

GIRAFFE

I walk gracefully across the grassy plain. With my long neck and my rangy legs, I tower high above everyone else. I don't need binoculars to see where my enemies are.



Who am I?

Name: giraffe
Class: mammals



Size:

males up to 19 feet (5.7 metres) high;
females up to 16 feet (4.8 metres) high

skin with particular **spot pattern**

Legs:
4 long, slender legs

Weight:
1742 pounds (790 kilos) to 1.36 tons

Enemies:



cheetahs



leopards



lions



hyenas



crocodiles

Birds that often sit on my neck and back: **yellow-billed oxpeckers**. They peck the **insects** from my fur and I like that.

2 knob-like **horns** on the head; hairy for the females, bald for the males

tail with a long **tuft of hair** at the end

big, dark **eyes** and long **eyelashes**

Habitat:

warm regions in Africa where there's lots of grass, and trees here and there



Food:

twigs and leaves (especially of the acacia tree), fruit, seed-buds



Males fight for me.

They swing their long necks and beat their heads against each other at full power. During this **neck wrestling**, they use the horns on their head as weapons.

I **eat** almost all the time and **ruminates** my food, just like cows do.

I mostly **sleep standing** and not longer than 20 minutes a day. Sometimes I have a **short nap** of one minute.

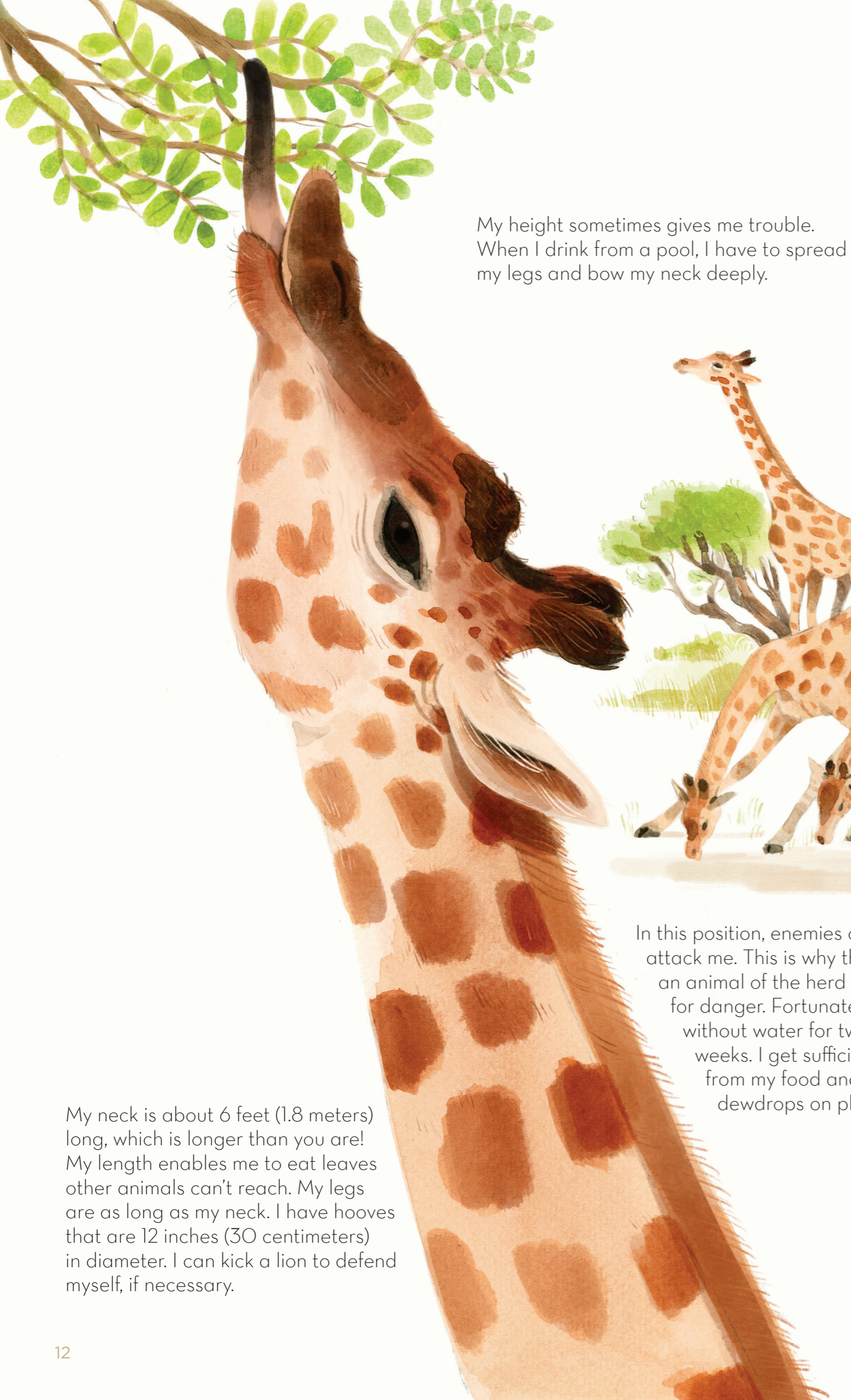
I live with my **calf** in a female **herd** of 10 to 20 animals. Some herds are larger, with males, females, and calves. I can **change herds** whenever I want to.

