

NAMIBIA'S GIRAFFE

Conservation Guide



We are grateful for the support of Anja Denker who has generously allowed us to reproduce her images free of charge as well as Cindy Armstrong for producing the map.

Conservation Status

- IUCN - Least Concern (LC): as a species *Giraffa camelopardalis*
 - Least Concern (LC): Angolan giraffe *Giraffa camelopardalis angolensis*
 - Least Concern (LC): South African giraffe *Giraffa camelopardalis giraffa*
- CITES - Not Listed

Taxonomy & Populations

Class: Mammalia (Mammals)

Order: Artiodactyla

Family: Giraffidae

Genus: Giraffa

Species: *Giraffa camelopardalis*

Subspecies: *Giraffa camelopardalis angolensis*
Giraffa camelopardalis giraffa

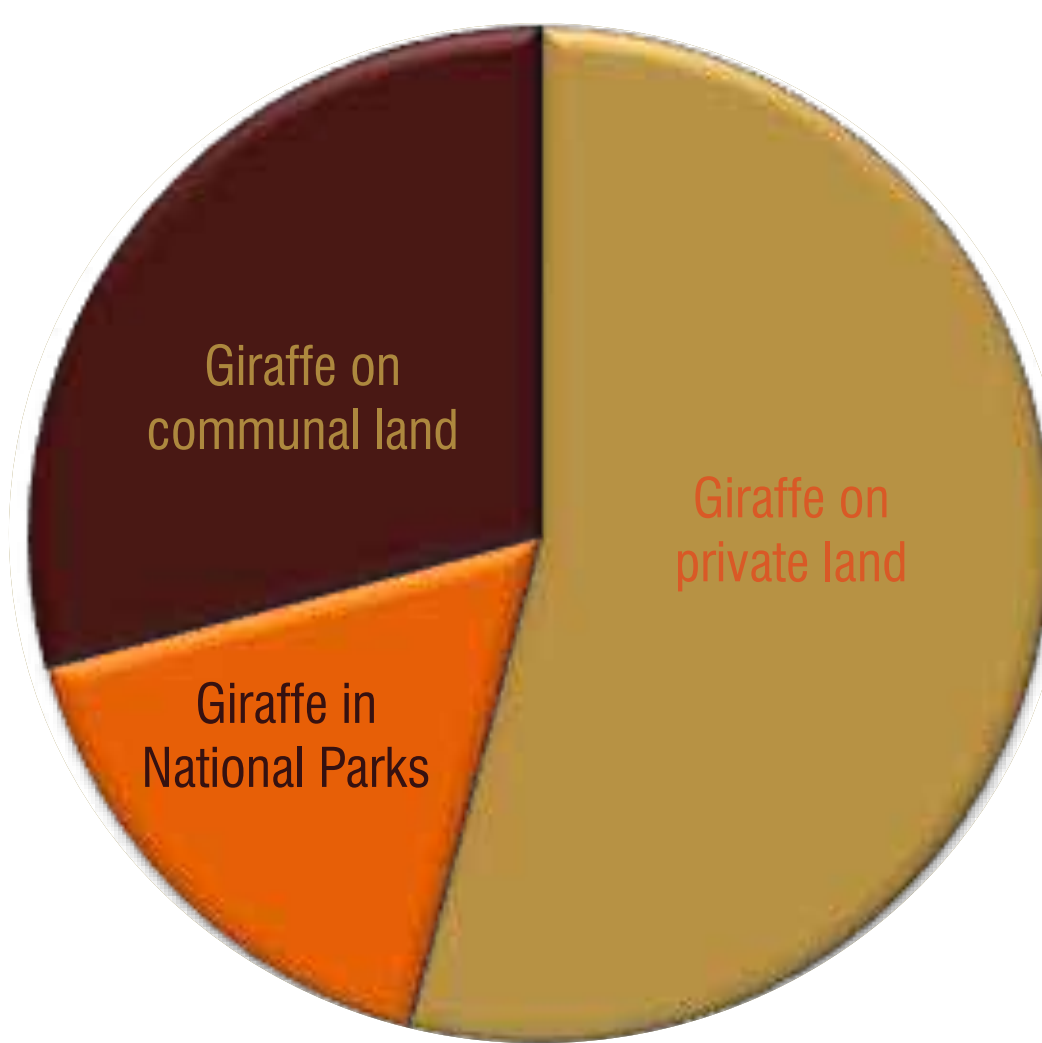
Local history of giraffe

Giraffe have ranged across current day Namibia for many thousands of years and evidence of this can be found in petroglyphs, rock paintings and engravings of giraffe in the Kunene Region. However, giraffe distribution has been poorly documented with the first written record by Captain Hendrik Hop, who ventured north of the Orange River in 1761.

Giraffe have long had cultural significance for the region's indigenous communities and are of ceremonial importance as well. In the mid 1990s, giraffe populations were at their lowest in Namibia, but since then, conservation efforts have successfully increased and expanded their range across the country.

