

TANZANIA'S GIRAFFE

Conservation Guide

Thank you to Cindy Armstrong, Billy Dodson, Majed Sultan, Michael Viljoen and Akshay Vishwanath for providing the images and map.

Taxonomy & Populations

Class: Mammalia (Mammals)

Order: Artiodactyla

Family: Giraffidae

Genus, Species and Subspecies:

Giraffa camelopardalis

G. c. antiquorum
G. c. camelopardalis
G. c. peralta

Giraffa giraffa

G. g. angolensis
G. g. giraffa

Giraffa reticulata

Giraffa tippelskirchi

G. t. thornicrofti
G. t. tippelskirchi

Where do you find giraffe in Tanzania?

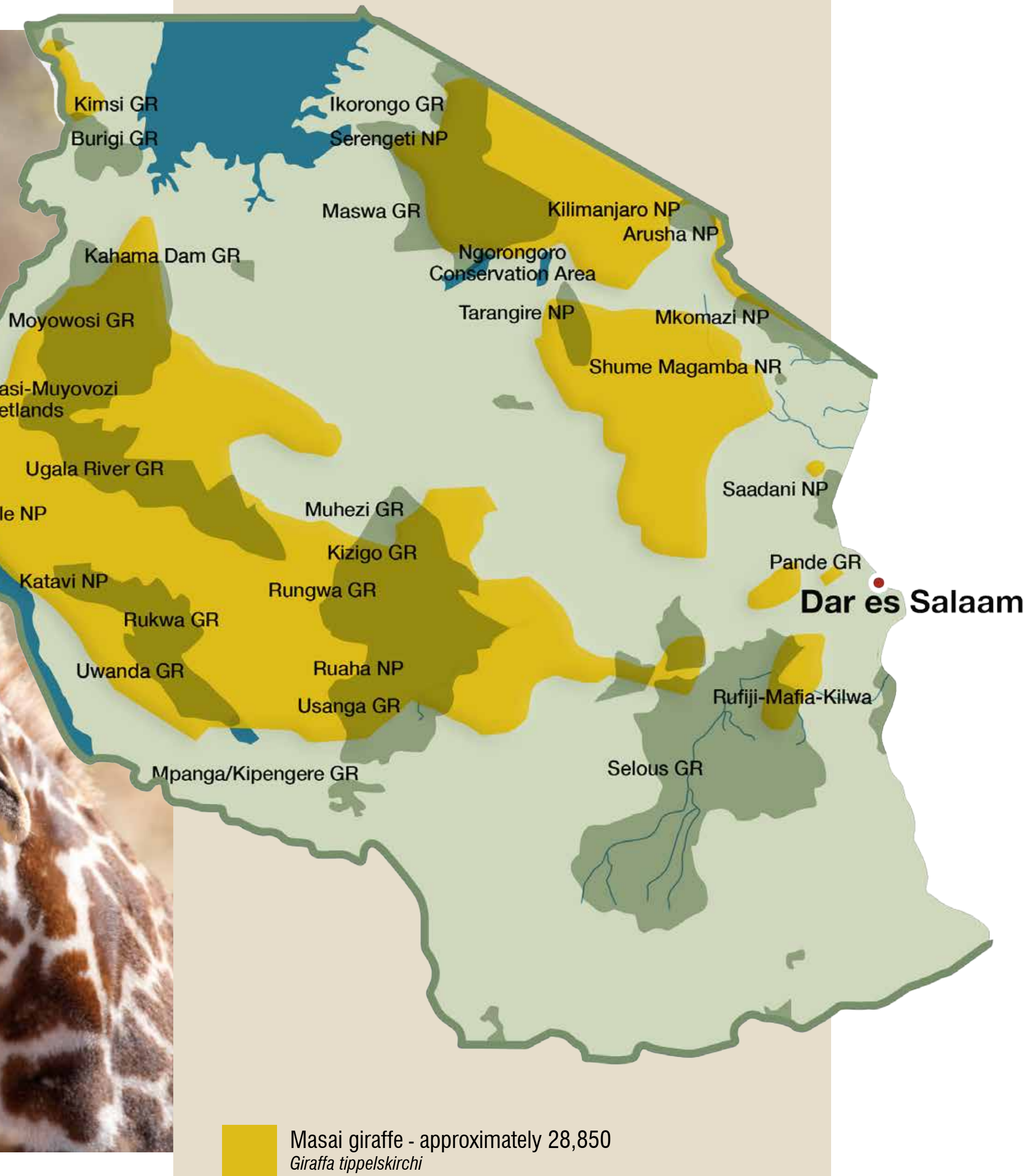
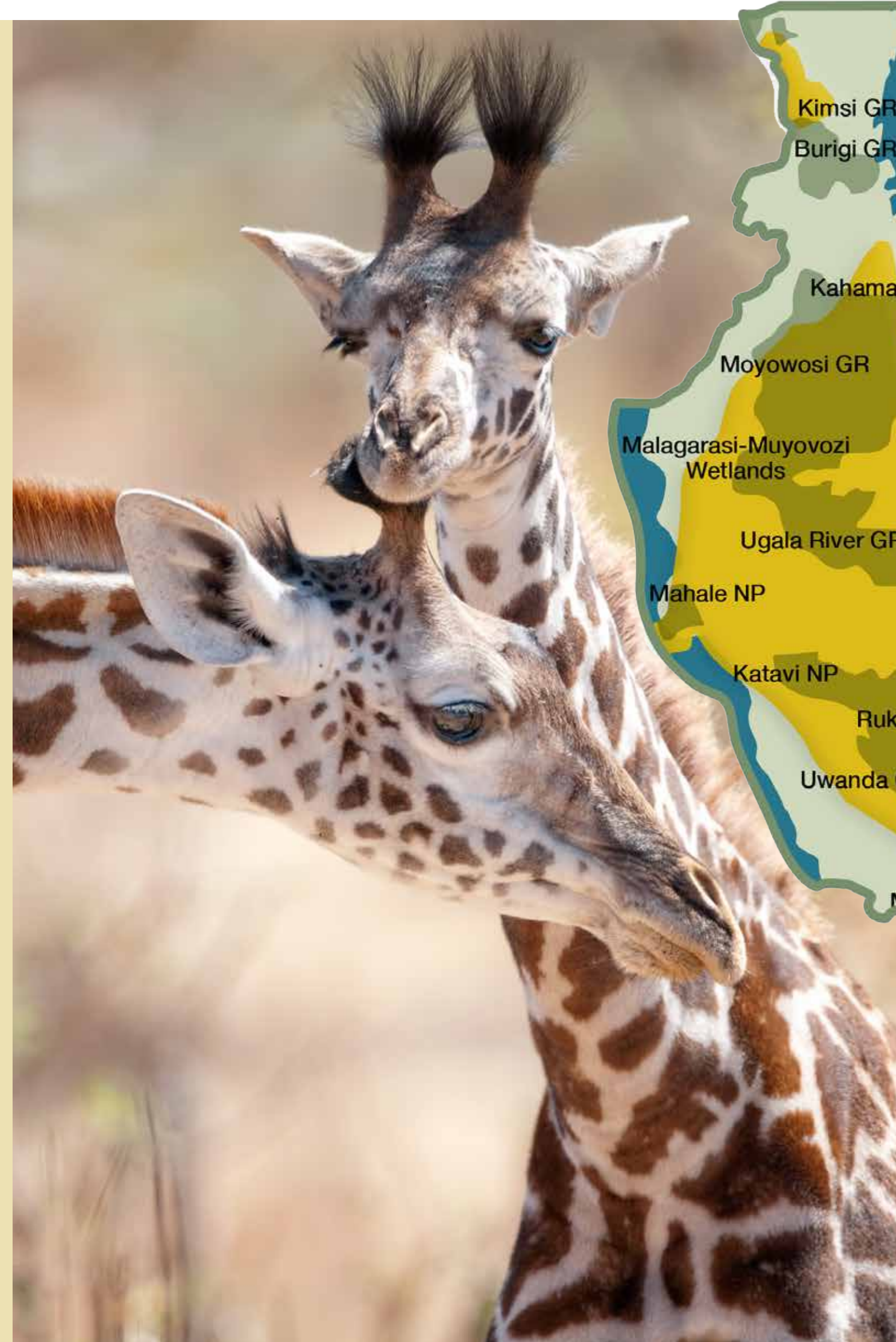
Masai giraffe are widely distributed throughout northern and central Tanzania in both protected and unprotected areas, including the Serengeti, Tarangire-Manyara, Arusha, Mkomazi, Mikumi, Kigosi and Saadani ecosystems. Additionally, Masai giraffe are also found in western and southern Tanzania, including Nyerere National Park and the Katavi-Rukwa ecosystem. Even though the Selous-Mikumi ecosystem, in southern Tanzania, is the largest wildlife protection area in the world, giraffe only occur in the northern section (Nyerere National Park) as the Rufiji River acts as a natural barrier, preventing them from accessing the southern sections. However, due to the vast size of conservation areas and the logistical difficulties involved in accessing southern Tanzania, studies of giraffe have mostly focused on the northern part of the country.



