

Three-year population study supports fight to save Cameroon's Kordofan giraffe

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Camera trap image of Kordofan giraffe in Bénoué National Park, Cameroon.
Credit: Bristol Zoological Society

Crucial new data about the numbers of Critically Endangered Kordofan giraffe living within Cameroon's Bénoué National Park has been released, supporting conservation efforts to save the subspecies from extinction.

Researchers from the University of Bristol and Bristol Zoological Society have carried out a three-year study using imagery of giraffe from a variety of sources, including camera traps, to establish how many of the highly threatened mammals remain within the park.

Their findings, which have been [published](#) in the *African Journal of Ecology*, present the first reliable estimate of giraffe [population](#) size for the region and will help conservationists monitor the threats they are facing.

The paper concluded that as few as 27 individuals remain within the park, highlighting the vital importance of ongoing efforts by Bristol Zoological Society and others to minimize threats from poaching and mounting human pressures.

Giraffe in the park are a target for [illegal hunting](#), which poses a serious threat to the population. An alarming recent study, also led by Bristol Zoological Society and University of Bristol, found that without intervention, poaching of just two Kordofan giraffe per year could result in extinction of the population in just 15 years.

The Society has been working to conserve giraffe in Cameroon since 2017. It is thought there are fewer than 2,000 Kordofan giraffe remaining in the wild—a decline of 85% since the 1980s.

The paper's lead author, Connor Parks, undertook the study as part of his Master's degree in Global Wildlife Health and Conservation at Bristol Vet School, in conjunction with teaching partner Bristol Zoological

Society. Connor is among more than 400 students who annually undertake one of the six degrees the Society offers, in partnership with UWE, the University of Bristol and SGS College.

Parks explained, "Our study has shown a significant population of Kordofan giraffe still occur within the park, with many more living in the surrounding landscape. It also emphasizes that continued [conservation efforts](#) are vital if we are to further support the subspecies in Cameroon. This should include strengthening existing anti-poaching regulations and protecting wildlife movement corridors."

Dr. Caspian Johnson, a [conservation](#) scientist and lecturer at Bristol Zoological Society said, "Habitat degradation and illegal hunting has already seen the loss of cheetah, black rhino, and all resident elephants from Bénoué National Park. It is paramount we do not lose another precious species from this area.

"These studies provide us with the crucial baseline data needed to determine how giraffe population size and structure may change in the future. This will help us inform the conservation action and [management practices](#) needed to protect [giraffe](#) in Bénoué National Park."

More information: Connor Parks et al, Preliminary population estimate of Kordofan giraffe (*Giraffa camelopardalis antiquorum*) in two areas of the Benoué complex, Cameroon, *African Journal of Ecology* (2023). [DOI: 10.1111/aje.13249](https://doi.org/10.1111/aje.13249)

Provided by University of Bristol

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