

March 31, 2015

Dear Sheri,

On behalf of the SAFE Steering Group and the Conservation & Science Task Force (C&S Task Force), thank you for taking the time to nominate this species. We greatly value your animal knowledge and experience, and devotion to species conservation. You will receive a copy of your completed form via email.

All nominations will be reviewed for completion to ensure that the species are eligible. The C&S Task Force then will review eligible, nominated species according to the Portfolio Rules (Part 2 of the form) in order to produce a list of 100 Candidate species. The SAFE Steering Group will select six Candidates to accompany the four existing Pilot species as the inaugural group of ten AZA SAFE species. All Candidate species will remain as candidates. Periodically, we will request new nominations and will allow updates of existing Candidates. New AZA SAFE species will be selected from the Candidates list as resources allow.

Again, thank you for participating. Please see below for a copy of your nomination.

Sheri Horiszny
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SPECIES INFORMATION

- **To which taxonomic group does this species belong?** Mammal
- **What is the common name of the species (or group/taxa)?** Giraffe
- **What is the scientific name of the species (or group/taxa)?** *Giraffa camelopardalis*
- **Which category does the species fall under according to the International Union for Conservation of Nature's Red List (www.iucnredlist.org)?** Endangered
- **Which category does the species fall under according to the United States Endangered Species Act (www.fws.gov/endangered)?** None of the above
- **Is the species currently in the care of AZA institutions or are closely related to species in our care?** Yes
 - **Please explain:** Giraffes are held in 97 accredited institutions (131 total institutions) in the US, Canada and Mexico, which is more than any other charismatic mega-vertebrate. That means over 40% of accredited zoos care for giraffes! For comparison, lions are found in 91 accredited institutions; elephants are found in 70 institutions; and gorillas are found in 52 institutions.

Additionally, 20 accredited AZA institutions (or nearly 10% of our member base) have a giraffe featured in their logo. Elephants are featured second most often in 11 logos, and lions are featured in 10 logos.

These two facts indicate that giraffes are an incredibly prominent species in our Zoos, and that they would receive broad, enthusiastic support as a SAFE species.

525 giraffes in North America are managed in two populations: a Masai population that is a Yellow SSP; and a population of hybridized Reticulated/Rothschild's giraffes, a Green SSP program, now being referred to as "Generic". It is the opinion of both SSPs and the TAG that all of these giraffes are effective ambassadors for wild giraffes, regardless of subspecies.

[Giraffe logo study conducted by Cheyenne Mountain Zoo. Estimates of number of institutions holding certain species are from studbooks or reports given at TAG meetings. All data and specific sources available upon request.]

