

Eudocras Tilonura rediscovered in Eritrea!

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ERITREA'S SUCCESSFUL CONTRIBUTION TO THE PRESERVATION OF NATURE KEEPS PAYING OFF GREATLY AS AN ENDANGERED ANTELOPE IS NOW REDISCOVERED IN GASH BARKA!



Mr. Ftsun Hagos, Director of Wildlife Conservation and Development Branch, MOA

One of the gazelle species categorized as endangered by IUCN's (International Union For the Conservation of Nature) Antelope Specialist Group, the Eritrean Gazelle, scientifically known as Eudocras Tilonura, was recently rediscovered in

Eritrea. The Eritrean Gazelle has not been recorded in Eritrea since Eritrea's Independence.

The rediscovery of this beautiful gazelle is the result of the efforts made by the Ministry of Agriculture (MOA) to preserve and safeguard Eritrea's green life. With the people's marvelous awareness the conservation of wild life has been very successful in the post-independence Eritrea.

The Eritrean Gazelle was spotted in April 2019 by Mr. Ftsum Hagos, Director of Wildlife Conservation and Development Branch at the MOA. "Though this is only a small group sighting of less than 2500 mature individuals, it is encouraging for wild observers who have been on the lookout for this species for three decades," writes Mr. Ftsum to the IUCN. He is our guest today.

-Thank you for your time. The rediscovery of the Eritrean Gazelle is making headlines these days; can you please say few words about it?

The rediscovery of the Eritrean Gazelle is nowadays attracting the attention of many wildlife observers as well as concerned wildlife organizations. The Eritrean Gazelle was an endangered species... there have been no registrations of this specific species in the past three decades. Now thanks to the actions of the Eritrean Government and its policies regarding wildlife this endangered animal is finally found again. And, of course, the people's awareness and understanding is certainly what has made this possible. The Eritrean community is extremely devoted to safeguarding its environment, and, therefore, Eritrea and its people have been making notable advances in the preservation of the ecosystem.

-Tell us a bit about the Eritrean Gazelle. When was it last spotted before its recent discovery?

People believe that it was last seen during the Italian and English colonization. The prolonged war has damaged the environment causing many species to be endangered. After Eritrea's Independence the preservation of nature was noted as part and parcel of the Government's National Development Plans. Finally, almost three decades later, a population of not more than 2500 mature individual Eudocras Tilonura has been rediscovered.

Now that local people and specialists have been informed, the Eritrean Forestry and Wildlife Authority is certain that further sighting will soon be confirmed and

that surveys as well as population studies can begin on a species whose total population is thought to be still in decline. There is so much work ahead of us.



-What is the situation of similar species in Eritrea?

The sighting of the Eritrea gazelle confirms that three gazelle species are present in Eritrea including the Eritrean Gazelle. We have the Soemmerring Gazelle found in the Dahlak Kebir Island with an estimated population of 9000. This figure reflects the estimation made in 2015 but currently Eritrea is endowed with the highest population of Soemmerring Gazelle. The second species would be the Dorcas Gazelle, geographically more dispersed across the northeastern area; it is a relatively common sight in Eritrea. The population of the Dorcas Gazelle is encouraging, especially in the Red Sea Region Coastal area and in the southwestern parts of Gash Barka. Moreover, The Buri Peninsula on the Red Sea is an affluent habitat for Soemmerring and Dorcas Gazelles. It seems very important for me to mention that this area is one of the designated national natural enclosures, one of the many protected natural areas of the country.

Taking into consideration the Government's commitment and the locals' support for wildlife conservation, Eritrea's approach to wildlife conservation has been creating comfort zones for the Soemmerring Gazelle, which is very important for the graceful, charismatic and resilient Eritrean Gazelle.

-What about the gazelles' home range? Is the Eritrean Gazelle strictly found only in Eritrea?

No, the home range of the Eritrean Gazelle is the Horn of Africa, particularly the north-west parts of Eritrea, Ethiopia's northern east parts and the Sudan's south-eastern parts.

-Besides the clear impact the rediscovery of the Eritrean Gazelle will have on a global scale and in Eritrea's wildlife conservation program, what else comes to your mind?

The rediscovery of the gazelle is so important to Eritrea. The gazelle is named after the country itself, so the attention it will attract will put a focus on Eritrea's history, culture, the people's lifestyle as well as its wildlife and current wildlife conservation policies and endeavors. It will also be a touristic attraction. There will be a lot of interested tourists and professionals that would love to have a close look at the gazelle.

-Any closing remarks?

The rediscovery of the Eritrean Gazelle is surely of global importance, so I would like to congratulate the Eritrean people for their respect of nature, wildlife and its preservation.