

Welcome to Sandscript

Welcome to **Sandscript** number one! Since its establishment in 2004, the Sahara Conservation Fund (SCF) has come a long way. We have people and projects in the field, a growing body of partners, a modest support office in Europe, and a home in the United States with the St Louis Zoo.

None of this would have been possible without your support and **Sandscript** is one way of keeping you in touch with developments and thanking you for your generous support and commitment. Together with our increasingly popular website www.saharaconservation.org **Sandscript** will keep you

informed of the progress we are making together, the priorities requiring support and the challenges faced by the Sahara's wildlife in its struggle for survival.

Thanks to SCF and partners like you, the conservation community is finally waking up to the perilous state of species like the addax, dama gazelle, ostrich and cheetah; a whole community of plants and animals suffering what SCF's Chair, Dr. Steve Monfort, has coined "a silent extinction". Progress is being made.

In this issue read about SCF's projects in Niger, Tunisia and Algeria, learn about emerging issues and share the wonder



The Dorcas Gazelle was once abundant throughout the Sahara.

of the Sahara's wildlife through species profiles. **Sandscript** is new and we welcome your feedback on the stories we tell. Let us know how we can best serve your needs and interests.

John Newby, CEO of SCF and Editor of Sandscript.

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Did you know that:

- There are less than 300 addax left in the wild.
- Desert-adapted cheetah can be found in the Sahara.
- Dust from the Sahara fertilizes the Amazon forest.
- The Sahara is home to more 500 million people.

Termit project off to a flying start

At a landmark, 2-day meeting in Niger's provincial capital of Zinder, more than 60 participants gave strong endorsement to a major conservation initiative to save the largest remaining addax population in the world. Co-funded by the government of Niger, the

Convention on Migratory Species (CMS), the Fonds Français pour l'Environnement Mondial (FFEM), the French volunteer programme, AFVP, and SCF, the project's first phase will last until 2008.

Continued on page 2



Chief Goukouni voices his support for the project.

Termit (continued from page 1)

As part of its programme, SCF has been mandated by Niger's Ministry of the Environment to prepare an ambitious protected area proposal focused on the Termit and Tin Toumma regions of central Niger, carry out field research, train local staff and prepare an effective management plan for the area.

Key to success in Termit will be developing a good working relationship with the region's many stakeholders, and the Zinder workshop was an ex-

cellent opportunity to talk with traditional leaders, administrators, the armed forces and other projects active in the zone.

SCF is committed to raising \$270,000 for this phase of the project and is already well on its way to meeting its target thanks to generous support from Addax Petroleum Corporation, African Parks Conservation, Iara Lee & George Gund III Foundation, Philadelphia Zoo, Philadelphia Zoo Docent's Association, St

Louis Zoo, and the Smithsonian's National Zoo.

SCF is working alongside Niger's wildlife department (DFPP) to implement its goals. In association with Nigerian Programme Coordinator, Ibrahim Madougou, SCF team leader, Dr. Thomas Rabeil, has already carried out a number of fieldtrips with local counterparts and is now assisted by new SCF recruit, Abdoulaye Harouna, a Nigerian conservationist.



Tunisia's addax and oryx on the move

As part of Tunisia's ambitious desert antelope conservation strategy, 20 addax and 8 scimitar-horned oryx have been successfully moved from Bou Hedma National Park to protected areas at Djebel, Senghar and Dghoumes. The operation was undertaken as part of the CMS/FFEM Sa-

helo-Saharan Antelope project in partnership with the Tunisian Direction Générale des Forêts and assisted by IGF, ZSL and IRSNB.

The translocation paves the way for additional animals to arrive from captive breeding programmes in Europe and North America, with the aim

of maximizing Tunisia's antelope gene pool. Led by Hannover Zoo, Marwell, the Saint Louis Zoo and the Living Desert, over 30 organizations are collaborating to transport additional animals to Tunisia later this year and to provide ongoing support for reintroduction efforts (see box).



