

The last viable addax population in the wild facing oil activities in Niger

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The last viable addax population in the wild has found a refuge in the desert of Tin Toumma located in the eastern zone of Niger. This population has been studied since 2006 by the team of the sahelo-saharan antelope project. A specific methodology based on transects within the current distribution area has been implemented to monitor the nucleus of the addax population. The team has carried out aerial and road surveys to estimate the population and to analyze the distribution according to ecological and human factors. Oil prospection and exploitation have started in 2008 but have reached the core area of the distribution in 2010. The pressure of the permanent and unorganized truck movements of oil companies and militaries in charge of their security has increased last year and has become unacceptable for the addax population. In 2010, the impact of oil activities in the Tin Toumma was so important that a part of the addax population has been obliged to migrate further north looking for a compromise between human pressure and good pastures. Since the oil activities have started in the area, several attempts have been undertaken to warn the Nigerien partners about the threat for the wildlife and the addax in particular. If nothing is done to set up a conservation plan in close collaboration with oil companies settled in Tin Toumma desert, the last viable population of addax may collapse in the next years considering there are very few remaining suitable habitats around the current distribution area.