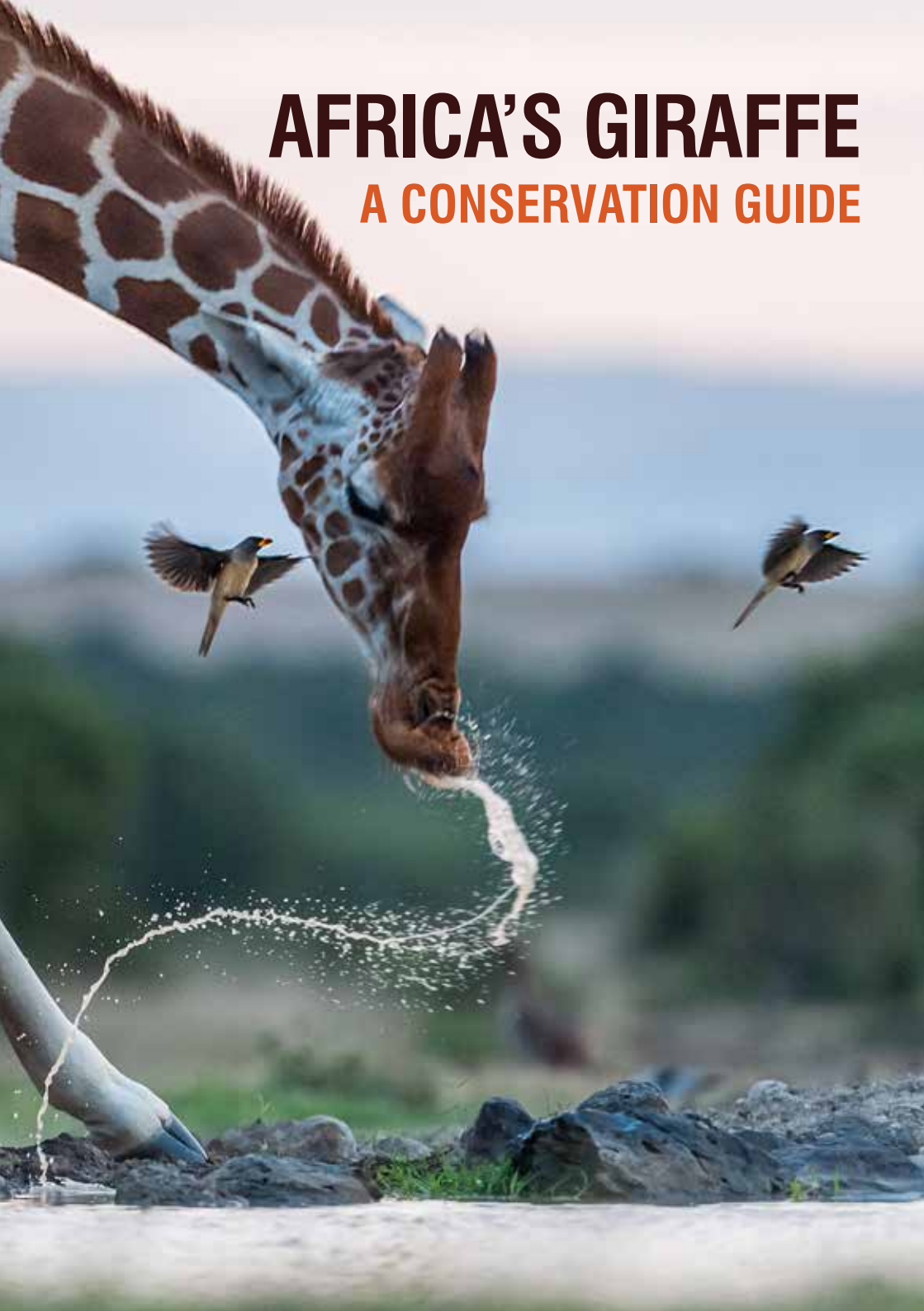


# AFRICA'S GIRAFFE

## A CONSERVATION GUIDE





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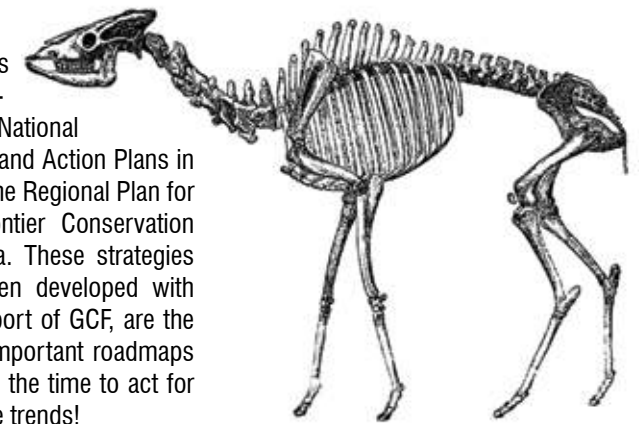
These giraffe images, which are carved life-size and with incredible detail into rock, are believed to date back 9,000 years to a time when the Sahara was wet and green.

MIKE HETTWER

# Introduction

Africa's Giraffe – A Conservation Guide provides essential, up-to-date information on one of the world's most iconic animals: the giraffe. It highlights the diverse conservation challenges and opportunities throughout the continent as well as the involved stakeholders from local communities, government agencies, non-governmental organisations, and the private sector. This guide comes at a significant time for giraffe in Africa, with the present knowledge that their numbers have suffered a decrease by almost 30% in just over three and a half decades. The discovery that there are in fact four species of giraffe and not only one, as previously assumed, puts some of these species in a somewhat precarious situation. Giraffe are still considered to be one species by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN), and since 2016 their formal conservation status on the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species™ has been listed as *Vulnerable*. Additionally, eight subspecies were assessed for the IUCN Red List, where two were classified as *Critically Endangered*, two as *Endangered*, two as *Vulnerable*, one as *Near Threatened*, and one as *Least Concern*. Surprisingly, giraffe in the wild have historically been largely ignored by conservationists and under-researched by scientists. Fortunately, this situation is slowly being addressed. With a few exceptions, giraffe populations are now showing positive trends throughout the continent. In spite of these positive trends, the need for a concerted conservation effort has never been more urgent as their numbers still remain precariously low. To address this, the Giraffe Conservation Foundation (GCF) works with partners throughout the continent and internationally to secure a future

for giraffe in Africa. These efforts are guided by GCF's Africa-wide Strategic Framework and National Giraffe Conservation Strategies and Action Plans in six countries so far, as well as the Regional Plan for the Kavango-Zambezi Transfrontier Conservation Area (KAZA) in southern Africa. These strategies and plans, which have all been developed with the financial and technical support of GCF, are the first of their kind and provide important roadmaps for giraffe conservation. Now is the time to act for giraffe to continue these positive trends!



