

Annual report 2020





A word from our CEO

For me, 2020 will be remembered as a year of successes, rather than Covid-19 related restrictions. I am very proud of how the organization adapted, realizing considerable conservation successes that are described in this report.

The year started off with a team of wildlife experts and pilots completing a daring mission to capture three genetically valuable female dama gazelles from the Manga region of western Chad. These were safely transported to an enclosure at the base camp in the Ouadi Rimé-Ouadi Achim Game Reserve (OROAGR). A male from the Reserve was added to form a breeding group, and despite some early setbacks, a female calf was born in August. This beautiful individual represents the genetic future of this Critically Endangered species.

Unfortunately, as the severity of the pandemic increased, SCF's key partner the Environment Agency Abu Dhabi, postponed the planned transfers of scimitar-horned oryx and addax to OROAGR in 2020. However, by the end of the year the number of free-living oryx and addax in the reserve had risen to at least 377 and 59 respectively. The success of this rewilding project cannot be overstated, and the lessons learned apply to future restoration projects.

The SCF team in Niger continued with their field surveys of dama gazelles, West African giraffe, vulture monitoring, and breeding of North African ostrich, whilst being mindful of the increasing insecurity. The team also completed a health mission providing vaccinations, medical and dental care to pastoralists in remote areas around Gadabegi Biosphere Reserve.

There were changes for the SCF team in Paris, including relocating SCF's head office to Saint Maur-des-Fossés and implementing new financial management procedures. Several new team members joined SCF, increasing the organization's project management capacity. Yet, we all had to adapt to a new normal of online meetings, almost no international travel, and facing some stark realities including the cancellation of the annual Sahelo-Sahara Interest Group meeting.

All these achievements reflect the professionalism of SCF's in country teams, donors and government agencies that support our work, and partner organizations. With the rollout of the Covid-19 vaccines and a return to normal, I look forward to further success over the year to come.

John Watkin
Chief Executive Officer
Sahara Conservation Fund



A statement from our Chairs of the Board

In a time of dramatically new threats and pressures on the environment and biodiversity around the world, the Sahara Conservation Fund's work is a dramatic reminder of what can be achieved through dedication and collaboration, even under the most trying circumstances.

SCF's flagship achievement has been, through close partnership with the Government of Chad and the Environment Agency Abu Dhabi, restoring the scimitar-horned oryx to the wild in the Ouadi Rimé-Ouadi Achim Game Reserve (OROAGR) of central Chad. As this population surpasses 350 animals and multiple generations of wild-born oryx continue to repopulate this Sahelian landscape, this work represents the fulfilment of one of SCF's key founding ambitions, and an inspiring example of 'rewilding' in the Sahelo-Saharan region. 2020 witnessed key milestones in the work to save the oryx, as well as other unique wildlife, as described in this annual report.

But restoring these endemic and critically endangered species is just one element of SCF's bigger vision as it has evolved over the years. Ultimately conservation success in the region will be measured not by merely saving species from the brink of extinction, but by developing successful and well managed conservation areas that balance the needs of people and wildlife. It is for that reason that SCF decided several years ago to take on a larger role, through partnership with the government of Chad and the European Union, in supporting the management of OROAGR. Ultimately for the oryx to thrive, these landscapes and the people in them must also thrive, while coping with the impacts of climate change.

SCF's work over the past two decades has laid the partnerships required to both save the rarest species and now, to work towards effective protected areas and human-wildlife co-existence. SCF has played a leading role in putting conservation in the region on the global map, building networks and collaborations around science, knowledge, and shared interests. Thank you to all the partners and colleagues who make this work possible, in building a brighter future for conservation in the region.

Roseline C. Beudels-Jamar and Fred Nelson
Chairs of the Board
Sahara Conservation Fund

ACTIVITIES IN CHAD

Scimitar-horned oryx reintroduction project in Chad

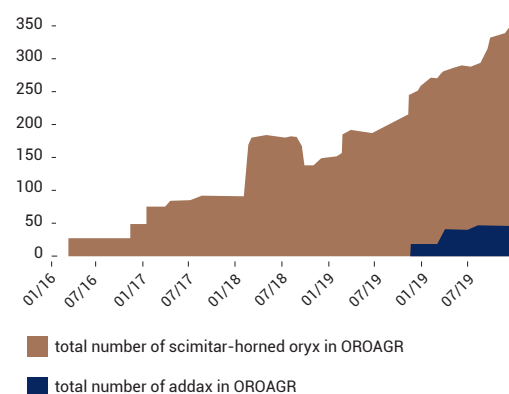
Led by the government of Chad and the Environment Agency Abu Dhabi (EAD), the scimitar-horned oryx (*Oryx dammah*) reintroduction project entered its second five-year phase in 2019. To date, 218 founder scimitar-horned oryx have been reintroduced into the wild and by the end of 2020 had grown to a free-roaming population of around 350 animals.

