

NEWS FROM AFRICAN PROTECTED AREAS

NAPA 211

CONSERVING NATURE IN AFRICA



THIS MONTH IN THE NAPA

EDITORIAL

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Discover our brand new tutorial on "Careers in conservation"...

MOOC, TUTOS AND ESSENTIALS

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Stay up to date with all the latest from our MOOCs, Tutorials, and Essentials, and join the platform at mooc-conservation.org.

YOUTH CONSERVATION

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In Togo, children from Sokodé visit Djamdè Park!

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P.7 TO 11 OUADI RIMÉ-OUADI ACHIM, TODAY

To conserve the reserve, we must manage what matters most, and ensure that local people have a stake in its future...



Careers in conservation... Could it be you?

By Geoffroy Mauvais
IUCN-Papaco coordinator

» You love nature. You want to contribute to its protection. But do you really know what kinds of careers are available in conservation?

When we think about conservation professionals, we often picture a ranger in the field, a biologist studying a species, or a protected area manager. Yet protecting nature today involves a remarkable diversity of skills, profiles and career paths.

Protecting a natural area, restoring an ecosystem, monitoring wildlife populations, working with local communities, managing data, raising public awareness, developing projects, securing funding, supporting public policies, organising responsible tourism... all these activities require professionals with very different skills and backgrounds.

This diversity is precisely what our new tutorial, **"Careers in conservation"**, aims to explore. It is now being made available on mooc-conservation.org.

The tutorial does not simply provide a list of jobs. Instead, it invites learners to explore the many different career pathways that exist in conservation. Through a range of professional fields and functions, it encourages them to reflect on their own interests, skills and aspirations, and on how they might find their place in the broad and evolving world of conservation.

Because there is no single "right" profile for working in conservation. You may be passionate about wildlife and choose to work in species management or monitoring. But you may also be more interested in people and communities, communication, project management, public policy, research, data, or nature-based solutions.

You may enjoy working outdoors, analysing information, working with others, sharing knowledge or finding practical solutions to complex problems.

And conservation careers are changing. The challenges we face: climate change, biodiversity loss, habitat fragmentation, pressure on natural resources and rapidly changing landscapes... increasingly require a wide range of skills and collaboration across disciplines.

The tutorial is therefore designed for students, young professionals, people considering a career change, and anyone who wants to better understand the conservation sector. Through concrete examples, short animations, questions and exercises, learners are encouraged to explore different professional pathways and ask themselves a simple question: **could this be me?**

The aim is not to choose a career for the learner. It is to provide the information and inspiration needed to better understand the possibilities and think about their own pathway.

So, whether you are studying environmental sciences, have recently graduated, are already working in conservation and considering your next step, or are simply curious about the people and professions behind conservation, we invite you to explore the tutorial.

You may discover a profession you had never heard of. You may find a new direction for your studies or career. Or you may simply confirm that the path you have chosen is the right one for you.

There are many careers in conservation. And there are just as many possible pathways into them.

Could one of them be yours? Discover our "Careers in conservation" tutorial on mooc-conservation.org.



OUR ONLINE COURSES: MOOCS, TUTORIALS AND ESSENTIALS

Our 10 MOOCs, 4 Essentials and 7 Tutorials are always open and available!



MOOC Conservation

Free online training courses for amateurs and professionals in conservation and protected areas

Start learning →

To follow the ESSENTIAL MOOCs and Courses, you will need an Internet connection and access to a computer, tablet or smartphone.



MOOC Conservation is the platform that hosts IUCN-Papaco's online training courses, developed in partnership with the Senghor University, in Alexandria (Egypt).

See you on:

www.mooc-conservation.org

THE MOOCS THEME-BASED TRAINING

MOOC BUNDLE FOR THE ONLINE CERTIFICATE

The following MOOCs must be completed to sit the exam and obtain the Online certificate in protected area conservation:



PROTECTED AREA MANAGEMENT



ECOLOGICAL MONITORING



LAW ENFORCEMENT



SPECIES CONSERVATION



VALORISATION OF RESOURCES AND SUSTAINABLE TOURISM



NEW TECHNOLOGIES



MARINE PROTECTED AREAS

[Learn more about the online certificate here](#)

Next date: 2nd of December 2026 for English speakers

OTHER MOOCS AVAILABLE ON MOOC-CONSERVATION.ORG



GOVERNANCE OF PROTECTED AREAS



COMMUNITIES AND CONSERVATION



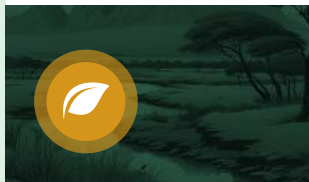
THE ONE HEALTH APPROACH

TUTORIALS TECHNICAL TRAINING



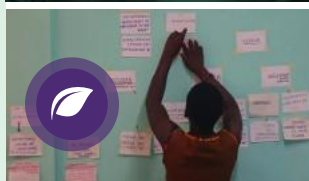
NATURE CONSERVATION EDUCATION

For teachers, educators, parents, etc., to provide them with the tools and methods they need to teach the children in their care about nature conservation...