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## Evolution

*Helladotherium*, a three-metre-tall antelope-like animal, which once roamed the plains and forests of Asia and Europe between the Eocene and Oligocene epochs 30-50 million years ago, is the forefather of the two remaining members of the Giraffidae family: the giraffe we know today and the okapi. To date, more than ten fossil genera have been discovered, revealing that by the Miocene epoch, 6-20 million years ago, early deer-like giraffids were yet to develop the characteristic long neck of today's giraffe.

## Giraffe and humans

This exotic, long-necked creature has captured the human imagination through the ages, as demonstrated in art throughout the African continent, be it by the Egyptians and the Nubians in the north or the San in the south. Rock carvings in the Sahara Desert in northern Niger, estimated to be 9,000 years old, represent the earliest, and arguably the most impressive, recorded human association with giraffe. Beyond the African continent, the giraffe delighted Caesar's Rome as long ago as 46 BC and it also features in artwork from the Chinese Ming dynasty.

The giraffe continues to be iconic today. It is the national animal of Tanzania, and in Botswana, where the giraffe is considered a royal animal, it is afforded special attention. Its distinctive, iconic image is used in advertising around the world to sell anything from children's apparel and wine to tourism destinations and insurances. Why then, having captivated humans so infinitely through the ages, has the giraffe been allowed to slip beneath the conservation radar? Why have they experienced such significant population declines in much of their remaining range? Where should we prioritise conservation efforts for giraffe? These are only a few of the many questions that urgently require answers to help save giraffe before it is too late.

**DID YOU KNOW?**  
Giraffe split from their closest relative, the okapi, approximately 12 million years ago. Today, okapi live only in the forests of the Democratic Republic of Congo.

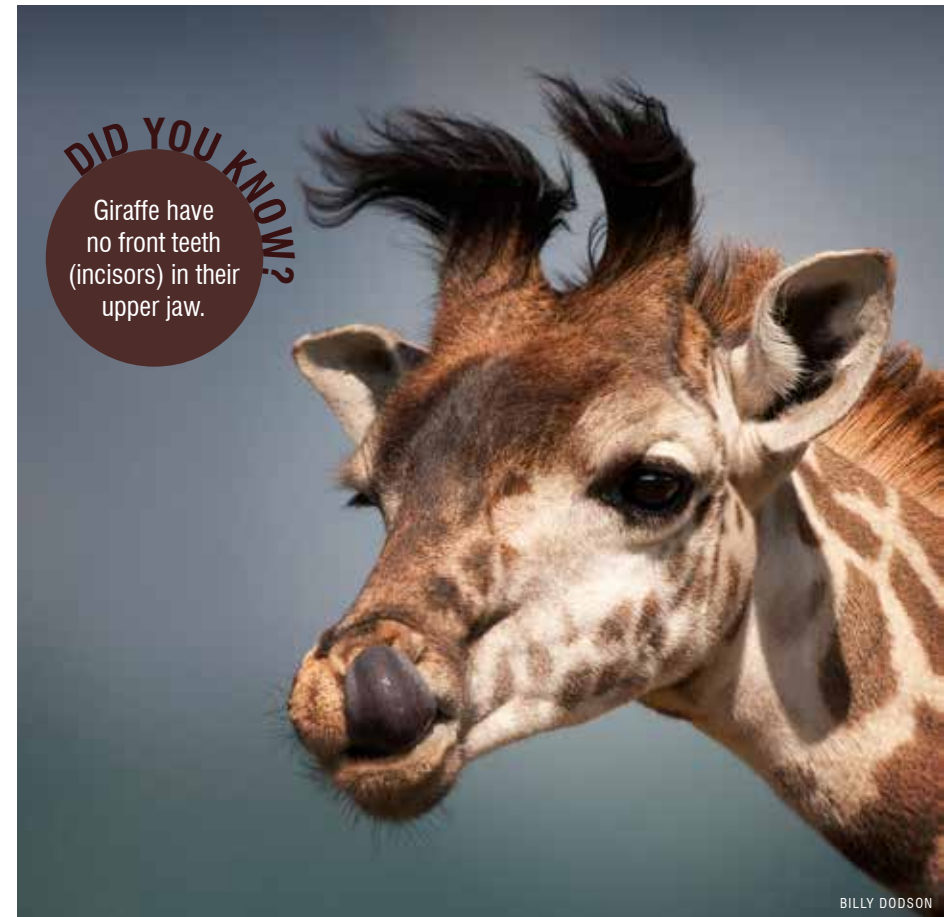
# GIRAFFE FACTS



Height (average adult)	♂ 5.3m (17ft 4in) ♀ 4.3m (14ft 2in)
Weight (average adult)	♂ 1,200kg (2,600lb) ♀ 830kg (1,800lb)
Largest	♂ recorded at 6m (19+ft)
Heaviest	♂ recorded at 1,900kg (4,200lb)
Foot size	30cm (12in) diameter Hoof: ♂ 20cm (8in); ♀ 18cm (7in) (average)
Defence	Forelegs and hind legs can deliver a lethal kick. They can kick in all directions.
Speed	50km/h (30mph) for sustained periods; calves less than 3m (9ft 10in) high can outrun adults.
Means of feeding	Browsing, using a prehensile tongue (50cm (20in) long) and upper lip.
Diet	Tree leaves, fruits, pods and shoots; rarely grass.
Senses	Colour vision; acute sense of smell; good hearing.
Sleep	4.5hrs, mainly at night; both standing and lying down.
Longevity	+/- 25 years (average)
Social behaviour	Ranges from solitary (often older males) to large, loose, mixed herds. Herds adjust their social systems, known as fission-fusion, by individuals or smaller groups readily merging with or splitting from the herd. This differs from one population to another.
Sex ratio	Very close to 1:1 (average)
Age at sexual maturity	♂ 4-7 years; restricted by competition from larger males. ♀ 3-4 years; in oestrus 1 day every 2 weeks.
Breeding lifetime	Throughout life. ♀ recorded mating within weeks of giving birth.



