



Sandscript

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The Sahara is home par excellence for dozens of reptiles such as the gecko and lizard featured above.

Black gold...or white?

In the fall of 2008, Niger began drilling for oil in the Tin Toumma desert to the east of the country. Tin Toumma is where SCF and its partners are working to set up a vast new national nature reserve. It is also home to the world's last viable population of addax antelope. Will the search for black gold deal the final blow to the survival of this magnificent white antelope? Or can we find a just compromise that allows Niger to benefit from its subterranean riches whilst conserving its precious living natural resources?

Whatever the final outcome, this new threat will require enormous effort on all sides to resolve. Not only is there a strong possibility the addax will be

hunted but the peace and tranquillity they have enjoyed and require to cope in such a rigorous habitat will be shattered. Enormous trucks are already roaming noisily across the desert and with funding from Niger's Chinese partners, an airstrip and base camps have been established deep in the desert.

The solution lies in constructive engagement between environmental and mining interests, coupled with a mutual desire to see a win-win solution developed. It is possible to have both black gold and white addax but this rosy outcome should not be taken for granted. Niger is determined to get at its oil and as one of the poorest nations on earth this is understand-



able. A major challenge lies not only with the disturbance caused by oil prospection and extraction but controlling the activities of the military forces put in the field to protect the oil workers. Thanks to our network of community game guards we know already that gazelles have been poached and it is only a matter of time before the addax also come into range.

Cont. on page 2

IUCN flags endangered Saharan fauna

A recently published report by IUCN's Antelope Specialist Group, lists one in four antelopes as threatened with extinction. The report, compiled by ASG co-chairs David Mallon and Philippe Chardonnet, highlights the dire situation for wildlife in

the Sahelo-Saharan region, with both the addax and dama gazelle listed as Critically Endangered by the IUCN Red List. Both species are central to SCF's efforts to conserve desert wildlife. See the report at www.iucn.org





Tin Toumma addax – the last viable population in the wild on earth (Photo: Thomas Rabeil/SCF)

Black gold...or white? (cont. from page 1)

During a recent fieldtrip, the remains of three freshly killed addax were found (photo) but with no conclusive evidence of military involvement.

So, what can we do to help? SCF's strategy is based on three interrelated components: dialogue, awareness and action. To begin with we must continue playing the role of moderator and catalyst to bring the various stakeholders together to look for mutually beneficial outcomes. To assist in this process we are using tools such as posters, films, lectures and workshops to raise the nation's awareness of the unique, living wealth of natural resources that Niger's deserts contain. A major strand of this campaign has been the showing on TV, both at home and throughout the region, of a documentary made by a local cineaste in 2007 with SCF on the ecology of Tin Toumma and the global importance of conserving its

unique and rapidly dwindling wildlife. Moves are now afoot to get a fully professional documentary made and initial contacts have been established with a number of top players, including the BBC.

Equally important is the need to demonstrate quite tangibly that Niger's wildlife is worth saving and the only way to do this is by having a strong presence in the field to watch and to dissuade would be miscreants from poaching. Even though the addax is protected by law, poaching will certainly occur unless vigorously controlled. Unfortunately the odds are not in our favour. The desert is vast and the means and manpower at the disposal of the wildlife service limited. But thankfully wildlife protection is not uniquely a question of force but a delicate balance between carrot and stick, where getting people onside is much more likely to have a long-lasting

effect than force alone. As Theodore Roosevelt said quoting an African proverb "Speak softly and carry a big stick, and you will go far." Frankly I doubt it. If there is one thing we have learned about conservation it is big sticks are no guarantee of success. To the contrary they don't resolve the root causes that often lead to hunting and overuse of wildlife and tend to create enemies rather than friends. As a result we are proactively engaged in working with the military forces and local government to harness their presence in the field to assist in conservation rather than act as agents of its destruction. Slowly, progress is being made to change attitudes. As for the critically endangered addax, let's sincerely hope when the oil is long gone, the dust and smoke settled and peace has returned they are still out there secure in their desert fastness.

John Newby, SCF CEO



Photos: John Newby (above and below), Oliver Born (bottom).





Rüppell's fox (left) and fennec (right) are just two of a much larger community of small nocturnal carnivores to be found in Termit

Spotlight on carnivores

As part of standard wildlife inventory and monitoring procedures, SCF scientists have been using camera traps as a useful tool to gather information on nocturnal species. Many of the desert's smaller creatures escape the heat by burrowing into cooler substrate and most of these species are also nocturnal. While gerbils, jerboas and small foxes like the fennec readily spring to mind, camera trapping has also brought to light other cryptic and rarely seen animals, such as the hedgehog, wild cat, porcupine and honey badger.

