

Masai Giraffe

Scientific Name: *Giraffa camelopardalis tippelskirchi*

Class: Mammalia

Order: Artiodactyla

Family: Giraffidae



This is the tallest living mammal, standing an average of 16 to 18 feet for a male and 1 or 2 feet less for a female. (The record in a zoo was 192".) Weight can range to a maximum of 1,760 lbs. The long neck has the usual 7 vertebrae, but each is quite long. In fact, all the bones in a giraffe are long. The coat consists of brown or reddish blotches on a lighter background. Giraffe horns are unlike those of other mammals. They are present at birth as cartilaginous knobs and become bony later as the animal matures. Eventually the horns fuse with the skull. They are like deer antlers that are in permanent velvet. Giraffes live in herds whose composition constantly changes. They spend the day browsing, but at night retire to an open area where their great height and excellent eyesight make it difficult for a predator to approach

unobserved. They take turns sleeping, with one or two always on guard. They pull leaves off twigs with their long prehensile tongues, which are blue. The calf is born with the mother standing, and undergoes a 6 foot drop as its introduction to the world. A calf weighs 100 to 150 lbs. at birth, and stands 6 feet tall.

Range

Africa south of the Sahara

Habitat

Savannas

Gestation

15 to 20 months depending on nutrition of mother.

Litter

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Behavior

Giraffes are social animals, living in loose, open, unstable herds varying from 10 to 20 individuals, although herds of up to 70 have been observed. Individual giraffes join and leave the herd at will. Herds can include all female, all male, female with young calves, or mixed genders and ages. Female giraffes are more social than male giraffes. Isolated individuals can also be encountered in the wild. They spend the day browsing but at night retire to an open area where their great height and excellent eyesight make it difficult for a predator to approach unobserved. They take turns sleeping, with one or two always on guard. They pull leaves off twigs with their long prehensile tongues, which are blue.

Reproduction

Bulls carefully guard an estrous female from other male giraffes. Conception occurs in the rainy season, with birth occurring in the dry months. Most giraffe births take place from May to August. Female giraffes breed every 20 to 30 months. The gestation period is about 457 days. The calf is born with the mother standing and undergoes a 6-foot drop as its introduction to the world.

Wild Diet

Leaves of acacia, mimosa, and other trees