Gestation	+/- 15 months (453-464 days)
Offspring	Single calf, rarely twins; known to stay with mother until 22 months old, but often independent much sooner, depending on the gender.
Conservation status	Giraffe, as a species, are listed as <i>Vulnerable</i> on the IUCN Red List.



**DID YOU KNOW?**  
Giraffe have no front teeth (incisors) in their upper jaw.

BILLY DODSON

# Taxonomy and Species

Like okapi, hippo, oryx, buffalo and cattle, the giraffe is an even-toed ungulate. Rhino, zebra and horses are odd-toed ungulates. As the world's tallest animal and largest ruminant (*an animal that partly digests its food, then regurgitates it to chew as 'cud'*), it belongs to:

**Class:** Mammalia (mammals)

**Order:** Artiodactyla (even-toed ungulates)

**Family:** Giraffidae

**Genus:** *Giraffa*

In 2016 the IUCN completed the first detailed assessment of the conservation status of giraffe, revealing that their numbers are in peril. This assessment was further emphasised when eight of the IUCN recognised subspecies were assessed in 2018/19 – some as *Critically Endangered*. While this update further confirms the real threat to one of Africa's most charismatic megafauna, it also highlights a rather confusing aspect of giraffe conservation: how many species/subspecies of giraffe are there?

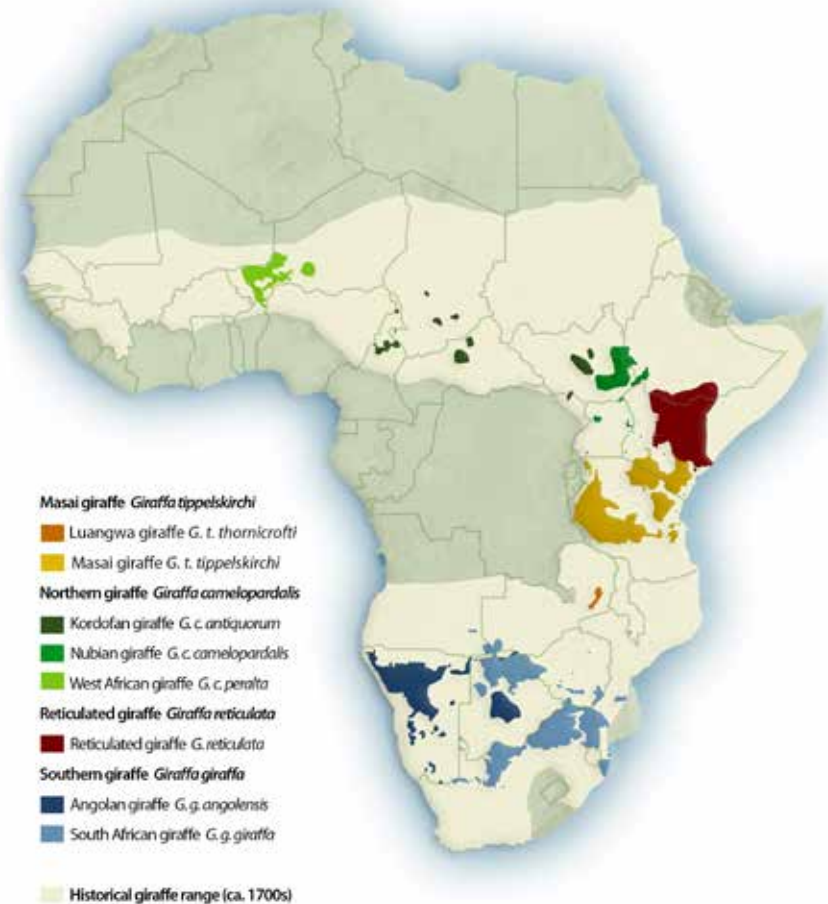
The IUCN currently recognises one species (*Giraffa camelopardalis*) and nine subspecies of giraffe, which is historically based on outdated assessments of their morphological features and geographic ranges. The subspecies are Angolan (*G. c. angolensis*), Kordofan (*G. c. antiquorum*), Masai (*G. c. tippelskirchi*), Nubian (*G. c. camelopardalis*), Reticulated (*G. c. reticulata*), Rothschild's (*G. c. rothschildi*), South African (*G. c. giraffa*), Luangwa (also known as Thornicroft's, *G. c. thornicrofti*), and West African giraffe (*G. c. peralta*).



However, the Giraffe Conservation Foundation (GCF), together with its partner Senckenberg Biodiversity and Climate Research Centre (BiK-F), performed the first-ever comprehensive DNA sampling and analysis (genomic, nuclear and mitochondrial) of all major natural populations of giraffe throughout their range in Africa. These studies have resulted in an updated understanding of the traditional taxonomy. The data shows that there are four distinct species of giraffe and seven subspecies. The four distinct species are Masai (*G. tippelskirchi*), Northern (*G. camelopardalis*), Reticulated (*G. reticulata*), and Southern (*G. giraffa*) giraffe. The Angolan (*G. g. angolensis*) and South African giraffe (*G. g. giraffa*) are the two subspecies of the Southern giraffe. The Nubian (*G. c. camelopardalis*), Kordofan (*G. c. antiquorum*), and West African giraffe (*G. c. peralta*) are the three subspecies of the Northern giraffe. Rothschild's giraffe are genetically identical to Nubian giraffe. As the nominate species, Nubian giraffe take precedence and Rothschild's giraffe are thus subsumed into it. Luangwa (Thornicroft's, *G. t. thornicrofti*) and Masai (*G. t. tippelskirchi*) giraffe are the two subspecies of Masai giraffe. In all of GCF's conservation work and publications, based on this research, the updated giraffe taxonomy of the four species is used.

