

UPDATE ON SAHARA CONSERVATION'S ACTIVITIES IN CHAD, NIGER & MOROCCO: Reintroduction, Reinforcement, & Rewilding

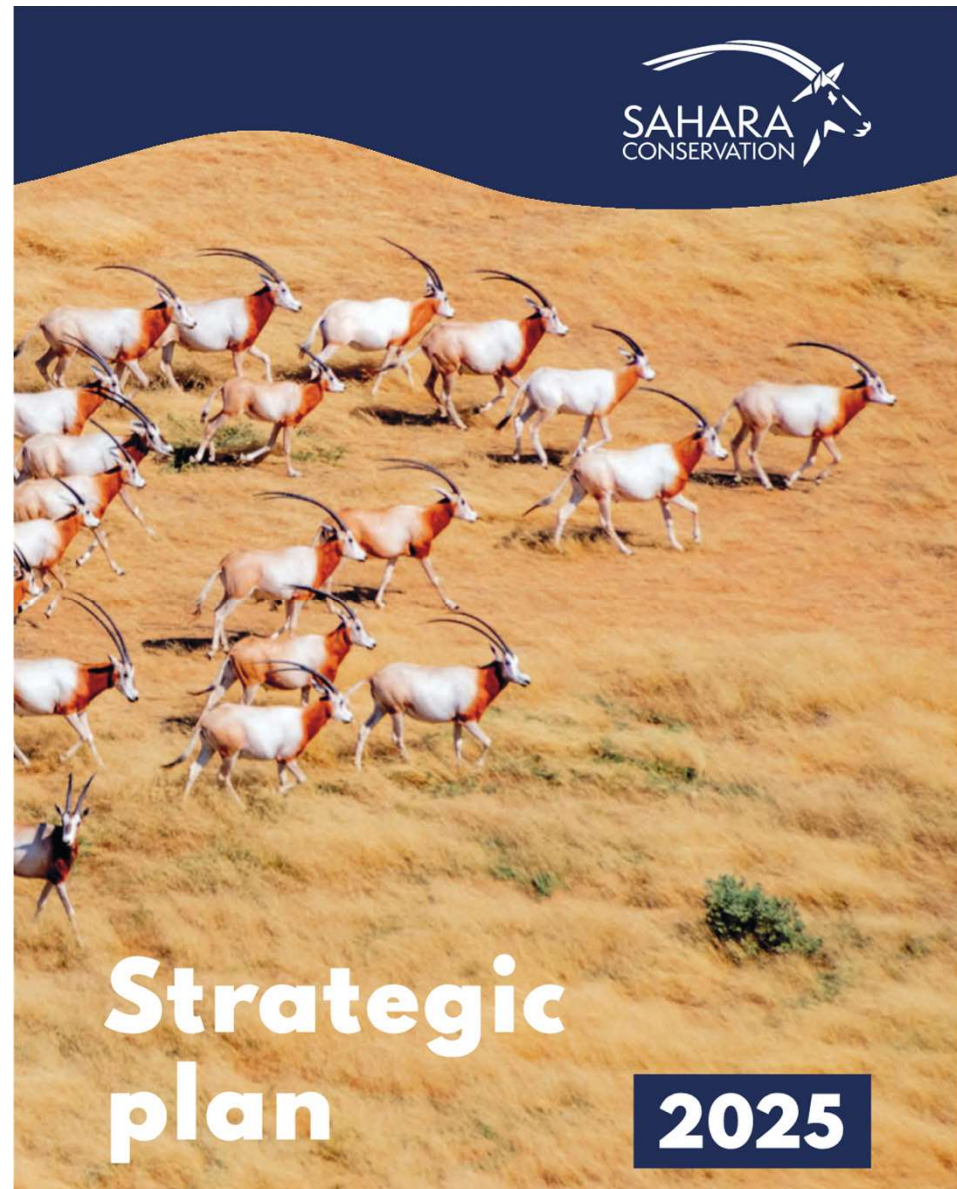
Justin Chuven, Adam Eyres, & John Watkin
Presentation to the Association of Zoos and Aquariums
Mid-Year Meeting April 24, 2022 Long Beach, California

