I have known of the Sahara Conservation Fund (SCF) since its founding in 2004, and its significant conservation successes achieved over the last 15-years; reintroducing the scimitar-horned oryx and translocating West African giraffe. Taking the helm of SCF is a huge responsibility.

What I was unprepared for was realising just how far SCF, “punched above its weight.” Achieving these goals with a small, dedicated team in Paris and the field projects in Chad and Niger. And that the oryx and giraffe projects were not the full extent of the SCF’s activities.

In partnership with many like-minded organizations and government authorities, SCF implements projects that improve protected area management, supporting endangered species, monitoring ecological systems, and provides medical assistance to communities in remote areas. The details of these activities are recorded in these pages. Over the last few months, I have come to admire the extent of SCF’s activities and the teams that lead these projects enormously.

These achievements cannot be realised single-handedly. SCF benefits from a vast network of scientists and specialists that provide technical insight. It receives support from many quarters, without which we could not implement these projects. The advice provided by the Board of the organization is invaluable. Several trips to Niger and Chad have allowed me to witness - first-hand - the sheer hard work undertaken by the field conservation teams.

Most importantly, I benefit from the sage advice from John Newby, the founding CEO. His profound knowledge and understanding of the Sahelo-Saharan region, people, and cultures, built upon almost 50-years of conservation work in the region represents a considerable resource for SCF. Combined with the skills of the rest of the SCF team, the organization has a very bright future.

This future should include amplifying the current activities, employing technical knowledge acquired to replicate conservation successes, and increased capacity, processes and policies to allow SCF to implement larger projects to deepen impact. Watch this space.

John Watkin

A WORD FROM THE CHAIRMAN

2019 was a year of unprecedented milestones and new beginnings for SCF. In the field, the organization’s work continues to broaden and deepen, with the ongoing ‘rewilding’ of focal sites such as Chad’s Ouadi Rimé-Ouadi Achim reserve and its growing population of scimitar-horned oryx, and now addax as well. This restoration of extirpated species and wildlife assemblages draws on the foundations that SCF has built over the past two decades, in becoming a unique source of scientific expertise and practical experience across the Sahelo-Saharan region.

This standing and SCF’s growing set of achievements are largely due to the tireless efforts over that time of the organization’s founding CEO, John Newby. His counterpart in SCF’s programmatic work for much of that time was Thomas Rabeil, who particularly led most of SCF’s work in Niger. In 2019, as part of the board-led effort to position SCF for greater impact in the years ahead, John Watkin was recruited as a new CEO, with John Newby transitioning to a new role of Senior Adviser as a natural handing over of the reins, while keeping his expertise available, while Thomas moved on to new opportunities. John Watkin has taken leadership of SCF at a time of great urgency for conservation everywhere in the world, in the Sahara and beyond, and has brought a fresh perspective and wealth of experience from conservation work across Africa. As we look to 2020 and the unforeseen challenges that are spreading all across the world, SCF is poised to step into that uncertain future with renewed leadership, focus, and commitment to its singular mission of saving the Sahara’s unique and often overlooked wildlife and wild landscapes.

Fred Nelson

TEAMWORK: THE ESSENTIAL INGREDIENT

All of the achievements described in this annual report can only have been accomplished through the dedication and hard-work of the SCF team members and government partners in the field.

The SCF teams in Chad and Niger include extremely competent field technicians who undertake arduous task of surveying and monitoring focal species. These team members are, in turn, supported by competent administrative and logistical staff.
The scimitar-horned oryx reintroduction project in Chad is a joint initiative of the Government of Chad and the Environment Agency Abu Dhabi (EAD). Under the leadership of the Agency, field implementation of the project is carried out by the Sahara Conservation Fund.

Reestablishing a population of scimitar-horned oryx (Oryx dammah), an emblematic antelope of the Sahel, relies solely on the reintroduction of captive-bred animals together with the unprecedented mobilization of local and international stakeholders contributing to its success.

In 2019 a further 75 oryx arrived in Chad, bringing the total of animals transported from EAD’s collection in Abu Dhabi’s Deleika Breeding Facility to 200 since the project’s start in 2015.