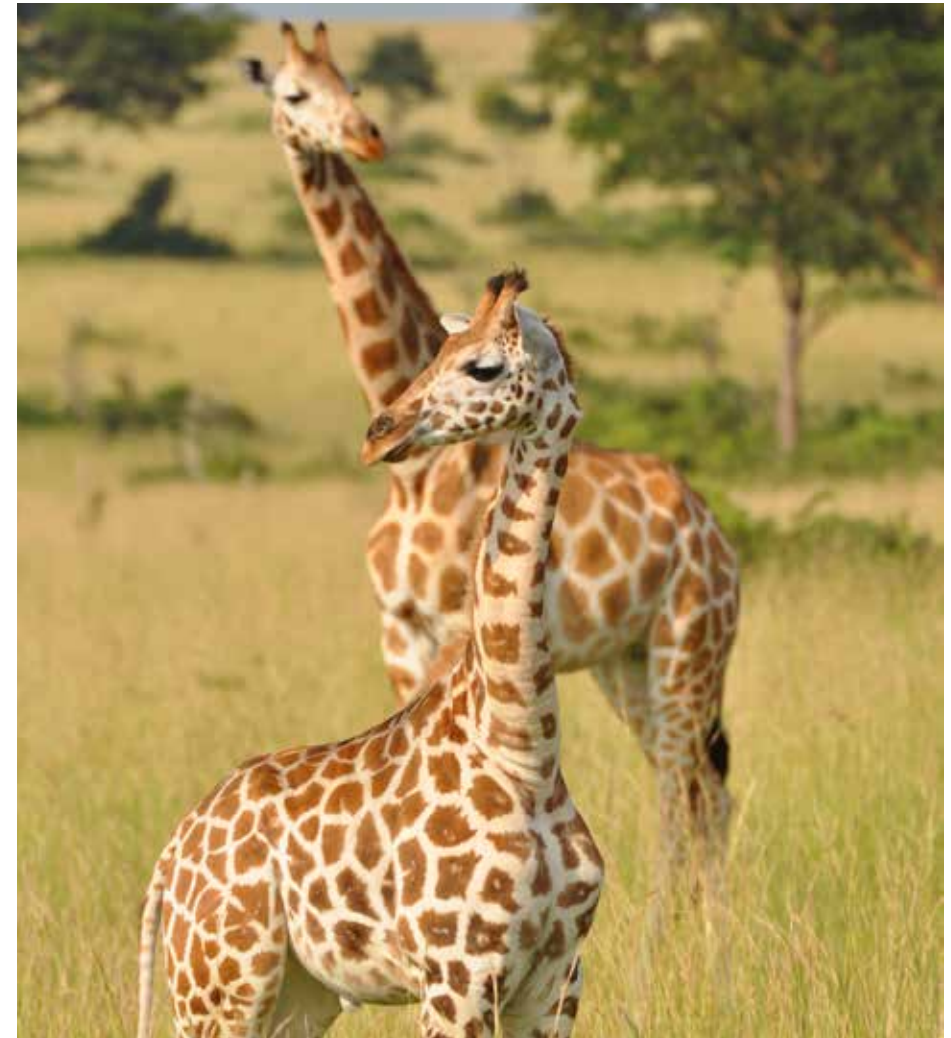
All four giraffe species and their subspecies live in geographically distinct areas throughout Africa. While some of these species have been reported to hybridise in zoos, there is little evidence that this occurs naturally in the wild.

# Distribution and Habitat



Throughout the African continent, many giraffe populations have declined and giraffe are now absent from much of their historic geographic range. It is estimated that 89% of giraffe habitat has been lost since the 1700s. Only an estimated 29% of giraffe habitat is afforded formal government protection in national parks and reserves, emphasising the importance to extend giraffe conservation efforts beyond government protected areas and to work closely with private landowners and the African communities that share their space with and live alongside giraffe.

The four species of giraffe currently occur naturally in 21 countries, forming a wide arc throughout sub-Saharan Africa from Niger to Central and East Africa, down to southern Africa. Giraffe are predominantly browsers and their long legs and neck ensure the utilisation



of a food source beyond the reach of most other animals. Surprisingly, despite this highly specialised adaptation, giraffe are extremely versatile and also flourish in habitats with relatively few tall trees where, instead, they trim the tops of bushes and smaller trees. Nevertheless, the quintessential image of a giraffe shows it reaching up to browse on one of Africa's large *Vachellia* or *Senegalia* (formerly *Acacia*) trees.

To drink, giraffe first have to splay their forelegs and/or bend their knees, and only then can they lower their necks to reach the surface of the water. However, despite their body mass, water is not a necessity as they can often absorb sufficient moisture from their food plants. Even when water is readily available, evidence shows that many giraffe do not drink regularly – sometimes not at all.

## Masai giraffe

### *Giraffa tippelskirchi*

Recent studies have shown that there are two subspecies of Masai giraffe: Masai giraffe and Luangwa giraffe. There are just over 45,400 Masai giraffe remaining in the wild.

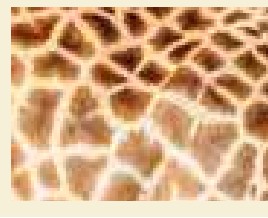
### Subspecies:

#### Luangwa giraffe *G. t. thornicrofti*

Luangwa giraffe (formerly known as Thornicroft's giraffe) exist as an isolated population in the South Luangwa Valley, eastern Zambia. They are listed as *Vulnerable* on the IUCN Red List because even though the population has remained stable at approximately 650 individuals in recent decades, they occur in low numbers in only one geographical area of eastern Zambia. Recent trends show that their range and numbers are slowly increasing.



The Luangwa giraffe's colouring and patterns are similar to the Masai giraffe. They also have distinctive vine leaf-shaped patches with jagged edges, which are surrounded by a creamy-brown colour that continues down their lower legs.



### Subspecies:

#### Masai giraffe *G. t. tippelskirchi*

Masai giraffe range across central and southern Kenya and throughout Tanzania. Although it remains unclear whether Masai giraffe occurred naturally in Rwanda in the past, extralimital populations (*those outside their natural range*) have been translocated to the Akagera National Park in the country. Formerly the most populous giraffe with an estimated 71,000 individuals three and a half decades ago, just over 44,750 remain in the wild today. Ongoing reports of poaching and habitat fragmentation suggest that their population is still under threat; however, recent estimates suggest that they are also slowly rebounding. The IUCN Red List assessment of Masai giraffe highlighted an overall decline of approximately 50%, resulting in their listing as *Endangered*; however, GCF's recent assessment shows a positive trend over the last five years.