- **Have AZA institutions been conducting/supporting active fieldwork for 2 years or more?** Yes
 - **Please explain:** Twenty-eight accredited institutions have supported in situ giraffe conservation programs in six countries over just the past seven years. The giraffe species has experienced a dramatic population decline over the last 15 years and this has only recently come to light, so the large number of participating institutions is an indication of the high level of commitment to/interest in the species. Additionally, members of AZA started the first ever organization of giraffe keepers – International Association of Giraffe Care Professionals (IAGCP), and helped to launch the International Giraffe Working Group (IGWG) made up of giraffe researchers. IAGCP held two conferences connecting keepers and field researchers, and was credited with the launch of four new giraffe conservation organizations/initiatives. Talks at three AZA midyear Ungulate TAG meetings, and panels at the last two AZA Annual conferences has served to build awareness and garner support for field projects, providing evidence of AZA's ability to make a difference for this species. Field activities supported include, but are not limited to: census and population assessments, development of Country Profiles for each range country, de-snaring, conservation education for local people, and livelihood improvement initiatives for people living in or near giraffe habitat.
- **Is the species one that AZA members have the capacity to help through the use of zoo and aquarium tools / techniques / expertise?** Yes
 - **Please explain:** AZA members are already finding ways to support giraffe conservation on their own, so a more organized effort through SAFE would be powerful.
Awareness & Funding
Many institutions have giraffe feeding decks that facilitate an unparalleled connection between the public and giraffes. These connections provide funding and awareness building that can be used to support efforts in the field.
The first ever World Giraffe Day was celebrated on June 21, 2014 by 61 zoos and AAZK chapters, building awareness and appreciation for giraffes, while also raising money.
Our capacity to reach over 180 million people annually can move mountains!
Research
The giraffes in our care, and the training skills of our animal care staffs, can help to fit and test radio collars for the very unique physiology of giraffes. Our funding and personnel can assist with the continued efforts to gather census and population information, and our veterinary expertise can help to gain understanding of the causes and possible cures for giraffe skin disease. Gaining this knowledge is important to help inform whether giraffe with the disease will be able to be translocated to other areas where skin disease is less prevalent or does not yet exist.
Education
Our experience with educating our public regarding conservation issues will translate well to helping to develop and produce education materials that can be used in country to teach local people about giraffes, and instill the belief that they are worth more alive than dead.
- **Has the species been recommended for captive breeding by IUCN's taxon specialist groups, USFWS, AArk, or other recognized entities?** No
- **Has a Population Habitat Viability Analysis (PHVA) been conducted on the species?** Yes
 - **Please reference:** A PHVA has been undertaken on the West African giraffe in 2009 to help develop the first-ever national strategy for giraffe conservation in Niger – a first for any country in Africa. A meeting is being held mid-May at which the IUCN SSC Giraffe & Okapi Specialist Group and Giraffe Conservation Foundation has been invited to provide technical support.
Currently, a PHVA has not been undertaken for the species as a whole, or any other subspecies. A first step has been the compilation of Country Profiles (http://www.giraffeconservation.org/prj_downloads.php?cid=247&prjid=25) upon which the under development Red List assessments are being based. At the upcoming IUCN SSC Giraffe & Okapi Specialist Group meeting, it is proposed to look at a framework to develop an Africa-wide Giraffe Conservation Strategy under which a PHVA or similar might be proposed for the species or subspecies, depending on time and scalability.

• **Would the species benefit directly through a campaign involving the public in ways beyond asking for money? (e.g. changing policies or social norm)** Yes

- **Please explain:** A conservation action program has been developed for this species that will allow the public to make a difference for giraffes without giving money. The program was developed as an additional way to build awareness about the dramatic population decline the giraffe species has experienced over the past 15 years, and to help us answer the question: "What can I do to help?" when we are interpreting the challenges giraffes now face in the wild.

Jeans for Giraffes – How It Works

The Jeans for Giraffes program is designed to allow the average person to take action to help protect giraffes – anyone can become a conservationist, just by donating an old pair of jeans. Collected denim is taken to a textile recycler that then pays for the denim by the pound. A pilot phase of this program was run in California during 2014 and was a wild success:

6,420 pounds of denim collected

>\$3,500 raised for giraffe conservation

Plus:

1,100+ "likes" on Facebook

8,000+ views of the website

7 California zoos participated

3 Elementary School Classrooms

3 Universities

2 Girl Scout Troops

1 Boy Scout Troop

2 Police Departments

1 Thrift store, 1 Dry Cleaners, 1 Outdoor Sports Center

The public loves this program, and it garnered interest from across the country and around the world, all via word of mouth. It would be great to have AZA support to take it national/international! Find out more at:

www.jeansforgiraffes.org

• **Are there other types of tools / techniques / expertise that the AZA community can apply to help the conservation of the species?** Yes

- **Please explain:** Several individuals within accredited institutions have started fledgling, grass-roots organizations to help conserve giraffes and support giraffe care professionals. These individuals are setting out into the unknown, and the expertise of seasoned conservationists within AZA could provide invaluable advice and guidance. Two examples of these are Giraffe Conservation Alliance (GCA), the first US-based non-profit focused on giraffe conservation (filed for 501c3 status in fall 2014 www.giraffealliance.org); and Giraffe Resource Group (an organization developed to provide husbandry, training and professional growth advice and opportunities to giraffe care professionals – find it on Facebook). These two groups are working to support each other, but the wisdom and clout of AZA could boost their effectiveness and chances of success.

