving the biodiversity of their habitats, and provides a better understanding on a number of questions that inform our conservation efforts:

- What do giraffe need?
- How do giraffe move? Do species or sexes move differently?
- How do giraffe use their habitat?

require intervention.

implemented.

habitats.

The GCF team and our partners continues to survey giraffe populations of all four species in numerous giraffe range states. As we can identify each giraffe by their unique coat pattern, we use photo identification software to determine how many giraffe live in each population. Currently, more than 20,000 giraffe are individually monitored Africa-wide, which makes our giraffe monitoring and survey programme the largest in the wild. To facilitate this work GCF continues to train conservationists, government officials, community members and volunteers throughout Africa in individual photo survey techniques and how to upload the images to GiraffeSpotter.org in order to contribute to a continent-wide citizen science initiative and to encourage greater giraffe monitoring. This year we actively conducted and supported giraffe population surveys in 16 African countries: Angola, Botswana, Cameroon, Chad, DRC, Kenya, Mozambique, Namibia, Niger, Rwanda, South Africa, South Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe.

- How much space do populations need?
- What drives their movements?
- Population Monitoring: Estimating population sizes, trends and demography is crucial for assessing the health of giraffe populations and identifying any declines or threats that may
- Habitat Assessment: Assessing habitat quality and availability is vital for understanding the ecological needs of giraffe and identifying key areas for conservation efforts, such as protected areas, corridors for connectivity between fragmented habitats or areas for possible (re)introduction.
- Threats Assessment: Giraffe face various threats in the wild, such as habitat loss, fragmentation and degradation, poaching, human-wildlife conflict, and disease. By identifying these threats and understanding their impact on giraffe populations at different scales, targeted conservation strategies to mitigate them can be
- Community Engagement: Collaboration with local communities and governments, raising awareness about the importance of giraffe conservation and engaging stakeholders in conservation efforts is key. Fostering local support and stewardship of natural resources will provide long-term benefits for giraffe and their

# Giraffe Spotter Giraffe Spotter Wildbook for Giraffe

GCF has significantly contributed to the development of GiraffeSpotter – Wildbook for Giraffe, an innovative Al supported photo-identification database of giraffe encounter and individually catalogued giraffe in the wild.

The database is populated and maintained by giraffe conservationists, researchers and managers, who collect and analyse giraffe sighting data in order to learn more about population numbers and their distribution. GiraffeSpotter – Wildbook for Giraffe uses photos of the patterns of giraffe on both sides of their body and neck (with a focus on their right side) to distinguish between individual animals. Cutting-edge software supports rapid identification using pattern recognition and photo management tools. You, too, can assist with giraffe conservation research by submitting photos and sighting data. The information will be used in mark-recapture studies to help with the Africa-wide conservation of these iconic animals.

Giraffi GiraffaCamelopardali



mage by GCF / Adobe Stock/ A

Producer 4



# **RANSLOCATONS** Giraffe on the Move

# **RESTORING GIRAFFE TO THEIR HISTORICAL HABITATS OR BOLSTERING** SMALL REMAINING POPULATIONS IS AN EFFECTIVE CONSERVATION TOOL

Habitat loss and fragmentation, in combination with numerous other factors such as illegal hunting and disease, are the biggest threats to giraffe. In addition, giraffe are a critically important part of savannah ecosystems. They are pollinators, seed dispersers, and shape many of the tree species they feed upon. If giraffe are removed from an ecosystem, some plants' physical structure, growth, and reproduction will change. This change has cascading effects for the whole ecosystem, right down to the insect communities and soil nutrients. Returning giraffe to their historical ranges where they have become locally extinct helps to restore the balance of these complex ecosystem processes for generations to come. In addition to pure conservation aims, these translocations can support tourism and sustainable development efforts, and support communities.

Carefully planned and managed giraffe translocations are vital to achieving this goal and are an important part of our conservation toolbox. Translocations assist in (re-)establishing or strengthening smaller, existing giraffe populations. GCF goes to great lengths in our efforts to secure a future for giraffe through translocations.

