

New study finds giraffes are as social as chimps and elephants

Female giraffes form friendships that can last years.

BASIC Scientists know that animals like chimps and elephants are social creatures. Social animals live in groups and work together. Like humans, they have families and friends. Recently, scientists in the U.K. discovered that giraffes are social animals too. **Can someone read the quote here? Have you ever seen a giraffe at the zoo? What was it like?**

Scientists found several interesting ways that giraffes behave toward one another. Female giraffes can form friendships with other giraffes that can last years. **Have you had friendships that have lasted for**

GENERAL Researchers have recently learned some amazing things about the social lives of giraffes. Scientists know that many animals have complex ways of interacting. **Can you think of animals that have complex social behavior?** (*Chimpanzees, dolphins, elephants, among others.*) But giraffes have never been thought of as highly social, that is, until now. **Can someone read the quote here?**

In August, researchers at the University of Bristol published a paper showing that giraffes may have social behaviors just as complex as those of chimps and elephants. **Based on the map here, where is the University of Bristol located?** (*In the U.K.*) These researchers spent time looking at hundreds of different giraffe studies. In doing so, they found that giraffes interact

ADVANCED Recently, researchers at the University of Bristol in England made some amazing discoveries about the social lives of giraffes. Scientists have known for a long time that certain animals like chimpanzees and elephants have complex social behaviors. But giraffes have largely been considered solitary animals, that is, until now. **Can someone read the quote here?**

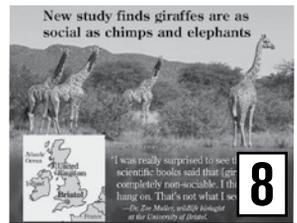
In August, the U.K. researchers published a paper combining the findings of hundreds of giraffe studies. The paper shows that giraffes have many complicated and subtle social behaviors. For example, some female giraffes can form bonds that last many years. Mother giraffes also create “daycares” with other giraffe mothers. These groups allow the giraffes to share the responsibility of feeding and protecting young giraffes.

years? They also found that mother giraffes create daycares, where they take turns babysitting and feeding the young of other giraffes. Scientists have also found that giraffes have certain friends that they like to eat meals with. **Why do you think giraffes like to eat with their friends?** These findings make it clear that humans still have a lot to learn about giraffes. Sadly, giraffes are in trouble. Their population has decreased by 40 percent over the last 30 years. **NEXT** in many interesting and complicated ways. Female giraffes, for example, form daycares with other mother giraffes. Some females spend time babysitting and feeding the children of other giraffes. The researchers also found that giraffes prefer to eat meals with a friend. The researchers say that giraffes hadn’t been considered social in the past because they communicate in ways that are hard for humans to see and understand. Giraffes don’t bark or call in loud and obvious ways. Instead, they make low humming sounds.

Humans still have a lot to learn about giraffes, but, unfortunately, these animals are in trouble. Experts say giraffe populations have fallen over 40 percent in the last 30 years because of habitat loss and hunting. **What do you think should be done to protect these animals?** **NEXT**

The researchers also found that some giraffes have specific friends that they prefer to eat meals with. **Why do you think giraffes have this preference?** Scientists believe that giraffes haven’t been considered social in the past because the animals communicate in ways that are hard for humans to see and understand. A recent study found that giraffes use low-frequency humming sounds to communicate at night, although experts still aren’t sure what purpose these sounds serve.

Unfortunately, the giraffe population in Africa has been under threat for decades. Giraffes are currently listed as vulnerable to extinction by the International Union for Conservation of Nature. The giraffe population has fallen by 40 percent over the last 30 years. **What should be done to protect giraffes?** **NEXT**

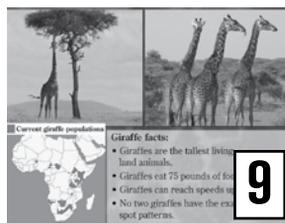


New study finds giraffes are as social as chimps and elephants (cont'd)

The giraffe is the tallest land animal in the world.

BASIC From the map here, on what continent do giraffes live?

(Africa.) Giraffes are the tallest land animals in the world. Male giraffes can be 20 feet tall and weigh more than 3,000 pounds. Giraffes are ruminants, like cows and sheep. This means they chew their food more than once before digesting it. That is a lot of chewing, because adult giraffes eat about 75 pounds of leaves a day. Their long necks are great for reaching high branches. But their necks make drinking water from the ground difficult. Luckily, giraffes get most of their water from the leaves they eat. Giraffes travel in herds



to protect themselves from predators like lions. They can also

run up to 35 miles per hour. But those predators have to be careful, too. Giraffes can use their strong legs to fight and kill attackers. Sometimes they use their long, powerful necks to fight each other. But that is very rare, because giraffes prefer to live peacefully with each other. And each giraffe is special, because no two giraffes have the same spot pattern. **What do you find most interesting about giraffes?** END

GENERAL

Giraffes only live in the wild on one continent. **From the**

map, which one? (Africa.) The giraffe is the tallest living land animal. Male giraffes can reach up to 20 feet tall and can weigh more than 3,000 pounds. In the wild, they can live for 25 years. Because of their long necks, giraffes have extra-large lungs to draw air through their long windpipes. They also have very large hearts to pump blood through their bodies. A giraffe's heart can be two feet across. Their long necks are great for reaching leaves on high branches. But giraffes must adjust their bodies to get low enough to the ground to drink water. Fortunately, they get most of their water from the leaves they eat and can go long periods without drinking. Giraffes consume about 75 pounds of

twigs and leaves a day. To get this much food, they spend from 16 to 20 hours a day standing and walking. They sleep no more than 2 hours a day.

Giraffes are ruminants, like cows and sheep. This means they have hooves and chew cud. Cud is partially digested food that they bring up from their stomachs and chew again. Giraffes always travel in herds of at least six or seven animals. They are capable of running up to 35 miles per hour. This helps them avoid predators and protect their young. But predators are also cautious around giraffes. **Why?** (They're very strong; one kick from a giraffe's powerful leg can kill a lion.) And each giraffe is unique, because it has its own pattern of spots on its coat. **What do you think is most interesting about giraffes?** END

ADVANCED

Giraffes mainly live in Africa's dry woodlands and

savannas. **From the map, in what parts of Africa do they live?** (Southern and Eastern Africa.) Giraffes are ruminants, like cows, sheep, and camels. **What are the characteristics of ruminants?** (They have hooves and chew cud, or partially digested, regurgitated food.) Giraffes are the tallest living land animal. Male giraffes are often 20 feet tall and weigh 3,000 pounds. Adults eat about 75 pounds of vegetation every day. Giraffes prefer to eat the leaves and twigs of acacia trees. To do this, they spend from 16 to 20 hours a day standing and walking, and sleep no more than two hours a day.

Like most mammals, including humans, giraffes have seven bones in their necks. In giraffes, these bones are much longer,

and supported by strong neck muscles. Giraffes have extra-large lungs to draw air through their large windpipes, and large, powerful hearts. A giraffe's heart can weigh more than 20 pounds and measure two feet across. Still, their necks aren't long enough to reach the ground easily. Fortunately, they can go days without drinking, because they get most of the water they need from the leaves they eat. Giraffes protect their young from predators by traveling in herds. **How do you think giraffes fight off predators?** (With their powerful leg-kick, which can kill a lion.) Their legs are so powerful that giraffes can reach speeds up to 35 miles per hour. Each giraffe sports a different pattern of spots, and no two individuals share the same pattern. **What do you find most surprising about giraffes? Why?** END