



Activity report- Semester 2, 2024

Support the restoration of North African ostriches to the wild in Niger



Information on the document

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Cover picture: The two grown-up chicks transferred from Iferouane breeding site last semester and doing well at Kellé breeding facilities. Date: December 2024.

This document provides **a summary of the main achievements over the last 6 months of the North African ostrich program** implemented by Sahara Conservation, in collaboration with local stakeholders and wildlife authorities in Niger.

Sahara Conservation and its partners have been supporting the conservation of the North African Ostrich in Niger for over a decade, to achieve the main goal of returning this emblematic species back into the wild in the country.

Activities were focused on the welfare of ostriches held in captivity, their reproduction and the management of the captive breeding group between the different sites and towards the Gadabeggi Biosphere Reserve, in south-central Niger, for reintroduction purposes. Sensitization activities and involvement of the surrounding communities have been enhanced and are becoming an important component of the program.

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What we aim to accomplish

The context

The North African ostrich (*Struthio camelus camelus*) has faced a rapid decline over the past 50 years and is currently on the brink of extinction.

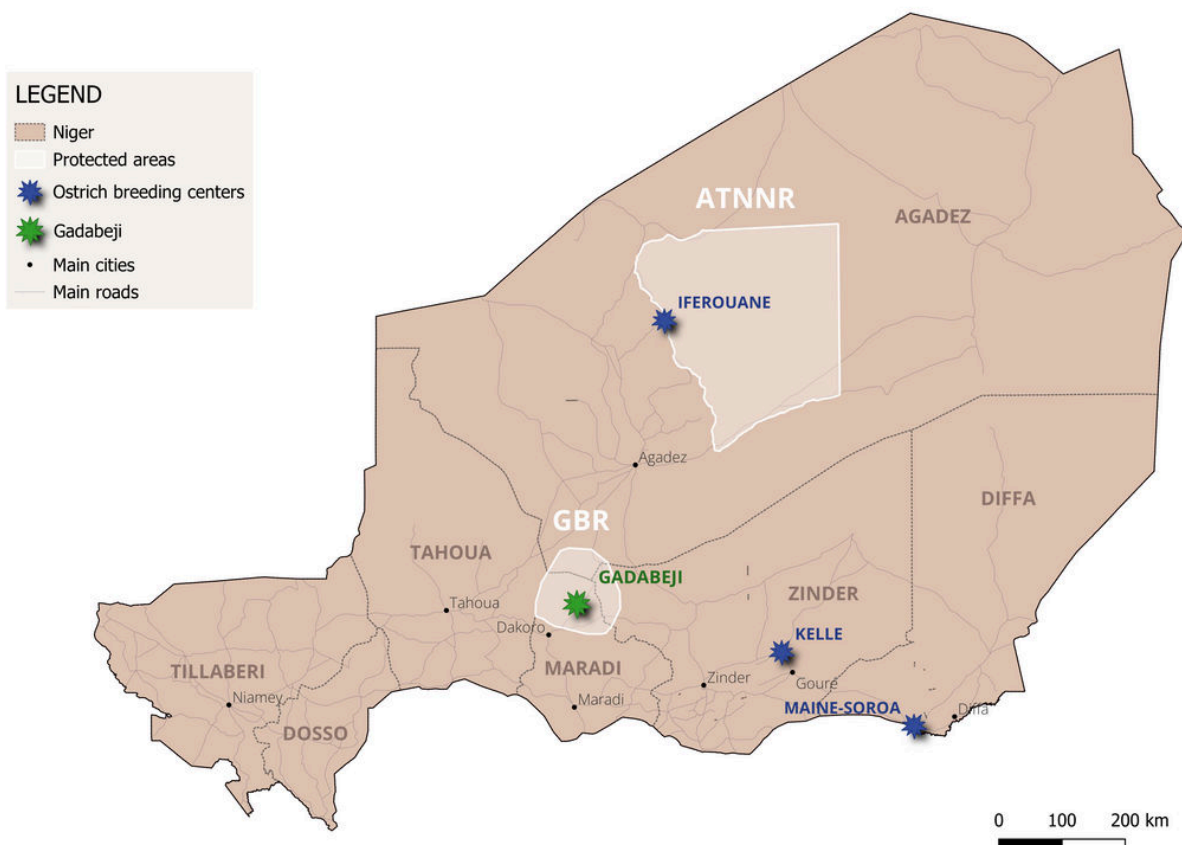
In Niger, the North African ostrich has disappeared from the wild since 2004. The species is fully protected by law in the country. A national strategy for the conservation of the North African ostrich was developed in 2016 and updated in 2022 to safeguard and conserve this bird with the help of captive breeding and in the framework of public-private partnerships.

