



Activity report – Semester 2, 2024

Halting the decline of vultures in West & Central Africa



Information on the document

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Cover picture: Raising awareness during the first ever International Vulture Awareness Day celebrated on the 7th September 2024 in Zinder, Niger, with more than 200 participants.

This document provides **a summary of the main achievements of the vulture program** implemented by Sahara Conservation, in collaboration with local stakeholders in Niger and in Chad, over the last 6 months. The main area of implementation are the Gadabeji Biosphere Reserve (GBR) and the Koutous massif in Niger, and the Ouadi Rimé - Ouadi Achim Faunal Reserve (OROAFR) in Chad.

Within this conservation program, activities are organized around two main objectives:
(1) Monitor and improve our knowledge on vulture population in Chad and Niger
(2) Protect the remaining vulture populations by fighting against the main threats.

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What we aim to accomplish

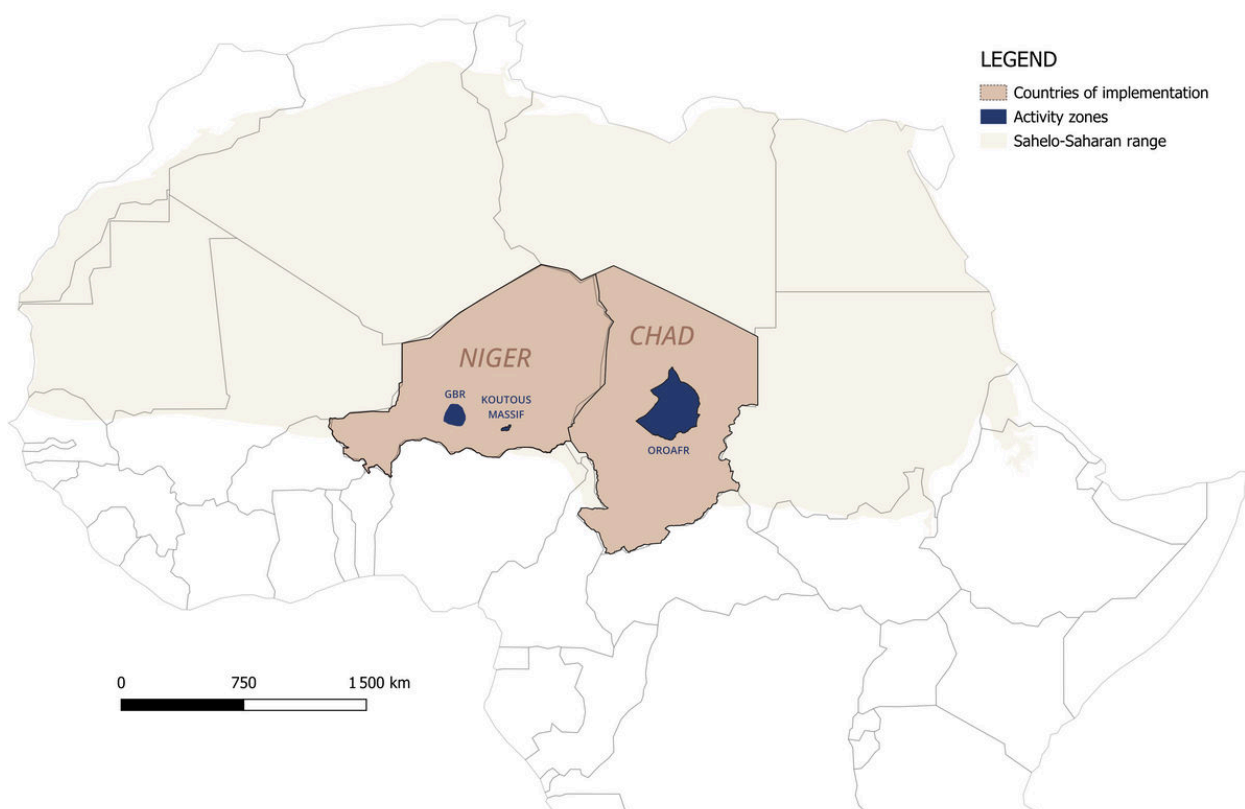
The challenges

As scavengers, vultures play an unparalleled role in maintaining healthy ecosystems. Yet, they are among the species most threatened with extinction. Throughout Africa, vultures have declined drastically over the last decades, with the highest rates of decline in West Africa. One of the major drivers for this decline is the illegal taking of vultures for belief-based use (wide range of medical and personal uses, such as treatment of insanity, stroke, against evil spirits, for gambling, for luck).

Our impact

Sahara Conservation and its partners have initiated a dedicated conservation program on uniquely placed vulture populations in Chad and Niger. The primary objective is to understand better these vulture populations while strengthening local capacities to effectively reduce their threats.