Giraffe Conservation Foundation (GCF), a non-profit registered in England, has been the main voice for giraffe conservation over the past several years (www.giraffeconservation.org). GCF has coordinated the efforts of researchers studying giraffe genetics and taxonomy, led much of the census work, supported giraffe researchers working on specific giraffe populations/habitats, and hosted two international giraffe conferences.

All of the above organizations are interested in partnering with AZA and the SSP to maximize protection for giraffes.

• **Does the species carry special importance and/or offer an opportunity for expanded conservation impact?** Yes

- **Please explain:** Currently, giraffes as a species (*Giraffa camelopardalis*) are listed as Least Concern, with two subspecies listed as EN 'Endangered': West African (*G. c. peralta*) in 2008 and Rothschild's (*G. c. rothschildi*) in 2010. However, it is likely that the species and all subspecies will be listed as threatened in the next year. Specifically, Reticulated giraffes (*G. c. reticulata*) will be recommended for a listing of CR 'Critically Endangered'; Rothschild's will remain at EN 'Endangered'; and Masai (*G. c. Tippelskirchi*) will likely be VU 'Vulnerable'. Additionally, genetic testing suggests that several subspecies may warrant distinct species status, further increasing

the importance of protecting each of these populations.

Giraffes are an umbrella species, offering protection to a vast number of other species when giraffe habitat is protected. For example, in Kidepo Valley National Park, Uganda, Rothschild's giraffes share the ecosystem with 462 bird species and 80 mammal species!

Giraffes are the tallest land mammal, and share the family Giraffidae with only one other species, the Okapi. Their large size and unique physiology make them excellent subjects for interpretation, and they are widely loved by the public.

The ability of many AZA institutions to offer giraffe feeding experiences builds strong connections between giraffes and the public, and such connections are extremely valuable tools when we desire to change perspectives or behavior. These feeding experiences also offer a direct connection to conservation when guests are told that a percentage of their ticket price goes to giraffe conservation in the wild.

PORTRFOLIO RULES

- **How many institutions hold, breed, or display this species?** (Include AZA-accredited and certified related facilities) 97 zoos hold 525 giraffes
- **Briefly describe what you know about the condition of the population of the species in the wild.** Giraffes are facing a silent crisis. Their numbers are in dramatic decline, however few people or organizations are telling this story or researching giraffes' conservation needs. In 1998 it was estimated that there were >140,000 giraffes ranging across Africa (IUCN estimate); in 2012, giraffe numbers were estimated at <80,000 individuals (Giraffe Conservation Foundation assessment) – a decline of more than 40% in just 15 years. Reticulated giraffes are estimated to have declined by >80% during this same time period, and now number <7,000. For reference, about 450,000 elephants remain in Africa, more than five times the number of giraffes, and elephants are listed as 'Vulnerable' by IUCN.

Additionally, new genetic evidence suggests that some subspecies of giraffe may be genetically distinct enough to warrant species status. This is critical information to finalize as four of the current subspecies have fewer individuals left in the wild than giant pandas.

The threats faced by giraffes include illegal hunting, agricultural expansion, human encroachment and habitat degradation & fragmentation. Poverty, food insecurity and the proliferation of automatic weapons have combined to create a dramatic increase in the poaching of wildlife in some areas. In Kenya, home to Reticulated and Rothschild's giraffes, there are approximately 12.5 million food insecure people, and only 3,000 giraffes. In the Karamoja region of Uganda the odds are even worse for giraffes with 785,000 food insecure people and only about 60 giraffes. It is therefore critical that we take action quickly to protect giraffes and develop/implement education and livelihood programs.