A group of 15 addax (*Addax nasomaculatus*) was reintroduced into the Ouadi Rimé-Ouadi Achim Game Reserve (OROAGR) in January 2020. A second group of 25 addax landed in Chad in February 2020 and was released into the reserve in September 2020. The Covid-19 pandemic prevented any further animals from being transported from Abu Dhabi for the rest of the year.

At the beginning of 2020, three female dama gazelles were captured in the Manga region of Chad and transferred to an enclosure at the Oryx Base Camp in the OROAGR. A male from the reserve was added to the group. Unfortunately, two females died in April 2020. The remaining female gave birth to a female dama in August 2020.

In March 2020, 17 North African ostrich chicks arrived at the Oryx Base Camp from Zakouma National Park. At the end of 2020, there were 11 ostriches (six females and five males) in an enclosure. They will be fitted with satellite transmitters and released into the reserve in September 2021.

The total number of antelopes reintroduced or transferred into the OROAGR as of 31 December 2020 was as follows:



POROA

Support to the development of the Ouadi Rimé-Ouadi Achim Game Reserve and sustainable management of its biodiversity (Projet Ouadi Rimé-Ouadi Achim - POROA)

A ministerial order relating to the creation, composition and powers of the OROAGR Joint Management Unit was signed in January 2020. In addition, a Partnership Agreement was signed on 13 May 2020 between SCF and Chad's Ministry of the Environment, Water and Fisheries (Ministère de l'environnement, de l'eau et de la pêche) concerning the co-management of the reserve.

The project contributed to the work undertaken by the Oryx Project to capture and then transport three dama gazelles from the Manga region.

The project's awareness and education team hosted an environmental education stand in Arada (around 3,000 visitors) and held a number of information sessions for 419 members of the reserve's communities and representatives of the administrative and traditional authorities.

A SMART (Spatial Monitoring and Reporting Tool) database was created to measure the effectiveness of monitoring in the reserve. It is also being populated with the results of the oryx, addax and ostrich monitoring activities, along with socio-economic data.

A road map for development a Management Plan for the reserve was drawn up by the team, accompanied by pastoralism experts and a lawyer. In that regard, four months of research on the socio-economic and anthropological situation of the reserve was carried out to support the future plan.

In total, 236 km of firebreaks were created during the year to help control bushfires, thereby providing better protection for the habitat and pastures used by the oryx and addax in the OROAGR. A cooperative agreement was drawn up to create an experimental Vigilance and Action Committee made up of firefighters from Arada, to be mobilized when labor is needed to tackle fires in that area. In total, the VAC was mobilized to control fires on four occasions.

ACTIVITIES IN NIGER

Captive breeding of North African ostriches at the Kellé and Mainé-Soroa sites

SCF is responsible for managing the North African ostrich (*Struthio camelus camelus*) breeding sites in Kellé and Mainé-Soroa, with the aim of rearing enough ostriches to enable the secure reintroduction of the species. SCF's goal is to provide the necessary space, resources, infrastructure and technical support for the sites to operate properly.

Crucial progress was made during 2020. To begin with, the first ostriches resulting from artificial incubation were produced using the solar-powered facilities installed in 2019. The use of the incubator and hatchers required a period of adaptation, but they are now operational. A total of 11 ostriches hatched in this way in 2020.

In parallel, four natural births were recorded on the Kellé site in 2020. To boost genetic diversity, 22 eggs from the Mainé-Soroa ostriches were transferred in order to be artificially incubated in Kellé, while two ostriches were transferred from Kellé to Mainé-Soroa.

At the end of 2020, there were 47 ostriches in the two North African ostrich captive breeding sites managed by SCF – 35 in Kellé and 12 in Mainé-Soroa. A team of five, employed between the two sites, is responsible for these birds and provides the daily care they need.

Preparatory activities for transferring ostriches to the Gadabegi Biosphere Reserve (RBG) were initiated this year. Firstly, a mission was carried out to the reserve in July 2020 to assess all the key elements involved in transporting ostriches to the reserve and accommodating them there. Next, a report and terms of reference on recommendations for the transport and care of the ostriches were drafted and sent to the relevant stakeholders.