WORDS OF CONSERVATION

An interactive glossary with 100 essential words and expressions you need to know if you want to conserve nature and understand PA management...



MANAGEMENT PLANNING OF PROTECTED AREAS

A step-by-step guide to organising the preparation, implementation and evaluation of your protected area management plan...



HUMAN-WILDLIFE CONFLICT

A simple method for understanding, anticipating and responding to conflicts between humans and wildlife...



RESTORING PROTECTED AREAS

A practical guide explaining the different steps to follow to prepare, restore and assess a damaged protected area...



SUSTAINABLE FINANCE FOR PROTECTED AREAS

How to sustain your protected area and develop a powerful business plan...



MANGROVE RESTORATION

A practical guide to plan, implement and assess, step by step, your mangrove restoration project...

MOOC CONSERVATION IS SUPPORTED BY THE
FONDS FRANÇAIS POUR L'ENVIRONNEMENT MONDIAL



IT STARTS IN OCTOBER!

TUTORIAL: CAREERS IN CONSERVATION**OUR NEW ONLINE TRAINING COURSE STARTS ON 5 OCTOBER!**

‘Careers in conservation’: what if your career began here?

Do you dream of working in nature conservation but don't know where to start? Do you have qualifications, certificates and experience, and are you wondering how to make the most of them? Good news: there isn't just one path to a career in conservation – there are many different ways in.



Our new online course, which is free and open to everyone, helps you gain a clearer understanding. Across four modules, you'll discover the wide range of careers in the sector, take stock of your skills and aspirations, and also explore the realities on the ground, including the challenges. Throughout the course, five characters (a young biologist, a nature ranger, a community organiser, a passionate farmer and a communications specialist) share their doubts and the choices they've made. You might just recognise yourself in one of them!

The reward: your own realistic and flexible action plan to move step by step towards a career in conservation. Your journey begins now.

👉 Join the course at mooc-conservation.org.

AND, AS ALWAYS... PODCASTS FOR INSPIRATION!

The podcast series “Les Rendez-vous de la Conservation” was launched in July 2024 and currently comprises more than 79 episodes.

Every week, we give a voice to a nature lover – whether an amateur or an expert – to share their commitment to and actions in support of the environment.

Do you have experience or expertise in the field of conservation and would like to share it? Please email us at info@youth-conservation.org.

Subscribe and give us a thumbs-up to support us on [YouTube](https://www.youtube.com) and [Spotify](https://www.spotify.com). Enjoy listening! FRENCH ONLY



2026
MOOC CONSERVATION
CALENDAR

2nd of December: Online certificate exam for English speakers

>> [Click here](#) to learn more and apply!

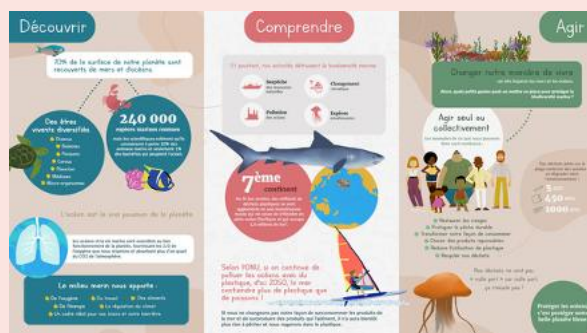
YOUTH CONSERVATION

DEDICATED RESOURCES FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE TO RAISE AWARENESS AND INSPIRE THEM TO TAKE ACTION!

On the Youth Conservation environmental education platform, you will find dedicated resources tailored to children and young people, available in a variety of formats to suit different needs. Everything is 100% free and open access, and the content is offered in several languages, including national and regional languages. Please feel free to share widely to help educate, raise awareness, and inspire younger generations to take action!