**Key Achievements**

The released animals have adapted very well to their environment, where they find enough space, vegetation and shelter to meet their daily and seasonal needs. The oryx breed well in the wild and 2019 saw the first calf born to a wild-born oryx. In total, the oryx population now numbers around 280 animals.

Thanks to the outstanding international collaboration between veterinarians, biologists and other experts, new vaccination protocols have been introduced to combat locally-present diseases and to increase protection from flies and other disease vectors.

Following a highly successful first phase of activities, EAD confidently agreed to develop and fund a second five-year phase of operations. Phase II will maintain focus on building the oryx population but also add new species to the mix, including the Critically Endangered addax antelope (Addax nasomaculatus), dama gazelle (Nanger dama), and North African ostrich (Struthio camelus camelus).

**Key Challenges**

The number of oryx in the wild increases, but the proportion of animals wearing GPS tracking collars decreases as new individuals are born, calling for the use of new monitoring techniques and protocols.

In a landscape inhabited by both wildlife and pastoralists, much more information is needed on the prevalence of local livestock diseases, such as Foot and Mouth Disease and Rift Valley Fever, and the means of combating their spread.

In 2019, following a highly successful first phase of activities, EAD confidently agreed to develop and fund a second five-year phase of operations. Phase II of the project will maintain focus on building the oryx population but also add new Sahel–Saharan species to the mix, including the Critically Endangered addax antelope (Addax nasomaculatus), dama gazelle (Nanger dama), and North African ostrich (Struthio camelus camelus).

As in Phase I, SCF will work on behalf of EAD in close partnership with Chad’s Ministry of the Environment and its Wildlife Service to manage the project, notably through the recruitment of staff, development of technical and scientific knowledge, capacity building, training in animal monitoring, data assessment, sensitization of local populations, etc.

While continuing to build up the scimitar-horned oryx population, Phase II will begin the reintroduction of pilot groups of addax, dama gazelles and North African ostriches. Pre-release enclosures for addax were built in the spring of 2019 and a first group of 15 addax was welcomed into the reserve in November by the Minister of the Environment, Mr. Ibrahim Mahamat Djameladine and other local dignitaries.

Following a protocol relatively similar to that of the oryx, addax from the EAD collection in Abu Dhabi were carefully selected, vaccinated, transported by plane to Abeché airport in Chad and then transported by truck to the Oryx Basecamp in the Ouadi Rimé-Ouadi Achim Game Reserve. Release into the wild is planned for January 2020. As with the oryx, GPS collars will be used to follow the movements of the addax.

While the bulk of the funding for Phase II comes from EAD, Saint Louis Zoo is also making a substantial contribution to the project’s wildlife monitoring component through the purchase of satellite collars and support to the ground monitoring teams. The "Projet Ouadi Rimé-Ouadi Achim" (POROA) also participates in the Phase II, supporting it in many ways, such as providing funds for some of the pre-release infrastructure.

As with Phase I, SCF and EAD will continue to enjoy and benefit from the partnership of the Zoological Society of London, the Smithsonian Conservation Biology Institute (SCBI) and the Fossil Rim Wildlife Center.

**ADDAX REINTRODUCTION IN MOROCCO**

Morocco’s national strategy for the conservation of wild ungulates includes the reintroduction of addax into the habitat from which it disappeared in the 1960s.

Based on our experience with the Chad Oryx Reintroduction Project, SCF was very pleased to take part in the preparation and launch of an addax reintroduction initiative, using some 32 animals, in the M’Hamid Nature Reserve protected area in southeast Morocco, in October 2019. Partnering with the Moroccan Water & Forests Department and SCBI, SCF assisted the Moroccan team with collaring, handling, translocation and veterinarian care of the addax, and will continue to help with GPS monitoring. The addax group, eventually released in mid-November, is the first ever reintroduced into the wild in Africa. International support for this initiative came from SCBI, Taronga Zoo in Australia, and Erlebnis-Zoo Hannover in Germany.