The Masai giraffe is often noticeably darker than other species. Its patches are large, dark brown and distinctively vine leaf-shaped with jagged edges. The patches are surrounded by a creamy-brown colour, which continues down their lower legs.



## Northern giraffe

### *Giraffa camelopardalis*

Northern giraffe are estimated at a population of just below 6,000 individuals in the wild, with numbers slowly rebounding in key areas. Three subspecies of the Northern giraffe occur across Eastern, Central, and West Africa.

### Subspecies:

#### Kordofan giraffe *G. c. antiquorum*

The Kordofan giraffe ranges in areas that experience high incidents of conflict and political instability: southern Chad, Central African Republic, northern Cameroon, northern Democratic Republic of Congo, and western South Sudan. It is estimated that approximately 2,300 individuals survive in these conflict-ridden countries. A decline of more than 80% in the last three and a half decades has resulted in their recent listing as *Critically Endangered* on the IUCN Red List.



The Kordofan giraffe's patches are pale and irregular. Like all Northern giraffe subspecies, they have no markings on their lower legs..



### Subspecies:

#### Nubian giraffe *G. c. camelopardalis*

The Nubian giraffe is the nominate subspecies, which means that because it was the first specimen recorded, its Latin sub-specific name is the same as the original species described. The estimated number of Nubian giraffe is approximately 3,000 individuals, which includes the genetically identical formerly recognised Rothschild's giraffe. At present, fewer than 175 occur in western Ethiopia, less than 450 in eastern South Sudan, approximately 700 in Kenya, and more than 1,800 in Uganda.

The majority of Nubian giraffe in Kenya live extraliminally (*outside their natural range*) as a result of efforts to establish viable populations throughout Kenya for conservation purposes.

Exact information about the precariously small and fragmented populations in Ethiopia and South Sudan is extremely difficult to ascertain, and their numbers are most likely lower due to increased poaching in the region. Based on the rate of decline, estimated at 95% in the last three and a half decades, Nubian giraffe were, for the first time, added to the IUCN Red List and listed as *Critically Endangered*. In 2010, the formerly known Rothschild's subspecies was classified as *Endangered*, but based on strong conservation efforts of governments and partners, including GCF, it was downlisted to *Near Threatened* as populations and numbers have increased. Once the IUCN recognises the two subspecies as one, the conservation status on the IUCN Red List for Nubian giraffe will most likely remain *Critically Endangered*, indicating an urgent need for further conservation measures.



The Nubian giraffe's patches are large, rectangular and chestnut-brown. The patches are surrounded by an off-white, creamy colour. There are no markings on their lower legs, a distinct feature of all Northern giraffe





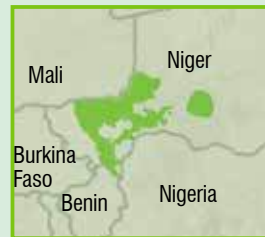
## Subspecies:

### West African giraffe *G. c. peralta*

At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the West African giraffe were widely distributed, from Nigeria to Senegal, but by the mid-1990s only 49 individuals remained in the whole of West Africa. These few survivors are now formally protected by the Niger government and their numbers have risen to more than 600 individuals. However, their future is still of great concern as they predominantly live in an isolated pocket (*the Giraffe Zone*) east of the capital Niamey and share their living space with local villagers. No other large wild mammals occur in this area, and habitat loss and destruction are increasing. In 2018, GCF together with the Government of Niger translocated eight West African giraffe to the Gadabedji Biosphere Reserve to establish a new satellite giraffe population in order to assist the population's growth in number and range. In 2008, the West African giraffe was listed as *Endangered* on the IUCN Red List; however, in 2018 it was downlisted to *Vulnerable* based on increasing numbers and their conservation success story.



The West African giraffe is noticeably light in appearance. Their patches are rectangular and tan coloured and broadly surrounded by a creamy colour. There are no markings on their lower legs.



## Reticulated giraffe *Giraffa reticulata*

The Reticulated giraffe has a relatively limited distribution across northern and north-eastern Kenya, and small restricted populations most likely persist in southern Somalia and southern Ethiopia. An estimate of almost 16,000 individuals remain in the wild – a decline of over 50% from the approximate 36,000 three and a half decades ago. As a result of this decline, Reticulated giraffe were added to the IUCN Red List and listed as *Endangered* in 2018. In recent years, however, numbers across northern Kenya appear to be increasing with improved conservation measures. More than 95% of Reticulated giraffe occur outside of government-managed protected areas, emphasising the need for community and private stakeholder engagement in giraffe conservation.



It is easy to see why this species is called the Reticulated giraffe, as its rich orange-brown patches are clearly defined by a network of striking white lines, which continue the entire length of their legs.



## Southern giraffe

### *Giraffa giraffa*

Two subspecies of the Southern giraffe occur across Southern Africa and, together, they make up over 40% of the continent's total giraffe numbers, estimated at almost 50,000 individuals.

#### Subspecies:

##### Angolan giraffe *G. g. angolensis*

Despite their name, Angolan giraffe were extirpated (*locally extinct*) in Angola until recent translocations from Namibia. The Angolan giraffe's range includes central Botswana, most parts of Namibia, and various populations scattered throughout Zimbabwe. Extralimital populations (*those outside their natural range*) have been translocated to South Africa and to private land in Botswana and Zimbabwe. The estimated 5,000 individuals three decades ago have, today, more than quadrupled to over 20,000 in the wild. Considering this recent increase in numbers, the Angolan giraffe has been listed as *Least Concern* on the IUCN Red List.



The Angolan giraffe is relatively light in colour. In northwest Namibia, where it is particularly arid, they can be almost colourless. They have large, uneven and irregularly notched light brown patches. Their patches are surrounded by a pale cream colour, and their lower legs are randomly speckled with uneven spots.