The future of the North African ostrich in Niger lies on captive breeding and reintroduction programs. Currently, over 50 North African ostriches live in captivity in three breeding centers, managed by non-governmental organizations or private owners, namely the sites of Kellé, Mainé-Soroa and Iférouane.

Our objectives

With dedication and motivation, Sahara Conservation and its partners have worked to improve in-country captive breeding of pure North African ostriches, as well as the genetic pool of captive animals, to produce enough birds for the reintroduction program.

Reintroduction activities have been initiated with transfers to the Gadabeji Biosphere Reserve (GBR), where the species used to be present until 1955.



What we achieved

2 breeding sites managed by Sahara Conservation

5 monitoring missions realised across sites

51 ostriches supported and part of the captive breeding program

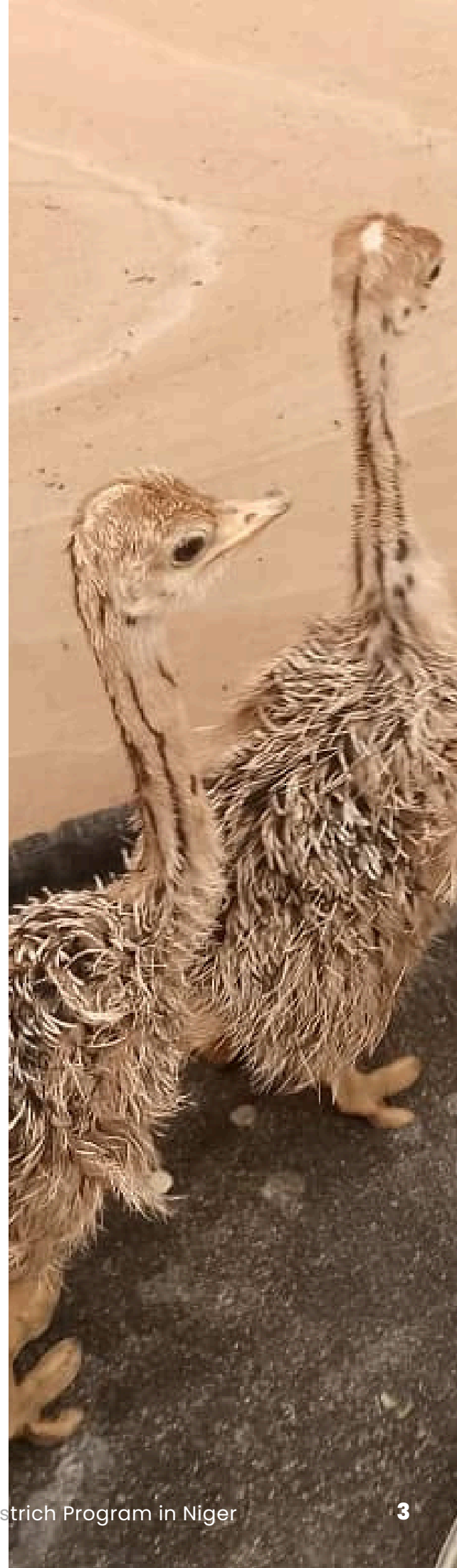
8 chicks obtained over the period, including 3 via natural incubation and 5 via artificial incubation

48% of incubated eggs were fertile

Over **600** local and national visitors directly sensitized at the Kellé breeding center

Over **20 000** people around the world heard about the program through our social media channels.

