

How many giraffe are there in Namibia?

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The Giraffe Conservation Foundation (GCF) has commenced an exciting project to undertake the first-ever county-wide assessment of the conservation status of giraffe (Angolan giraffe – *Giraffa camelopardalis angolensis*) in Namibia. Financially supported by NedBank's Go Green Fund, Blank Park Zoo, Leiden Conservation Foundation and GCF, this project aims to collate all historical and currently available census and anecdotal data on numbers, distribution and translocation records of, as well as threats to, giraffe throughout Namibia in order to gain a greater understanding of their numbers and their conservation status in the country.

You might ask why we need to undertake this project. Surely we must know everything there is to know about giraffe in Namibia? Well, no. Limited long-term and no country-wide research efforts have ever been undertaken on giraffe populations in Namibia, something which is quite remarkable considering their tourism and social status. While giraffe are currently common both inside and outside protected areas in Namibia and the country's giraffe population appears to be one of only few growing giraffe populations on the continent, numbers are essentially unknown as no accurate or standardised estimate of population numbers has ever been undertaken. Additional to this, recent preliminary findings indicate that those giraffe naturally occurring in north-east Namibia maybe genetically totally different to those in the rest of the country – stay tuned for more information! Unfortunately, this lack of knowledge is not only true for Namibia's giraffe but for giraffe all across the African continent. Our limited knowledge regarding the current status of giraffe as a species and the currently recognised nine (sub)species poses a significant threat to their long-term survival in Africa.

The project will greatly enhance our knowledge of giraffe status and distribution in Namibia and will provide the necessary base for possible future giraffe research and conservation management to be conducted in the country. A greater understanding of the perceived 'healthy' giraffe population can also potentially assist with establishing a framework for the management of other giraffe populations in Africa, using Namibia as a true success story, especially considering the mix of public-

private-communal land management practices. This study will also provide an invaluable framework for a possible National Giraffe Conservation Strategy for Namibia if the Ministry of Environment & Tourism sees the value. Furthermore, the data will inform the first-ever IUCN Red List assessment of the Angolan giraffe which is currently being undertaken and is critical for the international conservation of this (sub)species.



Collection and collation of data on giraffe numbers in Namibia is not an easy task as giraffe occur throughout the country and there are many private farms that host just a few giraffe or even larger populations. We are therefore dependent on a collaborative network of partners, including fellow scientists, citizen scientists, landowners, tourism and hunting industry, wildlife vets, governmental organisations and NGOs to help with this work. We would like to encourage all of you to participate in this important project, particularly if you are a private landowner and/or a manager of a property with giraffe. Please take a moment to complete the attached questionnaire and help us with our study. You can request the questionnaire in Excel to complete electronically or send us the completed sheet as a scanned or even hard copy. If you do not have the time, we would be happy to call and chat with you.

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