**TOWARDS A PHASE II OF THE CHAD ORYX REINTRODUCTION PROJECT**

**Main objective** Establish a viable population of a minimum of 500 breeding individuals in the wild in the Ouadi Rimé-Ouadi Achim Game Reserve (POROA) in central Chad. In the long term, reclassification of the species from “Extinct in the Wild” to a lower IUCN Red List threat category.

**Phase II 2021 - 2026**

**Main objective** Reintroduction of feral-ranging populations of addax, dama gazelles, and North African ostriches in the OROA (OR) in Chad.
The project “Support for the development of the OROAGR and the sustainable management of its biodiversity” better known by its French acronym as “POROA” (Projet Ouali Rime-Ouali Achim) was launched at the end of 2018 in close collaboration with the Republic of Chad.

The project is part of the support programme for the preservation of biodiversity and wildlife and fragile ecosystems in Central Africa (ECOFAC VI) financed by the 11th European Development Fund. POROA is funded by the European Union to the tune of three million euros, with SCF providing a further € 650,000 in counterpart funding. African Parks Network and the local NGO APPROOF, together with Chadian government partners, work with SCF to implement the POROA and promote it on the ground. In January 2019, two consultants from ECOFAC VI visited the project and reported very positive observations on its progress and early implementation. The presence of the Chad Oryx Reintroduction Project in the reserve provides a solid foundation for POROA, together with the significant support of the Chadian administration and other local partners.

Ever since it was established, SCF has always tried to help local communities in some of Africa’s most isolated places. To date, focus has been on health issues, mostly in rural Niger. To augment its impact and the sustainability of its modest contribution, SCF combines its knowledge of the field and contacts with local people with partners working in the health and humanitarian sectors. Our main partner, the French nongovernmental organisation Education et Santé sans Frontière (ESAFRO), provides the technical skills and medicines, SCF provides logistical support, and funding is provided by our partner L’Afrique à Cœur. Health missions involve doctors and dentists from the regional health departments.

This humanitarian, albeit modest, aspect is a component of SCF’s “landscape” approach. Humanitarian activities are also carried out in Chad by both the Chad Oryx Reintroduction Project and POROA. In Niger, four health missions were carried out in 2019, allowing more than 500 people to receive health care.

Communities contacted are systematically sensitised on the need for primary healthcare and essential personal hygiene by ESAFRO staff, and to the preservation of their natural environment, fauna and flora, by SCF staff.

In September, key meetings with government and local partners were held in Chad’s capital, N’Djaména, including the project’s Steering Committee and a workshop to help define a national conservation strategy for the North African ostrich.

As an integral part of its participatory co-management philosophy, 2019 saw the project establish its first provincial consultative council. Made up of representatives of the major stakeholder groups, the council will play a major role in helping POROA to define and implement its ambitious program to manage the reserve and develop a local governance structure.

**KEY CHALLENGES**

POROA faces very significant challenges to achieving its ambitious goals. The Ouali Rime-Ouali Achim Game Reserve is vast, almost twice the size of Switzerland or Belgium. As an open-access protected area, where people have traditional land rights and access to grazing resources, natural water points, etc., finding win-win solutions that allow mutually beneficial cohabitation will call for great skill and the building of a shared vision and solid co-management approach to the use and conservation of natural resources.

In July, a major get-together attended by local dignitaries, community leaders and representatives from the project’s donors and partner organizations was officially launched in Gadabeji Biosphere Reserve, Niger: future management possibilities.

**SUPPORTING LOCAL PEOPLE**

In 1969, the Ouadi Rimé-Ouali Achim Game Reserve was created as part of the Gadabeji Biosphere Reserve and L’Afrique à Cœur’s work in supporting local people in the reserve.

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In 1955, the Gadabeji Reserve was created.

SCF advocates an inclusive and dynamic “landscape” approach, where species protection is linked to land and natural resource use with strong participation from the various stakeholders. The reserve could be a good pilot site because of the presence of committed local actors. However, unlike other protected areas where SCF works, it is relatively small and densely inhabited by herders and their livestock, posing significant challenges to biodiversity conservation and management activities.