Translocations are significant and challenging technical and logistical undertakings and require careful planning and long-term commitment. This includes pre-translocation assessments and post-translocation monitoring. Each translocation is unique and therefore requires specific preparation and planning.

The first step is identifying viable habitat. This is often a desktop, science-based exercise that is then groundtruthed as part of a feasibility study, which also includes assessing the social attitudes of the people who might be neighbouring or sharing their living space with the (re-) introduced giraffe. This is followed by organizing the overall logistics and permitting process, which can be rather complicated and time consuming. Once these aspects are sorted, giraffe can actually be moved and (re-)introduced to their new home. While this is the most complex part of the operation, it is not the final step. Post-translocation monitoring is an essential part of every translocation and unfortunately, it is often forgotten in the planning process. GCF always conducts this monitoring, often overlooked by others, as it is essential in determining whether a translocation was a conservation success and also in ensuring the long-term management of any new giraffe population.

Translocations are a truly collaborative effort and together with governments, NGOs and other partners, GCF remains at the forefront of supporting these initiatives.

This year, we successfully moved giraffe in/to Angola, Kenya, Mozambique, and Namibia.





SUCCESS STORY Giraíg

n June 2023, we made history when 14 Angolan giraffe were successfully relocated to Iona National Park, Angola, as part of an ongoing conservation effort to restore and enrich the park's biodiversity. Bringing giraffe back to this vast landscape is a huge success for conservation and giraffe in the wild.

GCF. African Parks and the Government of Angola teamed up to bring back Angolan giraffe after a long absence. After their capture in Namibia, the giraffe travelled over 1,300km in a journey that lasted more than 36 hours before their successful release in Angola. Their reintroduction plays an important role in restoring the park's ecosystem as well as re-establishing the region's ecological processes. The translocation was sponsored by GCF and the Wyss Foundation.

Abias Huongo, Secretary of State for the Ministry of Environment, said, "The reintroduction of giraffe to Iona National Park is a remarkable milestone in Angola's conservation journey. This significant

endeavour demonstrates our commitment to preserving our country's natural heritage. Together, we are building a future where both people and wildlife thrive harmoniously."

A thorough feasibility study was conducted prior to the operation by a student from the Namibia University of Science & Technology under supervision of GCF. The assessment evaluated various factors, including the source population, habitat suitability, human dimensions, risks during and after the operation, as well as financial feasibility. Based on the positive results and the commitment of all stakeholders, the translocation was recommended and now put into action. In addition, a survey was conducted amongst the communities in and around the periphery of Iona National Park to evaluate local community perceptions of the proposed translocation of giraffe. The assessment revealed that most lona inhabitants are highly receptive to the presence of giraffe in the park and the tourism potential they may bring.

# return to **Iona National Park** in Angola

"This collaborative effort of bringing giraffe back to Iona National Park is an extraordinary achievement for giraffe conservation in Angola. By reintroducing giraffe to their historical range, we reestablish their range, ensure their longterm survival and contribute to restoring the ecological balance in the region. We look forward to continuing to work closely with all partners involved for the long-term success of this project", said Stephanie Fennessy, Executive Director and Co-Founder, GCF.

Whilst giraffe populations in general have declined in the past 35 years due to habitat loss, poaching, and other human-induced factors, recent targeted giraffe conservation efforts have seen positive effects and several populations have started to rebound. Conserving and protecting giraffe is crucial not only for their own survival but also for maintaining the balance and functionality of Africa's ecosystems. The successful translocation of Angolan giraffe to Iona National Park serves as a testament to the importance of crossborder conservation efforts for the overall protection of Africa's unique biodiversity.

Pedro Monterroso, Park Manager at Iona National Park, said, "The reintroduction of giraffe to Iona marks a critical moment in the park's history. These graceful animals will contribute to the restoration of the park's biodiversity and serve as a symbol of Angola's commitment to conservation. We are grateful for the partnership with the Giraffe Conservation Foundation, the Government of Angola and the support from the Wyss Foundation in making this translocation possible."