Monitoring dama gazelles in the Aïr & Ténéré National Nature Reserve (ATNNR)

The Takoloukouzet Massif, situated in the ATNNR, is home to some iconic species of fauna, including the dama gazelle (*Nanger dama*), one of the most endangered antelopes on the planet. In 2020, the SCF team in Niger carried out two ecological monitoring missions in the reserve, working closely with the Nigerien Wildlife Department [Direction de la Faune, de la Chasse, des Parcs et Réserves] (DFC/PR) and the Nigerien Regional Environment Department [Direction régionale de l'environnement] of Agadez.

Almost the entire presumed dama gazelle distribution area had been covered by camera traps installed in various places on the massif since 2017, so these cameras were picked up during the mission in March 2020. Many thousands of photos have been collected over the years, including several thousand depicting species representative of the Sahelo-Saharan fauna (dama gazelle, dorcas gazelle, Barbary sheep,

patas monkey, and a number of small carnivores). During 2020, the SCF team worked on processing the data, and they were able to extract substantial information on which species are present and how the land is occupied in this part of the massif. This long-term work will continue over the coming months.

Vulture monitoring and conservation

In 2018, the activities related to monitoring Egyptian vulture (*Neophron percnopterus*) nests were intensified with the launch of the Egyptian Vulture New LIFE project, which SCF is responsible for implementing in Niger.

In 2020, the SCF team monitored four different species of vulture – lappet-faced (*Torgos tracheliotos*), Rüppell's (*Gyps rueppelli*), Egyptian (*Neophron percnopterus*), and white-headed (*Trigonoceps occipitalis*) – on the Koutous Massif (two missions) and in the Gadabegi Biosphere Reserve (three missions).

In terms of conservation activities, a number of communication, information and awareness campaigns on the subject of vultures, hunting and the illegal vulture trade were carried out from May 2020 by SCF with the main stakeholders in the Zinder and Maradi regions. A total of 27 meetings and 140 interviews took place in 2020.

In 2020, SCF also undertook a range of activities aimed at educating and raising awareness among young people in the town of Kellé as part of the Egyptian Vulture New LIFE project. In this way, SCF supports primary schools by providing them with educational materials and participating in events, such as award ceremonies for the top primary school pupils in Kellé.



West African giraffe conservation activities

The last remaining population of West African giraffes (*Giraffa camelopardalis peralta*) is found in Niger. The giraffes are present mainly in the Kouré and North Dallol Bosso regions, around 60km south-east of Niger's capital, Niamey, and as far as the Doutchi, Loga, Gaya, Fandou and Ouallam regions. This entire area is known locally as the Giraffe Zone and is part of the "W" Regional Biosphere Reserve. A new satellite population of giraffes was established in the Gadabeggi Biosphere Reserve at end of the 2018 by the Giraffe Conservation Foundation (GCF) on behalf of the government of Niger, with the support of SCF and other organizations.

In November 2020, a technical meeting was held between the wildlife authorities, GCF and SCF to discuss monitoring methods and the associated database used to date. This resulted in a new method being proposed, based on combined, aerial and ground monitoring and sampling approach.

Regular, long-term monitoring has also been carried out for the satellite population of eight giraffes translocated to the Gadabeggi Biosphere Reserve at the end of 2018. Two eco-guardians monitor the giraffes daily to collect as much information as possible on their state of health, their social dynamics and their spatial ecology (movements, habitat use, etc.). Their role also involves raising awareness among the people living in the surrounding areas about the importance of protecting the giraffe. In 2020, the eco-guardians were trained to identify individual giraffes and to implement new monitoring methods. They were also equipped with all-weather field uniforms.



Humanitarian health monitoring program for remote populations in the Sahelo-Saharan region

In November 2020, as a result of the travel restrictions imposed by the Covid-19 pandemic, only one single medical assistance mission to the pastoralists living on the periphery of the Gadabeggi Biosphere Reserve was undertaken in conjunction with our partner ESAFRO. The team was made up of two nurses and a local guide, along with the SCF team responsible for the logistical aspects of the mission. Five villages were visited, and 147 patients were examined. A variety of general medical care was offered, including treatment for malaria, and abdominal, joint, eye, skin, mouth, dental, and gynecological problems. Meningitis, measles and other vaccines were also administered to children aged less than 16 months. In addition, the nurses provided the patients with information on the most important health and hygiene practices.



ACTIVITIES IN MOROCCO

Following the initial release of addax in November 2019, a second group of 20 animals was released at the end of 2020 in the M'hamid El-Ghizlane Nature Reserve in south-west Morocco. The collaboration between SCF and the Smithsonian Conservation Biology Institute involved providing GPS collars and monitoring satellite data from the individuals in conjunction with the Moroccan Water and Forestry Department (Département des Eaux et Forêts du Maroc) and with the support of Taronga and Hannover zoos. After an initial difficult dry season in 2020, during which emergency supplementary food was provided to help the animals, the addax adapted to their new environment, with the two groups forming a single herd and exploring an area of some 2,000 to 4,000 ha. In total, Morocco has now released 52 addax in their historical distribution area in the country, and three new calves have been born, adding to their number. In total, 11 adults and 9 calves born in the reserve have died of various causes.