- **Do you know of AZA and/or other groups who are conducting field-conservation work on the species? Please explain briefly.** Twenty-eight accredited institutions have supported in situ giraffe conservation programs in six countries over just the past seven years. The following are several projects/individuals/organizations that have been supported:
 - Giraffe Conservation Foundation
 - The Reticulated Giraffe Project
 - The Rothschild's Giraffe Project
 - The Wild Nature Institute's Tarangire Ungulate Observatory (TUNGO) project
 - Care for Karamoja
 - David Brown, early genetics work indicating genetic separation of subspecies

Field activities supported include, but are not limited to: census and population assessments, development of Country Profiles for each range country, de-snaring, conservation education for local people, and livelihood improvement initiatives for people living in or near giraffe habitat.

Compared to other mega-vertebrates, giraffes have been much less studied. Surprisingly little is known about giraffe behavior

and social structure especially, and more research is needed to gain an understanding of their relationships and interactions. This knowledge could inform how we transfer giraffes within our captive breeding populations, for instance moving small groups of females together rather than separately to help them maintain “friendships” that we are beginning to suspect they may form.

- **Are the actions required to succeed in “saving” this species clearly understood? Yes**

- **Briefly describe:** While further clarity can always be gained, the basic actions needed to protect giraffes are understood, and include:
 - Submit proposal to update IUCN Red listing to reflect current levels of threat
 - Get giraffe listed by USFWS
 - Produce first ever Giraffe Conservation Status Report
 - Develop national/subspecies strategies
 - Develop PHVA or Africa-wide strategy
 - Complete genetic analysis and taxonomy
 - Support anti-poaching teams
 - Support snare removal efforts
 - Conduct ongoing census for each population to monitor trends
 - Provide conservation education materials for local people
 - Improve livelihoods of local people to reduce poaching pressure

At the upcoming IUCN SSC Giraffe & Okapi Specialist Group meeting, it is proposed to look at a framework to develop an Africa-wide Giraffe Conservation Strategy under which a PHVA or similar might be proposed for the species or subspecies, depending on time and scalability.

While it may be tempting to wait for strategies to be developed prior to taking action, that could prove catastrophic for giraffes. We must begin taking many of these actions simultaneously, and refine our approach as we go. AZA can lend support in engaging local governments and NGOs, and AZA expertise in species recovery will be very valuable as we work in country with local partners.

- **Describe any current conservation work being conducted:**

- **What is the historic and current geographic range of the species?** Historically, giraffes were abundant across all of sub-Saharan Africa on dry savannas wherever trees could be found. While many resources (even National Geographic!) still depict the giraffe range as quite extensive, in truth it is extremely fragmented with small, isolated populations scattered across the lower two thirds of the African continent. Click this link, and scroll down to the bottom of the page for a map:
http://www.giraffeconservation.org/giraffe_facts.php?pgid=51

Giraffes are now thought to be extinct in Angola, Mali and Nigeria, and are regionally extinct in Eritrea, Guinea, Mauritania and Senegal.

In West Africa, the only surviving population is a small population of West African giraffe (*G. c. peralta*) consisting of less than 200 individuals. This subspecies is found nowhere else, either in the wild or in captivity.

In East and Northeast Africa, giraffes still occur in fairly large numbers in Kenya and Tanzania, in southern Ethiopia. Uganda now has only two small populations of Rothschild's giraffes (*G. c. rothschildi*), one of approximately 700 individuals and the other with just 60.

In southern Africa, giraffes are fairly widespread in both inside and outside protected areas.

Additionally, while previously thought that the various subspecies would hybridize (as they do in zoos) whenever they came into close geographic contact, genetic testing has now shown a complete lack of hybridization, even in areas like Kenya where three subspecies have frequent contact. We must carefully protect each giraffe of each subspecies, as the genetics may soon show that they are species in their own right.

- **What are the current effects that are negatively impacting this species in the wild? (This list below shows IUCN Key Threats). Please check all that apply:** Residential / commercial development

Agriculture / aquaculture

Human intrusion or other human disturbances

Use by humans (as food, etc.)