# **TWIGA TRACKER** ΙΝΙΤΙΑΤΙΥΕ

### TO KNOW WHERE GIRAFFE MOVE AND HAVE THEY USE THEIR HABITAT IS KEY TO EFFECTIVE CONSERVATION

As a science-based organization, GCF is considered a world leader in various aspects of field technology for giraffe conservation monitoring and research. To conserve giraffe and the diverse ecosystems they inhabit, we need to better understand where giraffe move, how much space they need, and how they utilize their habitats across a range of different environments. Some of this data is gathered through surveys, but direct tracking provides more diverse information. The spatial data and habitat utilization information collected by these tracking units provides unique and critical insights into the resources that giraffe require.

Since Julian and Steph Fennessy fitted the first giraffe with a GPS satellite collar in 2002, which was adapted from an African savannah elephant collar, GCF has been at the forefront in giraffe tracker development and field implementation. The GCF team has worked with different companies and researchers to trial a range of tracking devices on giraffe throughout the continent. The range of designs that evolved

Countries where giraffe are tracked

Twiga Tracker units deployed this year

375,296 Data points collected this year

2,696,029

Data points collected total

Units deployed in total

138 Units Deployed This Year

**Twiga Tracker** countries in total

Number of Twiga **Tracker** publications

Twiga Tracker countries during reporting period include the initial cumbersome neck collars, head

suspected, we can confirm through our work that harnesses, ossi-units, foot collar, tail tags, and a giraffe do not care about international borders variety of lightweight ear tags. and cross in and out of national parks, private and communal protected areas in many countries. GCF's Twiga Tracker initiative setsout to gain more Whilst some of these results seem logical, at times in-depth data on giraffe movements and is the a scientific basis is needed to support political will largest GPS tracking study ever conducted on for important decisions. Based on this increased giraffe - or any species in Africa. This ambitious knowledge of giraffe spatial ecology throughout continental-wide research initiative joins partners Africa, we are able to develop well-informed and from across the globe to better understand giraffe innovative conservation strategies for protecting movements throughout their range. It helps us giraffe and their habitats in collaboration with our understand how giraffe interact with a remarkable partners. Additionally, our understanding of giraffe diversity of habitats, which include the hyper-arid distribution continues to be fine-tuned with the deserts of northwest Namibia, the mesic savannahs data received which will lead to better on ground of northwest Uganda, the semi-arid scrub of protection and management. northern Kenya, and the Sahel of Niger. As always

GCF is spearheading this effort with a growing network of partners throughout Africa-wide. This financial year, GCF and our partners deployed 138 new GPS satellite trackers in nine countries. We are currently testing three new models that can be attached to the tail or as ear tags, and we have collected over 375,000 GPS data points this year alone. Over the years, we have deployed 571 tracking units on giraffe in 17 African countries. Many of these units are fitted during translocations to help with post-translocation monitoring and ensure that giraffe settle well into their new homes. Importantly, using new, low-cost technology makes using tracking

Units deployed per year



# TWIGA TRACKER STATISTICS:

Most data points collected per unit

41,896 at Okapuka Ranch in Namibia, at times collected in 10 minute

Longest tracked giraffe **2,850** DAYS (<7.5 YEARS)

intervals)

(female Angolan giraffe in the Hoanib River area in NW Namibia)

# Largest distance travelled over time:

**18,857**KM (male Angolan giraffe in the Hoanib River area in NW Namibia)

Largest home range: **3,730**KM<sup>2</sup>

(male Angolan giraffe in the Hoanib River area in NW Namibia) Smallest home range: **6.14**KM<sup>2</sup>

(female Southern giraffe, Umfomoti, Eswatini)

# Giraffe that helped the most with tech development **Ranger**

(female Angolan giraffe in the Hoanib River area in NW Namibia) has carried 4 different unit types: head harness, ossicone unit, 2 types of ear tags)





# Giraffe Conservation Strategies & Action Plans

African government are key players in giraffe conservation and without their participation, there is no future for giraffe

While giraffe can ultimately only be saved in the wild in Africa, it is vital to apply a science-based and strategic approach to their conservation. GCF continues to work with many African governments and has supported the development and implementation of every National, Regional or Park Giraffe Conservation Strategy and Action Plan that exists to date. These plans provide an important framework for countries to undertake coordinated and targeted giraffe conservation efforts.

