

Giraffe

(*Giraffa camelopardalis*)

Kingdom: *Animalia*

Phylum: *Chordata*

Class: *Mammalia*

Order: *Artiodactyla*

Family: *Giraffidae*

DESCRIPTION

Giraffes are one of the world's tallest mammals. They are well known for their long necks, long legs, and spotted patterns. Giraffes have small "horns" or knobs on top of their heads that grow to be about five inches long. These knobs are used to protect the head in fights.

SIZE

Male giraffes are larger than females. Males weigh between 2,400 and 3,000 pounds and stand up to 19 feet tall! Female giraffes weigh between 1,600 and 2,600 pounds and grow to be 16 feet tall.

POPULATION

Giraffe populations are relatively stable.

LIFESPAN

Healthy giraffes live about 25 years in the wild.

RANGE

Giraffes can be found in central, eastern and southern Africa.

HABITAT

Giraffes live in the savannas of Africa, where they roam freely among the tall trees, arid land, dense forests and open plains.

FOOD

Their long necks help giraffes eat leaves from tall trees, typically acacia trees. If they need to, giraffes can go for several days without water. Instead of drinking, giraffes stay hydrated by the moisture from leaves.

BEHAVIOR

Giraffes are non-territorial, social animals. They travel in large herds that are not organized in any way. Herds may consist of any combination of sexes or ages.

OFFSPRING

Female giraffes typically give birth to one calf after a fifteen-month gestation period. During the first week of its life, the mother carefully guards her calf. Young giraffes are very vulnerable and cannot defend themselves. While mothers feed, the young are kept in small nursery groups.

THREATS

Giraffes are hunted for their meat, coat and tails. The tail is prized for good luck bracelets, fly whisks and string for sewing beads. The coat is used for shield coverings. Habitat destruction and fragmentation are also threats to giraffe populations.