#### Subspecies:

##### South African giraffe *G. g. giraffa*

The range of South African giraffe is dotted throughout south-eastern Angola, north-eastern Namibia, northern Botswana, south-western Zambia, Zimbabwe, southern Mozambique, and throughout South Africa. Previous re-introductions of the South African and Angolan giraffe to overlapping areas have most likely resulted in hybrid populations. There have also been extralimital (*outside their natural range*) introductions of South African giraffe across Angola, Senegal, South Africa, Zambia, and Zimbabwe. At present, the South African giraffe population is estimated at almost 30,000 individuals, showing a marked increase of over 150% over the past three and a half decades. More recently, the population has begun to stabilise in numbers. No IUCN Red List assessment of the South African giraffe has been undertaken, and there remains uncertainty about how many of these giraffe are hybrids with Angolan giraffe after many years of regional translocations. The historical increase and the recent stabilisation of numbers suggest a listing of *Least Concern*.



The South African giraffe has star-shaped patches in various shades of brown, surrounded by a light tan colour, very similar to the Angolan giraffe. Their lower legs are randomly speckled with uneven spots.





# Conservation

## Status and statistics

In the 1980s, giraffe numbers in Africa were estimated at more than 155,000 individuals. Today, GCF estimates the current Africa-wide giraffe population at approximately 117,000 individuals. This is a drop by almost 30%, which is a slightly less bleak outlook than previously portrayed in the 2016 IUCN Red List assessment, which estimated giraffe at less than 100,000 individuals. This updated information is based on a combination of improved data and actual increases in numbers. Unfortunately, in some areas traditionally regarded as prime giraffe habitat, numbers are thought to have dropped by 95%.

With the new scientific findings by GCF and partners of four distinct species of giraffe, which have significant conservation implications, it is hoped that the specific and updated information will soon be taken into consideration by the IUCN for further conservation assessments. Most importantly, it would give each giraffe species its own taxonomical status and thus conservationists a mandate for increased and targeted protection.

In 2016, the giraffe as a species was uplisted from *Least Concern* to *Vulnerable* on the IUCN Red List. In 2018/19, eight of the nine currently recognised subspecies were assessed and are now listed on the IUCN Red List. All of these assessments were based on GCF's foundational work.



### IUCN Red List

#### As a species:

Giraffe

Vulnerable

#### The listed subspecies:

- |                       |                       |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Angolan giraffe       | Least Concern         |
| Kordofan giraffe      | Critically Endangered |
| Masai giraffe         | Endangered            |
| Nubian giraffe        | Critically Endangered |
| Reticulated giraffe   | Endangered            |
| Rothschild's giraffe  | Near Threatened       |
| Thornicroft's giraffe | Vulnerable            |
| West African giraffe  | Vulnerable            |

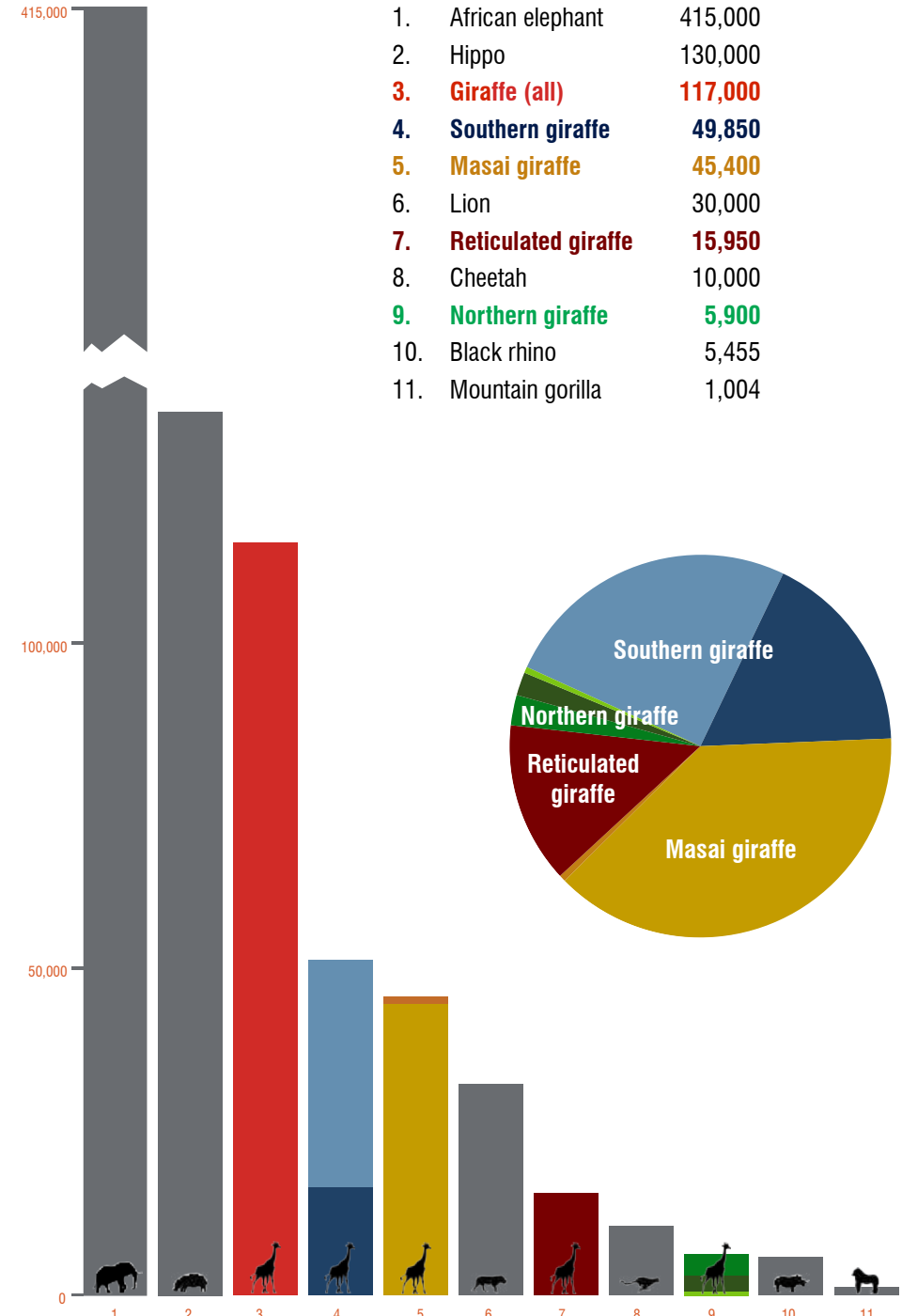
The Giraffe Conservation Foundation (GCF) continues to take the lead on updating information on the continent-wide giraffe status, as captured in the first-ever giraffe range-state country profiles and numerous peer-reviewed scientific publications. These profiles (available on the GCF website) collate all historical and currently available census and anecdotal data on giraffe numbers and distribution, as well as their country specific threats.

