



## Saving Africa's Giraffes



photos courtesy San Diego Zoo Global

Graceful, gentle giraffes dot the landscapes of Africa and draw visitors to many zoos. But in December, experts at the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) announced that giraffes are now "vulnerable" for extinction because numbers of the animals have dropped by 40 percent over the last 30 years.

The Mini Page talked with experts at the San Diego Zoo about these beloved animals and why their numbers are decreasing.

### Counting giraffes

The IUCN produces an index of animals and plants that are threatened with extinction. In order to keep track of different species, conservationists must count the animals in the wild and keep records to see how the populations are changing. For giraffes, this means counting from the air and on the ground.



A young giraffe on the savanna in Africa.

According to the IUCN, about 97,000 giraffes are living in the wild. In 1985, there were about 160,000 giraffes. Some subspecies are doing well, but others are in decline.

Many years ago, giraffe herds might have had 20 to 30 members, but today herds average fewer than six members. Scientists believe the giraffes may be more scattered because of humans' effects on their habitats.

### Mini Fact:

Giraffes have great eyesight. Many other species stay close to them, as they can spot predators before other animals can.

### Threats to giraffes

Africa's giraffes face four challenges:

- loss of habitat (because more land is used for farming and housing people);
- civil unrest, or wars and violence;
- illegal hunting, or poaching; and
- ecological changes, such as those from mining and climate change.

### Working for conservation

Conservation groups such as The Nature Conservancy, the San Diego Zoo Global and the Giraffe Conservation Foundation, along with others, are working together to keep giraffes from getting closer to extinction.

Their work includes creating fenced sanctuaries where giraffes will be safe, educating people about the importance of saving the species, and enacting laws to prohibit the hunting of giraffes.

For example, in Niger, the government created a National Giraffe Conservation Strategy, which includes banning hunting and encouraging nurseries to grow seedlings for trees. These efforts helped increase the giraffe population in that country.

### What can we do?

Kids can help by supporting zoos and conservationists in their efforts to save giraffes from extinction. For instance, at the San Diego Zoo, you can buy biscuits to feed to the giraffes. Money from the biscuits goes to conservation programs in Africa.

### All about giraffes

We learned about giraffes from Andy Blue at the San Diego Zoo Safari Park.

When calves are born, they typically hide in the bushes for the first several weeks to avoid predators. The mother will call the calf to nurse a few times a day, and once the calf is a couple of weeks old, it will join the herd.

Calves of similar ages often stay together to form nursery herds that all the mothers look after.



Giraffes seem to stay in a range that has the most vegetation and will move away as food becomes available elsewhere. They lie down to sleep, but they rarely put their heads down. They primarily eat acacia twigs, shoots and leaves.

Giraffe calves can be eaten by lions, leopards, hyenas and other predators. However, the mothers are very protective of the calves and have been known to kill a lion to defend a calf.

Adults are vulnerable to predators when they bend over to drink, so they will often drink at midday, when predators are resting in the shade. The animals are also threatened by hunters for their meat and their tails, which can be used as a fly swatter. Overgrazing by livestock is also a threat to giraffes and their environment.

### Resources



#### On the Web:

- [bit.ly/MPgiraffes](http://bit.ly/MPgiraffes)
- [bit.ly/MPSDZoo](http://bit.ly/MPSDZoo)

#### At the library:

- "Juma the Giraffe" by Monica Bond

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## Try 'n' Find

Words that remind us of giraffes are hidden in this puzzle. Some words are hidden backward or diagonally, and some letters are used twice. See if you can find:



AFRICA, CLIMATE,  
CONSERVATION, COUNT,  
EXTINCTION, GIRAFFE,  
GRACEFUL, HABITAT,  
HERD, MAMMAL,  
POACHING, POPULATION,  
SANCTUARIES, SPECIES,  
THREAT, VULNERABLE,  
WILD, ZOOS.

V U L N E R A B L E Z O O S W  
W S O X O T A E R H T W Z T G  
G S P E C I E S H E R D N H N  
S E I R A U T C N A S U A A I  
C O N S E R V A T I O N F B H  
L A M M A M C Z L C Q S R I C  
E F F A R I G V S U S O I T A  
C L I M A T E I L O P G C A O  
K N O I T C N I T X E O A T P  
W I L D L U F E C A R G P N E

## Cook's Corner

### Tuna-Cranberry Salad

#### You'll need:

- 1 (6-ounce) can water-packed Albacore tuna
- 1 tablespoon reduced-fat mayonnaise
- 1/2 teaspoon Dijon mustard
- 1/2 teaspoon lemon juice

- 1/3 cup chopped celery
- 1/4 cup cranberry raisins
- sprinkle of lemon pepper seasoning



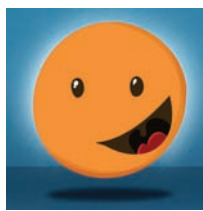
\* You'll need an adult's help with this recipe.

#### What to do:

1. Drain and chop tuna; place in a medium bowl. In a separate bowl, combine mayonnaise, mustard and lemon juice.
2. Spoon mayonnaise mixture into bowl with tuna. Add chopped celery, cranberry raisins and seasoning. Stir gently until well mixed.
3. Serve with bread as sandwiches or with crackers for a snack.

## 7 Little Words for Kids

Use the letters in the boxes to make a word with the same meaning as the clue. The numbers in parentheses represent the number of letters in the solution. Each letter combination can be used only once, but all letter combinations will be necessary to complete the puzzle.



1. 100 cents (6) \_\_\_\_\_
2. closest planet to the sun (7) \_\_\_\_\_
3. queen's daughter (8) \_\_\_\_\_
4. thaw (4) \_\_\_\_\_
5. outdoor meal (6) \_\_\_\_\_
6. where trials occur (5) \_\_\_\_\_
7. what you sit on (5) \_\_\_\_\_

NIC	IN	RT	PIC
CU	ME	LAR	PR
MER	DOL	CH	RY
AIR	CESS	LT	COU

Answers: dollar, Mercury, princess, melt, picnic, court, chair.

## Mini Jokes



**Jerry:** Why do giraffes have long necks?

**Jenny:** Because their feet smell!

## Eco Note



Trees help fight climate change by absorbing carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>), a gas that animals and humans produce when we exhale. Cars and factories also produce CO<sub>2</sub>. Visit your local nursery to find out what kinds of trees you can plant in your area. Get planting!

adapted with permission from "The New 50 Simple Things Kids Can Do to Save the Earth" by The Earthworks Group, Andrews McMeel Publishing ([andrewsmcmeel.com](http://andrewsmcmeel.com))

## Thank You



The Mini Page thanks Andy Blue, associate curator of mammals with the San Diego Zoo Safari Park, for help with this issue.

## Teachers:

For standards-based activities to accompany this feature, visit: [bbs.amuniversal.com/Everyone\\_content/Teaching\\_Guides/The\\_Mini\\_Page/](http://bbs.amuniversal.com/Everyone_content/Teaching_Guides/The_Mini_Page/)

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