Safe and sound: oryx and addax regain their freedom.

Photos © Olivier Born

This project is a fine example of collaboration under the overall coordination of Tunisia's Direction Générale des Forêts

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| • Artis Royal Zoo Amsterdam | • International Foundation for the Conservation of Wildlife (IGF) | • Peace River |
| • Bamberger Ranch Preserve | • Institut Royal des Sciences Naturelles de Belgique (IRSNB) | • Plzen Zoo |
| • Berlin Zoo | • Kansas City Zoo | • Sacramento Zoological Society |
| • Beyond Motion Productions | • Kansas City Zoo AAZK Chapter | • Safari Enterprises |
| • Brevard Zoo | • Kolmarden Zoo | • Saint Louis Zoo |
| • Brookfield Zoo | • Kolmarden Fund Raising Foundation | • San Antonio Zoo |
| • Buffalo Zoo | • Lisbon Zoo | • Stuttgart Zoo |
| • Chester Zoo | • Longleat Safari Park | • The Living Desert |
| • Cincinnati Zoo | • Marwell Preservation Trust | • The Wilds |
| • Convention on Migratory Species (CMS) | • Mulhouse Zoo | • WAZA |
| • Dachser Logistik | • NABU | • West Midlands Safari Park |
| • Dublin Zoo | • National Zoo - CRC | • Wildlife World Zoo |
| • Fonds Français pour l'Environnement Mondial | • Nurnberg Zoo | • Zoo Hannover |
| • Fossil Rim Wildlife Center | | • Zoo Zlin Lesna |
| | | • Zoological Society of London |
| | | • Zoological Society of San Diego |



The International Foundation for the Conservation of Wildlife provided technical support.



Hanover Zoo & Marwell Zoo are coordinating efforts in Europe.

A is for Addax

The addax is a remarkable antelope, capable of surviving the rigours of desert life, often without drinking for several years at a time. It is also on the brink of extinction; not because of extreme heat and drought but thanks to the relentless hunting that has reduced its numbers throughout its range. Already long extinct in North Africa, the last remaining wild populations are to be found in the southern Sahara between

Chad and Niger.

In the battle to save the addax from extinction, SCF has joined forces with Addax Petroleum Corporation, a progressive, independent oil company active in Africa and whose name was chosen specifically to reflect the strength and potential of this iconic species. In an initial two-year agreement, Addax Petroleum Corporation will support SCF's addax conservation

strategy in Niger and neighbouring Chad. The aim is to establish protection and management across the entire range of the addax, a goal that is also shared by the CMS and the European Union in a new initiative under development.

To survive, addax need to be strong, mobile and adaptable in response to available resources. To be effective, conservation does too.



Research: first know your resource

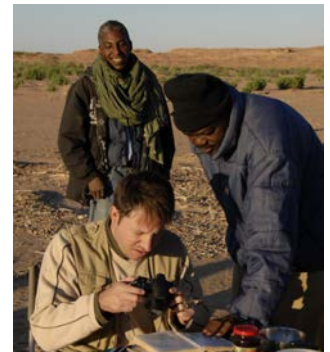
If successful conservation depends largely on building strong relationships with key stakeholders, it is also important that effective strategies be built on a sound understanding of the wildlife concerned, its needs and ecology.

As part of SCF's mandate in Niger, wildlife survey, monitoring and applied research

are key components. A solid understanding of the ecology of poorly known species, like the addax or desert cheetah, are critical for their conservation.

Research activities provide excellent opportunities for training and skills development, as well as creating openings for students.

Students from Niamey and Paris have just carried out survey work in Termit. With the help of local Toubou guides, the students, travelling on foot and camel-back, localized important relict populations of dama gazelle, Barbary sheep and spurred tortoise.



Thomas Rabeil & Hamidene Saleh study bird photographs.

Algeria's desert wildlife

SCF and Algeria's Direction Générale des Forêts (DGF) have agreed to cooperate on Saharan conservation. With its vast and diverse desert domain, success in Algeria is vital for many threatened species and desert ecosystems.