**GADABEJI BIOSPHERE RESERVE, NIGER: FUTURE MANAGEMENT POSSIBILITIES**

In 1977, the Gadabeji Biosphere Reserve was created as part of the Gadabeji Biosphere Reserve and L’Afrique à Cœur’s work in supporting local people in the reserve.

The reserve is vast, almost twice the size of Switzerland or Belgium. As an open-access protected area, where people have traditional land rights and access to grazing resources, natural water points, etc., finding win-win solutions that allow mutually beneficial cohabitation will call for great skill and the building of a shared vision and solid co-management approach to the use and conservation of natural resources.

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**CONFIRMING MAIN THREATS TO VULTURES IN NIGER**

Some African countries, including Chad and Niger, are wintering areas for Egyptian vultures (Neophron percnopterus) that migrate to the Sahel region every year from the Balkans. However, the species is facing a significant decline. In order to protect it along its migration routes, SCF has been working since 2018 on a collaborative conservation project “Egyptian Vulture New LIFE” funded by the European Union, and implemented under the leadership of the Bulgarian Society for the Protection of Birds (BSSPB) / BirdLife Bulgaria. SCF’s team in Niger also monitors three other vulture species, whose numbers are also declining due to hunting pressure.

**KEY ACHIEVEMENTS**

In 2019, SCF participated in three major international events with project partners to discuss actions to protect the species.

SCF’s monitoring activities recorded key information on the ecology and behaviour of four vulture species in Niger. This included locating the sites of breeding pairs of Egyptian, lappet-faced (Torgos tracheliotos), white-headed (Trigonops occipitalis) and Ruppell’s vultures (Gyps rueppelli) in Koukous massif and in Gadabeji Biosphere Reserve. Using a drone, the team recorded footage, for the first time in Niger, of a white-headed vulture chick, and found evidence of poaching in some of the nests.

**KEY CHALLENGES**

During the year, three field surveys targeting local wildlife markets were carried out by SCF staff. The surveys confirm that poaching to supply markets for traditional medical practitioners is the main cause of decline of vulture numbers. Education and awareness-raising against these practices remains one of the biggest priorities for SCF.

In July and December, posters about Egyptian vultures were distributed to schools, as well as notebooks for teachers, colouring books of animals and natural landscapes for children, to raise awareness and generate support for the project and vultures.

**INVESTING IN NORTH AFRICAN OSTRICH SURVIVAL**

With the exception of a few small savanna populations, the North African ostrich has completely disappeared from its vast Sahelo-Saharan range. SCF’s work on this species aims to provide the necessary framework, resources and technical support to enable its eventual reintroduction into the wild, with the kind and crucial support of Saint Louis Zoo. Dozens of US zoos have supported this project via the SCF “Adopt-an-Ostrich” campaign spearheaded by the Association of Zoos & Aquariums Rattle Technical Advisory Group and the Smithsonian’s National Zoo.

2019 marked an important turning point in the history of the organization’s actions in favour of the North African ostrich. The world’s largest bird still faces significant fertility problems in captivity, which delays its potential reintroduction to the wild. In February, SCF and partner Wildlife Conservation Network installed solar-powered facilities including an incubator and hatcher in its ostrich captive breeding center (now hosting 30 ostriches) to address this problem.

**HELPING SAVE THE WEST AFRICAN GIRAFFE IN NIGER**

Historically, West African giraffes (Giraffa camelopardalis peralta) were widespread throughout West Africa, from Senegal and Mauritania to Zambia and Malawi, and through to northern Nigeria in the east. Today, they can only be found in Niger. SCF has partnered with the Giraffe Conservation Foundation (GCF) and the Government of Niger to save the species and reintroduce eight of them to the Gadabeji Game Reserve. These giraffes, translocated in 2018, have adapted extremely well to their new environment.

SCF used field monitoring missions to the Gadabeji Game Reserve in March and November to train guards, park rangers and local extension agents in the use of equipment and protocols to improve wildlife monitoring.

In April, a survey was also carried out in the giraffe’s main stronghold near Koure, in Western Niger, providing essential information on the giraffes’ distribution during the hot season. In July, SCF and GCF used their annual meeting to update Niger’s national giraffe conservation strategy, to share results and to discuss giraffe census methods.