Below are the most up-to-date population figures compiled by GCF for the *Status of Giraffe 2020* Report, which provides an update five years after the IUCN Red List assessment:

Species, Subspecies and Numbers	
<b><i>Giraffa camelopardalis</i> (Northern giraffe)</b>	<b>5,900</b>
<i>G. c. antiquorum</i> (Kordofan giraffe)	2,300
<i>G. c. camelopardalis</i> (Nubian giraffe)	3,000
<i>G. c. peralta</i> (West African giraffe)	600
<b><i>Giraffa giraffa</i> (Southern giraffe)</b>	<b>49,850</b>
<i>G. g. angolensis</i> (Angolan giraffe)	20,200
<i>G. g. giraffa</i> (South African giraffe)	29,650
<b><i>Giraffa reticulata</i> (Reticulated giraffe)</b>	<b>15,950</b>
<b><i>Giraffa tippelskirchi</i> (Masai giraffe)</b>	<b>45,400</b>
<i>G. t. thornicrofti</i> (Luangwa giraffe)	650
<i>G. t. tippelskirchi</i> (Masai giraffe)	44,750



BOBBY-JO PHOTOGRAPHY



## International Conventions

Although there is limited recognised international trade in giraffe, they were listed on Appendix II of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) in 2019. GCF is committed to monitoring current circumstances regarding the trade of giraffe (local vs. international) and providing recommendations for future assessments. In 2018, giraffe were added to Appendix II of the Convention of Migratory Species (CMS) in recognition of their transboundary movements and a need for increased conservation protection and monitoring across international boundaries. GCF played an instrumental role in the development of the proposal for this listing for the Government of Angola and the United Nations.

## Stakeholders

Occurring naturally in 21 African countries, giraffe live throughout all land-management regimes: from state-owned national parks and reserves to private and communal lands. Many of the individuals and organisations who live and work in these areas recognise the importance of giraffe and have become directly or indirectly involved in their conservation. As giraffe are widely distributed throughout Africa, their conservation is not an easy task. It is vitally important, but also challenging, to develop and coordinate continent-wide, regional, national or species-specific strategies and action plans that incorporate the priorities of each country, every stakeholder, and the four species of giraffe.



Although giraffe conservation should be seen as an Africa-wide initiative, GCF is helping to tackle it by starting with a country-by-country and species-by-species approach in partnership with relevant stakeholders. So far, GCF has supported the development and implementation of the first-ever National Giraffe Conservation Strategies and Action Plans for six countries and one regional Strategy (KAZA TFCA). These strategies are critical for the long-term objective of developing and operationalising a consolidated continent-wide approach to giraffe conservation.

## Threats

The combined impacts of habitat loss, habitat fragmentation, habitat degradation, human population growth, poaching (illegal hunting), disease, and war and civil unrest threaten the remaining giraffe and their distribution throughout Africa. Many threats arise from direct, indirect or perceived competition for resources with humans and their livestock. Habitat degradation and loss is caused by an increasing human demand for agricultural land, pastoralism, and unsustainable timber and fuel-wood harvesting.

Human-giraffe conflict is not common, but can develop due to crop loss and damage, and potential disease transmission can result from sharing their habitat with domestic livestock. The fragmentation and loss of giraffe habitat caused by human encroachment



and infrastructure development often leads to the isolation of giraffe populations which, in turn, can limit the flow and exchange of genetic diversity between populations.

The interbreeding of giraffe species poses a potential threat as it could result in the loss of the genetic uniqueness of each individual species. Although there is essentially no evidence of species naturally interbreeding in the wild, the translocation of one species of giraffe to an area already occupied by a different species could create the risk of hybridisation – a situation that is already occurring in South Africa.



## Limiting factors

The giraffe has a distinct advantage in that it seldom competes with other wild animals or, more importantly, domestic livestock for food. Although conflict does sometimes occur, they do not normally pose a threat to humans. Nevertheless, there are several factors that affect conservation initiatives throughout Africa.

### Scientific

The existence of long-term studies, reliable historical and current data, and targeted conservation research concerning giraffe is limited. This lack of information remains one of the most limiting factors when it comes to improving their conservation and management, as well as their ecology and taxonomy. However, exciting advances are being made. GCF's collaborative Africa-wide genetic research has unravelled the mystery surrounding the giraffe's taxonomy, providing invaluable information for all four species' future conservation and management. Some of the current projects and studies in Africa are the first ever to be undertaken of giraffe in their natural environments.

Conservation translocation projects can be highly beneficial for establishing new or bolstering small existing giraffe populations, but they are a significant and challenging logistical undertaking. Conservationists go to great lengths in their efforts to secure giraffe populations, and success has already been achieved in southern Africa and more recently in Kenya, Malawi, Niger and Uganda. Despite the logistical challenges, GCF's conservation translocation programme, working closely with governments and other partners, has already



increased and/or augmented over 7 million acres of giraffe habitat.

GPS satellite tracking units have become an important aid for understanding giraffe habitat use, post-translocation monitoring, seasonal movements, and home ranges, be they in and around human settlements or across international borders. The information these devices provide is invaluable for supporting long-term species and land management plans for giraffe and other wildlife. GCF's Twiga Tracker initiative is the largest GPS satellite tracking programme ever conducted on giraffe. By understanding giraffe spatial ecology across Africa, GCF is developing innovative conservation strategies

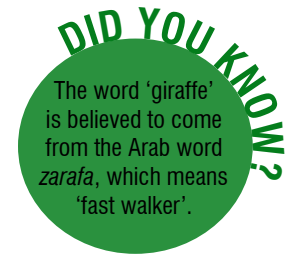
for protecting giraffe and their habitats. However, tracking giraffe using GPS satellite units requires great investment in time, innovation and resources; the cost of which is born largely by GCF and our partners. Additionally, the very nature of giraffe being such a uniquely built animal, this undertaking is something of a challenge!