Each strategy is developed in a consultative processthatincludesallrelevantstakeholders. The process starts with initial planning sessions and a workshop that brings relevant national and international conservation players together in one room (or virtually) to discuss and collate all relevant and available information on giraffe, available numbers, demographics and their distribution, knowledge gaps, and information that is relevant to or lacking for their effective protection. Existing threats relevant to the specific area are discussed, including human-wildlife conflict and poaching risks, and whether their current situation requires and allows for specific conservation efforts, eg. surveys, monitoring, movement studies, and translocations.

This initial workshop provides the baseline for stakeholders to develop priorities not only for giraffe conservation, but also for relevant research and management, which will be collated in a comprehensive Giraffe Conservation Strategy and Action Plan. This process often includes the development of a working group to follow up on the implementation of the Strategy and Action Plan. While these meetings are hosted by the range state government, GCF has facilitated and fully funded the development process of these strategies. Furthermore, GCF continues to provide targeted funding for key areas of the implementation and review of these Strategies and Action Plans.

In this financial year, GCF has supported the development and review of Strategies and Action Plans for Akagera National Park in Rwanda, as well as National Giraffe Conservation Strategies and Action Plans for Kenya and Malawi. We are in discussions and early planning stages with the governments of Cameroon, Chad, and Zimbabwe to develop National Strategies for these countries in 2024/25.



# **Giraffe Conservation** Health Initiative

This initiative provides a holistic approach to giraffe conservation and elevates the role of wildlife veterinarians in conservation efforts

Traditionally wildlife veterinarians' involvement in wildlife conservation has been limited to immobilization, disease monitoring, and capture operations. However, GCF realized that there is benefit to giraffe conservation if veterinarians were more involved at all levels. This initiative began in Uganda, where GCF identified an opportunity to invest in veterinary interventions in Murchison Falls National Park to find and rescue critically endangered Nubian giraffe from illegal wire snare traps. Without quite knowing initially

what the results would be, GCF realized that together with the Uganda Wildlife Authority we were leading one of the largest wildlife rescue efforts in Africa. In this process, we also included a capacity building component by directly training young Ugandan veterinarians in wildlife medicine. In line with the core of who GCF is, we gladly welcomed the opportunity to branch out and create the Conservation Health Initiative.

The Conservation Health Initiative incorporates a multidisciplinary team approach that is practical, proactive

and adaptable. Its aim is to benefit giraffe conservation across Africa through providing targeted capacity building of the next generation of wildlife veterinarians, quiding best practices for giraffe immobilization and interventions, identifying knowledge gaps and addressing them through targeted research, and ultimately creating a valuable network of skilled wildlife veterinarians throughout the continent. GCF truly sees value in investing in wildlife veterinarians not simply as tools but as true members of the conservation team.

As the leader in giraffe conservation, GCF currently implements and supports giraffe conservation initiatives in 21 African countries, often working closely with wildlife veterinarians. While most African countries do not necessarily have a shortage of veterinarians, few have the specialized skills, confidence or experience in wildlife veterinary medicine and field work. Based on our collaborative conservation programmes, GCF and other conservation organizations have historically brought in foreign wildlife veterinary expertise to assist and help build local capacity throughout the rest of the continent when implementing critical conservation projects.

GCF is determined to make a long-term impact by providing African veterinarians the opportunity to gain experience in wildlife field immobilization

and related work through a tenday intensive theoretical and practical field course conducted annually in Namibia by leading experts. Since 2022, 16 young wildlife vets from ten African countries (Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Nigeria, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia), have completed the course under the guidance of a highly experienced team of wildlife veterinarians and ecologists. Participants and mentors have worked collaboratively to build capacity, share skills and experiences, and at the same time, provide invaluable conservation support.