OTHER: armed conflict/proliferation of automatic weapons

- **Does the AZA community possess unique strengths that can make a significant difference for this species? Yes**

- **Please explain:** The giraffes in our care, and the skills of our animal care staffs, veterinarians, and educators, can all help to support efforts on the ground in Africa, however awareness and funding are the most important strengths AZA offers here. The AZA community reaches over 180 million people each year with amazing animal experiences and conservation messages, offering the ability to build broad awareness and spark interest in protecting the species with whom we share the planet. The combination of AZA and giraffes has the potential to benefit many other species as well, both because giraffe are an umbrella species, and because giraffes can help to turn people into conservationists! Jeans for Giraffes (J4G) is a conservation action program that AZA can utilize as a point of entry for the public, helping them to realize that taking conservation action feels great. J4G can also serve as a fundraising tool, as donated jeans are sold to a textile recycler, with the proceeds going to giraffe conservation. Plus, knowing that it is easy and makes them feel good can lead people to seek opportunities to take conservation action again, perhaps with a different species next time. Learn more at www.jeansforgiraffes.org.
- **Can the AZA community act as a catalyst of convener of stakeholders for this species?** Yes
 - **Please explain:** Giraffes are found in 19 countries. Coordinating the conservation of a species across 19 governments is no small task, and having the expertise and clout of AZA to help facilitate MOUs and permits would be invaluable. AZA members are already finding ways to support giraffe conservation on their own, so a more organized effort would be powerful.

Our public is a stakeholder, too, and AZA member institutions have the capability to reach out to them in various ways, including giraffe feeding experiences and World Giraffe Day celebrations. Feeding decks facilitate unparalleled connections between the public and giraffes. These connections provide funding and awareness building that can be used to support efforts in the field. The first ever World Giraffe Day was celebrated on June 21, 2014 by 61 zoos and AAZK chapters, building awareness and appreciation for giraffes, while also raising money. The high level of participation in this first time event is a testament to the commitment our member institutions have to giraffes.

Finally, perhaps the most important stakeholders are the local people sharing giraffe habitat in range countries. Our educators, and conservation education expertise, can be tapped to provide compelling education programs and materials to help spread the message about the importance and magnificence of giraffes, *in situ*.

- **Has IUCN or other recognized entity recommended this species for captive breeding?** No
 - Please provide reference:
- **What other AZA-specific strengths could help to achieve conservation outcomes for this species?** AZA members are already finding ways to support giraffe conservation on their own, so a more organized effort through SAFE would be powerful.

Awareness & Funding

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Education

Our experience with educating our public regarding conservation issues will translate well to helping to develop and produce education materials that can be used in country to teach local people about giraffes, and instill the belief that they are worth more alive than dead.

- **Is the species one that realistically would benefit from direct action taken by AZA's citizen audience?** Yes
 - **Please describe:** People are incredibly enamored with giraffes. They react passionately to events like the euthanizing of young Marius in Copenhagen, and a giraffe toy (Sophie) has become the best selling baby product offered on Amazon.com in the United States. (Not to mention, more Sophie giraffes were sold in France in 2010 than

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babies were born!).

A conservation action program has been developed for this species that will allow the public to make a difference for giraffes without giving money.

“Jeans for Giraffes” is designed to allow the average person to take action to help protect giraffes – anyone can become a conservationist, just by donating an old pair of jeans. Collected denim is taken to a textile recycler that then pays for the denim by the pound. A pilot phase of this program was run in California during 2014 and was a wild success:

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Plus:

1,100+ “likes” on Facebook

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7 California zoos participated

3 Elementary School Classrooms

3 Universities

2 Girl Scout Troops

1 Boy Scout Troop

2 Police Departments

1 Thrift store, 1 Dry Cleaners, 1 Outdoor Sports Center

The public loves this program, and it garnered interest from across the country and around the world, all via word of mouth. All the program needs to go national is a corporate sponsor, for whom the program would offer excellent PR opportunities. Find out more at: www.jeansforgiraffes.org.

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