



CHAD

# Zakouma

## National Park

3,054 km<sup>2</sup>

African Parks Project since 2010

Government Partner:  
The Republic of Chad

European Union (EU),  
Fondation Segré and U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS)  
were major funders in 2017





# Zakouma

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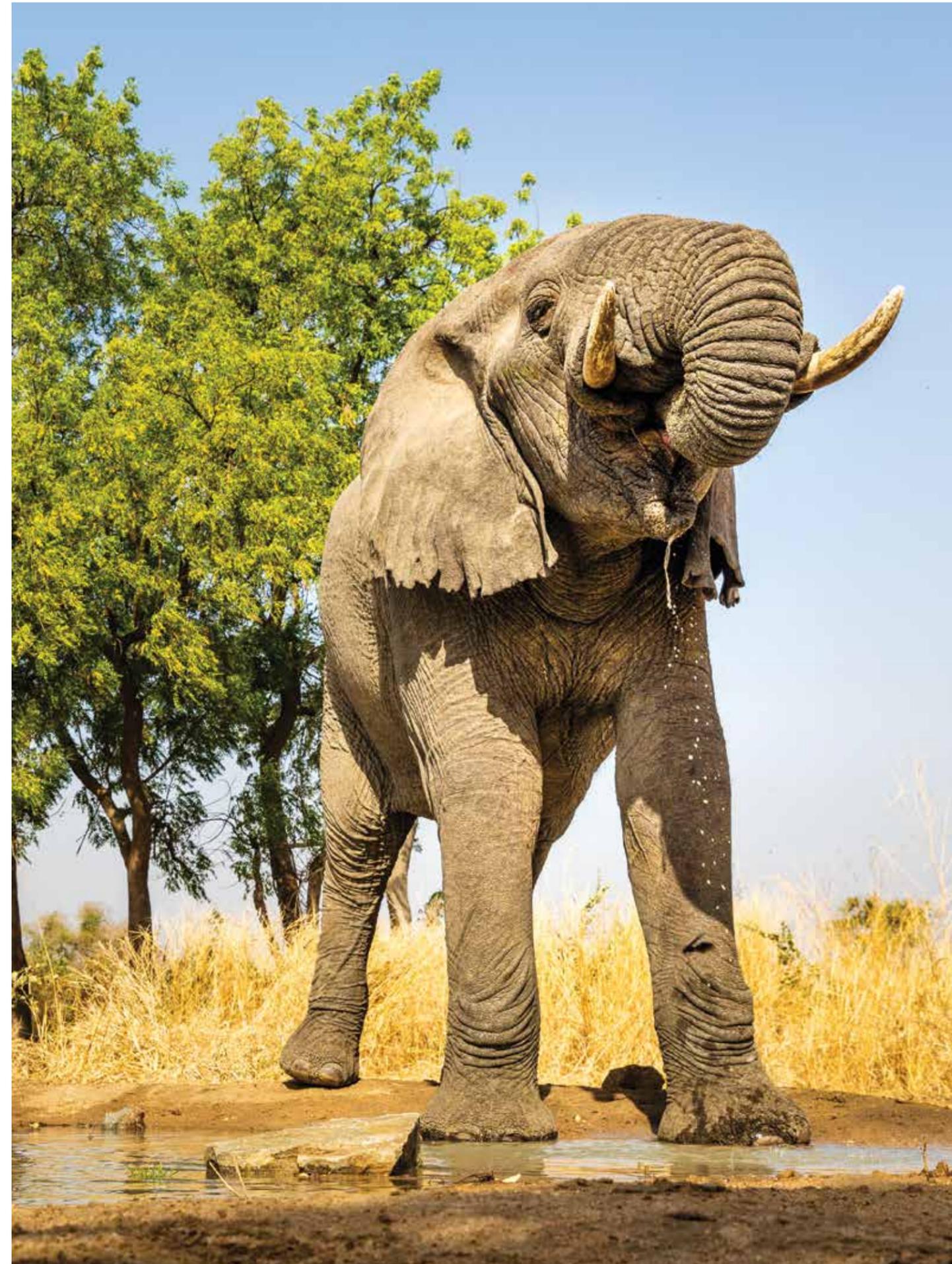
**CHAD** – Between 2002 to 2010, 95 percent of Zakouma’s elephants were poached – almost 4,000 were killed for their ivory by men on horseback, often taking out multiple family units at the same time. These poachers were also leaving a path of destruction and instability for the local communities in their wake. In 2010, African Parks, on invitation by the Chadian Government, signed a long-term agreement to manage Zakouma and stop the bloodshed. Our first step was to overhaul law enforcement, but it wasn’t for the faint of heart. In 2012, six of our rangers were gunned down execution-style during their morning prayers. But our rangers, with their indomitable spirits, didn’t give up. Because of their efforts and effective community work, only 24 known elephants have been lost to poaching since 2010. Along with providing law enforcement, we built ‘Elephant Schools’ for local communities, providing desks, blackboards and teachers’ salaries, helping more than 1,500 children get an education. We built airstrips, and VHF radios were installed so community members could contact our control room with information about any illegal activity. People were employed to help manage the park, making Zakouma one of the largest employers in the region. With law enforced and security reclaimed, tourists began to visit, delivering needed revenue back to the park and local communities.

