



ACTIVITY REPORT – 2025

Restoration of the North African ostrich to the wild in Niger



Information on the document

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Date : January 2026

Cover picture: Ostrich chicks transferred in early 2025 to the Gadabeji Biosphere Reserve for future reintroduction. They are kept in a dedicated enclosure and closely monitored by a trained team to ensure their health and survival. Date: February 2025.

This document provides **a summary of the main achievements over the last year 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 Gadabeji 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

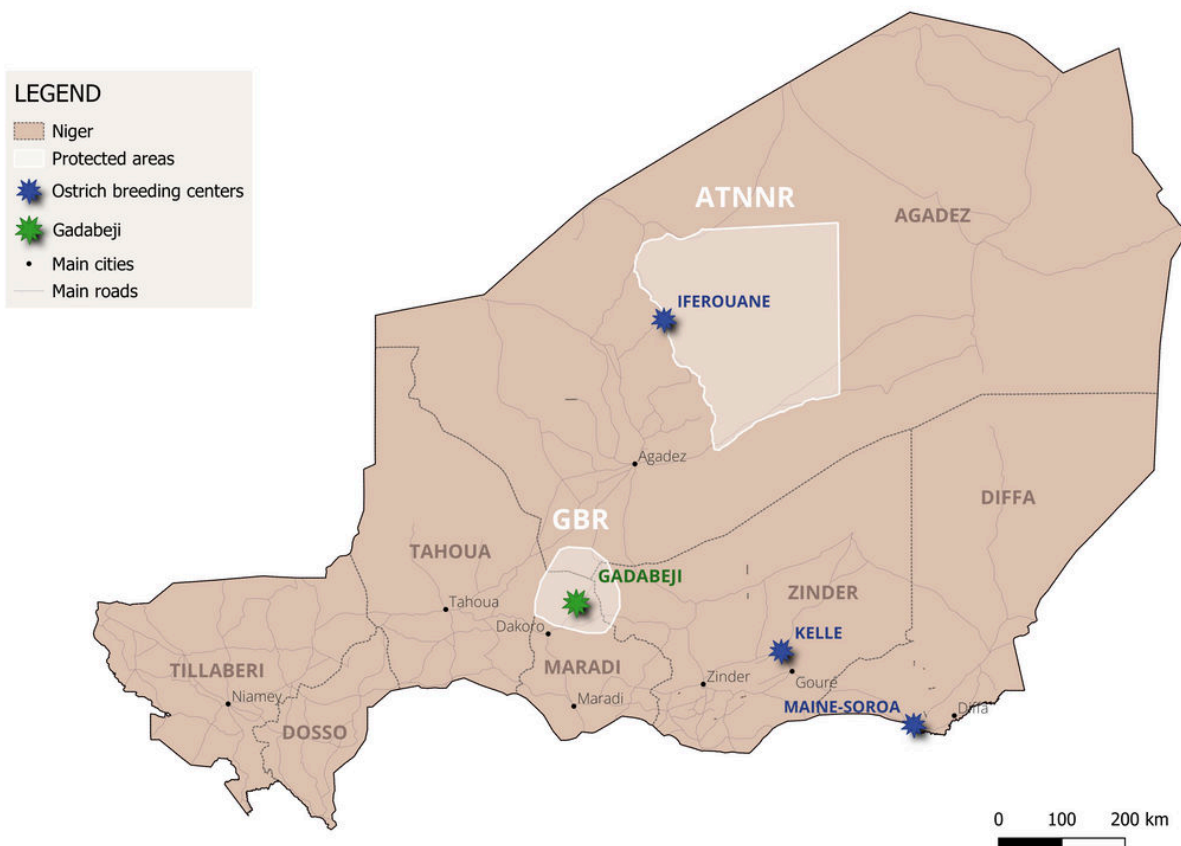
The North African ostrich (*Struthio camelus camelus*) has faced a rapid decline over the past 50 years and is currently on the brink of extinction.

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 in captive breeding and reintroduction programs. Currently, over 40 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. Transfers to the Gadabeji Biosphere Reserve (GBR), where the species used to be present until 1955, have enabled the creation of a group of 10 individuals for future reintroductions.

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.



