

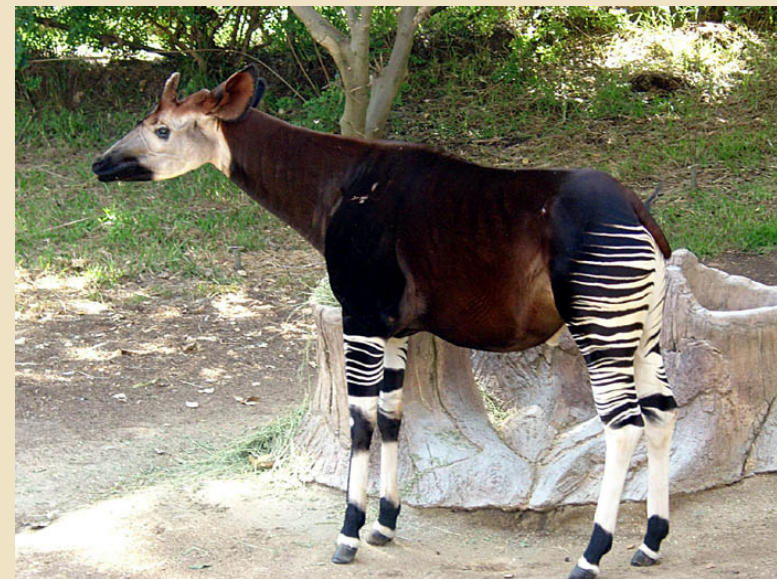
Okapi

Okapi (*Okapia johnstoni*) and giraffes are the only animals in the Giraffidae family. Their body shape is similar to the giraffe, except that the Okapi has a much shorter neck. Both species have large upright ears and long, 12 inch prehensile tongues. Okapi are found only in the Ituri Rainforest, in the Democratic Republic of the Congo in central Africa. They are eight feet long, five feet at the shoulder and weigh 450 to 650 pounds. Okapi vocalize using low frequency sounds, called infrasound. These sounds are far below the human hearing level. Okapi are diurnal and solitary animals that only come together to mate. They eat tree leaves and buds, grasses, ferns, fruits and fungi.

Okapi were not known to science until 1901 when British explorer Harry Johnston discovered them, although they were well known to the native inhabitants of the Ituri Forest. They are considered a living fossil because they are very similar to the many species of giraffes that existed in the past. Okapi closely resemble the short necked giraffes seen from the Miocene period, 5 to 24 million years ago.



Reconstruction of Palaeotragus,
an okapi ancestor



Modern Okapi