

ORDER



HABITAT



DIET



STATUS

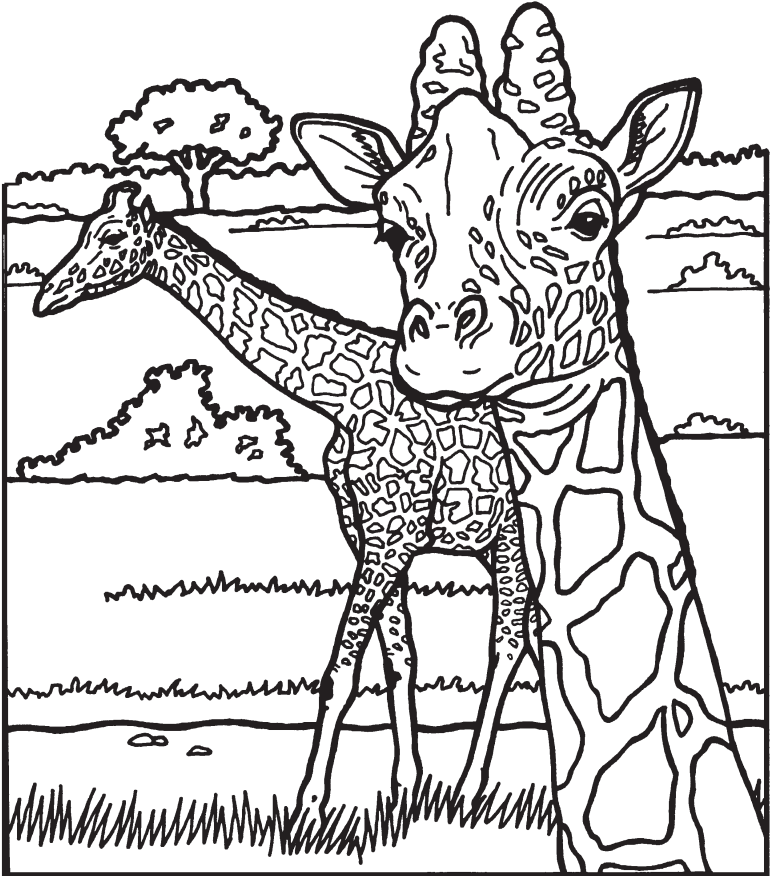


ROTHSCHILD GIRAFFE

ORDER
Artiodactyla

FAMILY
Giraffidae

GENUS & SPECIES
Giraffa rothschildsi



| | MALE | FEMALE |
|-------------------|---------------|---------------|
| Total body length | 3.8 – 4.7m | 3.8 – 4.7m |
| Total height | 4.7 – 5.3m | 3.9 – 4.5m |
| Weight | 800 – 1930kg | 550 – 1180kg |
| Pregnancy | | 15 months |
| Young born | | 1 |
| Life span | 25 – 28 years | 25 – 28 years |

DESCRIPTION

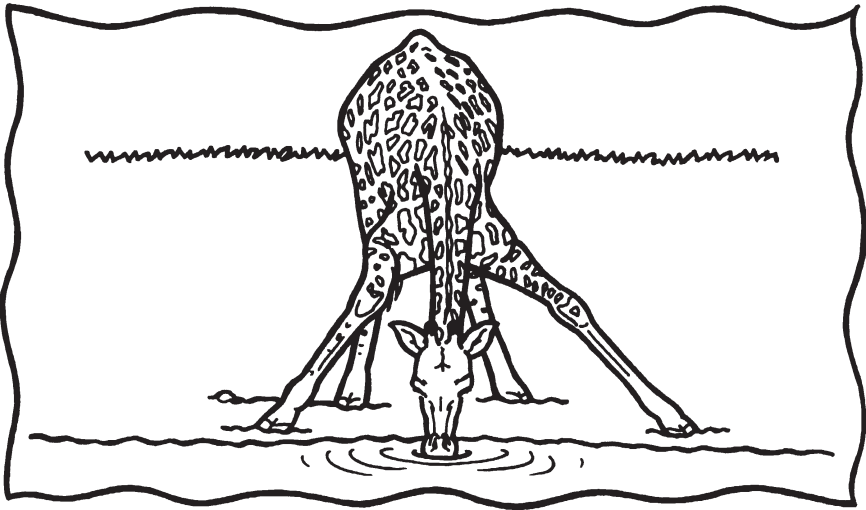
The appearance of the giraffe is somewhat strange, its distinctive long neck makes its body seem short and slightly out of proportion and this is not helped by its long legs. These differ in length, the front being longer than the back, so the body of the giraffe slopes downwards from horns to tail.

The horns are made up of cartilage and have a tuft of black hair sticking out of the top of them. The calf is born with horns which lie flat against the head.

These become up-right during the first weeks of life. The number of horns vary from three to five depending on the species of giraffe.

The muscle system joining head and neck to body is attached at the hump between the shoulders. This gives greater leverage, supporting the weight of the long neck and head.