And then something miraculous happened. Elephants were able to be elephants once again, and for the first time in years, they began to breed and could raise their young. In early 2017, we counted 81 calves under the age of three. In 2011, we counted one. Elephants have now surpassed 527 individuals and are on the rise for the first time in a decade. In October, we doubled our footprint around Zakouma by signing an MOU with the Government to manage the Greater Zakouma Ecosystem which includes Siniaka Minia Faunal Reserve and other critical corridors for wildlife. The Chadian Government also signed an MOU with the South African Government enabling us to translocate a founder population of rhinos to Zakouma in 2018, entrusting us with the safety of this highly valued and endangered species. We’ve come a long way since 2010. The story of Zakouma is of a park rising from the ashes and becoming an unlikely tale of redemption, for people and animals alike.

## BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION

Zakouma’s elephants were on the increase in 2017 for the first time in over a decade. The population surpassed 527 individuals, and 81 elephant calves under the age of three years old were counted. One elephant bull died close to the park’s headquarters in September, and four old AK-47 bullets were found in the carcass, but it was unclear whether that was the cause of death. Additionally, four other carcasses were found of elephants that had died of natural causes, and the ivory was recovered. We concluded assisting the Ministry of Environment in establishing Chad’s National Elephant Strategy and will be involved in the implementation of the strategy in areas managed by African Parks within Chad. Preparations for the historic rhino

reintroduction to Zakouma, upon official request by His Excellency President Déby in 2015, were carried out throughout the year. This included the construction of the rhino sanctuary and holding bomas, as well as extending the rhino base airstrip for improved access and protection. A delegation made up of representatives from the South African Department of Environmental Affairs, South African National Parks, the Chadian Ministry of Environment and Fisheries and the South African Embassy in Chad visited the park in May to determine the suitability of Zakouma for rhinos. An MOU was subsequently signed in October between the Chadian Government and the South African Government to translocate a founder population of black rhinos in 2018; the species was last seen in Zakouma in the 1970s.



One of Zakouma’s bull elephants takes a slow drink at a watering hole. © Marcus Westberg

## LAW ENFORCEMENT

Refresher ranger training continued, with the focus on medical and rifle training provided by a team from the US Embassy and supported by US-AFRICOM, who were on site in Zakouma. The park's Intelligence Officer received training in Garamba National Park in the DRC, followed by Garamba's Anti-Poaching Information Coordinator continuing the training and implementing an intelligence database in Zakouma. Five rangers completed a Basic Combat Tracking course in Akagera, in Rwanda; and nine rangers graduated from a Basic Field Ranger training course to supplement the Mamba and horse patrol teams. In total 76 rangers were employed, conducting 14,803 patrol man-days, and 111 arrests were made through the year. Ranger equipment including uniforms, boots and tents, were purchased and received at the end of 2017. Support to the local environmental law enforcement officers, who are employees of the Government, continued with financial aid for patrols along the periphery of the park as well as patrols in the Bahr Salamat Game Reserve. Due to the terrain, horse patrols are an effective way to help monitor and patrol areas of the park, and three more horses were purchased to supplement the horse patrol teams, making it a complement of 40 horses in total. A consultant came to Zakouma in June to assess the equipment utilised by rangers for horse



