

Giraffe

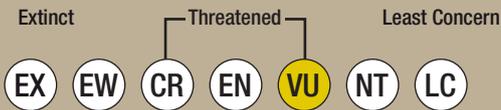


Fast Facts



Scientific Name: *Giraffa camelopardalis*

Conservation Status: Vulnerable



Body Length: 4.3-5.7 m

Weight: 0.6-1.9 tonnes

Gestation: Approximately 15 months

Number of young: 1

Habitat: Savannah

Distribution: Kenya and Uganda, Central, eastern and southern Africa



Distribution ■

Description

The Giraffe is the tallest land animal on earth with a long neck that contains only seven vertebrae (just like humans!). They have a long, strong tongue which is used to pull leaves from branches and is about 45 cm long. Giraffe have a thick spotted coat and a long tail which is useful for brushing away flies. The Giraffe can have up to five blunt, short horns called 'ossicones'.

Diet

Giraffe are herbivores. Because of their long necks they are able to eat the leaves from taller trees such as acacia and wild apricot which gives them an advantage over other herbivores. They also eat shoots, fruit and other vegetation. Giraffe are also known as browsers.

In the wild

Female giraffe, or 'cows', mate with local dominant males, 'bulls'. These bulls compete with each other by swaying and curling necks. Newborns are kept away from the main herd by the mother for the first 10–30 days and weaning takes place by 13 months. Lions, Spotted Hyaenas and leopards are the natural predators of young giraffe.

Threats

Traditional hunting, poaching for the tourist trade and habitat loss have contributed to the declining numbers and, in some cases, the complete extinction of giraffe from some areas of their former range.

At Perth Zoo

The Zoo's Giraffe can be seen in the African Savannah.

DID YOU KNOW?

The giraffe's heart has to pump blood upwards at enormous pressure to reach its brain. A series of valves in its neck restrict blood flow when it bends down to drink. This stops the blood from rushing to its head and causing brain damage.