

CONSERVATION ENDOWMENT FUND

Saharan Carnivore Study in Niger

CEF update



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Sahara Conservation Fund (SCF) has identified the Termit/Tin Toumma region of Niger as one of the last refuges for an entire suite of Sahelo-Saharan wildlife under threat, including: addax antelope (2/3 of the remaining wild population is found here); Dama gazelles; Nubian and Sudan bustards; fennec, pale, and Rüppell's foxes; golden jackal; striped hyena and desert cheetah. SCF's field work over the past several years has brought us a better understanding of the population dynamics and ecology of the antelope in the region. However, very little is known about Saharan carnivores, and conflict with humans threatens conservation efforts.

A viable reserve needs a full complement of native carnivores, but their impact on traditional human activities must be mitigated by balancing the needs of both. Thanks in part to a generous grant from AZA's Conservation Endowment Fund (CEF), SCF, Oxford University's Wildlife Conservation Research Unit (WildCRU) and the Saint Louis Zoo launched a survey of carnivore distribution and abundance, as well as programs with local people to investigate and mitigate livestock predation to achieve carnivore conservation. This two year pilot project in Niger is contributing to a better understanding of the distribution, abundance and ecology of several species. Since the project began in July 2009, 13 fennec, 11 Rüppell's and nine pale fox have been radio-collared, with nearly 600 locations of collared individuals recorded via radio telemetry to date. Camera trapping has provided good presence and abundance data for a number of species, including the first nocturnal photo of a Saharan cheetah in Niger. To date over 150 people living in Termit/Tin Toumma have been surveyed regarding attitude towards carnivores, losses to carnivores, livestock protection measures used and veterinary care available. Survey data will help inform the development of human/carnivore conflict mitigation strategies.

A more detailed report on progress to date can be had by contacting Bill Houston at houston@stlzoo.org.

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