Tailored video learning pathways



Clear, illustrated posters



Audio content available on [Spotify](#) and [YouTube](#)

YOUTH CONSERVATION - VOICES FROM THE FIELD IN TOGO, 17 CHILDREN FROM SOKODÉ VISIT DJAMDÈ PARK

On 19 September, 17 children and young people from Sokodé walked 99 kilometres to Djamdè Park (Kara Region, Togo). They were accompanied by three supervisors. They are all from the Peace Home Centre for Child and Youth Development (CDEJ) in Komah, and are aged between 10 and 19.

To welcome them, Luc Siou, a volunteer environmental educator and Youth Conservation mentor, began by laying the foundations: why we need to conserve nature, what it provides us with on a daily basis (its goods and services), and the links that bind humans to their environment.



Then came the moment everyone had been waiting for: the guided tour. At the end of the trail, the children were able to see elephants and lions. For many of them, these animals had previously been nothing more than pictures in a book or stories they'd heard. Seeing them in the flesh helps them understand why we must protect them, and what nature would lose if they were to disappear.

This day illustrates what Youth Conservation tutors do across Africa and beyond: combining a simple explanation with a memorable experience, so that the desire to protect nature arises from an encounter rather than a lesson. Luc is part of a network of around 200 volunteer tutors, teachers, youth workers and educators who instil a love of nature in young people.

Do you also work with young people, whether at school or in your organisation? The 'Educating for Nature Conservation' tutorial is for you: [visit MOOC Conservation to take this tutorial.](#)

Would you like to join the Youth Conservation network of volunteer mentors? Send us your certificate of completion for the "[Nature Conservation Education](#)" tutorial, along with your full contact details and a covering letter, to info@youth-conservation.org.



OUADI RIMÉ-OUADI ACHIM (CHAD) FROM VISION TO VIABILITY

**Text and pictures from
John Newby/Sahara Conservation**

There are protected areas that exist clearly on the ground, and there are protected areas that exist mainly on paper. The Réserve de faune de Ouadi Rimé-Ouadi Achim, in central Chad, sits uneasily between the two.

Created in 1969 by Presidential Decree, the reserve was an act of conservation ambition on a scale rarely seen in Africa.

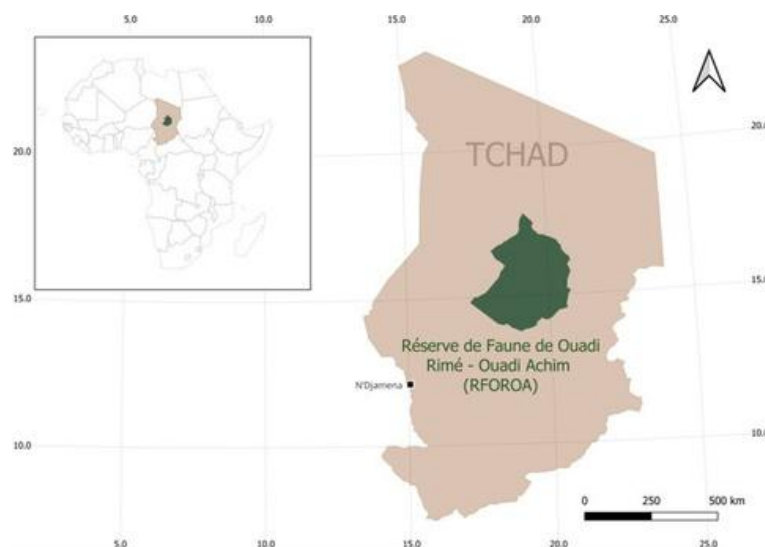
Covering 77,950 km² - around 6% of Chad's national territory or three times the size of Rwanda - it was designed to protect the great mobile wildlife of the northern Sahel and southern Sahara: addax, scimitar-horned oryx, dama gazelle, cheetah, ostrich and other species adapted to vast spaces, high temperatures, sparse resources and unpredictable rainfall.

The logic was sound. Wildlife in this part of the world cannot be conserved in small fenced blocks. It needs room to move. Rain may fall in one place and not another. Pasture appears, disappears and reappears elsewhere. Animals survive by tracking these shifting opportunities across enormous distances. In today's language, Ouadi Rimé-Ouadi Achim was conceived not merely as a reserve and protected area, but as a conservation landscape.

That vision was bold, and in many ways ahead of its time. However, translating it into practical long-term management was always going to be a challenge. The reserve was created with a relatively simple but distinctive legal regime. Hunting and harassment of wildlife, and the destruction of trees were prohibited; residents retained rights to grazing, collection of firewood and use of existing water points; and mortised access was subject to authorisation. As an IUCN Category IV faunal reserve, it was from the outset recognized to be a shared landscape.

