

The Kordofan Giraffe Project 3rd Quarterly Report; 01/08/2019.

Period: May, June, and July; preparing for the second field season.

Making arrangements for new passport, next field season and organising funding...

Passport:

On my return to the UK I was able to get a new passport, and plan to personally take my passport to renew the visa three months into the season; also giving me an opportunity to restock on difficult to get items for the second three months in the field.

Student:

Dr Dolmia from the University of N'Djamena is in the process of finding a suitable candidate to fill the role in the second season; I hope to conduct interviews by November for a January start.

Assistant:

The amount of work involved in gathering and organising the data that Zakouma's ~1200 giraffe provide is a huge job I realised last season. I have organised with AP to house a qualified assistant in tented accommodation for the second season, as accommodation is limited in Zakouma. I have prepared an advertisement for the position and aim to conduct interviews by November for a January start. This means we can keep on top of the data, conducting more surveys and getting an even better idea of the status of Zakouma's giraffe.

Armed Guard

Having spoken to the management at Zakouma I am pleased we will have a guard from a dedicated research guard squad, which means in the following seasons we will be able to include them more in the work and we can learn from each other.

GPS Ossiunits Update

The GPS units are already showing some interesting results, with three of the giraffe leaving the park boundary, one of these travelling way out to the western boundary of the park into an area where previously I have been told by park staff "the giraffe



do not go". This is an area which was out of access during the season, due to the lateness of the wet season and the grader and tractor needed parts which were unavailable for some time. It is my aim to reach this site next season to assess the vegetation and gain an understanding of what would attract the giraffe there. It will be interesting to see if the same routes and places are utilised by the giraffe in subsequent seasons.



Figure 1: Screen grab of the GPS ossi-units and the giraffe movements in the first few months.

Scientific Collaborations:

The whole project has been a partnership with GCF, supporting me by making vital introductions, and now I have joined them as a Fellow Researcher, which means more sharing of giraffe information and collaborations between researchers throughout Africa. I believe it is essential for conservation of species for all researchers to be working together and supporting each other in this way, for the benefit of the species in question.

As a GCF Fellow (and along with other GCF Fellows throughout Africa) I am working with Oregon Universities' Dr Scott Blumenthal and Kendra Critz to gather tail hair and teeth from carcasses of giraffe, and any other animals I come across in Chad to aid their research into giraffe feeding ecology.

Through GCF I am also gathering skulls for morphology studies into the different species and subspecies of giraffe, as other GCF fellow researchers are who are working with the other sub/species. These will be scanned and compared.





Figure 2: giraffe skulls collected in Zakouma

Survey Vehicle

It is now certain that I will need to buy a vehicle in N'Djamena to see me through the next three seasons. It is my aim to travel to Chad at the end of the year to find and buy a vehicle, which can then be filled with equipment bought in the capital before travelling to Zakouma. This ideally needs to have a double closed cab, to fit myself, and assistant, student and guard as well as all the equipment. It would be best to find a vehicle which is commonly used in Chad and the Zakouma garage is familiar with so that any parts are accessible and if we need any mechanical help from Abdul in the garage he will be familiar with the model.

Social media and project backing:

The Kordofan Giraffe Project Facebook group now has 455 likes and 456 followers. We are going to be working closely with Giraffe Conservation Foundation to ensure the biggest reach with the work being done by both GCF and KGP in Chad. Other social media sites have been quieter, though I expect this to pick up again in the field season when Instagram can be utilised from the field. We were able to use the social media to help with a Crowdfunder this summer.

Securing funding for the second field season:



I am still applying for, and awaiting responses for grants to fund the purchase of a suitable survey vehicle to see us through the next three seasons.

Fundraising through Woburn Safari Park over the world giraffe day weekend raised £2500, and a Crowdfunder through our social media raised £400, with a few smaller donations coming in directly to the KGP account.

We are continuing to promote naming a giraffe in Zakouma for a minimum donation of £25.

The Tigerwood Fund made major donations to GCF to support the GPS collaring operation last year, with some funds being directed towards the field costs for next season also.

Next Season:

I have organised to return to Zakouma to begin the season in January and do six months through till the end of June. I have based this decision on the last season, when I arrived at the beginning of the dry season, and there was still so much standing water throughout the park it was difficult to access many areas until mid-January. Arriving in January and seeing in the beginning of the wet season, which has been a month later than usual this year should ensure the maximum amount of surveys are possible around the widest parts of the park.

Going forward

Over the next three months:

- Secure the rest of the funding needed for the purchase of a survey vehicle.
- Conduct interviews for the student position from N'Djamena University.
- Conduct interviews for the qualified field assistant from a French speaking country.
- Most funding is in place for the next season, with the exception of the vehicle cost to buy, so I will continue to apply for grants for this purpose.
- I am giving two talks in the UK this summer; one at a giraffe zoo conference, where it will be beneficial to talk to giraffe keepers about giraffe behaviour, and forge potential funding relationships. The other is for a natural history society, which will make a small donation towards the project and educate an interested group who are not aware of giraffe conservation issues.

Further Ahead:



- Later this year I will produce all the training materials needed for the student and assistant while on the project.
- Before returning to Chad I will also prepare various teaching materials in English for a range of ages, which can be worked from when in Chad to be translated into French and Arabic and delivered at the local schools.
- In 2020 with the continued support of GCF we would like to fit more Ossiunits, and continue to do so until 25 giraffe at Zakouma are monitored in this way; if the population is indeed ~1200, to have 25 individuals fitted with units, would represent ~2% of the total population.
- Continue the projects previous aims, and collect samples for the new scientific collaborations.

Many thanks to the Project's partners APN and GCF as well as the first field season's supporters The Tigerwood Fund, The Rufford Foundation, Woburn Safari Park, Opticron and IDEA Wild.

