



**For more information or to set up interviews, please contact:**

Alistair Burnett IUCN Media Relations, Tel: +41 79 452 2872, email: [alistair.burnett@iucn.org](mailto:alistair.burnett@iucn.org) ;  
Simon Bradley, Communications Officer, SOS - Save Our Species, Tel: +41 78 711 6508, email:  
[simon.bradley@iucn.org](mailto:simon.bradley@iucn.org) ;

Photos are available at/from Dropbox: <http://bit.ly/1q0pfmx>

**Embargoes until 00.01 GMT 6 May 2016**

## Saharan Addax antelope faces imminent extinction

**Gland, Switzerland, 4 May, 2016, (IUCN)** - Regional insecurity and oil industry activities in the Sahara desert have pushed the Addax – a migratory species of desert-adapted antelope - to the very knife-edge of extinction according to a recent survey which found only three surviving in the wild.

An extensive survey in March across key Addax habitat identified just three remaining individuals, report experts from the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN); two of its Members working in the region - the Sahara Conservation Fund (SCF) and the NGO Noé, as well as the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS).

National legislation in Niger fully protects the Addax, meaning hunting and the removal of live Addax for any reason are strictly forbidden. It is also protected under the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS) because historical habitat extends into neighbouring Chad. Yet the Addax has suffered massive disturbance from oil installations in Niger operated by the China National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC) and associated encroachment of desert-going lorries and bulldozers. Moreover, the assignment of military personnel to protect the oil industry means illegal hunting by soldiers has increased poaching levels considerably in its last remaining haven, and Africa's largest protected area, the Termit & Tin-Toumma National Nature Reserve in eastern Niger.

**Dr. Jean-Christophe Vié, Deputy Director of IUCN Global Species Programme** says, "*We are witnessing in real time the extinction of this iconic and once plentiful species – without immediate intervention, the Addax will lose its battle for survival in the face of illegal, uncontrolled poaching and the loss of its habitat. On behalf of all concerned parties we are recommending a set of emergency measures to help save the Addax from imminent extinction.*"

The measures proposed by the experts from the conservation groups\* include securing the remaining population of Addax; stopping poaching by soldiers and engaging with CNPC to cooperate on preventing the extinction of the Addax; as well as reinforcing the existing population through the introduction of captive-bred stock.

The increase in poaching also comes against a backdrop of escalating insecurity across the region. The collapse of Libya in 2011 saw an exodus of militia with arms and 4x4 vehicles to neighbouring countries into areas harbouring important wildlife populations. This also fuelled subsequent insurgencies in Mali and northern Nigeria which have added to the instability, and the formerly remote habitats of the Addax have become major crossroads for the illicit trade of wildlife, arms, drugs and migrants.

**Dr. Thomas Rabeil of the Sahara Conservation Fund** says, "*Those with commercial interests in the desert could make important contributions to the protection of the Addax by cooperating with the wildlife authorities and by adopting more sensitive practices, becoming stakeholders in the management of protected areas and by sharing sightings of these elusive animals with conservationists.*"

The situation for the Addax has deteriorated precipitously since 2010 when an initial round of surveys estimated the population at 200 animals. Since then, conservationists have designed a three-pronged action plan to stabilise the situation by locating the remaining Addax and assessing their status. The plan aims to boost ongoing efforts to build the capacity of Niger's wildlife service to protect the Addax and manage the Termit & Tin Toumma Reserve in close collaboration with the local population. The third, critical part of the plan is to engage with the Niger authorities and Chinese business interests to bring poaching under control and minimise the impact of oil-related activities, especially on prime Addax habitat.

**Arnaud Greth, Chairman of Noé**, says, "*Working in coordination with the Ministry of Environment, Noé has*

*focused on reinforcing the capacities of the Management Unit in the Termit & Tin Toumma Protected Area and supporting Niger's conservation policy to strengthen Addax conservation in the field. But human pressures are increasing faster than we can adapt given the current level of resource support for the Addax and the large distribution range of the Addax in the largest terrestrial protected area in Africa."*

## ENDS

### Additional quotes

**Dr. David Mallon, Chair of the IUCN Antelope Specialist Group** says, *"We are gravely concerned about this unfolding wildlife disaster in the desert. This species is simply unable to cope with the current levels of disturbance and illegal killing. Without urgent coordinated action at all levels we will very soon witness its demise"*.

**Dr. Jean-Christophe Vié, Deputy Director of IUCN's Species Programme and Director of its SOS initiative** adds, *"We have prioritised funding for emergency intervention with the Addax because of the crisis engulfing it. Unfortunately it is not the only species in the Sahara and Sahel regions under threat from human disturbance, habitat degradation and hunting: Cheetahs, Dama Gazelles and the Slender-horned gazelle are all hot on the heels of this desert icon."*

**Dr Bradnee Chambers of CMS** adds, *"The prospect of losing the Addax from the wild is most disturbing. CMS has long been engaged in efforts to conserve Sahelo-Saharan antelopes in cooperation with others such as the European Commission and the Fonds français pour l'environnement mondial. CMS is therefore calling for the support of the leaders of both Niger and Chad to increase the presence of wildlife rangers in key areas and to use their convening powers to bring all stakeholders- including oil companies- together to adopt meaningful action plans to halt the decline of the Addax and associated species before it is too late"*.