That distinction matters. A Category II national park can often be managed through much tighter restrictions on access, settlement and resource use. A reserve like Ouadi Rimé-Ouadi Achim depends on something far more difficult: negotiated legitimacy. It must work not only ecologically, but socially and politically. It must be understood, accepted and useful to the people who live in and around it.

For many years, the reserve's sheer remoteness helped protect it. At the time of its creation, very few people had vehicles. Much of the area was waterless for months at a time. Modern firearms were uncommon. Hunting was mostly traditional, carried out on horseback or through communal net drives. The absence of permanent water limited human and livestock presence over large areas, leaving wildlife with access to extensive sub-desert grazing.



That world has gone.

The civil war of the late 1970s and early 1980s devastated the reserve's wildlife. Over the following decades, weak management, widespread poaching, including organized hunting parties from the Gulf states, pushed several species to extinction or near-extinction within the reserve. The scimitar-horned oryx disappeared from the wild. Addax, cheetah, wild dog and ostrich were lost. The dama gazelle, once abundant, was reduced to a remnant.



*Fixed dune habitat with bitter melon *Citrullus colocynthis*.*

At the same time, the landscape itself changed. Permanent wells and boreholes opened formerly waterless pastures to livestock. Settlement increased around water points. Wealthy absentee livestock owners emerged. Cheap motorbikes replaced horses as the vehicle of choice for both movement and poaching. Firearms became more common. Tractors facilitated agricultural encroachment. Tracks multiplied across the reserve, carrying traders, trucks, illegal firewood, gold miners and opportunistic hunters.



Wadi habitat during the short wet season.

In other words, the reserve did not simply suffer from lack of management. It was overtaken by the scale and speed of change in and around it.

And yet Ouadi Rimé-Ouadi Achim is not a failed idea. Far from it. Its recent conservation revival has been one of the most remarkable in the Sahel.

The reintroduction of the scimitar-horned oryx, beginning in 2016, has transformed both the reserve's visibility and its prospects. More than 300 founder animals have now been released, and the wild population is growing steadily. Addax and dama gazelle have followed. National and international support has increased. The reserve now has, for the first time, a ten-year management plan.

This is a genuine achievement. But it should not obscure the central issue: the reserve remains almost impossible to manage effectively as one uniform, largely open-use protected area.

Its boundaries are poorly known and largely intangible. In practice, many of its legal provisions have proved extremely difficult to enforce across an area of this scale. For many local users, the direct value of the reserve as an institution remains limited or insufficiently visible.

For them, it is not a clearly bounded conservation area, but part of a broader pastoral and economic landscape on which they depend.



North Sahelian sub-desert habitat dominated by Acacia raddiana and Panicum turgidum.



Typical Sahelian habitat dominated by Acacia and Balanites trees.

This is not a criticism of local communities. It is a recognition of reality. Immediate livelihood and security needs understandably carry greater weight than diffuse or long-term conservation benefits. Although people may support oryx restoration, bushfire control, habitat rehabilitation or improved pasture management, the broader value of a vast gazetted reserve is harder to appreciate when its benefits

are distant or insufficiently visible and its constraints more immediate.

The uncomfortable question, then, is this: if we were designing a protected area today to conserve the wildlife of this region, would we recreate Ouadi Rimé–Ouadi Achim exactly as it was drawn in 1969?

Almost certainly not.

A reserve of nearly 78,000 km² is too large, too complex and too transformed to be managed as a single unit with equal attention everywhere. Key wildlife areas remain. Important wadis still function as biodiversity reservoirs, ecological corridors and green barriers against desert encroachment. Vast pastoral resources remain essential to local livelihoods and the national economy.



Arab women collecting firewood.

But other parts of the reserve have changed so profoundly that their present ecological condition, conservation priorities and management needs are very different from those envisaged more than half a century ago.



Dorcas gazelle in typical Sahelian grassland habitat.

The answer is not to abandon the reserve. Nor is it to pretend that the whole area can be managed uniformly. The answer is to focus.

The most promising way forward is the one now reflected in the reserve's ten-year management plan: zoning.

This means identifying priority conservation areas, defining agreed conditions of

access and use, and concentrating management effort where it can make the greatest difference. It also means accepting that management objectives and intensity will differ between zones. That may be uncomfortable, but it is preferable to spreading scarce resources so thinly that nothing is managed properly.

