

Activity report – Semester 1, 2025

Halting the decline of vultures in West & Central Africa



Information on the document

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Cover picture: A pair of Egyptian vultures at their nest in a cliff of the Koutous Massif, Niger.

© Abba Mamane / Sahara Conservation. Date: April 2025

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 areas of implementation in Niger are the Gadabeji Biosphere Reserve (GBR) and the Koutous massif, and the Ouadi Rimé - Ouadi Achim Faunal Reserve (OROAFR) in Chad. For the first time in years, a field mission was also conducted on the Termit massif within the Termit & Tin-Toumma National Natural Reserve (TTNNR), key area for biodiversity in Niger.

Within this conservation program, activities are organized around two main objectives:

- (1) Monitor and improve our knowledge on vulture populations 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

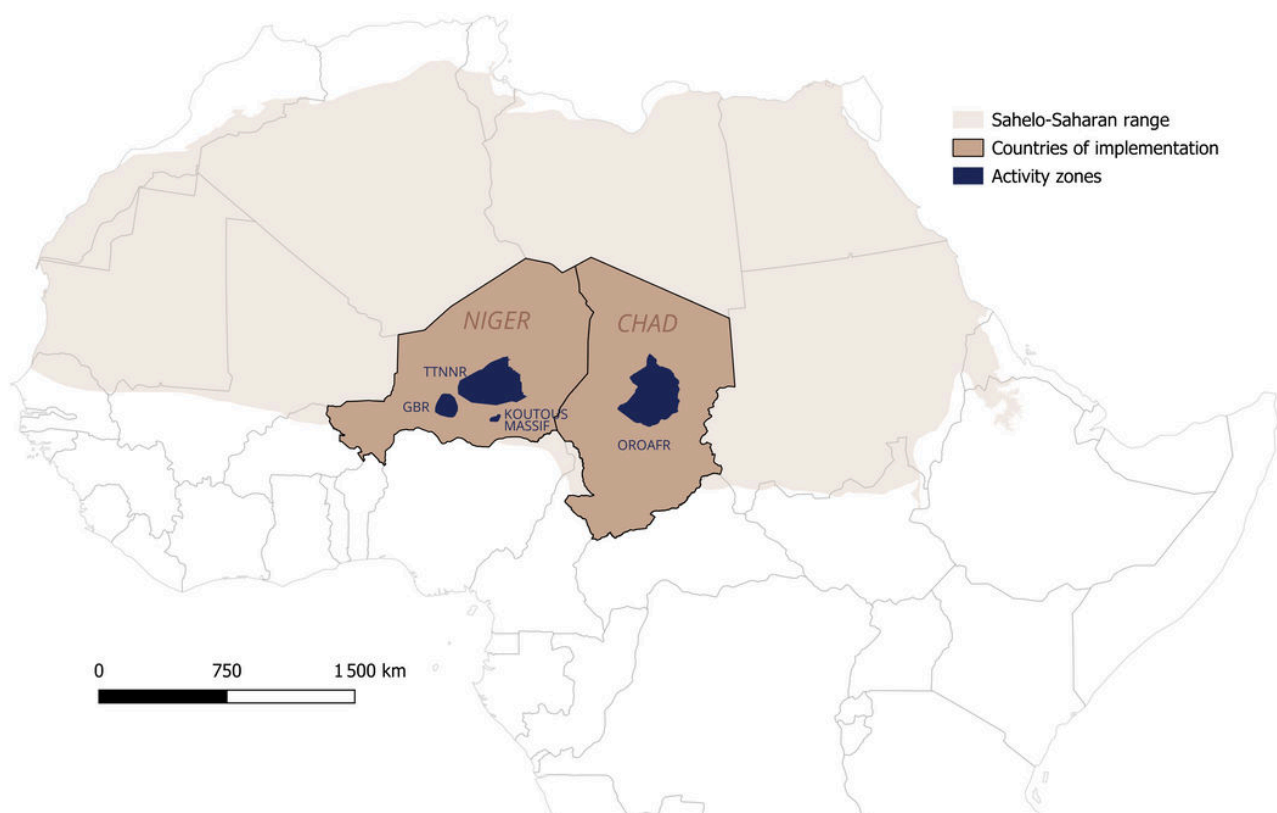
The challenges

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 poisoning and illegal taking of vultures for belief-based use.