What we achieved

2 breeding sites managed by Sahara Conservation

52 ostriches supported as part of the captive breeding program

20 chicks obtained over the period, including 15 via natural incubation and 5 via artificial incubation

55% chicks early-life survival over the year

2 transfers of a total of 9 chicks to the GBR for future reintroduction

8 monitoring missions realised across sites

About **3,000** local community members directly engaged in biodiversity conservation awareness activities

1 presentation sharing our work at the international meeting of the Sahel & Sahara Interest Group

Over **30,800** people around the world learnt about the program through our social media channels

Ostriches in focus

Creating the best conditions

- **Most chicks (80%) were produced at both the beginning and the end of the year**, confirming that **Niger's cold, dry season (Oct - Feb) is the most favorable period for ostrich breeding**, while the rainy season remains unfavorable.
- **Formation of new breeding groups** successfully stimulated reproduction at the Mainé Soroa site.
- **Targeted nest management during the rainy season** (July to Sept), specifically replacing rain-soaked sand with dry sand during incubation, significantly increased hatching success by preventing embryo mortality caused by excess moisture. Chick survival, however, remained zero due to heavy rainfall, highlighting climatic constraints.
- **Recovery of abandoned eggs enabled artificial incubation and assisted hatching**, resulting in the successful emergence of three chicks, underscoring the importance of close monitoring.
- Naturally hatched **chicks were separated from their parents to improve survival prospects** and prevent mortality from trampling by adult ostriches.
- **All North African ostriches were consolidated within a single enclosure in the GBR**, bringing together 10 individuals of different age classes in preparation for future reintroduction efforts.
- **Year-round infrastructure and habitat management activities**, including fence rehabilitation and firebreak maintenance, were implemented to ensure ostrich safety, welfare, and site security.



Picture: Sand removal works carried out along the perimeter fence. Sand accumulation against the fence reduces its effective height, posing a significant risk to the safety and containment of the ostriches. Date: June 2025



Picture: Female ostrich incubating seven eggs that were originally laid in two separate nests. The eggs were brought together into the main nest to ensure that the isolated egg was also incubated, thereby maximizing hatching success. Date: July 2025

Beyond the birds

We encourage interest and collaboration

- **Relationships with local communities and authorities were strengthened** through the diversification and expansion of jointly organized activities.
- **An innovative awareness-raising approach using sport as a platform for environmental education** was implemented through the organization in Kellé of football and wrestling tournaments, thematic races, etc., involving more than 350 participants.
- **100 Acacia trees were planted at the Kellé site** on August 3rd, Niger's National Tree Day, contributing to site revegetation while establishing a natural site limit. The activity was carried out collaboratively with local and traditional authorities, the Kellé Youth Committee, local children, and Sahara Conservation's team.
- **Program activities and results were presented to an international audience** of over 130 participants from 20 countries at the Sahel & Sahara Interest Group meeting in Tunisia, strengthening collaboration with partners and fellow conservationists.
- **The program generated increasing socio-economic benefits for surrounding communities** through cash-for-work initiatives across site maintenance activities.



Picture: Organization of a major traditional wrestling event promoting social cohesion and environmental protection, bringing together over 1,000 spectators and 42 wrestlers from 11 villages in the Koutous area. The event also provided an opportunity to raise awareness among participants about the ostrich breeding and reintroduction program in Kellé. Date: December 2025

They made it possible on the ground

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

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

Habou Idi Malam Kaou, Ousseini Idi Abdoulaye, Ibrahim Hassan – Sahara Conservation ostrich keepers in Kellé, ensure daily care of ostriches and maintenance of site infrastructures.

Oumara Ousseini Idi – Sahara Conservation Ostrich keeper in Mainé-Soroa, ensures daily care of the ostriches and site infrastructures.

The Sahara Conservation team in Niger provided operational support for field missions, including accounting, administration, and logistics.

The support team contributed to the overall program by handling administrative, financial, and reporting tasks, as well as assisting with fundraising efforts.

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: Administrative and local authorities assisting to the start of the transfer of ostrich chicks from Kellé to the GBR. Involving partners in this process strengthens collaboration, enables real-time information sharing, and reinforces shared conservation objectives. Date: January 2025



Thank you

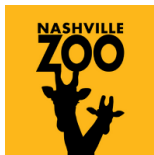
Technical and delivery partners



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