29 March 2022



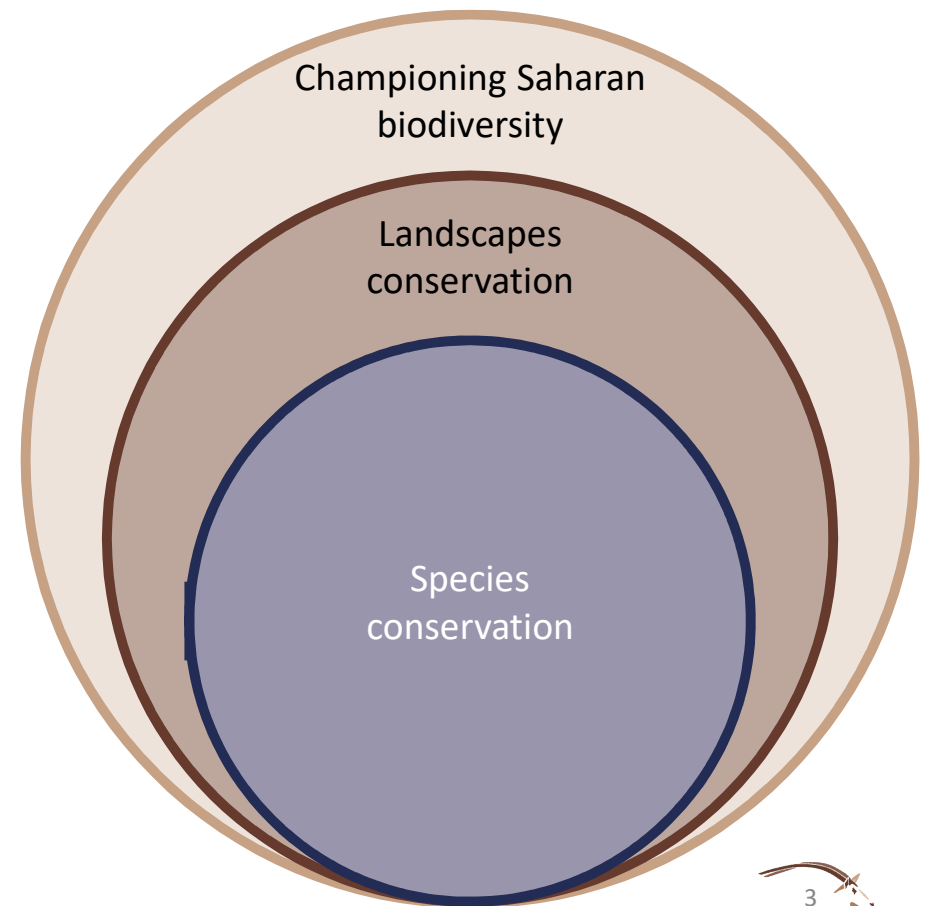
We are evolving!

- Change to the organization name
- Refreshed logo
- New 2025 Strategic Plan
- Improved financial management systems
- New Board Members
- New team members in Paris
- Enhanced delivery of field projects



SaharaConservation: Championing the Sahara

- An integrated three-pillar approach including:
 1. Championing Saharan Biodiversity
 2. Landscapes conservation
 3. Species conservation
- Provide technical assistance to further reintroduction and rewilding projects
- Reinforce existing and develop new partnerships for conservation action
- Raise awareness and funds for Sahel and Sahara conservation



