

# Translocations of Addax & Oryx in Tunisia-February 2007

WAY BACK OF ADDAX TO THE TUNISIAN SAHARA :

FIRST STEP TO THE RESTAURATION OF ADDAX ALGAZELLE AND SCIMITAR ORYX'S WILD POPULATION IN THE GRAND ORIENTAL ERG , BORDER OF THE BIG SAND DUNES BETWEEN TUNISIA AND ALGERIA

**A significant translocation operation of Addax and Scimitar Oryx was organized in Tunisia between February 18<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup> 2007 , within the framework of the Concerted CMS Sahel-Saharan Antelopes Action and the ASS CMS/FFEM project.**

The Scimitar Oryx , whose the permanent or temporal historical area presence involves the whole Saharan and Sub-Saharan North Africa , between Atlantic and Nile , is extinct in its wild state since the 80s . The Addax , this tall antelope from the sand dunes in the Sahara , is now represented by only one viable population of some 200-400 individuals , located between Nigeria and Chad . Both of them disappeared from the steppes and Tunisian desert since the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century , they have been reintroduced in 1985 , from European zoos , in the vast enclosed zone (2000 HA) of Bou Hedma National Park, in the central region of Gafsa . With a population of 130 Oryx (2006) and around 50 Addax , the results achieved until now are remarkable . The Tunisian authorities are actually hardly trying to extend the limits of the protected area (2000 ha for a total area of more than 16.000 ha).

On one hand , if the middle of the steppes and the afforestation of *Acacia raddiana* , amazingly preserved and restored to Bou Hedma Park , are an appropriate environment for the Scimitar Oryx , on the other hand it is not the biologic habitat for the Addax . However , the Tunisian national strategy for the restoration of the large fauna of desert environment foresees the reintroduction of these two species in a protected place into the Southern .

To answer to this commitment , a large catching and translocation operation was organized by the DGF ( Direction Générale des Forêt de Tunisie) with the technical and financial support of the CMS , through the project co-financed by the FFEM (Fond Français Pour l'Environnement Mondial).

Such an operation would not have been done without the participation of several partners for this project , especially the RBINS (The Royal Belgian Institute of Natural Sciences) , the IGF ( Institut pour la Gestion de la Faune Sauvage) and the ZSL ( London Zoological Society).

During this operation , 20 Addax and 10 Oryx will be catch . For each animal is made a technical card . Each animal is individually marked , blood sample are taken , that will establish among others , the identity card of each one and know the genetic base of the founders members in the different protected areas of the southern . Biometrics measure are taken , a photos album is created , each animal is weighted , finally waked up and placed in an appropriate box .

The set of these manipulations is on an average around 20 minutes by animal , but it requires the help of numerous person. It must be done quickly ,an anesthesia is always a dangerous moment and it cannot be prolonged with impunity . Then the boxes are leaded onto the trucks going straight in the South . It is a long way , between 300 and 400 kilometers depending on the regions

February 23<sup>rd</sup> , a first group of 15 Addax , 5 males and 10 females , went to Djebil National Park , at the South of Douz . A second group , made up of 3 females and 2 males , went to Senghar National Park, a new Saharan park of which the superficies, still in negotiation at the national level , should be 250.000 ha.

With 10 Scimitar Oryx caught , 3 males and 5 females will go to the Dghoumès National Park , at the Chott al Jarid 's border ,close to Tozeur , one adult male will join two females in a independent zone of Bou Hedema park

The translocation operation is a great success : all caught animals have arrived safe and sound in different acclimatizing enclosures , on the level of each protected area in the South. This operation also allowed to organize , among other things a study travel for 6 professionals of the Sahel-Saharan antelopes conservation , coming from Morocco , Algeria and Senegal . This travel has created bonds between different projects and initiatives in various place of these species repartition area

But the main objective of this program is without any doubt to light up the Grand Erg Oriental .Effectively , the arrival of Addax to the Grand Erg Oriental represents an historical step to an ambitious conservation program of the large Saharan

wildlife . That big transboundary zone is a huge field of dunes separated between Tunisia and Algeria ,where a wonderful diversity of species not well known is still represented , whose the jewel is without any doubt the Gazelle of dunes , a little white Gazelle, typically Saharan , really related to the sand desert and characteristic of the central Sahara . It should be present today only in the middle of the graveness of its historical reputation , that means in the Grand Erg Occidental and the Grand Erg Oriental , in Algeria and Tunisia

The Addax's reintroduction should allow to obtain the authorities' adhesion , a large audience , and local communities for a vast conservation and sustainable development program in this exceptional zone.

It is time to mobilize energies and finances , to show that the conservation and sustainable development in these arid parts of the world can stimulate the economy of these regions , to create new jobs thanks to ecotourism , and to develop the local communities' life that is often very disadvantaged .

Hopefully a new day comes for the large Sahel-Saharan wildlife , so roughly handle by man . The translocations , that just happened with success , takes on an essential symbolic benefit for Tunisia and international union for the conservation of nature.

**TRANSLOCATION D'ADDAX ET D'ORYX**  
un grand pas vers la restauration de la faune saharienne en Tunisie  
Février 2007

**CMS** **IGF** **IRSNB** **museum** **DGFTTunisie**

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