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 actions depends on strong partnerships and the implementation of complementary activities involving key stakeholders. These include raising awareness among local communities about the consequences of vulture decline, engaging traditional healers to address the demand side of wildlife trafficking, collaborating with community leaders to drive meaningful change, working with authorities to disrupt supply chains, and conducting systematic monitoring to fill knowledge gaps on vulture populations and threats—ultimately informing effective conservation actions.



What we achieved

54 vulture nests monitored in Niger and Chad

14 vulture chicks produced in Chad and Niger

146 789 km traveled and monitored by satellite transmitters in Chad over the period

462 pupils in key vulture areas of rural Niger received school materials and environmental awareness education

200 stakeholders (hunters and tradipractionners) engaged in awareness raising activities in Niger

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

1 migratory Griffon vulture rescued and released in the OROAFR, Chad

2 presentations sharing our work and approach at the international meeting of the Sahel & Sahara Interest Group

News on our vulture program reached over **28 000** accounts on social media

Picture: A Lappet-faced vulture nest in Termit massif. Four nests and 29 individuals were observed during the field mission. It is known as one of the main breeding area for Lappet-faced vultures in Niger. © Abdoul Razakou Abdou Mahamadou / Sahara Conservation. Date : April. 2025

Vultures in focus

Improving understanding to inform action

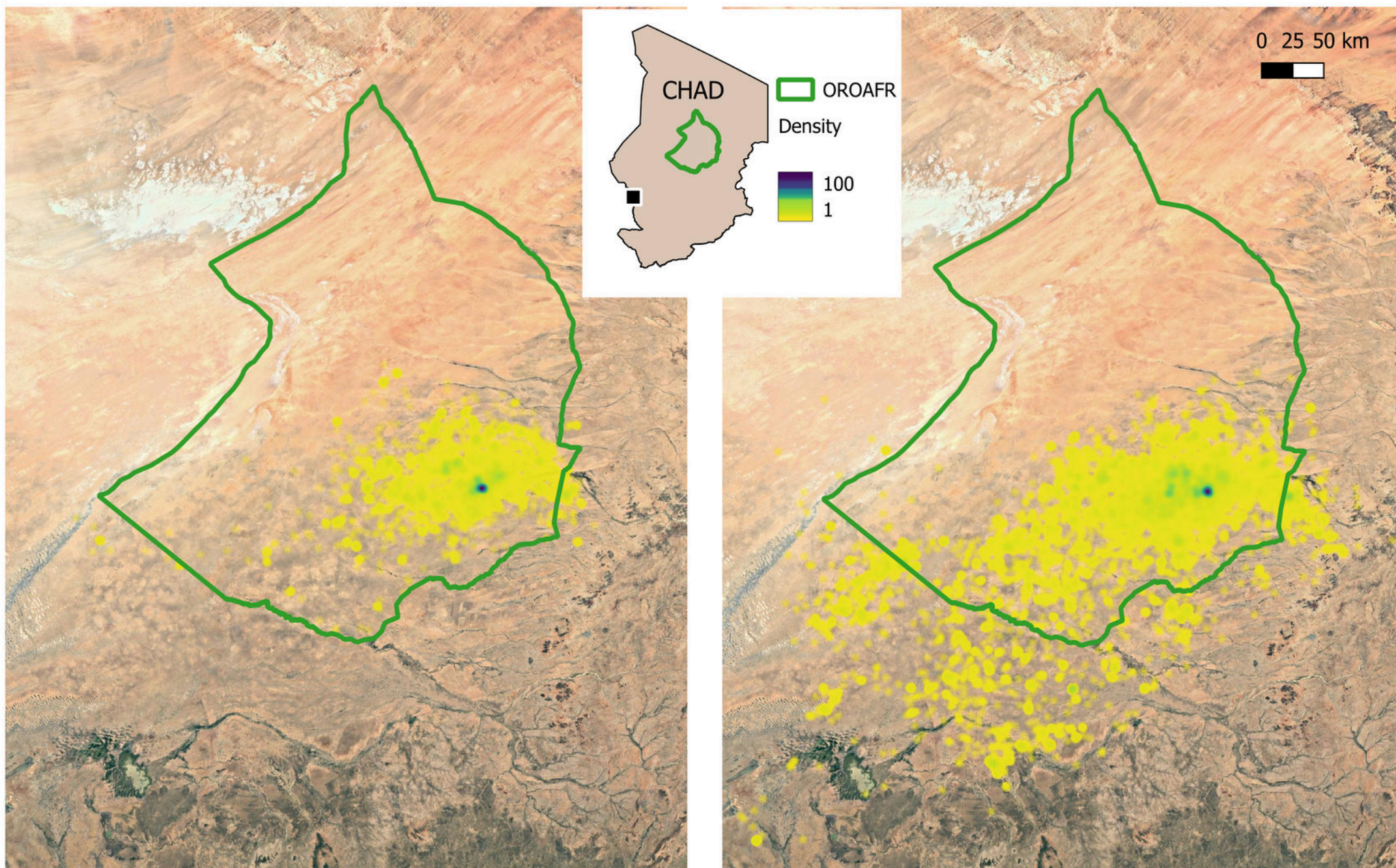
- **New areas were explored in Niger and new nests discovered**, including 4 Lappet-faced vulture nests in Termit massif, bringing the number of monitored species in Niger to four: Lappet-faced (*Torgos tracheliotos*), Rüppell's (*Gyps rueppelli*), white headed (*Trigonoceps occipitalis*) and Egyptian vultures (*Neophron percnopterus*).
- **Low breeding success was observed in tree nests**, with a significant number of grown chicks not surviving in OROAFR. Understanding the causes behind this will be crucial for an improved reproductive success, key to the species' conservation.
- **Investigated cases of vulture mortality** in Chad, including three tagged individuals, revealed **key regional threats** such as human–wildlife conflict involving pastoralists, and trafficking for use in traditional practices, both leading to poisoning incidents. While highly concerning, these records are essential for mapping threats, with hotspots outside and south of the reserve, and guiding an effective conservation response.
- **Seasonal movements were observed** among the six tagged individuals as vultures largely remained within the reserve during the cold season (November–February), coinciding with the start of the breeding period, while significant shifts south of the OROAFR were made during the hot season (March–June).



