

## **Giraffes: Africa's iconic species often forgotten in the fight against extinction**

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*Masai Giraffe mother nuzzling her calf*

One can't think of Africa without visions of Giraffes. These exotic animals have dotted the landscape as long as man as been alive. Now they are in serious trouble and their future is threatened. There are an estimated 68,000 giraffes left but accurate population numbers of wild animals can be difficult to obtain. Over the years it's thought their population has dropped by over 40 %, mostly due to hunting and habitat loss and degradation. While those numbers may not seem like an urgent call to save them many sub species are on the brink of extinction and could vanish in a few years.

### **How Giraffes are really fairing**

There are currently 9 known subspecies of giraffe. Several of these are on the brink of extinction. According to the IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature) estimates that 90 % of the Kordofan giraffe has vanished since the 1980s and is down to a mere 2,000 animals in the wild which is not sustainable in the long term. The Nubian giraffe subspecies has dropped a whopping 98% and lives only on sheltered lands in Kenya.

The IUCN has declared the Masai giraffe, once found all over Kenya and Tanzania, as endangered. Their population has dropped by 50% due to poaching and modifications of land use just in the past 30 years. There are a projected 35,000 Masai giraffes left but at the rate of hunting that number will continue to drop.



Threats to their long term survival African giraffes face several threats that impact their survival:

*Habitat Loss and Fragmentation:* Human activities such as agriculture, urbanization, and infrastructure development result in the loss and fragmentation of giraffe habitats. As their natural habitats are converted for these purposes, giraffes have less space to roam and find food, water, and suitable shelter. The current population is estimated at 117,000 while 90% of their habitat has forever been lost.

*Poaching:* Giraffes are poached for their skin, meat, bones, and tails, often used for cultural items. Though not as widely publicized as other species, giraffes are still targeted by poachers.

*Human-Wildlife Conflict:* As human populations encroach on giraffe habitats, conflicts arise.

*Climate Change:* Changing climate patterns affect distribution of vegetation and water sources they rely on. Extended droughts and altered rainfall patterns can impact the availability of suitable food and water, affecting giraffe populations.

*Illegal Wildlife Trade:* Giraffes are captured and sold illegally for the exotic pet trade or for display in private collections, which crashes their populations and genetic diversity.

*Disease:* Giraffes are susceptible to many diseases often transmitted by other wildlife species or domestic livestock. Outbreaks can significantly impact giraffe populations.

*Lack of Awareness and Conservation Efforts:* Giraffes have received less conservation attention compared to other iconic African species. Limited awareness and funding for giraffe conservation projects hinder effective protection efforts.

*Inadequate Legislation and Enforcement:* Weak ineffective wildlife protection laws and insufficient enforcement make it difficult to address issues like poaching and habitat degradation.



Victor Soares

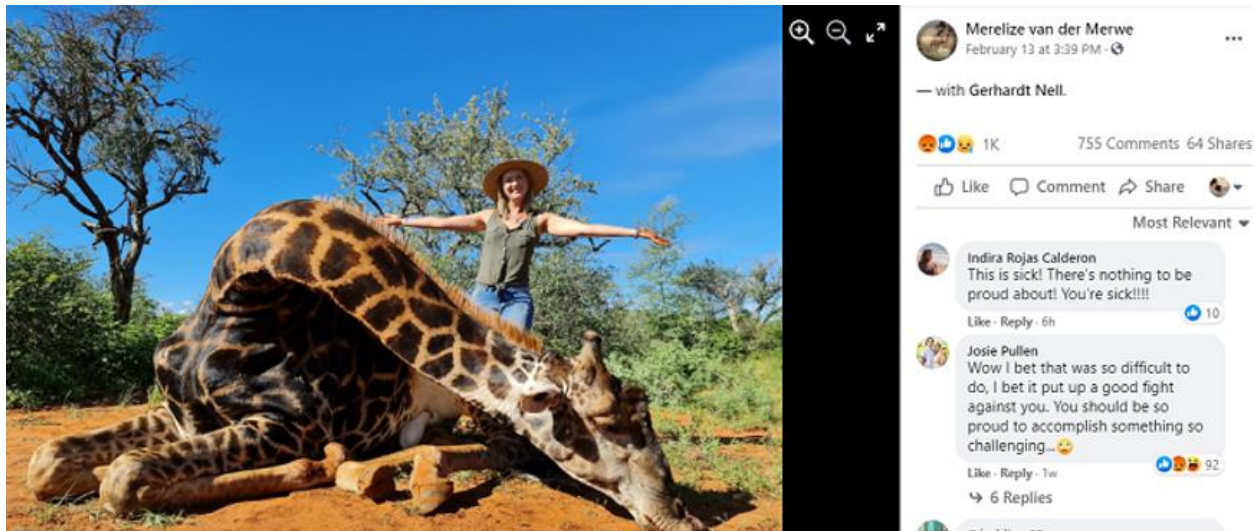
### **Why would people hunt giraffes?**

For those who do not look to killing animals as a thrill or sport it's hard to understand those who do. For species that are seen as docile, like the giraffe, it's even harder to fathom why a hunter would kill such a harmless creature.

Contrary to popular myth hunting is not conservation or management. The fee hunters pay to kill a giraffe range from about \$1,800 - \$3,000 depending on the tour guide and gender of the animals (males cost more to kill).

Notorious hunt groups like The Safari Club , known for killing endangered species, claim the hunts help giraffes. I'll let the reader decide how killing an animal helps them. It's a blood sport of dominance. Their large size, sweet face and exotic pattern make them a highly prized trophy. That's the only reason they're killed.

Prime example of trophy hunters the twisted smile, this one went so far as to pose with the giraffes heart. Click here to read about her <https://www.indiatimes.com/trending/environment/trophy-hunter-shows-off-giraffes-heart-535113.html>



*Merelize Van Der Merwe from her Facebook page*

### **How they should be wild and free**

The Giraffe Conservation Foundation (GCF) supports giraffe conservation in 18 African countries. Conservation groups, governments, and local communities are working to address these threats and protect African giraffes. Efforts include habitat conservation, anti-poaching initiatives, community engagement, research, and awareness campaigns. As long as we see ourselves as the only species deserving of life on Earth we will escalate the speeding train toward mass extinction. Once all the other species are gone so to will ours be.

Aside from humans, cockroaches and a few other species, nearly all other species on Earth are under threat of extinction. For many it's no longer 'IF' but 'WHEN' they go extinct. Many species like giraffes could go quietly into the forever gone darkness before most realize we've lost them. Let's work to make that never happen

Click here to read more about threats and efforts to save our giraffes:  
<https://giraffeconservation.org/>

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<https://goodmenproject.com/featured-content/giraffes-africas-iconic-species-often-forgotten-in-the-fight-against-extinction/>