



Okapi



Okapia johnstoni

Conservation Station



Getting Ready


Demographics

-  School groups of various ages
-  Family groups of various ages


Materials Needed

-  Zebra Pelt
-  Okapi Skull
-  Conservation Infographic/stand
-  Okapi Station Box

Conservation Organizations

-  Okapi Conservation Project



-  Call2Recycle







call2recycle
Leading the charge for recycling.

Message






Learning about okapi and the threats they face in the wild can inspire us to take conservation action!

Talking Points

-  Okapis are one of two members in the family *giraffidae*, the other being giraffes.
 -  Okapis were put in their own family, *Okapiinae*, in 1926, but both physical and genetic analysis shows that they are closely related to giraffe and they are their only living relative.
 -  Their skulls have a similar shape as giraffe skulls with no top incisor teeth, but only the male okapis have the head horns (called ossicones), while both sexes of giraffe have them.
-  Okapis are classified as *endangered* by the IUCN.
 -  The biggest threat to okapis is deforestation. Okapis live in canopy forests northeast of the Congo River and cannot live in forests that become disrupted. Human activities like logging and farming break forests into sizes uninhabitable by okapis.
 -  They are also threatened by poaching and cobalt mining. Cobalt is mined for the production of lithium-ion batteries, and the Congo is a part of the cobalt belt. These batteries are used in a lot of "green" tech even though cobalt mining produces a lot of toxic gases, as well as using child labor.

Conservation Actions

-  Recycling your old electronics and batteries reduces the amount of cobalt and lithium needed to be mined. This will reduce the need to mine these materials and save more habitat for animals, like okapis!
-  Purchasing sustainably sourced lumber and wood furniture ensures that that the products you buy are sustainably sourced from different habitats, including okapi habitat.
-  Supporting AZA Zoos, like Potter Park Zoo, and okapi conservation organizations helps aid in conservation of species, including okapi!



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At The cart


Key words


- 👉 **Okapi** - only member of the genus *Okapia*
- 👉 **Deforestation** - removal of forests by human activities.
- 👉 **Sustainable** - actions that promote a healthy ecosystem.
- 👉 **Lithium** - a material in rechargeable batteries.
- 👉 **Herbivore** - animal that only eats plants.
- 👉 **Camouflage** - patterns on animals that disguise them.
- 👉 **Canopy** - the cover that trees create in forest tops.
- 👉 **Ossicone** - the type of rounded horn that okapis and giraffes have.


Conservation Infographic and QR Code


 The conservation infographic for the okapi addresses three of the main threats for okapis.

Insert infographic here

 **Deforestation:** Okapis depend on expansive canopy forests to survive, so fragmentation and destruction of these forest biomes directly impacts okapi. Only about 1/5 of their range is protected by the Okapi Wildlife Reserve.

 **Poaching:** Illegal trophy hunting of these protected animals greatly contributes to population decline. In 2012, poachers attacked the Okapi Wildlife Reserve, killing 6 staff and 14 Okapi.

 **Mining:** Cobalt mining for electronic batteries in the Congo has also greatly contributed to deforestation and pollution. Cobalt is Cobalt mining is very unethical and has become increasingly closer to reservations, which impacts okapi survival.

 Guests can scan the QR code, which will bring up another infographic that gives more detail on what actions they can do to help okapis.





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Fun Facts

🌴 The main predator of the okapi is leopards.

🌴 Okapi stripes are sometimes called "follow me" stripes, as the bold pattern makes it easy for a calf to follow its mother through the dark rainforest.

🌴 Okapi were once found in Uganda as well, but they have been extinct there since at least 1970.

🌴 The okapi's tongue is about 18 inches long! They can use it to groom both their eyes and their ears, and feed on leaves of high branches.

🌴 Okapi were called African Unicorns by the Europeans because they believed they weren't real.

Suggested Script

👉 Hooks to draw people in

👉 Hi! How are you this morning/afternoon?

👉 Hi! Can you guess how long an okapi's tongue is?

👉 I see you may be having some trouble spotting our okapi! They're right over there! (point out where the okapi is to the guests)

👉 Hi! Would you like to see what an okapi skull looks like?

👉 Transition into messaging

👉 Did the legs help you find them? Those striped legs are more obvious to us, but they have a more important use in the wild. The forests that the okapi live in have a lot of canopy cover, so very little direct sunlight gets through. The stripes on their legs looks a lot like the sunlight coming through the tree tops to other animals. Can you think of another animal that has stripes? (Zebra) Exactly, and much like zebras, the stripes are unique to each individual, which is why scientists once they were related! We know now that they are closer to giraffe.

👉 This is our okapi! Okapis are in the family giraffidae! There's only one other animal in that family, can you guess what it is? (Giraffe!) We can see from their skulls just how similar they are! See how they both have little rounded horns? Those are called ossicones! They also both have no top front teeth and very long tongues. What do you think they use that long tongue for? (Grabbing plants!) We call an animal that eats plants an herbivore!

👉 Okapis are found in only one country in the entire world, the Democratic Republic of Congo. They are found northeast of the Congo River, and only lives in the canopy forests found there. Usually, one male will mark a territory that females are able to freely pass through, but they will fight males that attempt to invade.



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Fun Facts

- Okapi are generally solitary, unless an adult female has a calf with her.
- Okapis and giraffes both have the same way of walking called a pacing gait. This is where they move both the front and hind leg on the same side while moving, while most other hooved animals walk with alternating legs!
- Okapis have a secret language! They often communicate with coughs, bleats, and whistles, but also with calls that are so low, humans cannot hear them at all!
- The name Okapi is taken from the Mbuba name for the animal.

Suggested Script Continued.

Before they leave

- Okapis are threatened by habitat loss. One way that you can help okapis is by recycling your old electronics and dead batteries! Try going to your local recycling centers, stores that carry batteries, or even Home Depot to drop off your batteries and protect the forests of Congo.



- You can also help the Okapi directly by supporting the Okapi Conservation Project. Contributions are used to directly support the growth and protection of both the okapi populations and the Mbuti people of Congo.



- Thanks for stopping and learning about how you can save okapis in the wild! If you would like more information on how you can help okapis, scan this QR code! (QR code on the infographic)