Picture: A tree-nesting pair of Rüppell's vultures and their chick in the OROAFR, an habitat they share with other Sahelo-Saharan wildlife as well as pastoralists and their livestock.

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SEASONAL VARIATION OF TAGGED VULTURES SPATIAL DISTRIBUTION JANUARY TO JUNE 2025, OUADI RIME - OUADI ACHIM FAUNAL RESERVE - CHAD



TAGGED VULTURES SPATIAL DISTRIBUTION IN
JANUARY & FEBRUARY 2025 (COLD SEASON)

TAGGED VULTURES SPATIAL DISTRIBUTION FROM
MARCH TO JUNE 2025 (HOT SEASON)

Beyond the birds

We encourage knowledge, interest and collaboration

- **Perceptions of vultures among nomadic communities in OROAFR, Chad**, has been studied to inform tailored conservation efforts. The findings reveal that vultures hold little importance in local cultural practices and beliefs; they are widely seen as taboo or harmful to livestock, with little recognition of their vital ecological role.
- **Participation of our field team in the SSIG meeting** in Tunisia offered an opportunity to share experiences with fellow conservationists, reinforce their enthusiasm, and strengthen collaboration with partners.
- **A comprehensive field guide *The vultures of the Ouadi Rimé - Ouadi Achim Faunal Reserve***, was produced and printed as a key resource for sensibilization, providing essential information on the main species of vultures, their role, their threats, and the legislative tools available to protect them.
- **Growing national momentum for vulture conservation in Chad** was reflected in the first dedicated meeting held in N'Djamena, providing an opportunity to present the ongoing work led in OROAFR, build overall consciousness and highlight the need for urgent actions. It provided an opportunity to officially present and distribute the vulture conservation field guide to key stakeholders.



Picture: First meeting with key partners on vulture conservation in Chad, marking the launch of a national network united around a common goal—to develop coordinated conservation actions for greater impact. © Photography provider / Sahara Conservation. Date: June 2025.

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 Abdou 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 supports vulture monitoring.

The **monitoring team in the OROAFR**, with a special mention to **Mahamat Ali** who coordinates most of the vulture work in Chad.

With the support of Marc Dethier – Oryx Project manager, coordinating logistics 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.

Thank you to **all the other team members** for their punctual participation and support, and to the **authorities and communities** who help make this initiative a success.



Picture: The team in Chad conducting interviews with local community members to understand their perception on vultures. 120 interviews based on a pre-established questionnaire were led in and around the OROAFR by the intern Tchibibé Bang-Djolbe.

©Tchibibé Bang-Djolbe / Sahara Conservation.
Date: January 2025

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