

## Giraffes

It would probably not surprise you to learn that giraffes are the tallest animals on the planet. An average male giraffe will grow to a height of about 18 feet! Females usually reach heights of about 16 feet. The tallest giraffe ever measured was nearly 20 feet tall. His name was George and he lived at the Chester Zoo in England from 1959 to 1969.

Giraffes are surprisingly graceful animals. On average, they live up to 25 years. Male giraffes are called bulls and females are called cows. Baby giraffes are called calves. Most giraffes have either two or three horns. Some have up to five horns. The horns are really bones that stick out and are covered with skin and fur. There are five or six different kinds of giraffes based on the markings on their coat and what part of Africa they come from. Even though their necks are so long, giraffes actually have only seven neck bones, the same number as humans!

Giraffes live in places where there are many trees and plants. They are herbivores, and they often eat from the tops of trees where other plant-eaters cannot reach. In the wild, giraffes eat mostly from the tops of flat trees called acacia trees. The giraffe's height gives it a built-in warning system. Because they can see great distances, they can spot danger long before it arrives. When a giraffe spots and runs from danger, such as a predator approaching, it is often a warning signal for other animals in the jungle who know that giraffes can see a predator in the distance long before they can see it themselves!

A giraffe's long neck does cause some problems. This is most true when the animal is trying to take a drink. In order to lower its head to the ground to reach a water hole, a giraffe must spread its front legs far apart. Before doing this, a giraffe will always look around for danger.

Giraffes travel in herds of about 40 animals. Some herds are made up mostly of females and calves with a few males mixed in. Other herds, called "bachelor herds" are mostly young male giraffes. Older males usually keep to themselves for the most part. When giraffes find mates, they actually wrap their necks around each other. This is known as "necking".

When a baby giraffe is born, the mother leaves it behind in a group of babies called a crèche while she goes out looking for food. When the babies are old enough, they go out looking for food with their mothers.

## Giraffes Questions

1. Giraffes are the
  - a. tallest animals on the planet.
  - b. heaviest animals on the planet.
  - c. Both of these
  - d. Neither of these
  
2. How tall do average male giraffes become?
  
  
  
3. How tall to average female giraffes become?
  
  
  
4. Male giraffes are called \_\_\_\_\_.
  
5. Females giraffes are called \_\_\_\_\_.
  
  
6. Giraffes eat
  - a. mostly from the tops of trees.
  - b. from the tops of trees and from the ground.
  - c. mostly from the ground.
  - d. fruits and vegetables
  
7. What do giraffes and humans have in common?
  - a. We are both herbivores.
  - b. We have the same number of bones in our necks.
  - c. Both of these.
  - d. Neither of these.
  
8. How many neck bones do giraffes have?

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

### Giraffes Questions (Cont'd)

9. What do giraffes warn other animals of danger?
- a. They see it first and run.
  - b. They make loud noises.
  - c. Both of these.
  - d. Neither of these.
10. A giraffe's long neck can be a problem
- a. when it eats.
  - b. when it tries to run.
  - c. when it drinks.
  - d. when it sleeps.
11. "Necking" is what happens when giraffes
- a. kiss.
  - b. search for food.
  - c. mate.
  - d. get stuck in trees.
12. Baby giraffes are left with other babies in \_\_\_\_\_ when their mothers go searching for food.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Giraffes Answers

1. a
2. 18 feet
3. 16 feet
4. bulls
5. cows
6. a
7. b
8. 7
9. a
10. c
11. c
12. crèches