The hands-on approach provides training on all ongoing conservation management efforts, including GPS satellite tagging including removing and replacing old tracking units, wildlife translocation,



and disease surveillance. Participants gain a working knowledge of all components of wildlife veterinary medicine and experience with a variety of immobilization protocols, species and equipment. Furthermore, participants have an opportunity to develop their leadership, communication, critical thinking and crisis management skills through lectures and theoretical discussions, as well as being placed in charge of actual immobilization procedures from start to finish.

In addition, we continue to work closely with the School of Veterinary Medicine at the University of Namibia and support hands-on wildlife veterinary training for their students every year as well as continued professional development courses for practicing Namibian veterinarians.



# **KEY PARTNERS**

# GCF's work is never done in isolation but achieved through valuable partnerships.

GCF's partnerships continue to evolve over time with new partnerships developing and relationships changing as each partner provides support and interventions most appropriate for the time, place and the stage of the organization. Initial partnerships focused on zoos providing invaluable support for World Giraffe Day when it was established in 2014. After the 2015 documentary, Giraffe: Africa's Gentle Giants, narrated by Sir David Attenborough, raised the profile of our work, we started raising significant project funding which allowed the team to make GCF a full-time endeavor. While zoos remain important partners for awareness raising and by providing funding support, we have added many important conservation partners to our list: organizations we work with closely in the field or who have committed long-term continued support to help GCF grow in impact and be a forever louder voice for giraffe.

We would like to use this opportunity to thank all our partners as well as our donors for their unwavering support. Our work would not be possible without your support. Thank you for standing tall for giraffe with us.





ACT FOR WILDLIFE





















# FINANCIAL SUMMARY

As we are all getting used to a heightened level of insecurity and unpredictability in the world, we are grateful to all our donors and supporters who continue to make our work possible. We

continue to try new and innovative ways of engaging donors the message of the plight of giraffe with a wider audience.

Our team is used to working hard and we continue to keep administrative costs at a minimum, however, as GCF grows, this may have to change a little, but we will cross this bridge when we get to it.

> Platinum Transparency 2024

# Candid.

GCF has again earned the Platinum Seal Transparency with Candid (formerly ar). For the fifth consecutive vear ived this award for meeting their rigorous criteria for the highest levels of transparency within our operations and results. You can continue to support our work to save giraffe in Africa with renewed trust and confidence.

# **FUNDS RECEIVED**

# (BY SOURCE)

# **EXPENDITURE**



TOTAL \$1,662,904





\$1,508,975

\$155,945

# TOTAL \$1,664,920

\*All amounts are in USD.

# DONORS

GCF has a wide donor base which is reflected in our donor list as well as in the split of received funding by source. Zoos from around the world and their staff continue to provide amazing support for giraffe conservation. Their passion and enthusiasm is unrivaled. However, we also receive funding from many individuals, companies and foundations who continue to put their trust into GCF and our team. We would like to thank all our donors for their amazing support. In this report, we only list the donations of US\$300 and above, however, every donation helps! We appreciate that you all stand tall with us for giraffe - Thank YOU!

A special thank you goes to Shores, Tagman, Butler & Company, P.A. in Orlando, Florida, who allow us to use their postal address, provide us with amazing pro bono administrative support, collate our financial annual statements, and support us in many other ways with regards to financial compliance in the USA. We would also like to thank the Metzger Group at Morgan Stanley who carefully look after our investment portfolio.