Men hunt us and eat our meat. They use our skin to make all sorts of **utensils**. They use our tails as fly swatters, or they make bracelets with it.

Speed:

I can maintain my top speed of 35 miles per hour for a short time. Mostly, I walk 10 miles per hour.



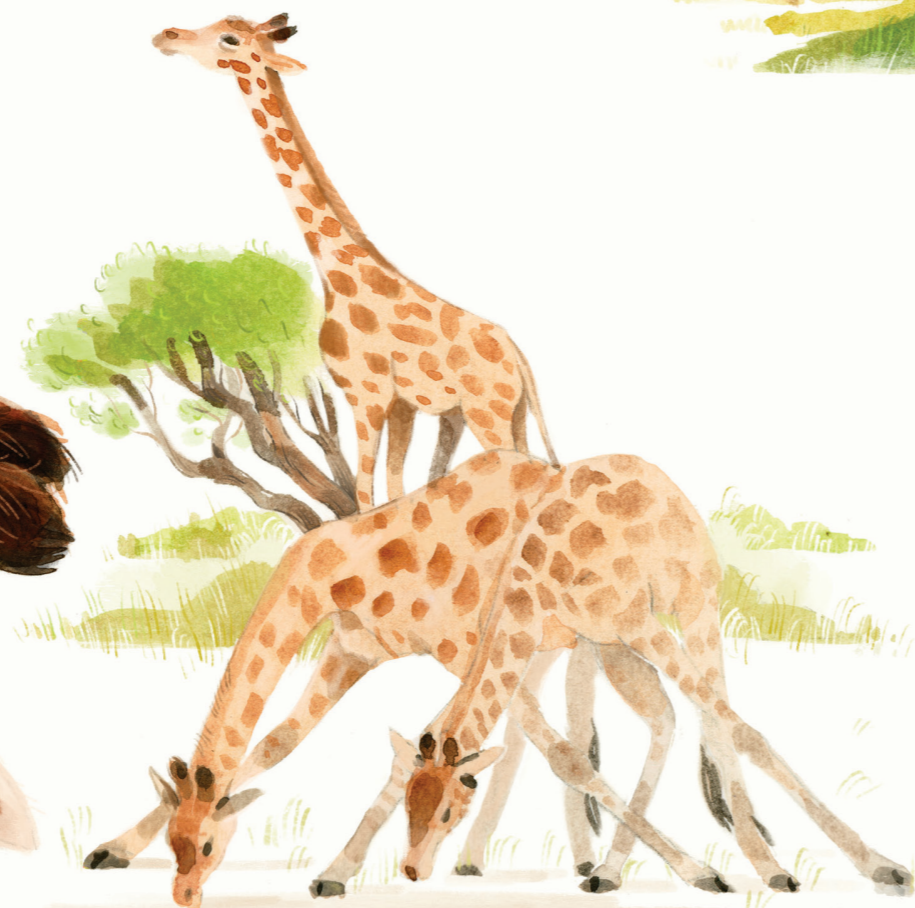


My height sometimes gives me trouble. When I drink from a pool, I have to spread my legs and bow my neck deeply.

My neck is about 6 feet (1.8 meters) long, which is longer than you are! My length enables me to eat leaves other animals can't reach. My legs are as long as my neck. I have hooves that are 12 inches (30 centimeters) in diameter. I can kick a lion to defend myself, if necessary.

