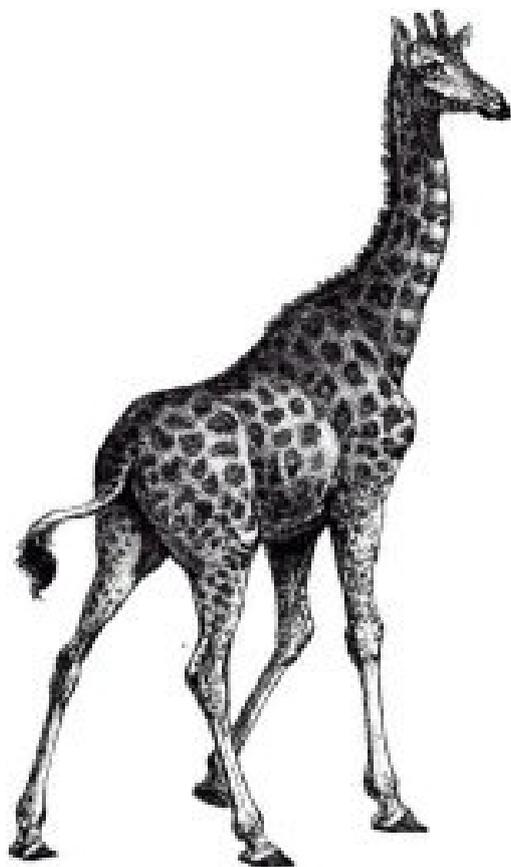


The African Giraffe



Scanning the distance for predators, the tallest animal in the world, the giraffe, munches on its favorite meal, the thorny leaves of the acacia tree.

Suddenly, a giraffe signals to the rest of the herd that danger is near—a lion. In an instant the small herd of giraffes springs their seemingly gangly bodies into a full 35-mile-an-hour (56-kilometer-an-hour) run.

The lion spots a young giraffe, called a calf. Before the lion can attack the calf, its mother positions herself over the calf to protect it.

The lion continues its stalking, unaware that the adult giraffe's powerful front legs with sharp hooves could easily put an end to the lion's life.

The lion lunges forward only to be thwarted by a swift kick of the giraffe's front legs. This time the lion was lucky and only had the wind knocked out of it.

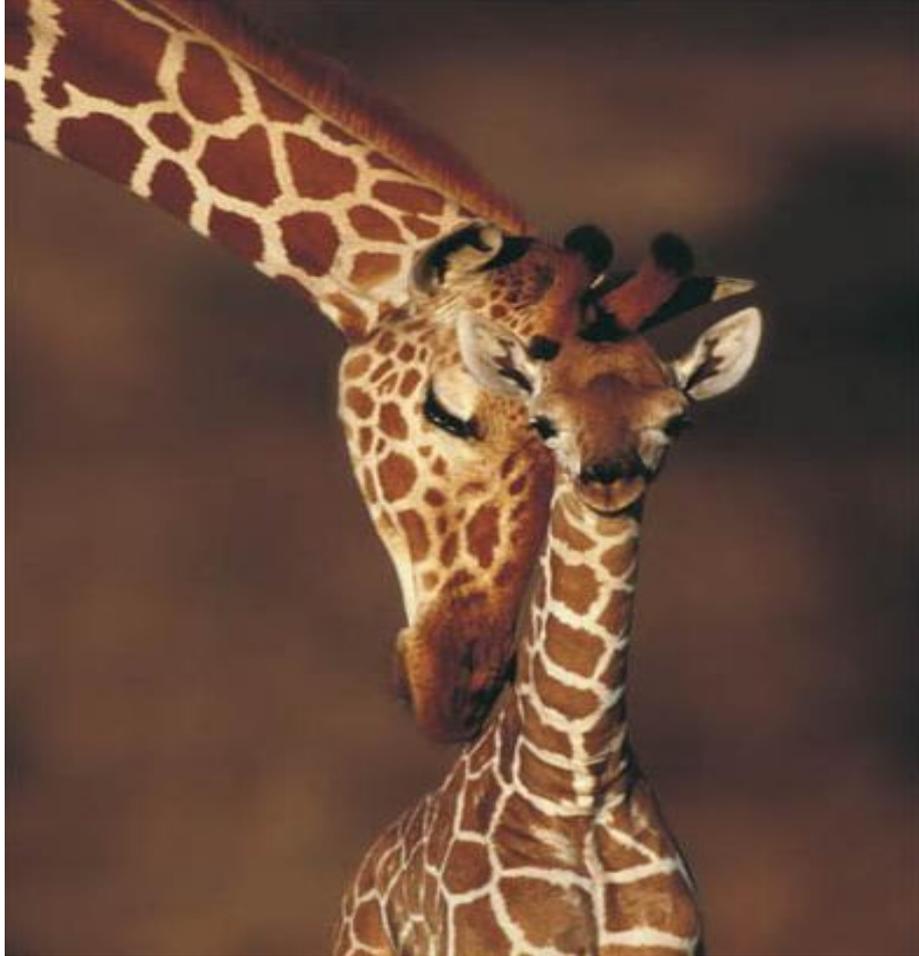
While most lions would think twice before attacking a fully grown giraffe, the calves are not so lucky. Many calves die from lion attacks during their first year of life. Once a giraffe reaches adulthood its height is often enough to protect it from lions. Giraffes can easily live 25 years.

Adult giraffes, however, must still be careful of lions when they are bending down to drink water or rest. Usually giraffes will drink or rest in shifts so that at least one giraffe is always on the lookout for approaching predators.

The giraffes' 18-foot (5.4-meter) height and excellent vision gives them a wide view of the grasslands where they live, making it easy for them to spot predators from a distance. Some scientists believe that other animals—such as zebras, antelope, and wildebeests—often congregate near giraffes to take advantage of their ability to see danger from a distance.

The giraffe could be considered the early warning system of the African grasslands.

Text by James Lehnhoff



A decorative border with a repeating geometric pattern surrounds the page. The main area contains 20 horizontal dashed lines for handwriting practice.

A large, empty rounded rectangular box with a thick black border, intended for drawing or a picture.

FUN FACTS

Female giraffes are pregnant for approximately 15 months before giving birth.

Only male giraffes engage in fighting with other males.

The giraffe usually sleeps standing up, because it can take too long for a giraffe to get back up on its feet if a predator should approach.

No two giraffes have the same pattern of spots.

The giraffe usually sleeps standing up, because it can take too long for a giraffe to get back up on its feet if a predator should approach

Giraffes can go weeks without drinking water. Giraffes can get most of the water they need from the plants they eat.

Female giraffes are pregnant for approximately 15 months before giving birth.

Acknowledgements

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