## \$50.000 and above

Cheyenne Mountain Zoo **Cleveland Metroparks Zoo** Glenmorangie Murray Haseler Lars Markgren Naples Zoo at Caribbean Gardens Royal Zoological Society of Scotland The Woodtiger Fund Wallace Reseach Foundation

## \$20.000-\$49.999

Alex Chantecaille Chester Zoo Cumbria Zoo **Galanthus Foundation Trust** In memory of Carvel Wayne Glenn IUCN Save Our Species / European Union Kratt Family Fund Natural Selection Oklahoma Zoo The Waterloo Foundation

# \$10,000-\$19.999

Africam Safaris Auckland Zoo **Beauval Nature** Club Westside Columbus Zoo Dallas Zoo **Detroit Zoo Explorers Against Extinction** Fota Wildlife Park Friends of the Topeka Zoo

Kolmarden Foundation Jesse C Lefcourt Mey Share Foundation Sandra Moss Peoria Zoo Stichting Wildlife Beekse Bergen The Ruggiero Family Fund in honor of Emma Ruggiero Woodland Park Zoo

## \$5,000-\$9,999

Blank Park Zoo Dublin Zoo Eric Flossic & family Fort Wayne Children's Zoo Jacksonville Zoo & Gardens Lehigh Valley Zoo Lion Habitat Ranch Corrine Lynch Memphis Zoo In honour of Jay Mitchell Odense Zoo Phoenix Zoo Reid Park Zoo **Riverbanks Zoo** Julia Szalwinski The Safari Collection Wags & Menace Make A **Difference Foundation** Wilhelma Zoo

## \$2,500-\$4,999

Africa Adventure Consultants Bellewaerde Park **Bioviva / Saint-Pierre Foundation** Birmingham Zoo CFLI - High Commission of Canada

Fundación Parques Reunidos Global Wildlife LLC Victoria Gordon & Bob Bradley Sue Heim Henry Vilas Zoo Elizabeth Herman Hirth Family Fund Till Hollmann Ann Marie Kohlligian Lion Country Safari Norristown Zoo Parks! America, Inc Plumpton Park Zoo The Burkehaven Family Foundation Jorge F Vazquez Brandon Weal White Post Farm Zoo Knoxville Zoos South Australia

# \$1.000 - \$2.499

African Safari Wildlife Park Antipants Ride for Giraffe Association of Zoo Veterinary Technicians ATI Holidays **B** Bryan Preserve Boissière Mervent Conservation / Zoo de La Boissière du Doré **Bright Funds** Buffalo Zoo Cape May County Zoo AAZK Chapter Chessington Zoo Colleen Crowley Dallas Zoo

### Donna De Weil Friends of Dickerson Park Zoo Duarte Inc. Dudlev Zoo Leroy Elkin & Linda Bottarini Linda Frantz **Robert Fulton** Christine Goossen Granite Ridge Nature Institute Michael & Jo Hamm Vaughn Hasslein & Linda Borders Joy Helbing Klara Kurowski LDL Peterson Family Charitable Fund Little Turtle AAZK Chapter Lonanecks For Lonanecks Los Angeles AAZK Chapter Maryland Zoo Susanna McDonald Mesker Park Zoo Drew Monaghan & David Dibley Linda & Bill Murray Charitable Fund Jennifer Nguyen Orin & Vicky Oberlander Pacific Lotus Corps Parco Natura Viva / ARCA Foundation Paws & Fir, The Theissing & Kaufman Charitable Fund **David Penswick** John & Nuri Pierce David Posner Cheryl Rothman San Antonio Zoo San Diego Zoo Wildlife Alliance Sedgwick County Zoo Six Flags Theme Parks Catherine Smolinski Spectra Aluminum Products Lilly Spitz & Rudolph Loncke Diane Stone John Sturtevant The Wilds Robert John & Margaret A Van Andel Mary Vero Laurel Walsh West Asheville Playschool Zoo Dresden Zoo Lyon