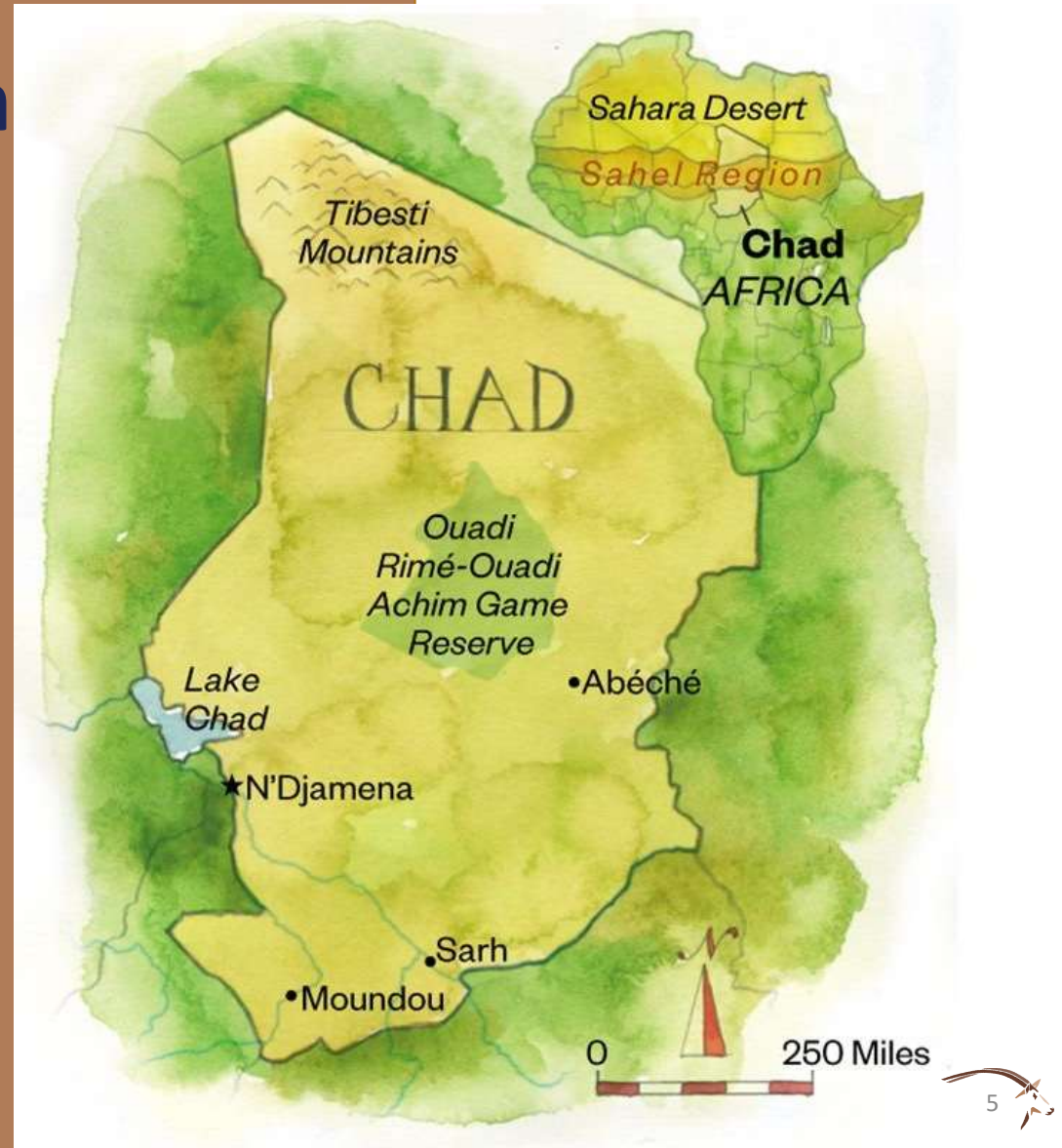
THE SAHARA – a conservation orphan.



- Biggest desert on earth
- ~10 million km²/~4 million mi²
- Rainfall < 100mm / 4” a year
- Sahel is an Arabic word for “shore” a transition zone to the sea that is the Sahara
- Uniquely adapted biodiversity
- Many threatened species (IUCN Red List)
- Challenging environment from all aspects

Sahara Conservation in Chad

Activities focused on the 77,950 km² Ouadi Rimé-Ouadi Achim Game Reserve (OROAGR), a protected area the size of Scotland



Reinforcement of addax

- Reinforcement is the intentional movement and release of an organism into an existing population of conspecifics
- There are thought to be 50 remaining addax in northern Niger
- Environment Agency-Abu Dhabi (EAD) and SaharaConservation started translocating addax from Deleika Wildlife Conservation Center in November 2019
- To date, 49 individuals have been released into OROAGR. There are now 92 free-living addax in Chad





In-situ reinforcement of dama gazelles

- January 2020: Three female dama gazelles were transferred from the Manga region, Chad to the enclosures at Oryx base camp.
- One male from OROAGR added to start a breeding program.
- “Passive capture” of two males and three females since.
- Six calves have been born. Five individuals have died.
- March 2022: Five female damas transferred to OROAGR from EAD
- Active breeding program of 16 (3♂ and 13♀) to reinforce the wild population in place.

