

8 November 2009

# Niger's giraffes stage a comeback

By Martin Plaut

BBC Africa analyst



Giraffes have been threatened by poaching and loss of habitat

**The giraffe population of Niger, which was on the verge of extinction just 10 years ago, is now on the rise and moving into new habitats.**

From a herd of 50 animals, careful conservation supported by Niger's government has seen their numbers rise to around 200.

Once, thousands of giraffes roamed across tracts of West Africa from the deserts of Chad to the Atlantic coast.

They are a specific sub-species of giraffe that only inhabit the region.

These endangered animals are now only to be found in a tiny area close to Niger's capital, Niamey.

## Remarkable synergy

Julian Fennessy, of the Giraffe Conservation Foundation, says they live side by side with farmers just 60km (37 miles) from the city.

"You can see them cross the fields," he says.

"They are drinking from the same water pans as cattle. It is quite a remarkable synergy that the people have with the giraffe, and it is the last wildlife left in this whole area."

As their numbers rise, the giraffes are on the move.

They are looking for fresh ranges and keeping track of them is vital.

Conservationists have been given a grant to buy collars for the animals to monitor their movements.

The government of Niger has banned all hunting and believes the giraffes will help build the country's tourism industry.

From these herds it is hoped that the animals, which grow to up to 6m (19ft) tall, will rebuild

the population of the region.