Zoning is not a retreat from ambition. It is a condition for effectiveness. For mobile Sahelian wildlife, conservation zones still need to be large. The reintroduced scimitar-horned oryx population already uses around 20% of the reserve — roughly 15,000 km². That is larger than many national parks. But it is still a more realistic management proposition than attempting to control the whole reserve as if all areas were equally important, equally intact and equally manageable.

The reserve's future therefore depends on striking a difficult balance. Conservation must be ecologically credible, large enough to sustain mobile wildlife and resilient enough to cope with erratic rainfall and shifting pasture. It must also be administratively realistic, financially manageable and operationally deployable. Above all, it must be socially legitimate. Local communities and authorities must see the reserve not as an external imposition or an inherited anomaly, but as a framework that can support both conservation and livelihoods.



Arab herder watering livestock in temporary wet season pool.

This is where Ouadi Rimé–Ouadi Achim still matters profoundly. Even if not every hectare can be managed intensively, the reserve provides a legal, geographic, ecological and social framework. It gives the landscape a name and an identity. It creates a platform for communication, public awareness, political engagement and fundraising. It anchors major conservation initiatives in a recognisable place. It allows government, communities and partners to discuss land, wildlife, water, pasture and development within a shared spatial reference.

That framework should not be discarded lightly. But it must be made functional.

Ouadi Rimé–Ouadi Achim was born from a historic vision: that the great desert and Sahelian wildlife of Chad needed space to survive. That vision remains valid. What has changed is the world around it. The task now is not to defend the reserve as a perfect inheritance from the past, but to reshape it into a practical conservation instrument for the future.

The reserve will not be saved by lines on a map. Nor will it be saved by nostalgia for a landscape that no longer exists. It will be saved by clear priorities, negotiated zones, credible management, local legitimacy and sustained investment.

To conserve Ouadi Rimé–Ouadi Achim, we must stop trying to manage everything equally. We must manage what matters most, manage it well, and ensure that the people who share this landscape have a stake in its future.

Disclaimer

The views expressed in this article are entirely my own. They do not necessarily reflect the views, policies or positions of Sahara Conservation, its staff, Board, donors, partners, or any government or institutional bodies with which it works.



Scimitar-horned oryx in typical Sahelian grassland dominated by annual and perennial grasses.

QUOTE OF THE MONTH

— Vandana Shiva, environmental activist and advocate for the rights of rural communities.

READING OF THE MONTH

WILDLIFE CONSERVATION AND AGRICULTURE DEVELOPMENT IN AFRICA

BY EDWARD D. WIAFE

This book delves into the heart of human-wildlife conflicts and the tensions between food security and conservation, in the light of SDGs 15 (Life on Land) and 2 (Zero Hunger).

Far from pitting these two issues against one another, the authors demonstrate that another path exists: community partnerships, sustainable agriculture, indigenous knowledge and informed governance. Protecting nature and feeding people are not two separate struggles, but a single equation to be solved together. Essential reading for researchers, decision-makers and conservation professionals.



IN THE NEWS

5 MAJOR NEWS IN THE CONSERVATION WORLD

African and international figures name 22 baby gorillas in Rwanda

A symbolic ceremony highlighting the success of mountain gorilla conservation and political commitment to biodiversity. A strong signal for tourism and the protection of Rwanda's national parks.



. Gabon launches a \$200 million programme to protect its biodiversity

A major new funding initiative dedicated to the management of protected areas, the fight against poaching and the development of sustainable alternatives for local communities. Gabon reaffirms its leadership in conservation in Central Africa.

. DRC: Surge in poaching and trafficking of protected species amid the Ebola outbreak

The health crisis is exacerbating the pressure on wildlife and undermining surveillance in several protected areas. The authorities and their partners are calling for increased patrols and cross-border cooperation.

State-NGO co-management of protected areas in Africa: an average 55 per cent reduction in deforestation

A study of 127 partnerships across 16 countries shows that long-term joint management significantly reduces deforestation, particularly in highly vulnerable areas. This is a promising model for achieving the 30 per cent protected area target.

. Africa: over 9,300 protected areas cover nearly 15 per cent of the continent; the target is 30 per cent

A progress report on the network of African protected areas and the challenges relating to funding, governance and community involvement. Public-private partnerships and community-based management are highlighted as key drivers.

CONTACTS - PAPACO

THE OPINIONS EXPRESSED IN THIS LETTER DO NOT NECESSARILY REFLECT THOSE OF IUCN