Rangers maintained 0 elephants poached in the park since January 2016

patrols; as a result, new and improved saddles and saddle bags were designed and will be available in 2018.

## COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Sensitisation meetings with all relevant villages on the land-use plan were completed. While the park's boundary issue was resolved by the government in 2015, additional and stronger beacons were installed on the south-eastern park boundary, which was also enforced. Planting of crops was supposed to cease after the 2016 wet season. During the 2017 wet season, however, the planting of crops in the disputed area continued, with the Chadian Government trying to find alternative solutions. A meeting was held with the nomads, farmers, local government and other stakeholders to discuss the corridors used by the nomads for their return north at the end of the dry season to help minimise their impact.

More than 1,242 children received an education in 2017 in schools built and teachers funded by African Parks; the park continued to build needed infrastructure for a secondary school in one village; six 'Secko' schools were supported by Zakouma, including employing a teacher for each school; and four 'Elephant Schools' continued to be supported. These schools are built efficiently, at a low cost, and for villages that currently have no schools, helping to advance



Children from a nomad community living near Zakouma receive an education for the first time, in an outdoor classroom. © Marcus Westberg

the 'Elephant School' programme. An environmental education consultant visited Zakouma at the beginning of this year to put in place an environmental education syllabus for the schools, and to further train the Extension Officers. Environmental awareness and educational visits by 3,546 school children and local villagers to the park continued staying in Camp Salamat, which is free for national visitors.

## PARK MANAGEMENT AND INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT

Key infrastructure developments included constructing the bomas for the rhinos' arrival and the rhino sanctuary. Fifteen ranger houses were built, and the construction of a secondary school began with foundations being laid and school benches constructed and painted in the Zakouma workshop. The school was built to the west of the park to complement the existing secondary school in the north of the park. The construction of an all-weather road, a small evacuation bridge and an airstrip were completed, providing improved access to assist with anti-poaching support in this area. One Toyota and one Nissan station wagon were converted to Law Enforcement wet-season vehicles. The park's boat was used intensively on the Salamat River during the wet season for access and patrolling while the aircraft was being repaired.

## TOURISM

During the four-month tourism season in 2017, Zakouma saw 2,225 tourists primarily from within Chad, Europe and the United States contributing US\$766,223, an 83 percent

increase from 2016. Numerous staff members who support and manage the three tourism options within Zakouma received hospitality training at the Hilton Hotel in N'Djamena. Two private guides also visited Zakouma in November 2017 to provide training for the drivers, community guides and Camp Tinga hospitality staff, and to assist with the design and construction of two game viewing hides. Rachel Nuwer visited the park and subsequently wrote an article about the rise of Zakouma, conservation and tourism for National Geographic; and a BBC crew visited in November to film a feature story that aired on the 27th of December for their end of year special, which was guest edited by His Royal Highness Prince Harry. The story featured the challenges and successes of Zakouma and aired on BBC Radio, television, and online.

## OBJECTIVES FOR 2018

- Continued emphasis on law enforcement with a strong focus on elephant and rhino protection and a target of zero loss
- Successfully reintroduce a founder population of black rhino
- Collar 30 additional elephants in the Greater Zakouma ecosystem
- Recruit a Field Operations Manager and a law enforcement team in the Siniaka Minia Faunal Reserve
- Increase park revenue through the implementation of the tourism development plan
- Implement the 11th European Development Fund investment plan in the Greater Zakouma complex



A group of Zakouma's rangers visit a community Chief. © Brent Stirton