Giraffe in Tanzania

Historically, giraffe were considered one species, *Giraffa camelopardalis*, with nine subspecies. However, the Giraffe Conservation Foundation (GCF), together with its partner Senckenberg Biodiversity and Climate Research Centre (BiK-F), performed the first-ever comprehensive DNA sampling and analysis (genomic, nuclear and mitochondrial) of all major natural populations of giraffe throughout their range in Africa. These studies have resulted in an updated understanding of the traditional taxonomy. The data shows that there are four distinct species of giraffe. These ground-breaking findings have already contributed significantly to giraffe research, conservation and management.

Only one of the four species of giraffe occurs in Tanzania: Masai giraffe. The Masai giraffe is Tanzania's national animal, and they are protected under the Wildlife Conservation Act No. 5 of 2009. According to the IUCN, the Masai giraffe population in Tanzania has declined from approximately 31,000 in 1986 to 22,000 and they are listed as *Endangered* on the IUCN Red List. However, according to the Tanzania Wildlife Research Institute (TAWIRI) aerial survey data, the Masai giraffe population is estimated at 28,850 individuals. Together with the Kenyan population, this would make Masai giraffe the second most populous giraffe species in Africa, accounting for approximately 30% of the total number of giraffe in the wild. Giraffe in Tanzania occur within different types of land-management, including national parks, game reserves, wildlife management areas and communal land.