FINANCES

SCF and its subsidiary SCF-Europe are non-profit, legally constituted, non-governmental nature-conservation organizations. SCF was established in 2007 as a non-profit organization in the State of Missouri (United States) and is classed as a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization by the US Internal Revenue Service (tax identification number: 26-0171939).

SCF-Europe was established in 2016 under the French Law of Associations 1901.

Main donors 2020

SCF's donors are mainly from the United States and Europe. They provide a generous core support to SCF as well as funding for our projects in the field; each one of them is making a precious contribution to our mission. SCF thanks them all for standing with us during 2020.

Donations > US\$ 10 000

- Acacia Partners
- Fossil Rim Wildlife Center
- Saint Louis Zoo

Donations US\$ 2 000 – 9 999

- Erlebnis-Zoo Hannover
- Maryland Zoo in Baltimore
- The Living Desert
- Zoo Montpellier

Donations < US\$ 1 000

Virginia Albert, Alliance Member Services, Amazon Smile, Katherine Buckley, Kevin Cutillo, Harrison Edell, Adam Eyres, John Fried, Kai Goe-dee, Susan Greene, John Grettenberger, Kyla Johnson, Marco Kalisch, Heather Kuikstra, Delphine Buisson Lalou, Jaco Michels, Steve Monfort, Kevin J Mullally, John Newby, Planète Sauvage Nature, Mark Stanley-Price, Rolling Hills, Edward Spevak, William Stallsmith, Ben Waxman, John Whitehouse, Zoological Association of America.

Expenditure by country & project 2020

SCF and SCF-Europe are grateful to receive funds to support their conservation efforts from various sources, including individuals, conservation partners, private entities, and bilateral and multilateral donors. For 2020, the budget for SCF was 2.4 million US dollars, and for SCF-Europe nearly eight-hundred thousand euro.

		SCF US	SCF-EUROPE
Secretariat		US\$ 137 390	
Support to operations		US\$ 595 259	
Programs costs			
Chad	Dama gazelle capture	US\$ 95 054	
	Oryx reintroduction	US\$ 1 422 832	
	POROA		€ 762 435
Niger	Dama gazelle monitoring	US\$ 17 028	
	Vulture conservation	US\$ 11 602	€ 24 778
	West African Giraffe monitoring	US\$ 59 347	
	North African Ostrich captive breeding	US\$ 63 242	
	Humanitarian missions		€ 3 085
TOTAL EXPENDITURE 2020		US\$ 2 401 754	€ 790 298

Project income 2020

Our 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.

	SCF US	SCF-EUROPE
Al Ain Zoo	US\$ 16 601	
Bulgarian Society for the Protection of Birds		€ 24 156
Detroit Zoological Society	US\$ 1 000	
Dickerson Park Zoo	US\$ 1 000	
Environment Agency - Abu Dhabi	US\$ 1 633 379	
European Union		€ 879 436
Fondation Segré	US\$ 148 950	
Fort Wayne Zoo	US\$ 10 000	
Gainsville Zoo	US\$ 500	
Giraffe Conservation Foundation	US\$ 58 372	
Milwaukee County Zoo	US\$ 2 500	
North Carolina Zoological Park	US\$ 1 000	
Re:Wild	US\$ 10 582	
St Louis Zoo	US\$ 60 000	
St Louis Zoo – Anonymous donor #1	US\$ 30 000	
St Louis Zoo - Anonymous donor #2	US\$ 67 000	
Taronga Conservation Society	US\$ 10 117	
Zoo Atlanta	US\$ 470	
Zoological Association of America	US\$ 5 000	
Total Project Income 2020	US\$ 2 056 473	€ 903 592
Total Donations 2020	US\$ 583 060	€ 4 500
TOTAL INCOME 2020	US\$ 2 639 533	€ 908 092



The Sahara Conservation Fund (SCF) was established in 2004 to address the catastrophic and largely ignored wave of extinction threatening the large mammals and birds of the Sahara and 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 in which ecological processes function naturally, with plants and animals thriving across their historical range, benefiting all its inhabitants, and where support for its conservation comes from stakeholders across all sectors of society.

This 2020 annual report provides you with an overview of the activities, progress and impact achieved by SCF and its partners throughout the year. We hope that the information provided will increase both awareness and support for the cause of conservation in the Sahara; a cause we proudly defend 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 neglected by the conservation community.

www.saharaconservation.org



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