Reintroduction

- Reintroduction is the intentional movement and release of an organism inside its indigenous range from which it has disappeared
- Since 2016, EAD and SaharaConservation have released 241 Scimitar-horned oryx in OROAGR
- Recent aerial surveys estimate 450-500 reintroduced scimitar-horned oryx thriving in the reserve





Rewilding

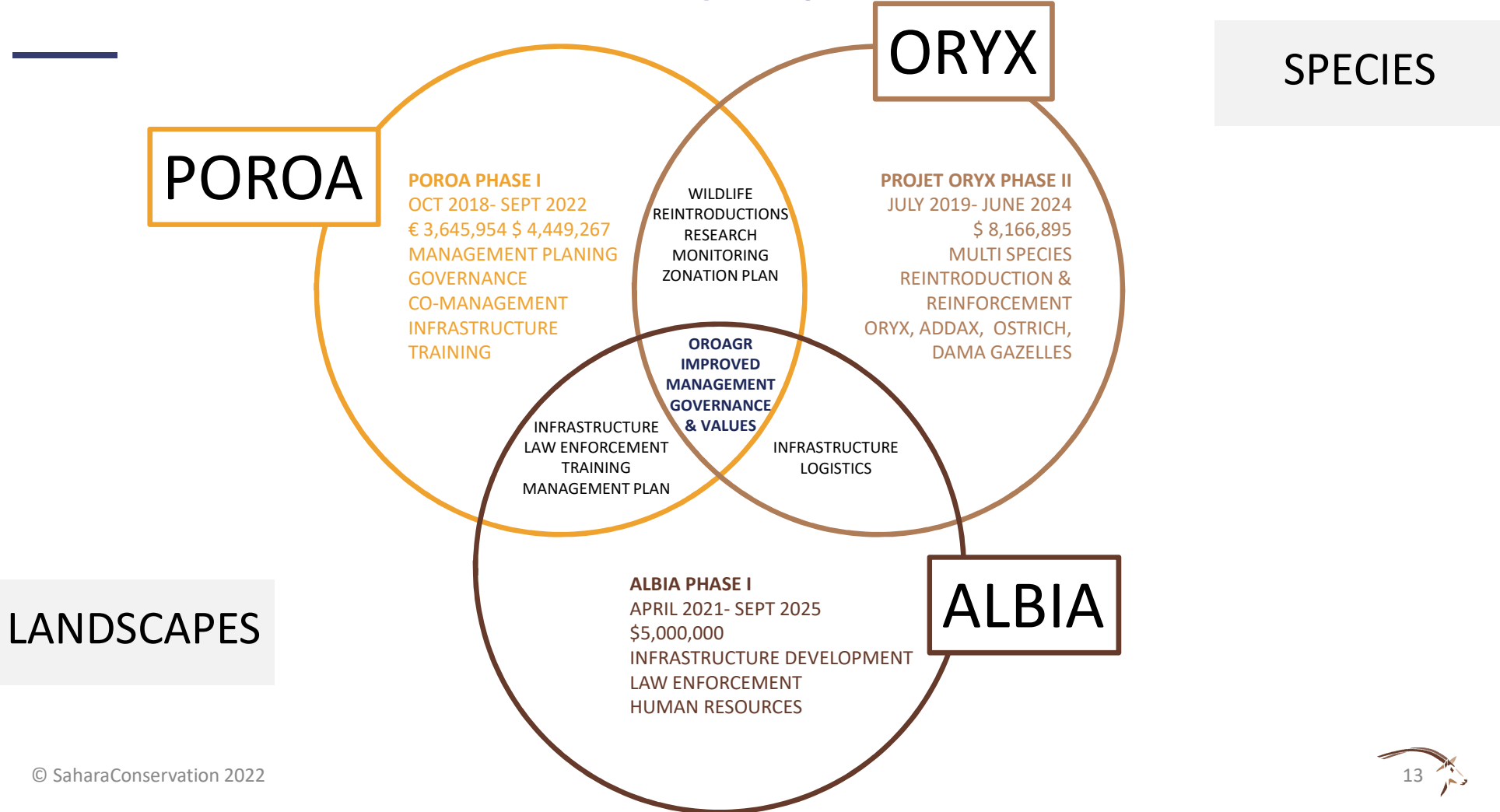
- Rewilding aims to restore ecosystems and reverse biodiversity declines by allowing wildlife and natural processes to reclaim areas no longer under human management.
- During the aerial sample count a group of 61 scimitar-horned oryx was observed.





