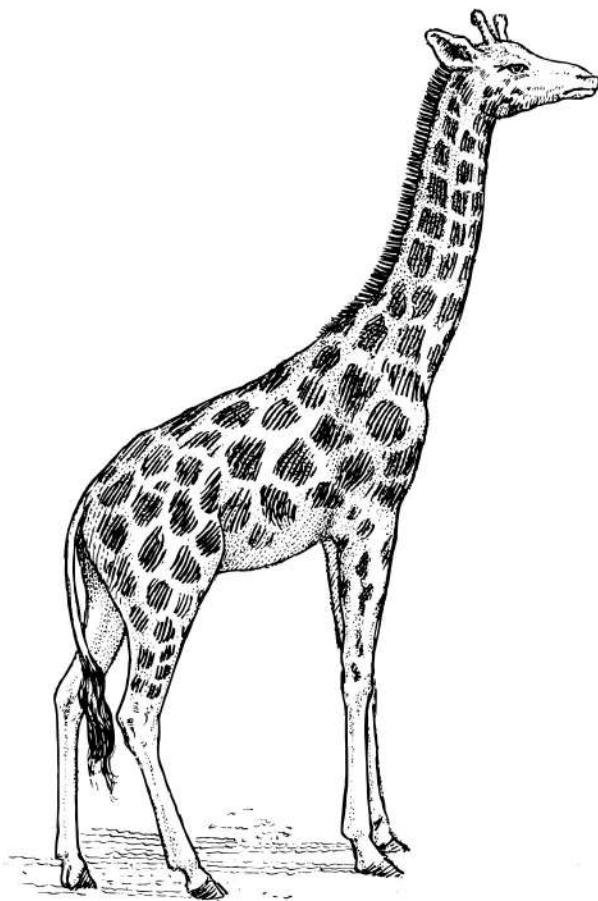


Nature on the Brink

Field Notes

Giraffes



Nature on the Brink - Inspiring the next generation of environmental stewards

www.natureonthebrink.org

Giraffes are the tallest land animals on Earth, easily recognized by their long necks and unique spotted patterns. These gentle giants roam the African savannas, using their height to reach leaves high in the trees and spot danger from far away. In this field note booklet, you'll explore how giraffes live, what they eat, and the special adaptations that help them survive in the wild. Grab your pencil and look closely—there's so much to discover!



Field Information

Location: _____

Date: _____

Weather (☀ ☁ ☔ ☁): _____

Temperature: _____ °F

Habitat Type (circle one): Forest / Meadow / Pond / Schoolyard / Other:

What do you notice first about this environment?



Quick Giraffe Facts

Giraffes are the tallest land animals on Earth.

An adult giraffe can be up to 18 feet tall. Giraffes have long necks, but the same number of neck bones as humans.

Each giraffe has a unique spot pattern, like a fingerprint.

Giraffes use their long, dark tongues to grab leaves.

Their tongues can be up to 18 inches long.

Giraffes mainly eat leaves from acacia trees.

They are herbivores, meaning they eat plants.

Giraffes live in groups called herds.

A baby giraffe is called a calf.

Calves can stand and walk within hours of being born.

Giraffes sleep very little, often just a few minutes at a time.

Their height helps them spot predators from far away.

Giraffes live in African savannas and woodlands.

What I Observed

Type of animal/bird/insect:

What was the giraffe doing? (Circle or write)

- Eating leaves
- Walking
- Standing
- Resting
- With other giraffes
- Other: _____

Any sounds or tracks?

What do you think this animal eats or depends on in this habitat?

Notes:



Habitat & Range

Habitat:

Open savannas

Grasslands with scattered trees

Woodlands where tall trees grow

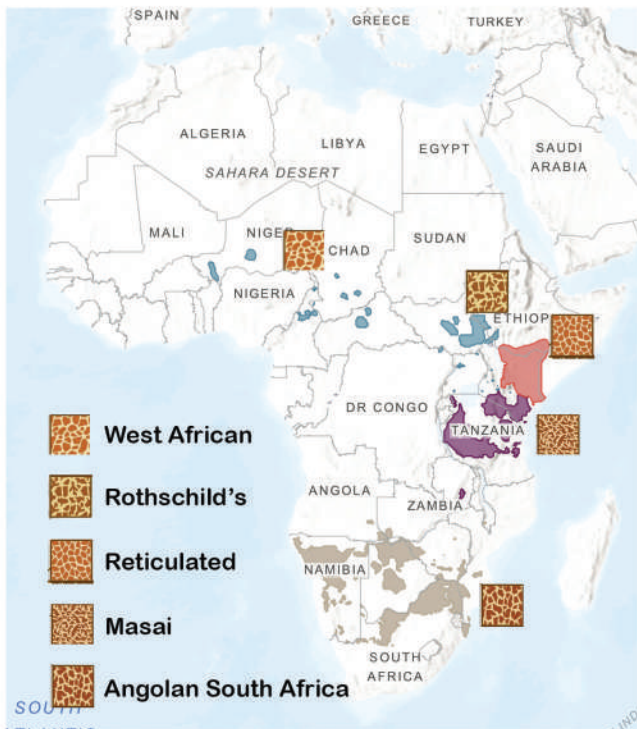
Areas with acacia trees, a favorite food source