During a joint GCF/SCF mission in early August, 16 giraffes were tagged with satellite transmitters in their range on the Kouré Plateau and in the southern part of their distribution range in the Falémé region. The joint SCF/GCF project officer in Niger also conducted the annual giraffe census at the end of August in close collaboration with the wildlife authorities.

SCF wishes to thank GCF for leading and supporting this critically important work to save West Africa’s last remaining giraffes.

**DAMA GAZELLES: TACKLING THE EMERGENCY**

The dama gazelle is one of the most endangered species on the planet, with less than 100 animals still living in the wild, distributed among four widely-dispersed and isolated populations in Chad and Niger. SCF monitors these tiny remaining populations and leads efforts to protect them in both countries.

**PROJECT CHRONOLOGY 2018 - 2022**

Main objective Prevent the Egyptian vulture from further decline, improve knowledge and raise awareness about the species.

In Niger, SCF continued to monitor the “Air damas”, a small group estimated at less than 20 individuals that has found refuge on the upland plateaus of the Talcitoukouzet Massif in the Air & Ténéré National Nature Reserve, an unusual, marginal habitat for the species. Every six months since 2017, SCF has collected data from an array of camera traps, kindly provided by Al Ain Zoo. At least four different individuals were observed during data collecting in February and December 2019.

SCF initiated an unprecedented rescue project to capture some of the last remaining damas from the isolated Manga region of western Chad and transfer them to safety in the ORCAGR. The Manga damas have been shown to have exceptionally valuable genetic diversity compared to other populations and they are also highly threatened by uncontrolled poaching. SCF carried out reconnaissance surveys in May and October, the latter being supported by a light aircraft kindly loaned by African Parks Network.

Despite the very small number of direct observations, and motivated by the extreme urgency of the situation, SCF took the bold decision to carry out a full rescue operation in early 2020. We would like to thank the Chadian government and the following organizations for sharing both the vision and the risk of such an ambitious operation: Fondation Segré, EAD, Noé, Römpple Stadl, Wildlife Conservation Network, French Ministry of the Environment, Saint Louis Zoo, and dozens of US zoos.

**KEY CHALLENGES**

During a joint GCF/SCF mission in early August, 16 giraffes were tagged with satellite transmitters in their range on the Kouré Plateau and in the southern part of their distribution range in the Falémé region. The joint SCF/GCF project officer in Niger also conducted the annual giraffe census at the end of August in close collaboration with the wildlife authorities.

**PROJECT CHRONOLOGY 2017 Since the start of the “Air damas” project”**

Main objective Save the last remaining wild dama gazelles from going extinct and rebuild populations where possible in Chad and Niger.

The Manga dama gazelle is one of the most endangered species on the planet, with less than 100 animals still living in the wild, distributed among four widely-dispersed and isolated populations in Chad and Niger. SCF monitors these tiny remaining populations and leads efforts to protect them in both countries.
The 19th edition of the Sahelo-Saharan Interest Group Meeting brought together about 100 people involved in the conservation of species in the Sahara and Sahel in Tunis, Tunisia.

Organized by SCF in partnership with the Tunisian Ministry of Agriculture, Water, and Fisheries and the nature conservation organization Marwell Wildlife, it fulfilled its role, once again, as a major meeting for conservation in this part of the world. Mr. Samir Taieb, Minister of Agriculture, Hydrological Resources, and Fisheries, honoured the first hour of the meeting with his presence. Thanks to more than thirty presentations given by the participants throughout this two-day meeting, everyone was able to leave with a general overview of the progress made in the protection of nature in the Sahara and the Sahel. Individual workshops focusing on the long-term conservation of the most endangered species including dama gazelles, North African ostriches, and other species were also held.

These workshops have enabled most of the participants to share their expertise, form collaborations, develop scientific hypotheses, or plan actions in the field. Once again this year, the meeting thus fulfilled its initial purpose: to offer an opportunity for emulation, sharing and progress to the conservationists and to raise awareness on the cause of Sahelo-Saharan species for other audiences.

