

Family Life

Just a few hours after a baby giraffe is born, it can run. But it spends most of its first few weeks hiding under mom's long legs. A baby giraffe (calf) is an easy target for a hungry lion or hyena looking for its next meal. Under its mom's legs, however, a calf is better protected from the dangers of the savanna.

Almost from the moment it's born, a baby giraffe can follow its mom wherever she goes. The mom will protect, feed, and snuggle her baby for several months.



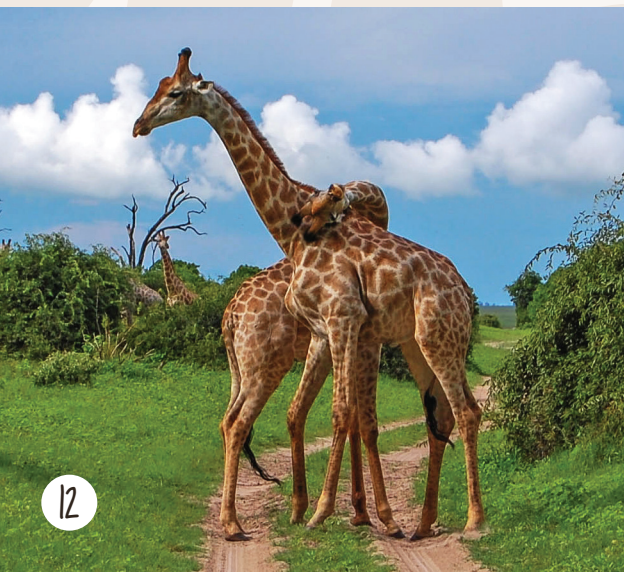
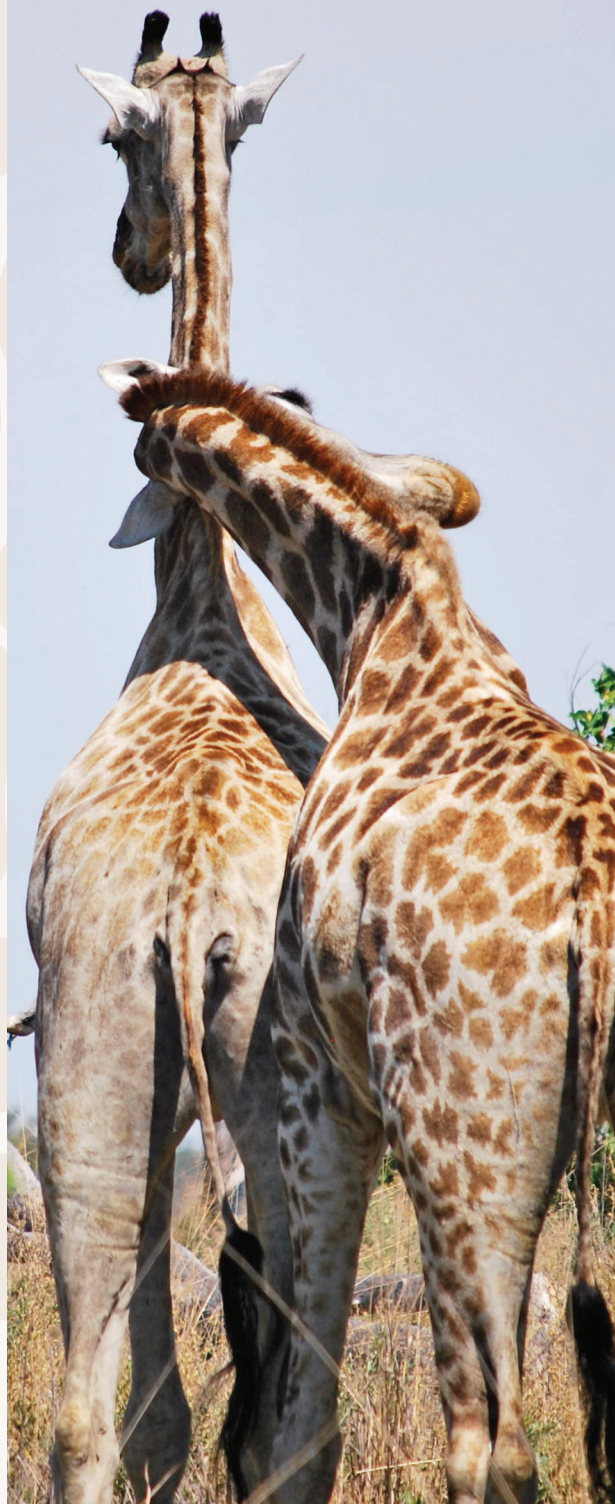
Giraffes grow about four feet during the first year of their life. At birth, a calf is usually about six feet tall and weighs about 150 pounds.

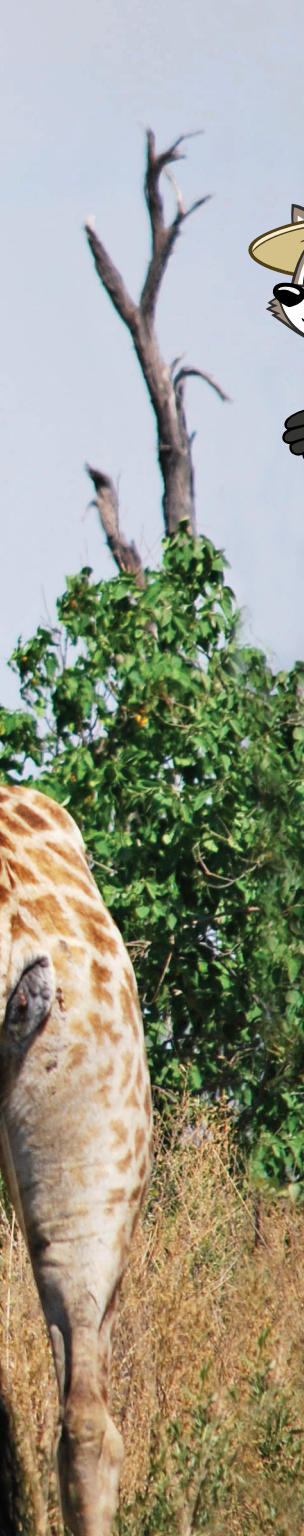




When a mother giraffe sees an advancing lion or hyena, she stands protectively over her baby. If the predator gets too close, Mom fends it off with a powerful kick. Even with mom's help, many calves die during their first year of life, but as they get older, they can better protect themselves from danger. ||

Male giraffes are calm animals, but they can be rough if they need to be—usually with other males. When two males both want to be “top giraffe,” they face off in a battle known as “necking.” They stand facing each other and lean in, pushing their necks together. The one that stays more **upright** is the winner. If a fight gets really serious, the battling giraffes may stand a few feet apart and swing their necks, trying to knock each other off balance with the horn-like bumps on their heads. *Ouch!*





THIS MAY LOOK LIKE
A HUG, BUT THESE TWO MALE
GIRAFFES ARE ACTUALLY USING
THEIR NECKS TO FIGHT!

Hey, watch where you're pecking! The giraffe below may look annoyed, but little birds called *oxpeckers* are doing it a favor by nibbling ticks and other pests off its skin.



It may sound hard to believe: an animal with a neck that can be used as a weapon, a tongue that can slurp right through thorns, and legs that can carry it as fast as a car. But when it comes to the giraffe, this tall tale is 100 percent true!