



Giraffe are everywhere, aren't they?



Giraffe are everywhere, aren't they? That is what most people here in Namibia, and also in the rest of the world think. When you go on safari or just on a quick game drive in Daan Viljoen National Park or in Etosha, you can be pretty sure to see giraffe. Yes, they are almost everywhere, but Namibia is one of the very few countries with a stable or even increasing giraffe population – something to be very proud of.



Did you know that giraffe are already extinct in at least seven countries in Africa? Isn't that sad?! Because you can spot giraffe often, most people do not know that there is a problem with giraffe. In the late 1990s it was estimated that there were more than 140,000 giraffe in Africa, but today we think there might only be as few as 80,000 left. That is a massive drop in numbers in only 15 years.

Today you can find giraffe in a wide semi-circle starting all the way up in Niger in West Africa, arching through Cameroon, Chad, South Sudan, Ethiopia and East Africa, and then down throughout Southern Africa. However, their range is very patchy and not continuous.

Photography: Billy Dodson



Male



Female

Can you spot the differences between male and female?

Male giraffe have much thicker ossicones which are mostly bald on top.

Photography: Billy Dodson



Photography: Fennessy, GCF

We at the Giraffe Conservation Foundation (GCF) have been concerned about giraffe for quite a while now and that's why we actually started GCF. GCF is the only charitable organisation in the world that focuses solely on giraffe conservation in the wild. We just felt, someone had to do something.



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Photography: Fennessy, GCF



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We have an office here in Windhoek – come and visit us if you are in the area! – but we also work all over Africa, helping to protect giraffe and the areas they live in. We work closely with other researchers, governments, universities and local communities to help them save their giraffe. If you want to find out more about our projects, visit our website www.giraffeconservation.org



There are several reasons for the drop in giraffe numbers. While there were wild animals living everywhere across Africa in the past, there are now more and more people living here too. Where there used to be bush or savanna before, land is now used for towns, villages and fields to plant food. As a result there is less space available for wildlife including giraffe.

Areas where they are still living are often cut up in small pieces and giraffe can't roam freely anymore – you can imagine that they like walking long distances with those long legs. Another reason for their dropping numbers is illegal hunting or poaching. Giraffe are easy to hunt and imagine how many people you can feed with the meat from one giraffe. This is a particular problem in Central Africa, where many countries are at war and there is a lot of poverty.

What can you do to help giraffe?

Last year we invented a special day for giraffe – World Giraffe Day. It is celebrated on 21 June. The longest night (or day, depending on your hemisphere) for the tallest animal. Great idea, wasn't it? We asked schools, zoos and organisations around the world to celebrate this day with us and make it a special day for our tall friends. Some schools organised painting or colouring-in competitions, baked special giraffe cakes or muffins, organised special science or art projects around giraffe or had a casual day under the motto 'Jeans for giraffe' on the Friday before.

Why don't you ask your teacher to make it a special day at your school too?! We are sure you can come up with some great ideas! Get some inspiration by getting in touch with us or visit the World Giraffe Day website www.worldgiraffeday.org, where you can download colouring-in sheets, giraffe masks and other fun things to do on World Giraffe Day 2015.

