

Zyrafte

Kameelperd *Giraffa camelopardalis*

Description Giraffes are characterised by their long legs and very long neck, which has seven cervical vertebrae – the same number as humans. The background colour is whitish-yellow covered with patches of light brown which become darker with age. On top of the head are two short horns, the tops of which are covered with black hair. There are no dark patches on the upper part of the muzzle and on the forehead. They have a mane of short, stiff hair.

Sexual dimorphism Females usually have a slighter build than males.

Habitat Open woodland to shrubby, dry savannah. Several different acacia types are a requirement of their diet.

Habits Giraffes are diurnal animals which live in herds with a fairly loose structure, individuals moving between the herds as they please. Males are usually solitary. They usually rest during the hottest part of the day. As they walk, the legs on the same side swing simultaneously. Although they appear clumsy, they can gallop surprisingly fast. Females with calves defend themselves against lions and can even kill them. Males fight by swinging at and hitting each other with their necks and heads.

Voice Grunt or snort, if alarmed.

Breeding A single calf is born any time of the year after a gestation period of \pm 15 months.