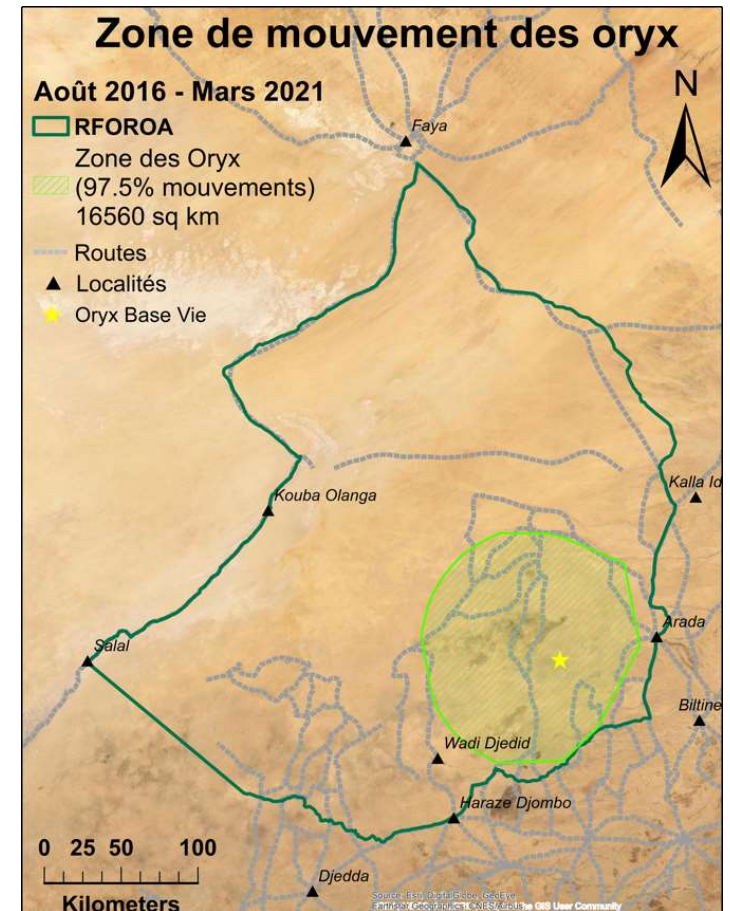
This is a remarkable achievement!

