

**Activity report #1**  
Period 2022 - 2023  
August 2023

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# Caméléon Center Conservation

Swiss non-profit association <https://www.cameleoncenterconservation.org>



Dear partners and supporters of Chameleon Center Conservation,

We are pleased to present our first annual activity report, detailing our achievements since our association was founded a year ago. During this period, our unwavering commitment and the generous support of our benefactor members have enabled us to make significant progress in our chameleon conservation mission. Here's an overview of the highlights.

## Progress of the association

*"If you can dream  
it, you can do it".*

Walt Disney

On August 4, 2022, we officially founded our non-profit association at a founding meeting. Since then, we've worked hard to realize our vision of chameleon conservation.

Putting together a **team of enthusiasts and experts** proved crucial to our approach. The arrival of Dr. Olivier MARQUIS as Scientific Supervisor and Rayane VUILLEMIN as Project Manager brought invaluable expertise to our association, facilitating the coordination and implementation of our initiatives.

We have also been granted charitable **status** and tax exemption in Switzerland, a significant recognition that reinforces our credibility.

The signing of a **scientific cooperation application agreement** between our association, the Muséum national d'Histoire naturelle de Paris and the NGO l'Homme et l'Environnement in November 2022 has enabled us to roll out our first in situ project in Madagascar.



Olivier MARQUIS  
Scientific oversight

Sébastien METRAILLER  
President

Rayane VUILLEMIN  
Project manager

## Communication Strategies

To strengthen our presence and influence in the field of chameleon conservation, we have put in place effective communication strategies.

**Online presence:** We have developed an attractive and informative website, offering visitors easy access to information about our association, our projects and our conservation achievements. In addition, we have adopted an active presence on several social media platforms, raising awareness among a wide audience of the crucial importance of preserving chameleons in their natural habitat.

**Participation in official events:** During the year, we seized the opportunity to take part in four major events in Europe: the Symposium Zootechnie 2023 in February 2023 at the LANE (Laboratory of Artificial & Natural Evolution) laboratory of the University of Geneva (Switzerland), the annual symposium of the AFSA (Association Francophone des Soigneurs Animaliers) in March 2023 at Réserve Africaine de Sigean (France), the annual meeting of the AG Chamaeleons working group of the DGHT (Deutsche Gesellschaft für Herpetologie und Terrarienkunde e.V.) in May 2023 in Boppard am Rhein (Germany) and the "Amphibian and Reptile Taxon Advisor Group" meeting of EAZA (European Association of Zoos and Aquariums) in June 2023 at Biotropica in Normandy (France). These events were important platforms for sharing our knowledge, building partnerships and raising awareness among a wider audience of the crucial issues involved in chameleon conservation.

**Community involvement:** In order to mobilize and encourage everyone's involvement, we have opened subscriptions enabling individuals and institutions to become supporting members of our association. These memberships have played a vital role in supporting our activities and strengthening our community of passionate chameleon advocates.

**External recognition:** We were privileged to be highlighted through an article on the Wildlife Century blog, which enabled us to reach a wider audience and share our mission with other nature and conservation enthusiasts.

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*"The best time to act was 20 years ago. The second best time is now".*

Chinese proverb



**Official boutique:** To promote our cause and offer our supporters an opportunity to show their support, we launched an official boutique offering exclusive T-shirts in the Chameleon Center Conservation colors. This initiative was well received by our supporters, who were able to proudly display our colors while making a concrete contribution to our conservation actions.

These communication strategies have played an essential role in raising awareness, mobilizing and promoting chameleon conservation. We are determined to continue exploring new communication opportunities to increase our impact and achieve our goals of preserving these fascinating reptiles.

## Projects in progress

Our commitment to chameleon conservation has resulted in a number of specific projects, developed in collaboration with international experts. A total of eight projects were launched in our first year of existence, aimed at making a significant contribution to chameleon conservation.

Project "**Inventory and distribution of the Vohimana chameleons in Madagascar** [id projet 0.3]": In collaboration with the NGO "L'Homme et l'Environnement" and the MNHN Parc zoologique de Paris, this exciting project involved 54 forest expeditions between January and April 2023. During these missions, covering 212 km of trails, we were able to observe and identify 246 chameleons, representing 11 different species. A new species, previously unknown in the reserve, was discovered during this exciting research. We also collected essential environmental data, such as temperature, humidity and UV index, to better understand the preferential conditions of each species. These data are currently being processed for publication in a scientific journal. The first results were presented at the EAZA (European Association of Zoos and Aquariums) Amphibian and Reptile Taxon Advisor Group meeting in June 2023 at Biotropica in Normandy (France).

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*"Excellence is not  
the result of an  
isolated impulse,  
but of a succession  
of small elements  
that come  
together."*

Vincent van Gogh



Project "**Exhibition on chameleons and the challenges of their conservation**" [id projet 5.1]: This exhibition, scheduled to open at the Tropiquarium de Servion (Switzerland) in December 2023, will provide a unique educational experience enabling the public to discover the beauty and fragility of these fascinating reptiles.

**Chameleon conservation breeding** projects: We have set up two separate projects to help preserve the chameleons of continental Africa [id projets 0.1] and the chameleons of Madagascar [id projets 0.2]. These projects aim to establish captive populations as genetic reserves for these endangered species. A first batch of South African dwarf chameleons (*Bradypodion thamnobates*), classified as endangered by the IUCN, has been transferred to a private Swiss zoo, thus contributing directly to this project. These populations will play an essential role in scientific research and in raising public awareness.