With the advent of a new generation of affordable, digital camera traps, using daylight, infrared and motion sensors, the application of this valuable tool will expand enormously, both for night work and by day to record the presence of species over long periods of time. As part of its research effort in the Termit region of Niger, SCF is about to

embark on a project in co-operation with the University of Oxford's Wildlife Conservation Research Unit to study the ecology of carnivores, including the jackal, fennec, Rüppell's fox, pale fox and sand cat. Most of these are listed as Data Deficient by the IUCN Red List and along with radio collars, camera traps will be used to record their presence, range and distribution. The project's aims are threefold: firstly to better understand the ecology and inter-relationships between this unique, sympatric, small carnivore community; secondly to provide input to planning for the carnivores' conservation; and thirdly to address the issue of livestock predation.

Pastoralists worldwide fear the presence of carnivores and Niger's nomads are no exception. Main culprits they identify are the common jackal and the much rarer striped hyena, and as a result not only are they per-

secuted but non-target species, such as the small foxes, are also killed through the indiscriminate use of traps or worse still, poisoned baits that also kill birdlife. Working with the local herders to assess the scale of the problem and identify workable solutions that do not prejudice conservation goals is an important step in developing a harmonious and meaningful relationship with Termit's stakeholders.

SCF is very grateful to the following people and institutions for their financial support to this project: Mr. Lynn Hall, Ms. Sheri Hanna, Saint Louis Zoo, Oregon Zoo, Gilman International Conservation and the AZA Conservation Endowment Fund.

A camera trap like the one pictured to the right costs \$650 each. If you would like to make a donation to SCF to help build our research capacity we would love to hear from you.





Giraffes are a common theme in Saharan rock art and an indicator of a wetter past (John Newby/SCF)

Rock art — a glimpse into the past

It is difficult to travel anywhere in the Sahara without finding traces of previous human occupation. Burial mounds, potsherds and stone tools all indicate the presence of a significant human population spanning many thousands of years. Especially intriguing are the numerous rock paintings and engravings that grace the boulders and shelters of many Saharan mountain ranges. Some like those in the Tasilli of Algeria or Libya's Acacus regions are protected as World Heritage sites.

Providing a rare glimpse into the past, rock art pro-

vides valuable documentary evidence of ecology, wildlife distribution and the relationship between man and nature. Whether as herder or hunter, people are shown with the livestock or in pursuit of ostriches or Barbary sheep. There are also enigmatic images of animals tethered with ropes, especially giraffes. With extraordinary skill, antelopes, cattle and horses are brought to life. And whilst many images leave it up to the observer to draw their own conclusions as to the subject others are startlingly clear and capture the 'jizz' inherent in the posture of a stalking lion or the gaze of a

leopard. Ten thousand years ago the Sahara was clearly a wetter place, where elephants, rhinos and hippos cohabited with man. The Sahara was also crossed by intrepid travellers, something images of horse-drawn chariots bring vividly to mind.

As much as its wildlife and living culture, rock art and stone age sites are part and parcel of the Sahara's precious heritage. SCF works closely with tour operators to ensure sites are protected from trampling and the ever present threat of the removal of artefacts.

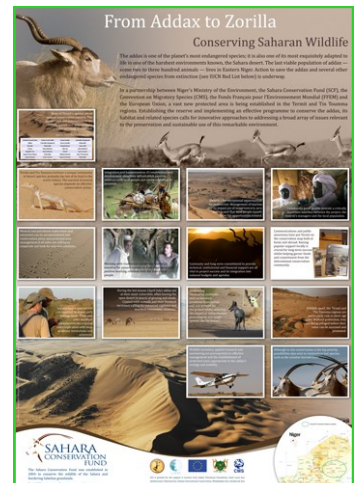


SCF poster rewarded

SCF's poster "From Addax to Zorilla" was one of the top three selected from over a hundred entries at the IUCN World Conservation Congress held in Barcelona

last year. The poster, designed by Vincent Turmine, graphically describes the scope and complexities of establishing a new protected area in Africa. It is also a

celebration of the Sahara and its biological diversity, neatly dispelling the myth that deserts are barren and empty spaces with little or no conservation value.