In 2005 and 2006, SCF participated in joint survey work

with partners from DGF, Bejaia University and the Agence Nationale pour la Conservation de la Nature. Under the guidance of SCF Board members, Koen de Smet and Tim Wachter, the Smithsonian's Pierre Comizoli, fieldwork has added significantly to knowledge of

Algeria's threatened gazelle and cheetah populations, as well as recording many other poorly known species.

Training in survey techniques is a key component of SCF input, with data recorded as GPS waypoints, downloaded to laptops for analysis and resource mapping.



Data collection in Algeria.

Support for this project comes from the Smithsonian, St Louis Zoo, the Zoological Society of London and the Cheetah Conservation Fund

Seeing red: ostrich conservation in Niger

At the start of Niger's northern uprising in 1991, the Air Mountains held the largest remaining population of Saharan, red-necked ostrich in the world. Over the next five years, however, virtually all the 1500 birds were wiped out and were it not for the foresight of a group of local environmentalists would be gone forever. Luckily a few chicks were captured and brought into captivity and today this tiny population is growing, fueling interest in a reintroduction project.

SCF has been helping this model project in cooperation with local NGO GAGE-Azihar and Niger's wildlife service. Holding pens have been built, food and vitamin supplements provided, and advice on husbandry dispensed. With its partner, the International Foundation for the Conservation of Wildlife (IGF), SCF is actively fundraising to implement a full-scale captive-breeding and reintroduction project. Local

interest is high as the ostrich is a flagship species for the local Twareg and justly recognized as an indicator of environmental health.

Financial support for this project has come from St Louis Zoo, Disney's Animal Kingdom and the Institut de France. Mulhouse and Paris zoos have provided technical advice. With support from AZA's Ratite Advisory Group, it is hoped to make this project the success and model it deserves to be.



Sabaran, red-necked ostrich in full breeding colours.

National Zoo Year End Campaign

As part of its annual year-end fundraiser, the National Zoo in Washington DC has raised \$120,000 for Sahelo-Saharan conservation. Through the Friends of National Zoo (FONZ), \$60,000 of this has been pledged to SCF for its work on addax and ostrich in Niger. A further \$30,000 is being given for core support

over the next three years. Thank you FONZ and thank you National Zoo.

Without support for its projects and running costs, SCF would cease to function. Other institutions providing core support include: Al Ain Zoo, Cincinnati Zoo, Jerry Brown, John Coe Design Ltd., Marwell Preservation

Trust, St Louis Zoo, San Diego Zoo, Sedgwick County Zoo, The Living Desert, Wildlife Trading Co., Zoo Hannover and the Zoological Societies of London.

Donations to SCF in the US are tax deductible. Information on giving can be obtained from the Treasurer at scf@saharaconservation.org.



Friends of the Sahara

St Louis, Missouri, is a long way from the Sahara. It isn't exactly the natural home of the addax, either, yet St Louis is not only SCF's home in the United States but also champions the conservation of desert antelopes. SCF is incorporated as a nonprofit in the State of Missouri and through

St Louis Zoo Friends Association can receive tax-deductible donations. SCF's Treasurer, Bill Houston, is Assistant General Curator at St Louis and manages the US breeding programme for addax.

As a world leader in zoo-based conservation, St Louis' WildCare Institute sponsors

fieldwork in a number of countries in Africa, including the Sahara. Both the Institute's Director, Dr. Eric Miller and St. Louis' President and CEO, Dr. Jeffrey Bonner, are fully committed to SCF's success. They are true Friends of the Sahara and SCF salutes their support.



Bringing hunting under control

Unsustainable and more often than not illegal hunting is the main reason Saharan wildlife is facing extinction. Unless brought rapidly under control, species like the addax, dama gazelle and Barbary sheep do not have a future. Even the commoner species, like the dorcas gazelle and large birds, such as the bustards, have seen their populations plummet over the past few decades.