The success of our action relies on strong partnerships and the implementation of complementary activities including the main stakeholders; Raising awareness on the effect of vulture trafficking with local communities and healers to reduce demand, collaboration with leaders to have a decisive impact, targeted work with authorities to break down the supply chain, and systematic monitoring to address knowledge gaps on vulture populations and their threats and inform conservation actions.



What we achieved

7 new vultures tagged with satellite GPS transmitters in the OROAFR, Chad.

10 in total:

6 Rüppell's vulture,
4 Lappet-face vulture

68 769 km traveled and monitored by satellite transmitters in Chad over the period

17 environmental officers benefited from capacity building on vultures in Niger

400 members from local communities directly involved in sensitization campaigns in Niger

261 stakeholders (hunters and tradipractionners) engaged in awarness raising activities in Niger

0 vulture part found for sale during a market survey in Niger, as part of a threat analysis

1 celebration of the International Vulture Awarness Day

About 100 pupils benefited from support (school material) and environmental awarness in rural Niger

News on our program have been circulated more than **15 000** times on social media



Beyond the birds

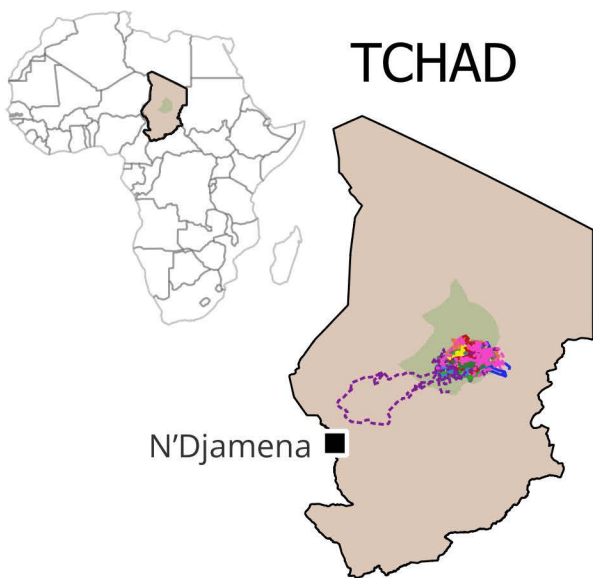
We encourage knowledge, interest and collaboration

- **Our vulture dedicated team has increased** as we welcomed a new intern Mr.Tchinbibe Bang-djolbe, dedicated to study perception on vulture among nomadic communities in OROAFR, Chad.
- **Continued engagement for vultures in Niger** was highlighted as testimonials of satisfaction were given to two traditional leaders actively involved in vulture conservation for years.
- **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 a vulture team!
- **Unprecedented data is being collected** thanks to the ten satellite transmitters deployed in the OROAFR (3 in March and 7 in November).
- Dedicated **team members have acquired new skills to become tomorrow's conservation leader.**

Picture: Handling an adult Ruppell vulture during tagging and ringing in the OROAFR, Chad. Data on the bird's measurements and blood samples were also collected. Date: November 2024



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VULTURE MOVEMENTS FROM NOVEMBER 15th TO DECEMBER 31st 2024