120 trees planted at Kellé breeding site during the celebration of Niger's Independence Day, also known as the tree day (August, 3rd)



Beyond the birds:

We encourage interest and collaboration

- **The site of Kellé, a local and a national pride:** ostriches are considered as a national heritage in Niger, and Kellé's infrastructures are unique in the region. Locally, people are proud to have on their land the last North African ostriches. The ostriches and the site itself contributed to the village renown beyond Niger's borders.
- **Contributing to national synergy** by supporting the wildlife authorities in the update of the action plan for the *ex-situ* conservation and reintroduction of the North African ostrich in Niger. This document should significantly help guide future actions.
- **An innovative approach using sport as a tool to raise environmental awareness** was initiated with the organization of a football tournament featuring several teams representing emblematic species of the region, including an ostrich team!
Two SpoGomi¹ events where kids had to pick up litter to help clean their village were also organized, enabling to remove more than 600 kg of litter in Kellé! Over a thousand people, participants and supporters, were present at these events.



Picture: 50 Participants gathered in Kellé for a 2-day workshop that Sahara Conservation organized along with the wildlife authorities to update the action plan for the *ex-situ* conservation and reintroduction of the North African ostrich in Niger
Date: September 2024

¹ Sport invented in Japan in 2008 in which teams collect garbage and litter within a time limit and specified area

Opportunities

A greater number of chicks were obtained this semester. The end of the year is generally favorable to good breeding results as the cold-dry season settles in. Different methods were used (natural and artificial incubation) producing chicks from different reproductive groups. These good results contribute to improve the herd size to support reintroduction efforts and ensure genetic diversity.

A growing impact on local communities: as part of the program some *cash for work* initiatives are created to benefit the surrounding communities, such as the involvement of young people on maintenance tasks, providing income for their families. This semester, they efficiently helped remove sand and make firebreaks. The harvested hay was made available for local villagers.

The results of additional genetic tests carried out on some birds enabled us to have a complete understanding of the genetic pool and subspecies of the captive population and therefore to make **informed decision regarding herd management**. The few individuals which do not match the local North African sub-species (*Struthio camelus camelus*) will be kept in isolated enclosures until further decision on their future is agreed. We are also happy to confirm our herd does not present hybridization between subspecies.

The various sensitization activities led as part of the program, in addition to raise awareness on our mission and objectives, are good occasions to **deepen our relationship with local communities**, including local authorities, and have their support.



Picture: Our site manager Maimounatou Ibrahim receiving a satisfaction testimony from the youth of Kellé organisation president for planning the football tournament. Date: December 2024



Picture: Part of the group of 45 young people who worked to remove sand from critical areas (against the fences) within the Kellé breeding site. Date: July 2024

They made it possible on the ground

Maimounatou Ibrahim Mamadou – Sahara Conservation ostrich sites manager, oversees management of breeding sites in Mainé and in Kellé and coordinates field activities.

Boukar Arifa Brah – Sahara Conservation ostrich project assistant, provides support on all activities and helps with management of Kellé site.

Harouna Moussa Lawan – Sahara Conservation Kellé ostrich keeper, ensures daily care of ostriches and maintenance of site infrastructures.

Habou Idi Malam Kaou – Sahara Conservation Kellé ostrich keeper, ensures daily care of ostriches and maintenance of site infrastructures.

Ousseini Idi Abdoulaye – Sahara Conservation Kellé ostrich keeper, ensures daily care of ostriches and maintenance of site infrastructures.

Oumara Ousseini Idi – Sahara Conservation Mainé ostrich keeper, ensures daily care of the ostriches and site infrastructures.

Souley Kouato Larwanou – Sahara Conservation Administration & finance officer in Niger, provides assistance with accounting, administration and logistics for field missions.

The support team in Paris provided crucial assistance on the administrative, financial and reporting side of the operations, as well as in fundraising.

Special thank you to the local and wildlife authorities and all the people from the local communities in Niger who significantly contribute to make this initiative a success.



Picture: Our site manager Maimounatou Ibrahim giving school supplies to a secondary school in Kellé as part of a broader initiative aiming to support local communities while raising awareness on biodiversity conservation and Sahara Conservation's mission and the objectives of the ostrich program

Date: December 2024

Thank you

Technical and delivery partners



CERNK



Project and financial partners



Funding from your organization is critical to support Sahara Conservation's captive-breeding facilities, and to the overall goal of seeing this species run free again in Niger for the first time in decades. It contributes to support Sahara Conservation's vision of a Sahara where ecological processes function naturally; a Sahara that benefits all its inhabitants and where support for its conservation comes from stakeholders across all sectors of society.

Together we make a difference