The giraffe uses its long tail to keep flies away. The hair on the end of the tail can reach up to one metre.



POINTS OF INTEREST

A giraffe has seven vertebrae in its neck, the same number as found in man, but of course they are much larger and elongated. They also have special valves and a complicated network of elastic blood vessels in the neck. These control the flow of blood to the head which occurs when the giraffe bends down to drink or graze.

The combinations of the long, hairy lips and long, black tongue, which is about

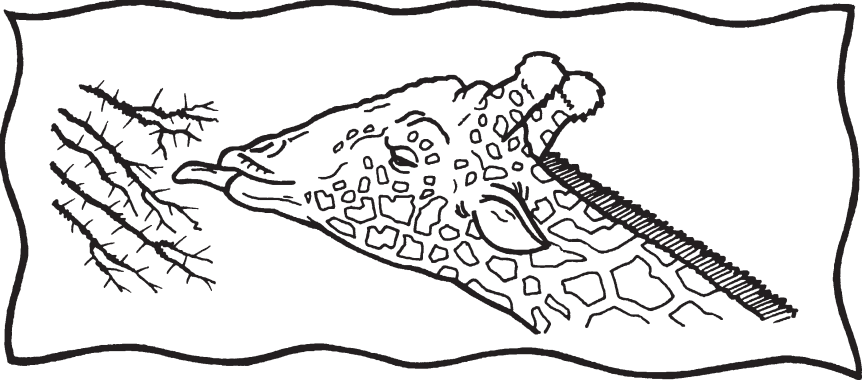
46cm long, enables the giraffe to feed from the thorniest tree with ease. The acacia tree, the giraffe's favourite source of food, has thorns which are 8cm in length.

The pattern of the coat is very distinctive and varies with each animal. Just like human fingerprints, no two animals are exactly the same. The pattern remains constant from birth to death although the colour may change.

NATURAL DIET

The giraffe is a herbivore. In the wild it has a varied diet which consists mainly of leaves and shoots of trees, their favourite being those of the acacia. They will also eat other vegetation like vines, seeds, flowers and fruit. This material is rich in nutrients

and does not show the decline in quality that grass does during the dry months of the year. Giraffes are browsers, stripping food from the tops of trees and bushes but they also graze.



The roof of the mouth is heavily grooved and this together with sticky saliva enables the giraffe to compress and swallow thorny food balls.

With broad leaved shrubs the giraffe uses special canine teeth which are splayed out into two or three lobes which comb the leaves off the shoots.

LONGLEAT DIET

Summer – Grazing supplemented with high fibre cubes, browse, nettles and hay.

Winter – Hay all day with high fibre cubes, vegetables, bran and linseed cake.

COMMUNICATION & LIFESTYLE

Giraffes are believed to be mute, although they may produce grunts and snorts when threatened or in distress.

The giraffe lives in small groups or loose herds, which often change, although it is quite normal to see the occasional bull wandering on his own. As they have very good eyesight groups several miles apart may be in visual communication.

Young bulls leave the family herd at about five years and band together in all male groups. This is when the behaviour called 'necking' starts. The bulls' necks are slowly entwined and pushed from side to side to determine dominance. However, giraffes can kill each other by swinging their heads into each others' bodies; the cause of death is often a brain haemorrhage.



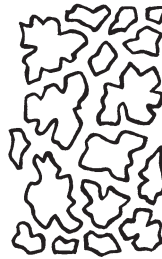
WORLD DISTRIBUTION

GIRAFFE - Africa, south of the Sahara in open woodland and wooded grassland.

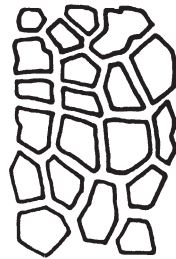
There are several different species of giraffe, the most common being the Masai. These different species all have their own markings, for example, the Reticulated giraffe has a large, even pattern on its coat, whereas the coat of the Masai has an uneven, star-like appearance.

CONSERVATION

The giraffe is not in immediate danger. However, like most African animals, habitat loss is a threat to their survival. Giraffe are common in Southern and Eastern Africa but poaching in West Africa has caused numbers to drop. In the Serengeti National Park, Tanzania, numbers of giraffes are increasing by over 5 per cent a year.



Masai



Reticulated

DID YOU KNOW?

Male giraffe feed at full stretch whilst females feed lower down and bend their heads over the vegetation.

A powerful kick from a giraffe can kill a lion.

Calves grow at a rate of 8cm per month and double their birth size in two years.

The giraffe is the tallest animal in the world.

The skull of a bull giraffe weighs three times as much as that of a female giraffe.

Giraffes walk by swinging two legs of the same side at the same time, instead of opposite legs. This gives them the swinging movement.

When galloping, both hind legs are brought forward at the same time and placed outside the front legs.

Giraffe can reach speeds of 50 – 56km/h

Female giraffes can conceive for the first time in their fifth year.

Calves are born in specific areas called calving grounds.