SaharaConservation's projects in Chad



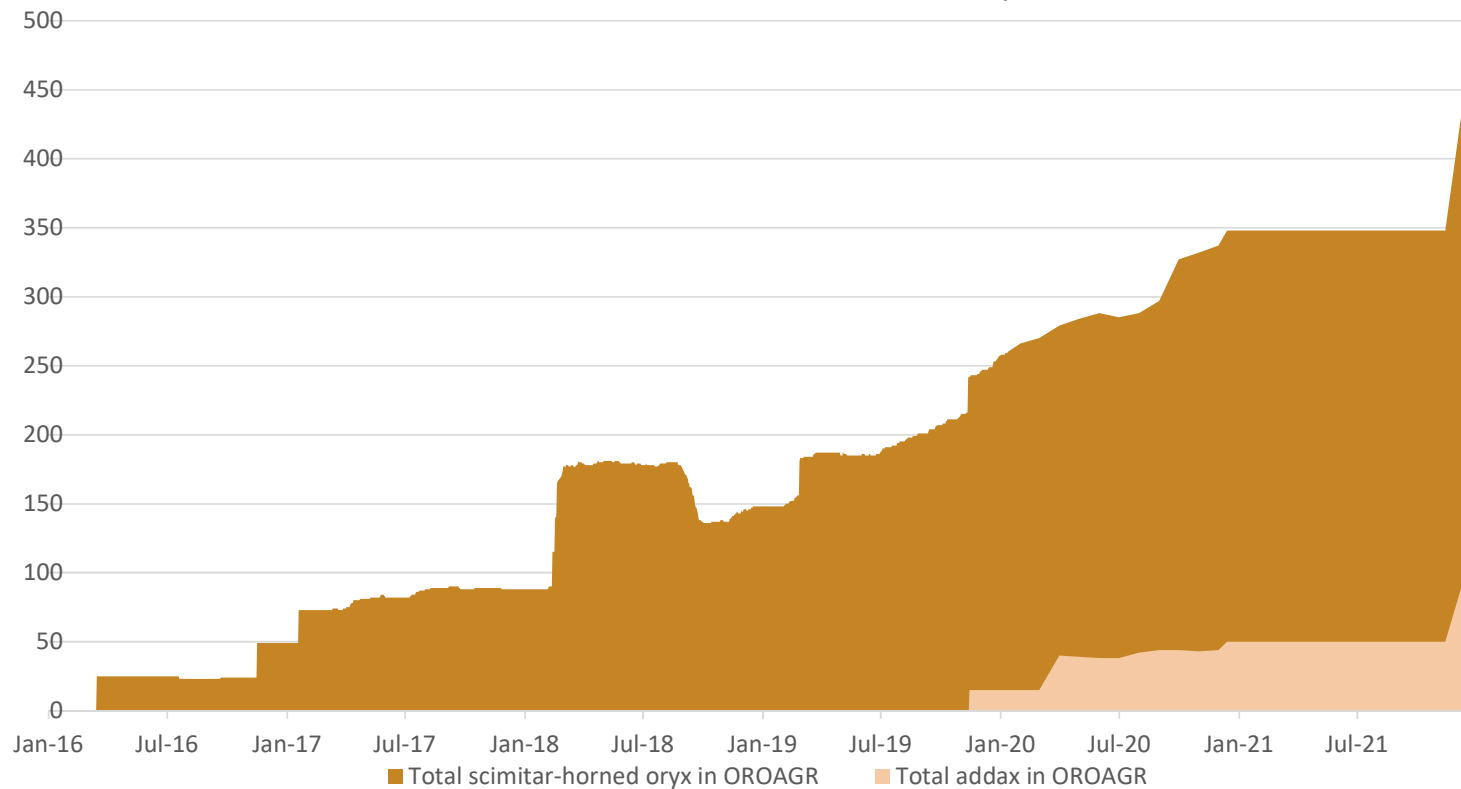
Post-release monitoring

- Monitoring is undertaken in partnership with Smithsonian Conservation Biology Institute and Zoological Society of London
- Data from satellite collars provides rapid feedback to the team on the ground of remote movements and alerts of possible death
- Ratio of collared to uncollared means that monitoring is shifting from individual to population scale



Progress of oryx and addax numbers

Numbers of reintroduced scimitar-horned oryx and addax in the Ouadi Rimé-Ouadi Achim Game Reserve, Chad 2016-2021

