

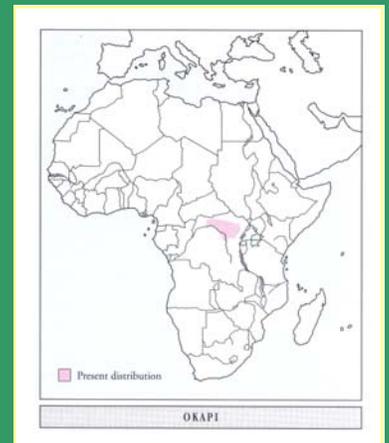
OKAPI FOREST GIRAFFE OF THE CONGO



The Okapi, or "forest giraffe", was first described by scientists in 1901. Sir Harry Johnston's watercolor rendition of the elusive animal, which was done before he ever saw one, proved to be quite accurate. Even today, the okapi largely remains a mystery to the outside world.

Inhabiting the Ituri Forest of the Democratic Republic of Congo, the okapi is one of many endemic vertebrate species including bonobo, Grauer's gorilla and Congo peafowl found nowhere else in the world. For all of its mystery, the okapi has become an ambassador for all of the other species with which it shares the Forest.

- About the size of a horse, the okapi stands over six feet at the head and five feet at the shoulder.
- Okapi weigh between four and seven hundred pounds and may live to over 30 years in captivity.
- The okapi's tongue measures between 14 and 18 inches long. They use it to wrap around leaves and limbs on which they feed as well as to groom themselves and their calves.
- The distinguishing brown and white marks on the okapi's rump help to camouflage it in the forest. The stripes look like streaks of sunlight filtering through the trees.
- Okapi calves are born with the same color patterns as the adults. To avoid leopards, they will stay in one place on a "nest" for the first six to nine weeks of their life; much longer than calves of other species are known to do.
- The Okapi Wildlife Reserve, established in 1992, helps to preserve the habitat of the okapi, many other species of animals and plants and also the culture of the Mbuti Pygmies.



www.okapiconservation.org

Photos by: Kenji Ishiwada, Reto Kuster & John Lukas