What Giraffes Need:

Tall trees for browsing

Open space to move and watch for predators

Access to water (they can go long periods without drinking)



Range:

Giraffes live only in Africa

Found mainly in sub-Saharan Africa

Populations live in eastern and southern Africa

Smaller groups live in parts of central and western Africa



Giraffe Field Note Vocabulary

Giraffe – The tallest land animal in the world

Savanna – A grassy land with scattered trees where giraffes live

Herbivore – An animal that eats plants

Browse – To eat leaves and twigs from trees

Acacia – A thorny tree giraffes often eat

Ossicones – The short, horn-like bumps on a giraffe's head

Camouflage – Colors or patterns that help an animal blend in

Pattern – The shapes and spots on a giraffe's coat

Neck – The long body part that helps giraffes reach high leaves

Tongue – A long, dark tongue used to grab leaves

Hooves – Hard coverings on a giraffe's feet

Herd – A group of giraffes living together

Predator – An animal that hunts other animals

Calf – A baby giraffe

Habitat – The natural home of an animal



Body Parts

Neck

Head

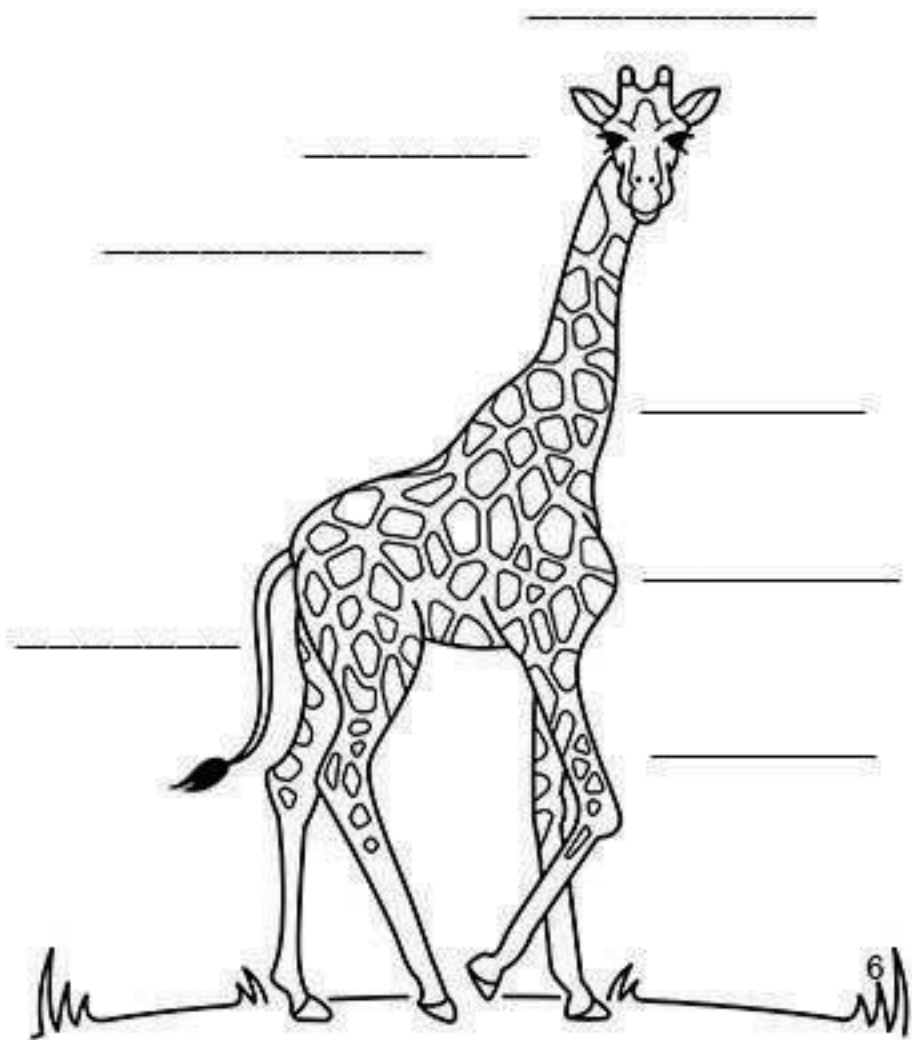
Ossicones

Tail

Body

Legs

Spots





Body Features I Notice

Check or describe what you see:

- Long neck
- Spotted coat pattern
- Ossicones (horn-like bumps)
- Long legs
- Long tongue

Describe one body feature:

Draw a giraffe in the box

A large, empty rectangular box with a black border, intended for drawing a giraffe.

