Giraffes by Lucy Carmody

I wanted to do a project using my new typing skills that I have learned on my favourite animal the Giraffe. I hope you enjoy it!

**Classification:**

Giraffes are cud – chewing hoofed mammals. Although they may all look the same to us there are actually 4 different species of giraffe:

1. Northern Giraffe
2. Southern Giraffe
3. Masai Giraffe
4. Reticulated Giraffe

**Description:**

Giraffes are the tallest of all living land animals and are easily identifiable by their distinctive patterned coats, long necks and legs. A male giraffe is called a bull and can grow up to 5.5 meters tall. He can weigh up to 1,930 kg.

A female giraffe is called a cow and can grow up to 4.5 meters tall and can weigh up to 1,180kg. A Giraffes tail may be 3 feet (1 meter) in length and has a long black tuft on the end. There is also a short dark mane. A giraffe’s head has two horn-like bumps that are covered with skin and topped with bristles. The giraffes thick hide is covered with short hair. The coat – pattern is made of irregular brown patches on a light background.

The spots that cover the giraffe’s fur act as a good camouflage. When a giraffe stands near trees and bushes the light and dark colouring of its fur blends in with the shadows and sunlight to help it hide from predators.

**Location:**

Giraffes live mostly in grasslands and open woodlands in Africa. They can also be found in wildlife reserves. Giraffes live in non-territorial groups of 20. Home ranges are as small as 33 square miles (85 square kilometres) in wetter areas, but up to 580 square miles (1,500 square kilometres) in dry regions.

**Dynamics:**

Giraffes are herbivores. Giraffes grasp leaves with their lips or tongues and pull the leaves into their mouths. Their diet is new shoots and leaves mainly from the thorny acacia tree. Giraffes are prey animals, living in groups helps protect the herd against predators. They have excellent eyesight and hearing.

A giraffe’s movement or “gait” has both legs on the same side moving together, if it must gallop it changes to push off with the hind legs and with front legs almost coming down together. When a giraffe gallops no two hooves touch the ground at the same time!

Giraffes can gallop for several miles at a speed of 50km per hour. A mommy giraffe can only have one baby at a time. The female giraffe has her baby standing up! The baby falls 6 feet to the ground but is not hurt from the fall. A baby giraffe is called a calf. It takes 15 months for the calf to grow in its mommy. A calf is 2 meters tall when it is born.

**Conclusion:**

Giraffes are ruminants – this means that they have more than 1 stomach in fact giraffes have four! Giraffes can live up to 26 years in the wild and slightly longer in captivity. Unfortunately, in the wild half of the calves are killed by predators – mostly lions and hyenas. The giraffe’s tongue can be up to one and a half feet long.

Giraffes get most of their daily water needs from their food. Even in the dry hot season they only need to drink water every three days. Drinking is one of the most dangerous times for the giraffe. While it is getting a drink, it cannot keep a lookout for predators, and it is vulnerable to attack. Giraffe population fell by 36 -40% between 1985 and 2015 and are now classified as a vulnerable species.