During the 1980s ostrich were a common sight in Niger's Air Mountains (Photo: Donald Miller)

Turning up the heat on ostriches

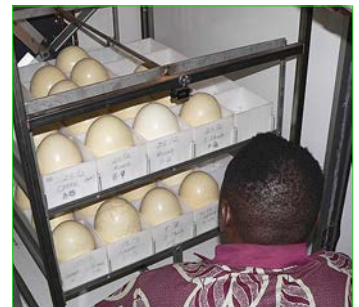
Thanks to support from San Diego and Saint Louis zoos, SCF is the proud owner of a brand new incubator to help with our ostrich recovery project in Niger. Eggs are already being incubated, with the first arrivals expected soon.

SCF's ostrich project was developed in direct response to a request from local conservationists for help. Over the past couple of years, it

has grown into an operation based on a strong relationship between SCF and local Nigerien ostrich owners. This is a positive step towards a sustainable outcome and recognition of the fact that the only ostriches in Niger today are in private hands.

In return for support to improve feeding, health and management practices, private owners are making

birds available for conservation, including land for a breeding centre. The gift of 4km of high tensile steel game fencing courtesy of the Exotic Wildlife Association and the manufacturers, Stay-Tuff, will go a long way to providing infrastructure. An improved diet is also being given thanks to funding from AZA's Conservation Endowment Fund.



Zoo Hannover: Friend of the Sahara

SCF salutes Zoo Hannover and its staff for their commitment to conservation in the Sahara. Under the leadership of its Director, Dr. Klaus-Michael Machens, and Zoological Director Dr. Heiner Engel (right), Zoo Hannover has played a pivotal role in the conservation of addax in zoos as well as in the wild. Dr. Engel serves as the coordinator for the addax breeding program (EEP) in Euro-

pean zoos. He has been instrumental in bringing the American and European zoo breeding programs for this species together to collaborate on reintroduction projects in North Africa. Zoo Hannover led the way in early attempts to re-establish addax in Morocco, organizing the highly-successful translocation of EEP addax into Souss-Massa National Park in the early 1990s. In

2007, Zoo Hannover has also helped to establish a protected population of captive-bred addax in Tunisia's Djebel NP.

For the critical core support they provide SCF, as well as the leadership and vision they commit through staff involvement on the SCF board of directors, we salute Zoo Hannover as a true Friend of the Sahara.



Sandscript is the twice-yearly newsletter of SCF, the **Sahara Conservation Fund**. It is edited by SCF CEO John Newby. We are grateful to Bill Houston, Terrie Correll, Thomas Rabeil and Kelley Bishop for their contributions to this issue.

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SCF's mission is to conserve the wildlife of the Sahara and bordering Sahelian grasslands.

Our vision is of a Sahara that is well conserved and managed, in which ecological processes function naturally, with plants and animals existing in healthy numbers across their historical range; a Sahara that benefits all its inhabitants and where support for its conservation comes from stakeholders across all sectors of society.

To implement our mission, we forge partnerships between people, governments, the world zoo and scientific communities, international conventions, non-governmental organizations and donor agencies. A powerful network with a common goal – the conservation of deserts and their unique natural and cultural heritage.

If you would like to know more about our work and how to contribute to our projects, please contact us at scf@bluewin.ch We would love to hear from you!

Bringing power to the people

One thing never in short supply in the Sahara is abundant and glorious sunshine. Using solar energy to power those increasingly essential scientific tools, such as walky-talkies, radios and laptops, has to be the way forward. It also offers enormous potential, if made available cheaply enough, to bring about major improvements in the life of desert dwellers. Power for medical clinics, lighting for schools, and energy for the radios and phones so essential to the development process.

One special challenge we have in Niger is making sure our community game guards

can communicate with each other and with us if help is needed to respond to a poaching outbreak or an accident. It was with great interest, therefore, we learned of the solar backpacks or *Juice Bags* made by *Reware* when our President, Dr. Steve Monfort, brought one with him on a recent trip to the desert.



The bags are robust and ideal for camel-mounted game guards. They are powerful enough to recharge their satellite phones and GPS units, which sit safely and dust-free inside the bags.

As the result of a recent appeal, our game guards are now the proud owners of seven *Juice Bags* and we would like to thank Henry Gentenaar, Helen Runnels Dubois, Brian Moore, Anne Hatfield Weir and Steve Monfort for the most generous donations.

If you would like to donate a solar backpack or solar panel to help us meet our energy



needs in an ecological and very practical way please contact us at scf@bluewin.ch.

Juice Bags can be found at www.rewarestore.com