Giraffe Behavior

Giraffes are gentle and calm animals that spend much of their day eating leaves from tall trees. They often live in loose groups called herds, but these groups change as giraffes come and go. Giraffes communicate using body movements, such as necking, ear positions, and tail swishing.

They are usually quiet animals, but they can make sounds that humans cannot hear easily. Giraffes rest and sleep standing up or lying down, usually for only short periods. Their tall height helps them watch for predators, and they can run fast when they need to escape danger.



Giraffe Behavior Observation

Time of Observation: _____



Giraffe Behavior

What behaviors did you observe? (Check all that apply)

- Browsing (eating leaves)
- Walking or running

- Standing alert
- Socializing with other giraffes
- Using tongue or neck
- Other: _____



Giraffe Life Cycle

1. Birth (Calf Stage)

A baby giraffe is called a calf.

Calves are born about 6 feet tall and can stand and walk within hours.

2. Juvenile Stage

Young giraffes grow quickly, learning to eat leaves and run from predators.

They stay close to their mothers for protection.

3. Adulthood

Giraffes reach full size around 4–6 years old.

Adults can be 14–18 feet tall and join herds of other giraffes.

4. Old Age

Giraffes can live 20–25 years in the wild.

Older giraffes often slow down but continue to browse leaves daily.



Giraffe Predators and Threats

Giraffes are very tall and strong, but they still have natural predators in the wild.

Predators:

Lions – The main threat to adult giraffes

Hyenas – Can hunt young or sick giraffes

Leopards – Occasionally target calves

Crocodiles – A danger when drinking at rivers

Human Threats:

Habitat loss – Forests and savannas are cleared for farming and cities

Poaching – Illegal hunting for meat, skin, or horns

Conflict with humans – Roads, fences, and farming can harm giraffes

Fun Fact:

Giraffes use their height, speed, and powerful kicks to protect themselves from predators.



Giraffe Conservation Status

Giraffes are facing challenges in the wild, and some populations are at risk.

Current Status:

Giraffes are listed as Vulnerable by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN).

Some subspecies are even more at risk, classified as Endangered.

Why They're Threatened:

Habitat loss – Trees and grasslands are cleared for farming and cities.

Poaching – Illegal hunting for meat, skin, and horns.

Human conflict – Roads, fences, and development make it harder for giraffes to roam.

Conservation Efforts:

Wildlife reserves and national parks protect giraffe habitats.

Anti-poaching programs help keep populations safe.

Education and community programs encourage humans and giraffes to coexist.

Fun Fact:

Education and conservation can help ensure giraffes roam the savannas for generations to come.



How You Can Help Giraffes

Protect habitats – Support efforts that save African savannas and woodlands

Learn and share – Teach others about giraffes and why they matter

Support conservation groups – Donate to or follow organizations that protect giraffes

Choose wildlife-friendly products – Buy goods that don't harm animal habitats

Reduce waste – Use less plastic and recycle when possible

Respect wildlife – Never disturb or feed wild animals

Support responsible tourism – Choose wildlife tours that protect animals

Plant trees – Trees help animals by improving habitats worldwide

Speak up for animals – Encourage laws and policies that protect wildlife

Create awareness art or writing – Posters, stories, or drawings can inspire others



Measure like a Giraffe



Materials

Rulers or measuring tapes

Paper and pencils

Calculator (optional)

Classroom objects (desks, doors, bookshelves, whiteboard)

Giraffe height reference:

Adult giraffe \approx 18 feet (216 inches)



Instructions

1. Measure classroom objects.

2. Compare to giraffe height.

Example: How many desks tall = one giraffe?

Desk is 30 inches tall; Giraffe is 216 inches

Answer: $216/30 = 7.2$ desks

Object	Height	Answer
Desk		
Door		
Bookshelf		



Giraffe Reflection Page



Think Like a Field Biologist

Why do you think giraffes have long necks?

How does their body help them survive?

My Favorite Observation

The most interesting thing I observed about giraffes was:



Observer Name:

Date: _____

Location (Zoo, Reserve, Video, Book):