Habitat and Ecology

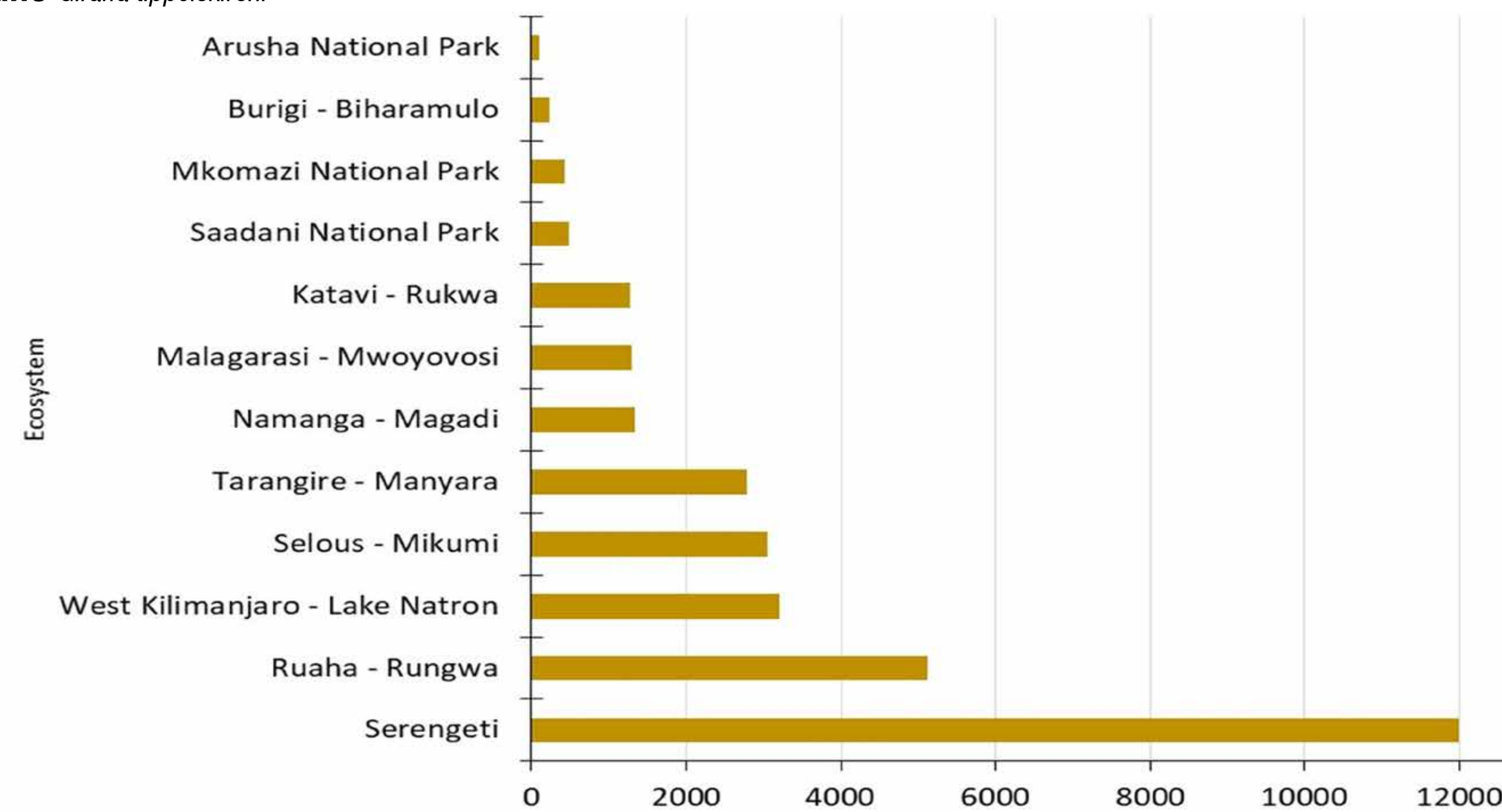
Throughout Tanzania, giraffe are mainly found in scrublands, open grasslands and woodlands. As browsers, giraffe feed primarily on the leaves, fruits, stems and flowers of a wide range of tree species, such as *Combretum*, *Commiphora*, *Vachellia* and *Terminalia*. Giraffe appear to seasonally change their home ranges, covering great distances in search of mates and available forage. Giraffe live in a fission-fusion social system, which means that the size and composition of herds change frequently. Depending on environmental factors and seasons, individuals or small groups will either merge with or split from a herd. However, a rapid increase in the human population and its related infrastructural development has resulted in the encroachment of giraffe habitats, which, successively, has led to reduced forage. This could have been a major contributor to the recent Masai giraffe population decline in the country. To help reduce continued habitat encroachment, it is vital to create awareness for the economic and ecological importance of giraffe conservation amongst the communities who share their space with giraffe and who live adjacent to protected areas.



Local history of giraffe

Since Tanzania's Independence in 1961, giraffe have played an important role in the country. In Swahili, Tanzania's *lingua franca*, giraffe are known as *twiga*. Tanzania chose the giraffe as their national animal for their grace, as well as their long necks which represent the ability to be visionary - seeing the past and the present at the same time. Giraffe serve as a reminder for Tanzanians to view life from all angles. Symbolically, giraffe are prominently used in all aspects of business; their image was used as a watermark on banknotes from Independence until 2011 and continues to be prominent in advertising various products and services, including beer (Twiga Brew), tourism (Twiga Campsite and Lodge), building materials (Twiga Cement), financial institutions (Twiga Bancorp), and chemical products (Twiga Chemical Industries).