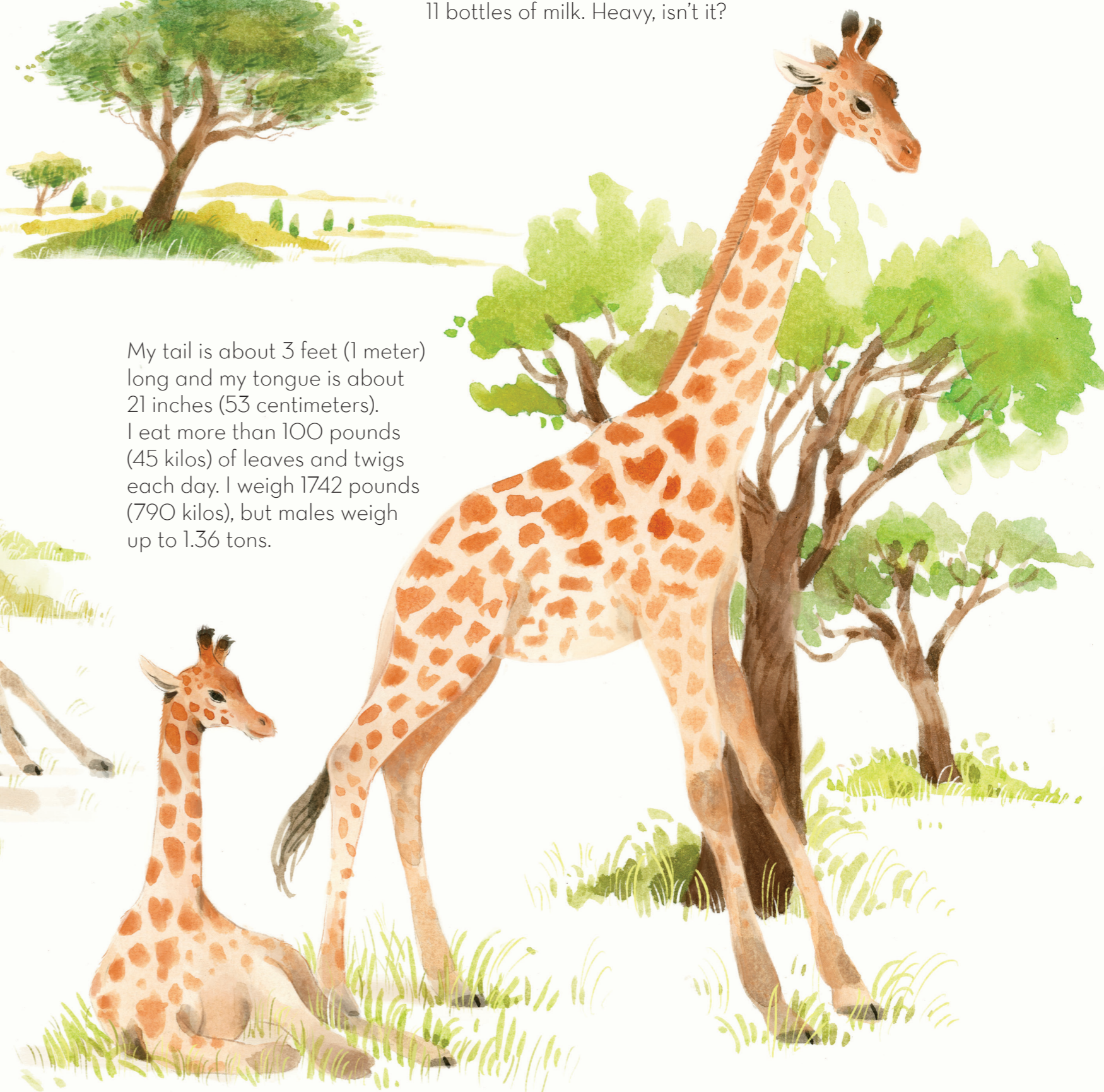


I need a large heart to pump the blood through my long body. My heart weighs 24 pounds (11 kilos). That's the weight of 11 bottles of milk. Heavy, isn't it?



My tail is about 3 feet (1 meter) long and my tongue is about 21 inches (53 centimeters). I eat more than 100 pounds (45 kilos) of leaves and twigs each day. I weigh 1742 pounds (790 kilos), but males weigh up to 1.36 tons.

In this position, enemies can easily attack me. This is why there's always an animal of the herd on the watch for danger. Fortunately, I can do without water for two to three weeks. I get sufficient liquid from my food and from dewdrops on plants.



I give birth while standing. A newborn giraffe falls to the ground from a height of 5 feet (1.5 meters). At birth, a calf is already 7 feet (2 meters) high and weighs 154 pounds (70 kilos), so it can take rough handling.