### \$500 - \$999

Bruce Abbott

David Alan Lucas Albanese James Anderson Betsy Arnold John Basinger Rachel Bhattacharyya Ann Boyd Richardson Judith Bradford Gary Brueggeman Caldwell Zoo Cameron Park Zoo Iri Cermak Frank Cermak Agnes Chu Barbara Clark Diane Curtin Laura Daugherty Sara Djamin Juliann Duffus-Newcome Joan Dunn Faruk Yalcin Zoo Ingi Finnsson Megan Foker Mark & Indra Frank Giving Fund Nicole Gallo KathyGerry Edward Gilpin ShariLeigh Gordon Damon & Teri Ground Lucy Hairston Jeffrey Hall Minako Harada Harrington-Spink Chartiable Fund Herboth's Blick Home Owners Association Michael Hughes Victoria Lanphier Julie Lapitino Nancy Latner Jonathan & Heather Lindbloom **MD** Linville Sheryl & Gary Lum Mango African Safaris Barbara McIntyre Bruce & Eleanor McLear Katya Melluish **Robert Menzies Dinah Miller** John Murphy **Beth Murray** Abigail NeSmith Valerie Nicklaus Lenne B Nicklaus Bell North Carolina Zoo Sam Obstfeld Okano Charitable Fund

Our Green House Roma Oxford **Edward Perkins** Dale Peterson Aimee Pierce Nancy Reinecker Laura Roe Roger Williams Park Zoo AAZK Chapter Sandra Carol Rogers Virginia B Rogers Rollina Hills Zoo Elizabeth S. Rumely Fund Anna Schnetzer Lorraine Smith Sonja Sorbo Ellen Sullivan **Duchess Swift** Pamela Tate Kristen Tauber Tennent Caledonian Breweries The Dixit Famiy Gift Fund The William Patrick Schneider Fund (in honor of Julia Joy Schneider) Jennifer Theissing Thomas / Alson-Milkman Charitable Fund Tidewater AAZK Chapter Twiga Coffee Tyler Family Fund James & Judith Wall Bettina Weber James Weckerle Jeff White John White Wildlife World Zoo & Aquarium Valerie Wilk Penelope Wright John Yaist **ZOOM Erlebniswelt** Gelsenkirchen Zoosiana

### \$300 - \$499

James Adams Jackie Alschuler Michael Ashenheim Shelby Billings Marie Bittner Samantha Blair Pamela Bradby Harry Brar Brenham Middle School Katherine Brennan Jodi Breuer Marv Bullard

GCF by Danielle Burdon Raven Carter Sara Church Sandra Cregan Mildred Crosbie Peter Cutrera Venita Davis Gabriela DeFilippi Eckart Demasius Bertram Edelstein Kuma Fit Erin Fortune Joyce Fuller **Denise Gaines** James Gallagher Sharon Galloway Clay Goldberg Jeannine Graf Jess Hall Miriam Harrington Dirk Heimermann Sylvia Hepler Mike Hill Andrew Hollo Laura Hooper Alvin Hui Karen Hutz Nicole Imfeld Libby Jones Judy Judd Nicolette Julson Rebecca Kiely Elizabeth Kolbe Karen & Mark Koten Jeanne Lehmann Christianne Leidecker Wayne Little Mark Patrick Lobene James Manley-Buser Marin Primary & Middle School, Grade 3 Girl Scout Troop Amanda McCredie Mikki McGuire Martin Meehan Pamela Metz Christine Mittelstead Lynette Morgan Claudia Neuwald New York City AAZK Chapter Elizabeth O'Connor Painting with a Twist Dallas Passmore Joan Phillips Jenna Pratt Marijo Racciatti Mary Reilly Susan Riley Graham Ritchie Monika Rodas In memory of Madeline Rosenblum Melinda Russell Christopher Seabock Brenda Serniak Lindsay Sharpe David Shiben Lisa Shields Kevin Shipe

Katie Souvannavong Daniel St Onge Shane Stalter Alex Starr **Rob Stevens** Line Stramland King-Wah Tai Jo Teale Gretchen Thompson Lena Townsend Roxanne Warren Theodore Weiman Aimee Weiss Annie White Darrick Wong Nicole Wood John Zagelow In honour of John Richard Zagelow Dora Zheng Samantha Zitola Istvan Zoltan

KARMASLOTH

# CONTACT Giraffe Conservation Foundation

info@giraffeconservation.org giraffeconservation.org

Reporting Period: 1 March 2023 - 29 February 2024

42