To better understand the issues involved, CMS Ambassador, Stanley Johnson, joined

an SCF-led fieldtrip to Niger in December, 2006, to survey wildlife populations. Stanley's article, published in the UK daily, *The Independent* *, highlights the issues, underlining the importance of the threat posed by large, and largely uncontrolled, foreign hunting parties. The activities of such groups is hot news in countries across the Sahara, and in many places vocal opposition from local press and NGOs is being heard.

Sahelian countries have a legitimate right to exploit their

natural resources and hunting is seen by many as a valid option. What is absolutely clear, is that without serious control and management, hunting is simply not a viable option. And for animals like the addax and dama gazelle, down to their last hundreds, it is not an option at all. For SCF, addressing the hunting issue is a cornerstone of our programme.

* <http://news.independent.co.uk/environment/wildlife/article2125162.ece>



Dorcas gazelles and addax have suffered massive declines from over-hunting over many years.

Sustenance & Sustainability

Since the dawn of mankind, wildlife has been a crucial source of food and other products. And until quite recently, much of this has been sustainable. Desert wildlife is no exception and it wasn't so long ago that most hunters used the same spears and nets of their ancestors. The scimitar-horned oryx even sup-

ported a major trade in hides for leather and especially the manufacture of shields for armed combat.

Unfortunately, automatic weapons, 4-wheel drive vehicles and greed have upset the balance, imperiling the very survival of many species. SCF is keen to find ways in which wildlife can contribute tangi-

bly to local economies and by doing so, create the incentives for its conservation and survival. Ecotourism is one good option and there is already interest from the tourism sector to work with us to identify win-win solutions that provide returns without compromising conservation objectives.



Twareg warrior with oryx-hide shield.

SCF needs your help to fund vital conservation work:

- Addax and dama gazelle conservation in Niger and Chad
- Ostrich breeding and reintroduction in Niger
- Conservation assessment of bustards across the Sahel
- Wildlife survey and training in Algeria
- Reintroduction of addax and oryx in Tunisia
- Core support to SCF for project development, fundraising and communications

If you can help, please contact us at scf@saharaconservation.org **THANK YOU!**



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SCF's mission is to conserve the wildlife of the Sahara and its bordering Sabelian 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, NGOs 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 to help contribute to our projects, please contact John Newby at scf@saharaconservation.org We would love to hear from you!

SCF is looking for Sponsors for its communications work. Getting the message out about the crisis facing Saharan wildlife is vitally important. Would you like to help us maintain our website or sponsor **Sandscript?**

Last but not least: the superb Dama Gazelle



Xavier Eichacker/ Al Ain Zoo

Dama Gazelle

The Dama Gazelle is an animal of superlatives: the biggest of the gazelles, for many the most beautiful, and without any doubt the rarest. With certainly less than 500 remaining in the wild, the dama gazelle is one of the world's most endangered mammals. Once widespread across the sub-desert belt of Northern Africa, dama gazelles now only exist in a handful of isolated pockets in Mali, Niger, Chad and possibly Southern Algeria.

Because of its large size and prominent white coloring, the dama gazelle is an easy target for hunters armed with auto-

matic weapons and powerful four-wheel drive vehicles. Its demise very much reflects that of the scimitar-horned oryx, an antelope with which it cohabited.

SCF strongly believes that it is vital to preserve the last few remaining populations of wild dama gazelle. Although there are small numbers in captivity, the cost and complexity of reintroduction projects is a major constraint. In spite of this, with population numbers in the wild so low, reintroduction has to be considered as a serious alternative and SCF is working with various players to examine ways of gearing up

captive-breeding efforts and linking them to in situ field conservation initiatives. It is with just this in mind that SCF is working with Al Ain Zoo in the United Arab Emirates.

SCF is grateful for the support it receives from St Louis and Philadelphia zoos, and ONCFS for dama gazelle conservation.



PHILADELPHIA ZOO