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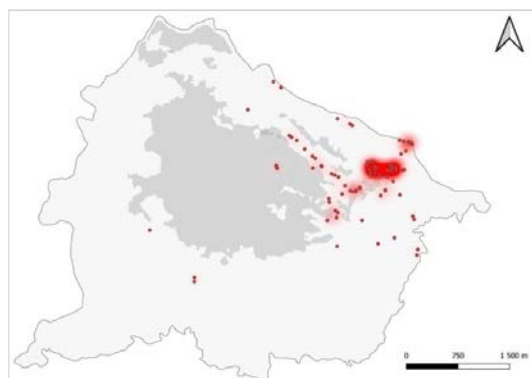
*"Dream big, start small, act now".*

Robin Sharma

Project "**Study of the thermal preferences and hydro-regulation capacities of mountain chameleons**" [id projet 0.4]: In collaboration with the Centre d'Études Biologiques de Chizé and the Herpeto-Technique company, this study, carried out in a controlled environment, will provide a better understanding of the ecological needs of mountain chameleons (*Trioceos jacksonii*) and enable the implementation of appropriate conservation measures.

Project "**Image bank on chameleon diversity**" [id projet 5.2]: Aware of the power of images to raise awareness and educate, we have undertaken the creation of a substantial photographic inventory of chameleons, ensuring consistency and stylistic harmony. This collection will be promoted through various initiatives.

**Global approach to the conservation of the world's largest chameleon** project [id projet 6.0]: Currently in its initiation phase, this ambitious project aims to preserve the iconic Parson's chameleon (*Calumma parsonii*) and safeguard its natural habitat. At the same time, we plan to set up captive breeding programs to ensure its long-term survival. This comprehensive approach, combining in-situ and ex-situ actions, represents a modern approach to the conservation of this endangered species.





Project "**Chameleon diversity and microhabitat preferences in the Vohimana Reserve, Madagascar**" [id projet 2.1]: Thanks to generous donations from our partners, we have begun the preparatory phase of this project. Planned to last one year, it will train Master's students to collect data on the distribution, diversity and ecology of chameleons in the Vohimana reserve. Molecular genetic and phylogenetic studies will also be carried out as part of this research. Dr. Mark D. SCHERZ (Natural History Museum of Denmark, KU) and Dr. Olivier MARQUIS (Natural History Museum of Paris, France) will co-supervise this work and thesis.

We are proud of the progress we have made so far and are determined to continue our efforts to preserve chameleons. Thanks to our partners and donors, we have been able to bring these vital projects to life, and we will continue to seek new opportunities to expand our impact in favor of in-situ and ex-situ conservation of these fascinating species.

## Outlook for the next 12 months

The coming months promise to be exciting, as we continue to develop each of our 8 current projects.

As part of our "**Inventory and distribution of Vohimana chameleons in Madagascar**" project, we are preparing a second series of field exploration missions. Thanks to the promising initial results, our Malagasy guides will now be able to explore as yet unexplored areas of the reserve, deepening our knowledge.

After its first successful opening, our **exhibition** on chameleons and the challenges of their conservation will embark on a European tour. This educational initiative will enable us to raise awareness among a wider public of the importance of preserving these fascinating reptiles.

Our study of the **thermal preferences and hydro-regulation capacities of mountain chameleons**, carried out on part of the population resulting from our conservation breeding project, will produce its first data. This crucial information will help us to better understand the ecological needs of these chameleons.

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*"The consequences  
of what we don't do  
are the most  
serious".*

Marcel Mariën



International collaboration with numerous private breeders and zoological facilities will enrich our **image bank** on chameleon diversity. This valuable resource will support research, education and awareness-raising.

As for our two projects in the initialization phase, they will begin their implementation. The project for the **conservation of the world's largest chameleon** will strengthen its collaboration with zoological structures to establish a conservation breeding facility, and will carry out its first field missions in Madagascar. Similarly, the study of **chameleon diversity and microhabitat preferences** in Madagascar's Vohimana reserve will begin its first fieldwork.

However, we are aware that the realization of our projects depends on committed partners and donors. **We are actively seeking new support to sustain our current initiatives**, in particular the global approach to the world's largest chameleon and the study of diversity and microhabitat in the Vohimana reserve in Madagascar. In addition, we are keen to initiate new ready-to-go projects, such as the major project dedicated to ecology and climate change "Community assembly rules and resource partitioning in Malagasy chameleon communities: a critical test of the ecomorph concept" [id projet 1.1]. We also remain open to any opportunity to create new projects, both in situ and ex situ, to strengthen our impact in the field of chameleon conservation.

To help us achieve our ambitions, we are **looking for a fundraiser who is** passionate about our cause, and whose expertise will help us preserve the chameleons effectively.

**We're proud of what we've achieved in just one year**, and our determination remains undiminished. We continue to explore new ideas and talk to potential partners to translate these ideas into concrete action. With your continued support, we are confident that we can fully realize our vision of in situ and ex situ chameleon conservation.

On behalf of the whole team, **we'd like to express our deep gratitude to each and every one of you** for your commitment and unstinting support. Together, we can make a significant difference to the preservation of these wonderful creatures.

Kind regards,

Sébastien Métrailler, *President of the association Caméléon Center Conservation*

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*"The support of our partners is invaluable. It enables us to preserve chameleons with passion and determination. Their generosity is a real driving force behind our success."*