SCF thanks its supporters in 2019

SCF benefits from the generous and loyal support of a wide range of partners that are passionate about the conservation of the biodiversity of the Sahara and the Sahel. They share our concern and understanding of the importance and value of this natural heritage to the world. By providing core support to SCF and funding for our projects in the field, each one of them is making a precious contribution to our mission. Long overlooked, the wildlife and wildlands of the Sahara and Sahel are finally getting the attention they need and deserve. We still have a long way to go but through our combined efforts, the amazing fauna and flora of the Sahara and the Sahel can be saved for the benefit of all humanity.

Our work is only possible with the support of our Government and other local partners in each country we work in.

Republic of Chad
Republic of Niger
Moroccan Department of Water & Forests
Tunisian Wildlife Authorities
Tunisian Minister of Agriculture, Water, and Fisheries

Our high-expertise technical partners join efforts with us to improve knowledge on the Sahelo-Saharan species, develop appropriate ecological monitoring or conservation protocols, and implement conservation activities.

Giraffe Conservation Foundation
Marwell Wildlife
Royal Zoological Society of Scotland
Smithsonian Conservation Biology Institute
Zoological Society of London

The chronology meeting held each year since 2000.

Main objective: Although it is not a formal membership organization, the Sahelo-Saharan Interest Group plays a unique role as a forum for people to meet, network, share information and build strong partnerships for Sahelo-Saharan conservation through its annual meeting. SCF is committed to maintaining its facilitator’s role.

INCOME BY COUNTRY & PROJECT 2019

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>SCF US Dollars</th>
<th>SCF Euros</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Niger</td>
<td>23,990</td>
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<td>Morocco</td>
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<td>Chad</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>2,256,678</td>
<td>1,064,199</td>
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Program costs

- Chad
  - Addax reintroduction: 70,900
  - Dama conservation - Manga: 15,000
  - Oryx reintroduction: 816,690
  - Wads in Peri: 3,000
  - Total Chad: 904,562

- Niger
  - Addax reintroduction: 10,301
  - Dama gazelle monitoring: 15,645
  - Oryx conservation: 1,050
  - Oryx reintroduction: 82,971
  - Vulture monitoring: 15,869
  - Health missions: 9,303
  - Addax conservation: 3,181
  - Total Niger: 140,856

- Morocco
  - Addax reintroduction: 21,201
  - Total Morocco: 21,201

- Grand total: 1,544,875

GRAND TOTAL INCOME: 1,168,501

EXPENDITURE BY COUNTRY & PROJECT 2019

- SCF Secretariat - Administration: 383,933 euros
- SCF Secretariat - Fundraising: 1,064,199 euros
- SCF Secretariat - Fundraising: 1,064,199 euros
- Sub-total: 385,742 euros
- Program costs: 73,069 euros
- Giraffe translocation: 40,428 euros
- Oryx reintroduction: 1,219,197 euros
- Total: 1,281,709 euros

INCOME BY COUNTRY & PROJECT 2019

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project</th>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
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</tr>
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- CASH BALANCE ON HAND: 1,858,833
- TOTAL 2019 INCOME: 1,858,833
- TOTAL 2019 EXPENDITURES: 1,856,769
- GRAND TOTAL EXPENDITURES: 1,856,769
The Sahara Conservation Fund (SCF) was established in 2004 to address the largely-ignored and catastrophic wave of extinction threatening the large mammals and birds in the Sahara and in the Sahel.

The mission of the Sahara Conservation Fund is to conserve the wildlife, habitats and other natural resources of the Sahara and its bordering Sahelian grasslands.

Our vision is of a Sahara where 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.

This 2019 annual report provides you with an overview of the activities, progress and impact made by SCF and its partners throughout the year. Through the information provided it will hopefully increase both awareness and support for the cause of Sahelo-Saharan conservation; a cause we proudly stand for alongside all the partners mentioned in this report. United in our mission, and with your continued and loyal support, we can bring about positive change in a part of the world long overlooked by the conservation community.

www.saharaconservation.org/donate

www.saharaconservation.org  @SaharaCF  @Sahara_CF