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# NAMIBIA'S GIRAFFE Conservation Guide

Thank you to Anja Denker and Cindy Armstrong for providing the images and map.

## Taxonomy & Populations

**Class:** Mammalia (Mammals)

**Order:** Artiodactyla

**Family:** Giraffidae

**Genus:** *Giraffa*

**Species:** *Giraffa giraffa* (southern giraffe)

**Subspecies:**

*G. g. angolensis* (Angolan giraffe)

*G. g. giraffa* (South African giraffe)

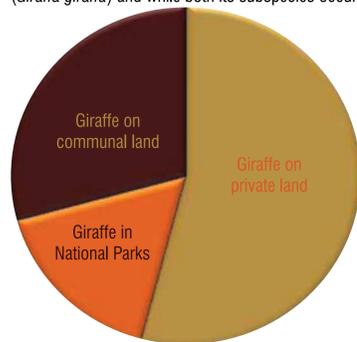
## Local history of giraffe

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

For a long time, giraffe have been culturally and ceremonially important to the region's indigenous communities. 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

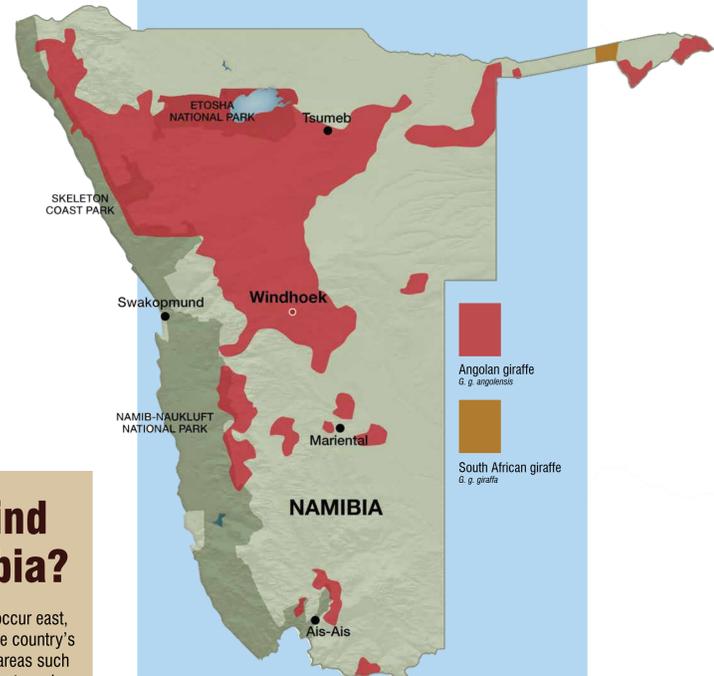
Latest research has shown that there are four different giraffe species in Africa. Giraffe in Namibia are the southern giraffe (*Giraffa giraffa*) and while both its subspecies occur in Namibia, most giraffe are the Angolan giraffe (*Giraffa giraffa angolensis*) subspecies.



Giraffe are widely spread across Namibia, occurring in National Parks, and on private and 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 (GCF) 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, in open grassland, woodland and scrubland, and along ephemeral rivers (rivers which contain water for a short period of time and then dry out again). Their preferred food is *Acacia*, *Combretum*, *Commiphora* and *Terminalia* tree 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, where their movements are concentrated within and around the ephemeral riverbeds – occasionally also moving between the rivers. Giraffe also 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. However, across the rest of Namibia, giraffe can and do co-exist with livestock on both commercial and communal farmland, where livestock farming is practiced extensively. Giraffe are absent from true desert areas which are 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.

Compared to any other giraffe across Africa, Angolan giraffe have the largest recorded home ranges (up to 11,600 km<sup>2</sup>), which is most likely a result of the arid environment of their habitats. Male giraffe usually have larger home ranges than females. Solitary males roam between different groups while females, who are more sedentary, tend to stay in a particular area.

## Where do you find giraffe in Namibia?

Numerous populations of Angolan giraffe occur east, south and west of Etosha National Park (the country's stronghold for giraffe) in formal protected areas such as the Bwabwata, Daan Viljoen, Hardap, Naute and Von Bach Game Parks, and in the Palmwag, Etendeka and Hobatere Concessions. Small populations are found in the Namib Naukluft National Park, Gondwana Canyon Park and Ai-Ais/Richtersveld Transfrontier Park.

Varying numbers occur on private land across the Khomas and Erongo regions, including the Black Nossob, Kalkfeld, Khomas Hochland, Namatanga, Okawi and Waterberg Commercial Conservancies. Smaller numbers are also kept on private land in the south, including the NamibRand Nature Reserve, and Excelsior, Nomtsas and Neuhof farms.

Healthy giraffe populations occur in the arid communal conservancy landscape across north-western Namibia (Kunene Region), including the Anabeb, Doro Inawas, #Khoadi-/Hóas, Puros, Sesfontein, SorrisSorris and Torra Conservancies, and east and north-east Namibia, including the George Mukoya, Mayuni, NyaeNyae, Salambala and Sikunga Conservancies.

Region	Giraffe numbers
Erongo	2,600
Hardap	100
Karas	20
Kavango East	770
Kavango West	20
Khomas	520
Kunene	5,650
Oshana	-
Oshikoto	-
Otjozondjupa	2,000
Zambezi	150 (50 Angolan, 100 South African)
<b>Total</b>	<b>12,100</b>

## 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, and 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 agriculture and use of game-proof fencing.
- 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 focuses on individual species, as well as on the bigger picture of biodiversity conservation, sustainability, ecosystem health and human wellbeing.

Communal conservancies are Namibia's biggest success. To date, there are 83 communal conservancies established on more than 20% of Namibia's land, and one out of every four rural Namibians live within these areas. Communal conservancies rely on tourism and sustainable utilisation 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. The achievements of the Namibian government and communal conservancies signify a return of the environment to a healthier state 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 increase of wildlife 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.



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The development of the poster was supported by:



The Giraffe Conservation Foundation (GCF) is dedicated to a sustainable future for all giraffe populations in the wild. GCF is the only NGO in the world that concentrates solely on the conservation and management of giraffe in the wild throughout Africa.

[giraffeconservation.org](http://giraffeconservation.org)