Giraffe in Namibia

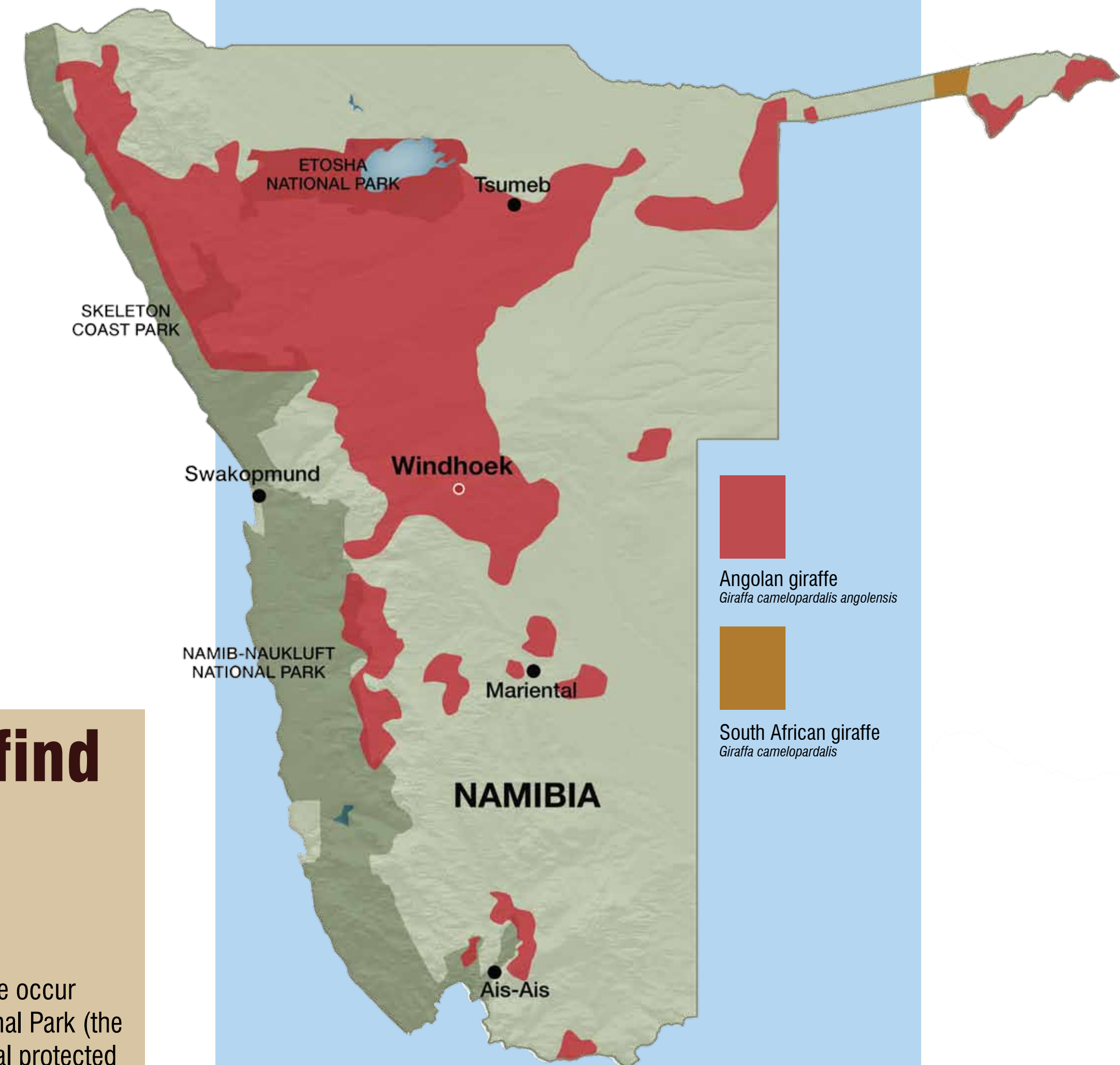
There are currently nine different giraffe subspecies recognised in Africa, two of which occur in Namibia: Angolan giraffe *Giraffa camelopardalis angolensis* and South African giraffe *Giraffa camelopardalis giraffa*. However, new research may show that they are actually the same.



Giraffe are widely spread across Namibia occurring in National Parks, private land as well as communal land. Giraffe population numbers and distribution in Namibia has increased over the past 30 years due to well managed conservation efforts.

Most giraffe in Namibia are Angolan giraffe. Based on a recent survey by the Giraffe Conservation Foundation in Namibia it is estimated that there are approx. **12,000 Angolan giraffe**; 6,500 on private land, 2,000 on communal land, and 3,500 in National Parks.

Approximately 100 South African giraffe occur in the Bwabwata National Park in the Zambezi Region.



