The **giraffe** (scientific name – *Giraffa camelopardalis*) is an African animal and the tallest of all land-living animal species.

Habitat

Giraffes live in dry arid regions ranging from open wooded forests to semi-desert areas. They can inhabit grasslands, or open woodlands but prefer areas rich with prickly acacia plants.

During periods of drought giraffes can cause major environmental damage by over browsing many different types of shrubs and trees.

Their overseas geographic range is 10 – 30 million square kilometres over sub-Saharan Africa.

Giraffes do not migrate.

Breeding

Giraffe gestation lasts between 14 and 15 months, after which a single calf is born.

Newborn giraffes are about 1.8m tall. Within a few hours of being born, calves are able to run around and are fiercely protected by their mothers.

Diet

Giraffes feed mainly on the leaves, buds and seeds of prickly acacia. Their long and nimble tongue allows them to effectively remove most of the leafy vegetation from a shrub or tree while avoiding its sharp thorns. Giraffes deposit around 70kg of dung every day.

A giraffe can survive for weeks without drinking water and can withstand times of drought due to their ability to extract moisture from plants. They will ring bark trees when food is limited.

There are recordings of giraffes entering farms to feed on crops but only if there are no immediate threats to the herd. It is generally considered a minor pest by African farmers.

Giraffes will not enter urban (human-disturbed) environments.

Giraffes and people

Giraffes are generally timid animals that are easily disturbed by human activity. They will avoid most situations where possible but if confronted will defend itself by kicking out with their large heavy hooves. Due to the large size of a giraffe, severe or fatal injuries may occur to people if they come into close contact with this animal. Female giraffes will vigorously protect their young.

The type of damage a giraffe may cause to public property is unknown.