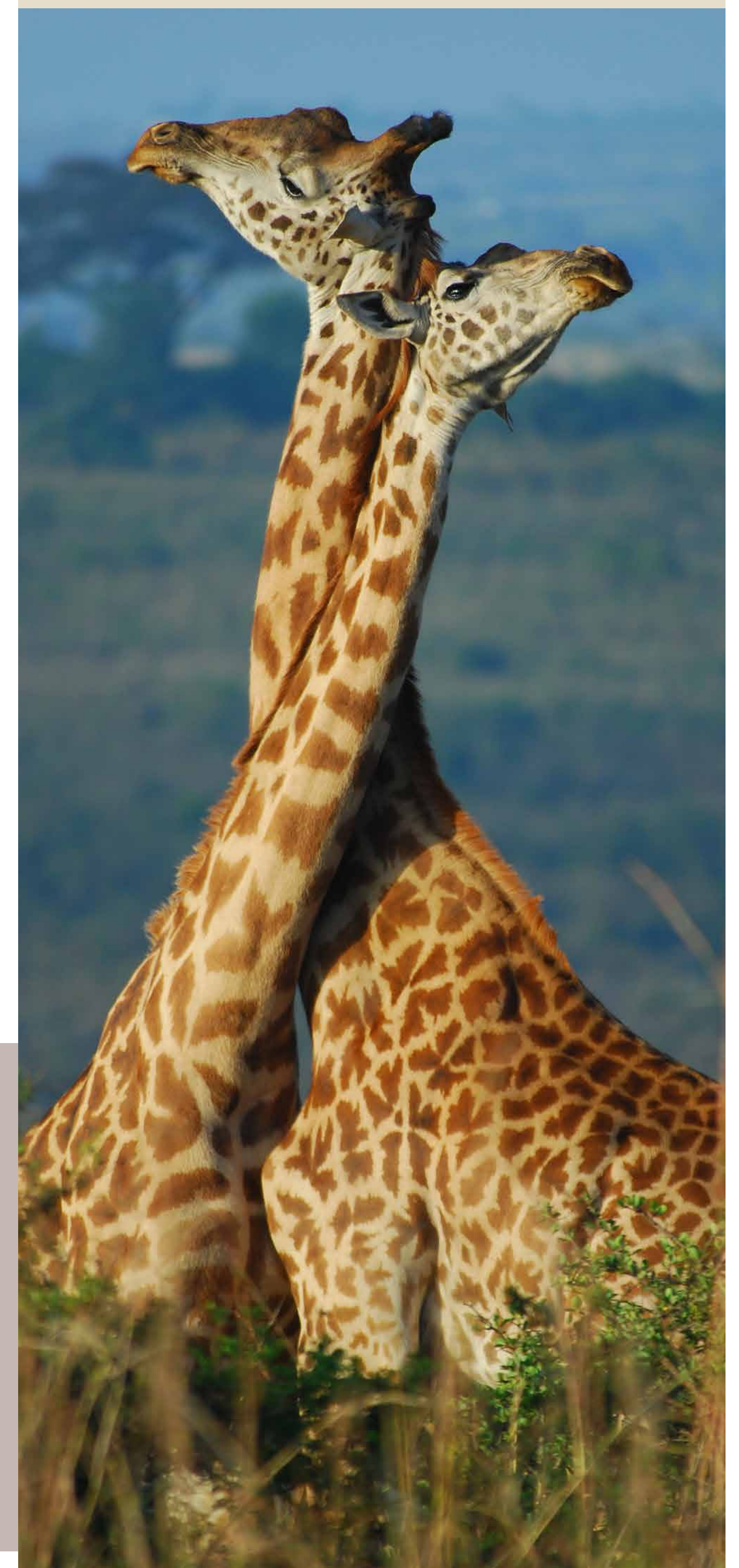
Masai giraffe *Giraffa tippelskirchi*



Threats

The main threats to giraffe in Tanzania include:

- **Illegal hunting/poaching** using snares and guns for bush meat and other products such as hides, bones and tail hair. Giraffe products are used for 'traditional' medicine, for example, in northern Tanzania some people believe that giraffe bone marrow and brains can be used to cure HIV/AIDS.
- **Habitat loss and fragmentation** due to increased human population has led to encroachment across the Masai giraffe range.
- **Diseases** such as Giraffe Skin Disease (GSD) and Giraffe Ear Disease (GED). GSD is characterised by greyish-brown lesions that appear on the forelimbs and neck of adult and sub-adult giraffe; and GED manifests in lesions on the ears which then become droopy. Tanzania is a hotspot for GSD and has presented some of the highest recorded incident rates in sub-Saharan Africa.
- **Predation** of calves by carnivores.
- **Increase of unpalatable tree species** such as *Vachellia robusta*, which is known to reduce giraffe forage in the Serengeti National Park, could have a declining effect on giraffe populations.



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