

# Giraffe

By

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The scientific name for the Giraffe is *Giraffa camelopardalis*. The giraffe is a mammal. Giraffes can be found in southern, central and eastern Africa. They roam freely among tall trees, arid land, dense forests and open plains.

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.

Giraffes eat leaves from tall trees, typically acacia trees. They can go several

days without water. Instead of drinking water, giraffes stay hydrated from the moisture in the leaves.

Most baby giraffes fall prey to lions and spotted hyenas in their first months. Adult giraffes are hunted for their meat, coat and tails. The tail is used for good luck bracelets and string for sewing beads. The coat is used to cover shields. Giraffes are semi-endangered because man is destroying their habitats.

Female giraffes give birth to one calf after being pregnant for 15 months. During the first week of its life, his or her mother guards her calf. Young giraffes cannot defend themselves. They're kept in small nursery groups. Baby giraffes are about six feet tall when born.

Giraffes are interesting because their tongues are 18 inches long. If a giraffe is in attack mode, it can kick the predators heads off. Female giraffes never use their horns and male giraffes only use them against other male giraffes. Giraffes are nonterritorial; they live in loose open herds. There are no leaders. A giraffe can only walk and gallop. In galloping they can reach a speed of 37 mph. To drink, a giraffe must either straddle or bend its front legs. The giraffe's height and excellent eyesight helps them see long distances.