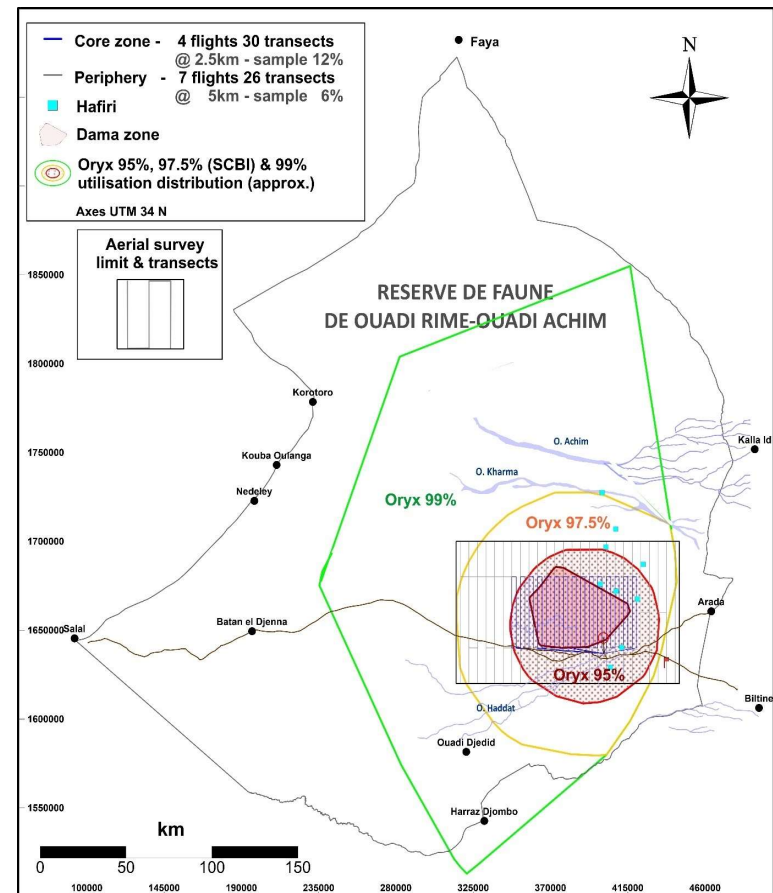


Results of the first aerial sample count of OROAGR

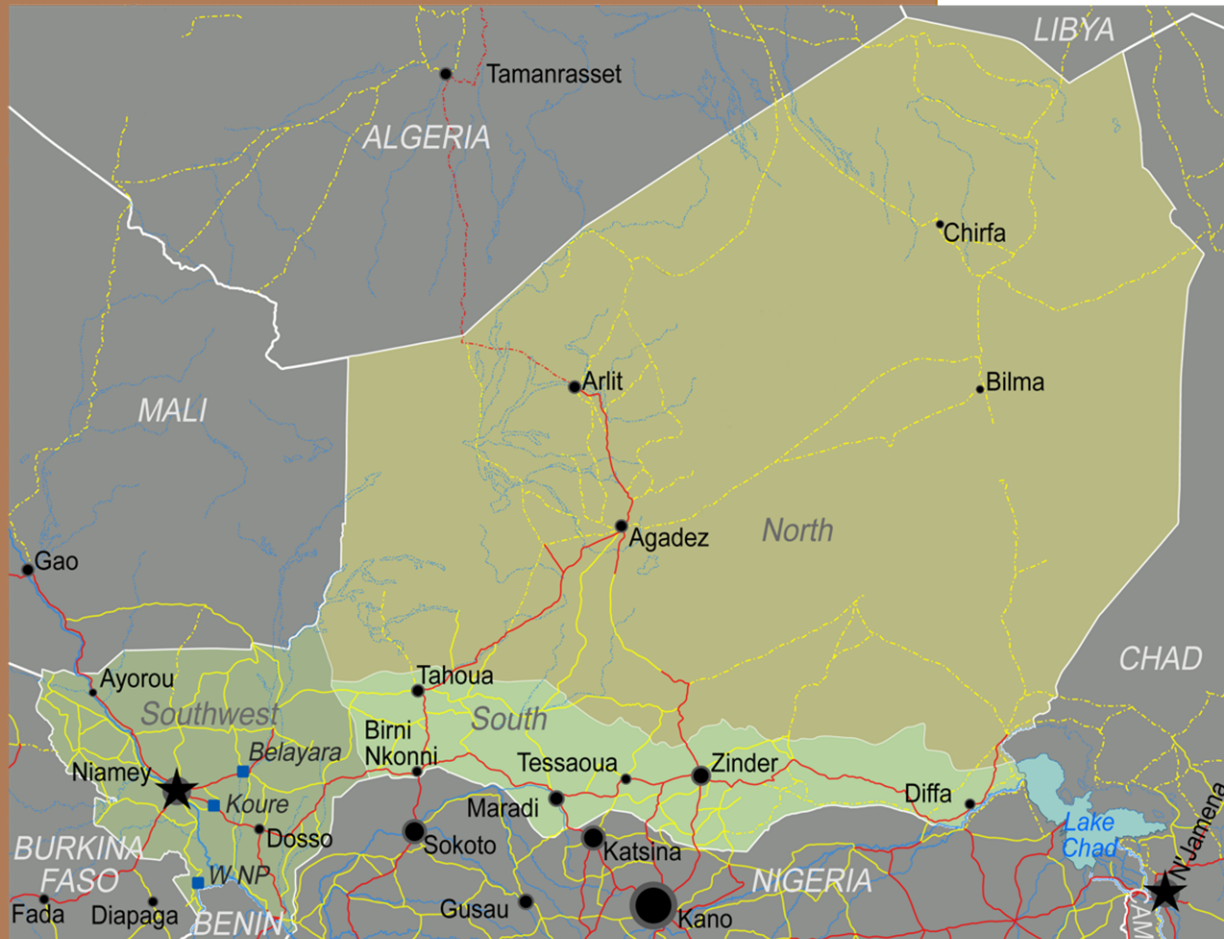
Dorcas gazelles are an indicator species