### Ecological

Giraffe populations naturally fluctuate due to mortality through predation and disease, and this varies from population to population. Lion are giraffe's biggest natural predator. In some populations, lion are responsible for the mortality of more than 50% of calves in their first year. Giraffe are less vulnerable to leopard and spotted hyena and to an even lesser extent to cheetah and crocodile. Population growth is also limited by drought, which results in poor food quality and quantity and malnutrition, as well as diseases such as anthrax and, historically, rinderpest. Additionally, the poaching (illegal hunting) of giraffe by humans poses a threat throughout certain areas of their range.

### Social

When it comes to conservation, giraffe compete with more charismatic species such as African savanna elephant and rhinos, particularly for funding. It is estimated that the current giraffe population is only just over a third of the African savanna elephant's. This discrepancy, and little-known fact by most in the world, leads many people to assume that giraffe are everywhere and do not face a conservation crisis – but the almost 30% population decline over the past three and a half decades clearly demonstrates that it does.



# Significance of Giraffe

## Economic

The giraffe's significance lies in its evolutionary uniqueness. Its silhouette, which is both unmistakable and evocative, is used around the world as a symbol to market a wide range of commercial and non-commercial products, events, and initiatives. As much as it is a symbol for Africa, the giraffe is also used widely for other purposes because of its uniquely recognisable shape and its perceived gentle nature. Giraffe are much-loved by most.

In Africa, it is the tangible economic benefits generated by tourism that interest and motivate many stakeholders, particularly those who live and work amongst wildlife. Many travel operators and safari brochures include the giraffe when marketing Africa as an exciting travel destination, and giraffe are a must-see on every African safari-goer's wish list.

Unlike the 'Big Five' (African savanna elephant, lion, leopard, buffalo, and black rhino) and a handful of ungulates, the giraffe is not in demand as a trophy. Revenue from legal hunting and the trade in body parts is therefore limited and has not caused a decline in their numbers.

## Ecological

Giraffe are habitat and landscape changers. Together with other large browsers, such as elephant and black rhino, they help open up vegetated areas and promote the growth of new forage for themselves and other wildlife.

On a finer scale, giraffe browsing stimulates shoot production in various plant species and often functions as a valuable pollinator. For example, in areas protected from giraffe and other mega-herbivores, a decline of some *Senegalia* and *Vachellia* species can be observed. This subsequently affects available food sources for other wildlife.

Giraffe also provide an essential natural landscape service by eating plant seeds and dispersing them in new areas through their droppings. The seeds' potential to germinate is enhanced once they have passed through the giraffe's digestive tract, and they are deposited with their own little fertiliser power-packs!

However, there are not only mutually beneficial relationships between giraffe and many plants, but also with some animals, especially the oxpecker. These birds have the important job of assisting giraffe, and others, to groom hard-to-reach places. By removing parasitic ticks, which often infest giraffe, the oxpeckers benefit from a valuable food source.

**DID YOU KNOW?**  
The Romans believed that the giraffe was part camel and part leopard, hence the scientific name *camelopardalis*. However, their lack of ferocity apparently disappointed the crowds in colosseum fighting-arenas!



# The Future

The Giraffe Conservation Foundation (GCF) is dedicated to securing a future for all giraffe populations in the wild. Working in collaboration with African governments, NGOs, universities, researchers, and international bodies such as the UN and IUCN, GCF is developing and/or supporting appropriate conservation strategies in 16 African countries. There is no singular or straightforward solution to giraffe conservation and management in Africa, but supporting and working together with partners is the key approach. Ultimately, giraffe can only be saved in Africa by African people; however, international support is important.

GCF has developed an Africa-wide Strategic Framework for giraffe conservation, not only to guide the organisation's conservation priorities throughout the continent, but to also serve as a roadmap for future conservation by all stakeholders.

GCF's continued focus includes working closely with partners to develop and implement National and Regional Giraffe Conservation Strategies and Action Plans, supporting conservation translocations, undertaking population assessments, and other targeted giraffe conservation and management efforts throughout Africa.

**DID YOU KNOW?**  
Giraffe have been extirpated (*locally extinct*) in 7 African countries.

## World Giraffe Day - 21 June

### Celebrate giraffe around the world!

World Giraffe Day is an exciting annual event initiated by GCF to celebrate the longest-necked animal on the longest day or night (depending on which hemisphere you live in) of the year, every year!



Established in 2014, World Giraffe Day is not only a worldwide celebration of these amazing and much-loved animals, but an annual opportunity to raise support, to create awareness, and to shed light on the challenges giraffe face in the wild. Celebrations are joined or hosted by zoos, schools, NGOs, governments, institutions, and conservation organisations around the world.

By supporting World Giraffe Day, you directly help save giraffe in Africa. With only approximately 117,000 giraffe remaining in the wild, the time is right to act now!



## Giraffe Conservation Foundation

The Giraffe Conservation Foundation (GCF) is the only NGO in the world that concentrates solely on the conservation and management of giraffe in the wild throughout Africa. Our small yet effective team is committed to securing a future for all giraffe populations in Africa. GCF currently supports and works collaboratively with giraffe conservation initiatives in 16 countries throughout Africa, focusing on all four giraffe species and their subspecies. Our work has an impact on over 100 million acres of giraffe habitat.

As the key focal organisation for the conservation and management of giraffe in Africa, GCF uses its ever-expanding network to maintain a close working relationship with government bodies, conservation organisations, academic institutions, and local communities. It provides a platform and forum for giraffe conservation and related management discussions and helps significantly to increase awareness and education about their plight. Importantly, GCF supports dedicated and innovative conservation science and research to better understand giraffe ecology, speciation, conservation, and management.

GCF is a voice for giraffe.

We #StandTallForGiraffe – join us!

## To support giraffe conservation in Africa:



Visit the GCF website  
<https://giraffeconservation.org/donate>



Adopt a Giraffe  
<https://adopt.giraffeconservation.org/>



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