### Further information

Extensive aerial and ground surveys funded in part by IUCN's SOS – Save Our Species initiative and Saint Louis Zoo and performed by SCF during March 2016 indicated the Addax was facing imminent extinction, however. Using cutting-edge Intelligence Reconnaissance and Surveillance (IRS) technologies, including infra-red capture and ultra-high resolution cameras capable of distinguishing species from the air, the survey covered more than 3,200km of transects across key Addax habitat using a C-208 Cessna Caravan aircraft hired from the Niger air force. Unfortunately, researchers could not identify one animal following 18 hours of flight time.

Meanwhile the ground team searched over 700km of prime Addax habitat and other areas where others had seen Addax tracks during the previous six months. After following some tracks for over 10km, the ground team confirmed sightings of one small group: three very nervous Addax individuals.

Several species of antelope once occurred in large numbers across vast tracts of the Sahara desert and surrounding Sahelian grasslands. In the recent past, over a million Scimitar-horned oryx ranged across North Africa from the Atlantic to the River Nile for example. However, the species had disappeared from the wild by the 1990s because of uncontrolled hunting and loss of habitat. Now one more of its close relatives – the iconic Addax - is perilously close to sharing that fate.

\*Proposed conservation actions include:

1. Monitoring and securing remaining populations of addax.
2. Stopping hunting by members of military escorts employed to protect CNPC assets and personnel in the region.
3. Engaging with CPNC to cooperate in the emergency conservation efforts required to save the Addax from extinction.
4. Encouraging statutory agencies, communities, NGOs, and commercial operators with interests in key wildlife areas to work together to achieve conservation goals.
5. Increasing the presence and effectiveness of rangers for protecting antelope and other species in key areas, including employment of community wildlife monitoring scouts.
6. Reinforcement of existing populations through reintroduction from captive-bred stock
7. Raising awareness of the plight of Saharan antelopes locally and globally to support conservation efforts.

Wildlife conservation in the Sahara is largely neglected compared to sub-Saharan Africa. However, a diversity of specially adapted and endemic species is found there. A high proportion of the Sahara's large mammals, including antelopes and cheetah are threatened with extinction.

The Addax *Addax nasomaculatus*, is physiologically and behaviourally adapted to living in the harsh desert environment. This little known, elusive and irreplaceable species is in danger of extinction because of over-hunting and the degradation, fragmentation and loss of its habitat.

### Notes to editors

**About IUCN**

IUCN is a membership Union composed of both government and civil society organisations. It harnesses the experience, resources and reach of its 1,300 Member organisations and the input of some 15,000 experts. IUCN is the global authority on the status of the natural world and the measures needed to safeguard it.

[www.iucn.org](http://www.iucn.org)  
<https://twitter.com/IUCN/>

**About IUCN's Antelope Specialist Group**

The Antelope SG is the world's leading body of scientific and practical expertise on the status and conservation of all antelope species. It is a global network of specialists concerned with the conservation, monitoring, management, and study of antelopes. ASG is one of more than 120 Specialist Groups that are part of the Species Survival Commission of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature.

**About The Sahara Conservation Fund (SCF)**

The Sahara Conservation Fund (SCF) is an international non-governmental organization established specially to conserve the wildlife of the Sahara desert and bordering Sahelian grasslands. [www.saharaconservation.org](http://www.saharaconservation.org)

**About Noé**

Noé is a French NGO whose mission is biodiversity conservation. Present in ten countries and with a strong team of employees and volunteers, Noé develops programmes either in France and at the international level. [www.noe.org](http://www.noe.org)

**About SOS - Save Our Species**

SOS - Save Our Species initiative is a grant-making mechanism funded by IUCN, the GEF and the WB and managed by IUCN which manages a portfolio of priority species conservation projects implemented by existing NGOs working on the frontlines of conservation issues worldwide. [www.SaveOurSpecies.org](http://www.SaveOurSpecies.org)

[www.sospecies.org/sos\\_projects/mammals/addax/](http://www.sospecies.org/sos_projects/mammals/addax/)

[www.sospecies.org/sos\\_projects/mammals/addax\\_and\\_dama\\_gazelle/](http://www.sospecies.org/sos_projects/mammals/addax_and_dama_gazelle/)

**About the Convention on Migratory Species**

As an environmental treaty under the aegis of the United Nations Environment Programme, CMS provides a global platform for the conservation and sustainable use of migratory animals and their habitats. CMS brings together the States through which migratory animals pass, the Range States, and lays the legal foundation for internationally coordinated conservation measures throughout a migratory range. [www.cms.int](http://www.cms.int)