Legend

OROAFR

△ Oryx base camp

▲ Main cities/municipalities

--- LFV09_Torgos tracheliotos

--- LFV17_Torgos tracheliotos

--- LFV19_Torgos tracheliotos

--- LFV22_Torgos tracheliotos

— RV07_Gyps rueppelli

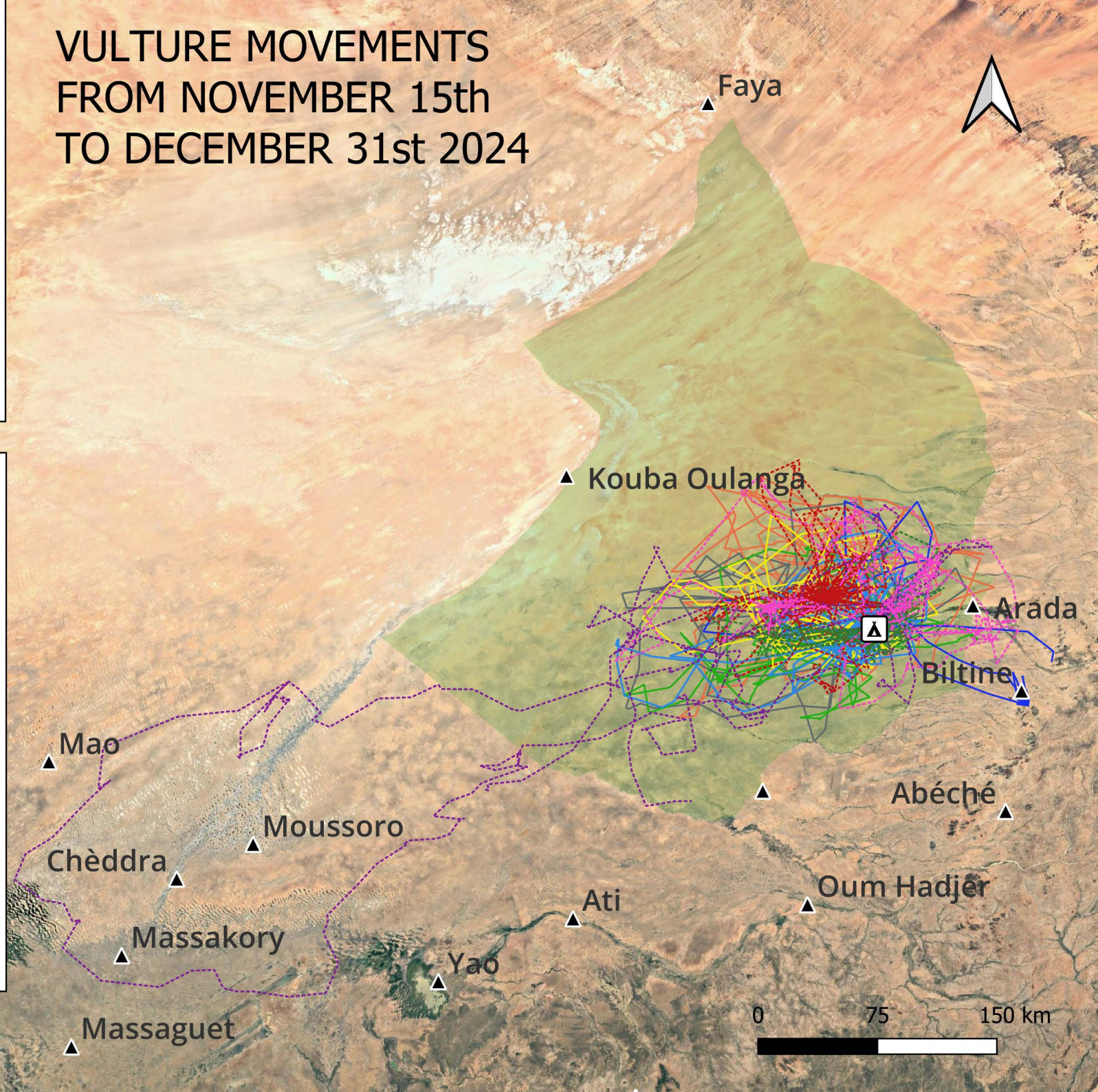
— RV08_Gyps rueppelli

— RV15_Gyps rueppelli

— RV16_Gyps rueppelli

— RV18_Gyps rueppelli

— RV20_Gyps rueppelli



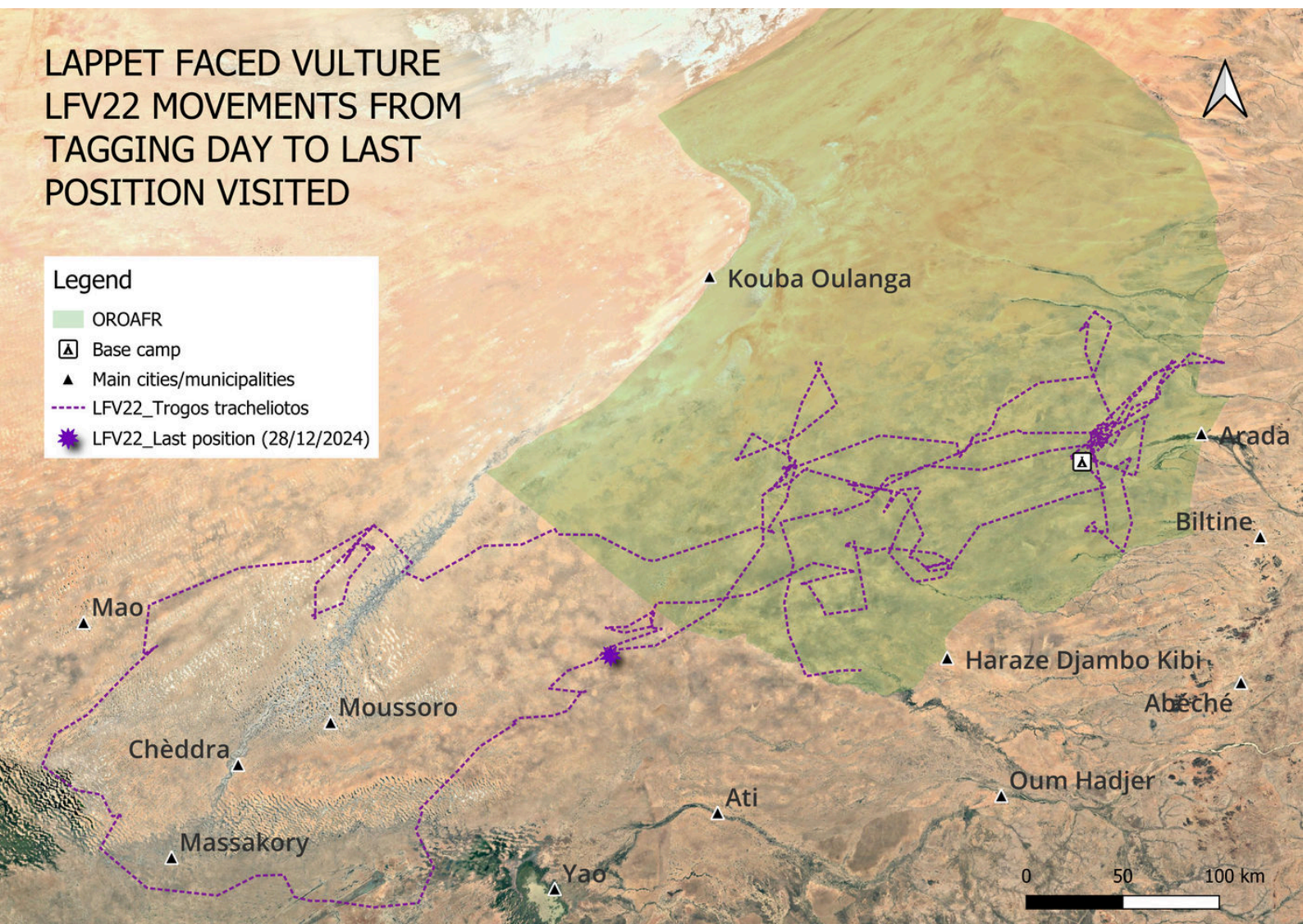
What we have learned from the trapping efforts

- If the tagging mission in OROAFR ending up being a success with 7 new vultures added to the tagged sample, it proved to be a difficult undertaking. Indeed, despite the team leaders expertise, it took several days before catching the first vultures. Both experiences (in March and November 2024) indicated that **tagging vulture in the area was particularly challenging**.
- The movements of several of the tagged vultures (going back and forth to the same tree) indicated **the start of the breeding season**. Their analyses will provide complementary data to ground monitoring (to be conducted the following semester).
- **Most tagged vultures remained within or close to the reserve boundaries** but one of the three Lappet-faced tagged in November (LFV22). After spending lots of time far outside the reserve, its tag indicated a stationnery position for days. A field revealed it had been poached, highlighting **the threats faced by vultures in the area and the need to extend our sensitization work and conservation network**.

LAPPET FACED VULTURE LFV22 MOVEMENTS FROM TAGGING DAY TO LAST POSITION VISITED

Legend

- OROAFR
- Base camp
- Main cities/municipalities
- LFV22_Trogos tracheliotos
- LFV22_Last position (28/12/2024)



They make it possible on the ground

Abdoul Razack Moussa Zabeirou – Sahara Conservation country representative in Niger, coordinates field activities in the country.