The aerial sample count of the core zone estimated the population of dorcas gazelles at 17,033

This is the largest remaining population globally



Sahara Conservation in Niger



SaharaConservation's antelope conservation: Niger

- Monitoring Dama gazelles (*Nanger dama*)
- Collaring wild addax around the Termit Tin Toumma National Nature and Cultural Reserve



Camera trapping dama gazelles

- Camera Trap Monitoring of dama gazelles in the Aïr & Ténéré National Nature Reserve (ATNNR) undertaken since 2017. Focus on Mount Takoloukouzet within the reserve.
- In 2021, SaharaConservation Niger team carried out two ecological monitoring missions in close collaboration with the Direction Générale des Eaux et Forêts and the Direction de la Faune, de la Chasse, des Parcs et Réserves and the DRE of Agadez.

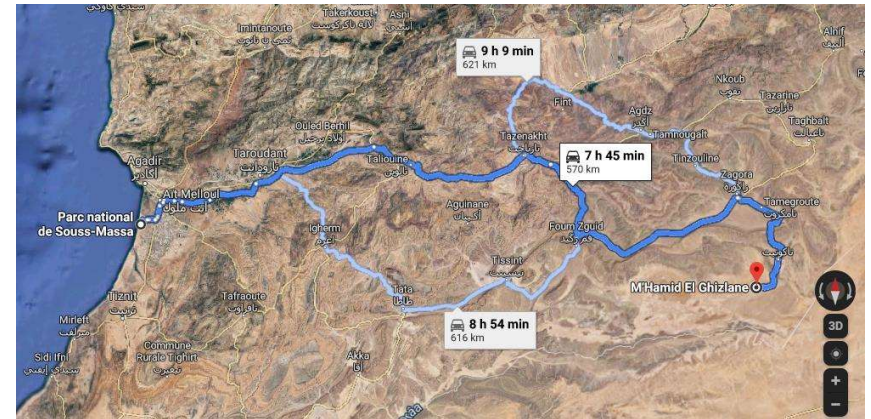


Collaring wild addax in Niger

- This operation was supported by the German government through the Convention on Migratory Species and UNEP.
- Massive field operation undertaken in February 2022.
- Complications in securing flight clearance for the helicopter and Cessna plane delayed ground operations.
- Over 2,000km of transects flown. Many sightings of dama gazelles, ibex, fennec foxes, but sadly no addax.
- Severe weather conditions curtailed further flying.
- Hope to repeat the mission in November 2022.

Sahara Conservation in Morocco

- In 2019, 32 addax were translocated from Souss Massa National Park and reintroduced into the 500 km² M'hamid El-Ghizlane Reserve



Some of the team members



Scale of infrastructure required to implement projects



In-country logistics



Challenges

- Security issues continue to impact day to day activities.
- Securing long-term funding for the program in Niger is greatest priority.
- All projects need to contribute realistically to core funds.
- Recruiting for these projects is extremely difficult



This is how it's done!



The last word.

- SaharaConservation's greatest need is for a Cessna 182 aircraft.
- Vital for:
 - Security
 - Ecological monitoring
 - Logistics
 - Law enforcement
 - Supplies
 - Emergency situations



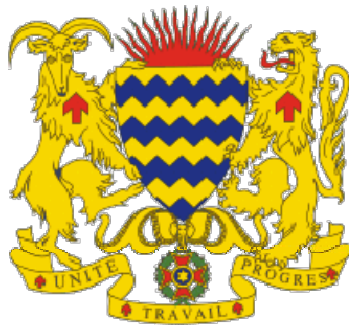
SaharaConservation grew from the Zoological community.



Our main supporters and government partners



Funded by
the European Union



THE WORLD BANK



هيئة البيئة - أبوظبي
Environment Agency - ABU DHABI





**THANK YOU FOR YOUR INTEREST
AND CONTINUED SUPPORT.**

QUESTIONS?

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