Range and habitat

Giraffe are found throughout the dry savannah habitats of Namibia, including open grassland, woodland and scrubland and along ephemeral rivers. Their preferred food are Acacia, Combretum, Commiphora, and Terminalia species. Their range extends west and south-west of Etosha National Park into similar or more arid habitats in the northern and central Namib Desert. Here the movements of giraffe are focused on the ephemeral riverbeds, but they occasionally move between the rivers as well. Giraffe further occur in the semi-arid Kalahari sandveld in north-eastern Namibia as well as in the far eastern Zambezi Region, where they have been translocated to communal conservancies.

Giraffe are largely absent from densely populated areas, which have been cleared of woody vegetation for agriculture, such as the central northern regions, north of Etosha National Park. In Namibia, giraffe can and do however co-exist with the extensive livestock farming practise used on both commercial and communal farmland across the rest of Namibia. Giraffe are absent from true desert areas devoid of trees.

Over the last few decades, the Namibian Ministry of Environment & Tourism and private operators have undertaken many re-introductions of Angolan giraffe from both private and public land to other protected, private and communal areas across the country. This has been a valuable conservation effort enabling the population to expand in number and range.

Angolan giraffe have the largest recorded home ranges of any other giraffe across Africa (up to 11,600 km²), likely a result of the arid environment of their habitat. Males usually have larger home ranges than females as female giraffe are more sedentary while male giraffe roam solitary between different groups.

Where do you find giraffe in Namibia?

Numerous populations of Angolan giraffe occur east, south and west of of Etosha National Park (the countries stronghold for giraffe) in formal protected areas (Bwabwata, Daan Viljoen, Hardap, Naute and Von Bach Game Parks), Palmwag, Etendeka and Hobatere Concessions and small populations are found in the Namib Naukluft National Park, Gondwana Canyon Park and the Ai-Ais/Richtersveld Transfrontier Park. Varying numbers occur on private land across the Khomas and Erongo regions, including commercial conservancies (Black Nossob, Kalkfeld, Khomas Hochland, Namatanga, Okawi and Waterberg Conservancies), while smaller numbers are also kept on private land in the south including NamibRand Nature Reserve, Excelsior, Nomtsas and Neuhof. Good giraffe numbers occur in the arid communal conservancy landscape across north-western Namibia (Kunene Region), including Anabeb, Doro Inawas, #Khoadi-//Hôas, Puros, Sesfontein, Sorris Sorris and Torra Conservancies, and east and north-east Namibia including George Mukoya, Mayuni, Nyae Nyae, Salambala and Sikunga.

| Region | Giraffe numbers |
|--------------|--|
| Erongo | 2,600 |
| Hardap | 100 |
| Karas | 20 |
| Kavango East | 770 |
| Kavango West | 20 |
| Khomas | 520 |
| Kunene | 5,650 |
| Ohangwena | - |
| Omaheke | 250 |
| Omusati | 20 |
| Oshana | - |
| Oshikoto | - |
| Otjozondjupa | 2,000 |
| Zambezi | 150 (50 Angolan, 100 South African) |
| Total | 12,100 |

Threats

The main threats to giraffe in Namibia include:

- Loss of suitable habitat:** due to clearing of land for crop cultivation, cutting of trees for firewood and construction, frequent human-induced bush fires.
- Climate change:** may increase aridity in Namibia, which can lead to droughts, bushfires and reduced food availability.
- Fragmentation** of subpopulations due to increasing use of game-proof fencing and agriculture
- Risk of **hybridisation** with other subspecies may have already occurred due to close proximity of Angolan and South African giraffe, particularly in the Zambezi Region.
- Small scale **illegal hunting** is currently not a major threat as giraffe mainly exist in protected areas (public, private and communal). However, human population growth and increased drought might change this.
- Unknown risk through **local and international trade** of giraffe and giraffe products.



Success story

Namibia is one of only a few countries in Africa with a growing giraffe population, a success that can be attributed to the combined forces and collaboration of many partners. As the first African country to incorporate protection of the environment into its constitution, 40% of Namibia's land is sustainably managed in protected areas, communal and freehold conservancies, community forests and tourism concessions. Namibia has a focus on both individual species as well as the bigger pictures of biodiversity conservation, sustainability, ecosystem health and human wellbeing.

Communal conservancies are Namibia's biggest success. More than 20% of Namibia's land and one in four rural Namibians are part of one of the current 83 communal conservancies, which rely on tourism and sustainable utilization of wildlife to simultaneously ensure the improvement of livelihoods and protection of the environment. Giraffe have been successfully translocated and re-introduced into communal conservancies from private and public land. What the Namibian government and communal conservancies have achieved signifies a return to a healthier state of the environment for both the people and the wildlife living in the country. Private landowners have also contributed significantly to the success of conservation in the country. Both non-consumptive (photographic) and consumptive (trophy hunting) tourism have been identified as key reasons for the significant wildlife increase across different land management systems in Namibia. If wildlife contributes to livelihoods, it can be utilised in balance with agricultural land uses through effective management.



Giraffe Conservation Foundation (GCF) is dedicated to securing a future for all giraffe populations in the wild. GCF is the only charity in the world that concentrates solely on the conservation of this most quintessential of Africa's mega-herbivores and its habitat.

www.giraffeconservation.org