Abdoul Razakou Mahamadou – Project assistant, in charge of vulture monitoring in Niger and sensitization work.

Abba Mamane – Field officer in the Koutous massif in Niger, leads sensitization campaigns in the region and support vulture monitoring.

Ali Mahamat– Field monitoring officer, in charge of vulture monitoring work in Chad.

With the support of Marc Dethier – Oryx project manager, coordinating logistic and enabling work in OROAFR and **Tim Wachter**– Senior biologist, Zoological Society of London, supervising field work in OROAFR.

The support teams in Niger and Chad that provide assistance with accounting, administration and logistics for field missions.

The coordinating team (Cloé Pourchier and Violeta Barrios) provided crucial assistance on coordinating the activities, the administrative, financial and reporting side of the operations, as well as in fundraising.

Special thank you to **André Botha**, Vulture Program manager at the Endangered Wildlife Trust and co-chair of the IUCN Vulture Specialist Group for his expertise, to **all the other team members** for their punctual participation and support, and to the **authorities and communities** who significantly help make this initiative a success.



Picture: Our team in Niger at a traditional healer stand, selling a variety of natural product. Market survey is good opportunity to assess offer and demand for vulture parts while reinforcing sensitization among traditional healers.
Date: August 2024

Thank you

Funding from your organization helps to achieve the overall goal of preserving African vulture species in the wild. By preserving vultures, we highly contribute to healthier ecosystems. 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