



BOYS & GIRLS CLUBS
OF PALM BEACH COUNTY

INTO THE WILD- SUMMER 2021

Activity Guide

Weekly Theme:

Field trip for the week:

Date of activity:

Grades:

Activity objective: What will the members learn or experience?

Materials needed:

Community Builder:

Main Activity:

Recognition and Reflection:



Animals • Wildlife

Meet the World's 8 Tallest Land Animals

By Noel Kirkpatrick Updated July 17, 2020



Elephants are plenty tall before they stand on their hind legs.
Jez Bennett / Shutterstock



All species [evolved](#) to the right height for their needs. These land animals, ranging from the giraffe to the bison, needed extra height.

In some cases, the height seems driven by a need for reaching the protein-rich [higher leaves](#) in trees. In others, outrunning predators led to animals evolving to have longer legs. Alternative evolutionary explanations for height include heat dispersal in more tropical climates, room for the [efficient digestion](#) of large amounts of vegetation, and more.

Giraffe



Most of giraffes' height comes from their necks.

StanislavBeloglazov / Shutterstock

No other land mammal has quite a view like a giraffe. Standing between 14 and 19 feet, giraffes are the tallest land mammals in the world. Sure, most of their height is in the neck, up to 8 feet of it, but their legs can also average about 6 feet.

The giraffe's size is a significant advantage. Between the giraffe's height, good eyesight, and strong kicks, giraffes aren't often brought down, even by lions. They can live for [between 10 and 15 years](#) in the wild as a result.

Sustainability for All.



Elephants are plenty big and pretty tall, too.

Peter Fodor / Shutterstock

Next to the giraffe in terms of height is the elephant, specifically the [African bush elephant](#) (*Loxodonta africana*). Males of this species have a shoulder height of 10.5 to 13 feet. The bush elephant's nearest relative, the African forest elephant (*Loxodonta cyclotis*), is between 7 and 8 feet at the shoulder.

Given the overall size of bush elephants — they weigh about 13,448 pounds (6,100 kilograms) — they're even more difficult to prey on than giraffes. Lions attempt to hunt younger elephants, but they don't have much success. Still, the species is considered vulnerable due to poaching and the transformation of habitats into agricultural land.

Advertisement

Sustainability for All.



Ostriches aren't Big Bird from "Sesame Street" tall, but they're tall.
paula french / Shutterstock

The ostrich is among the most recognizable birds. With their long necks and legs, an adult ostrich stands between [7 and 10 feet tall](#). The ostrich's long legs allow it to run at speeds up to 40 mph (64 kph). Only cheetahs are fast enough to keep up with these big birds.

Ostriches dig holes in the dirt to bury their eggs, and they have to lower their necks to turn the eggs with their beaks, and so, from far away, it can look like they're [putting their heads in the sand](#).

Brown Bear



If you think bears are intimidating on all fours, wait until they stand upright. Stand about 5 feet at the shoulder, but once they're up on their hind legs, they stand at 8 to 9 feet tall.

Brown bears occupy a range of habitats across North America and Eurasia. Despite extinction in some locales, the brown bear is considered an animal of least concern by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN). Some pockets of the species struggle, mostly due to habitat destruction and poaching.

Alaskan Moose



Moose are the largest of the deer species.

David Drake / Shutterstock

The [Alaskan moose](#) (*Alces alces gigas*) is a mighty herbivore of Alaska and the Yukon. Males reach 7.5 feet in height at the shoulder, and that's before you add the neck, head, and antlers. Moose are vegetarians and can consume up to 70 pounds of food a day. Their height makes grazing on short grasses and plants difficult. Instead, they choose bushes and taller grasses. They're also excellent swimmers because of their need to eat water plants, a source of sodium.

Dromedary Camel



Stand tall in the desert,

The camel is using the fat reserves contained within for sustenance.

Despite their impressive stature, dromedary camels are extinct in the wild and have been for almost 2,000 years. Today, this camel is semi-domesticated, meaning it may wander in the wild, but usually under the watchful eye of a herdsman.

Shire Horse

Sustainability for All.



Shire horses are the tallest horses.
Marina Kondratenko / Shutterstock

Horses, despite their generally gentle nature, can be intimidating due to their size. This factor is especially true for the Shire horse. This horse breed descended from the English "great horse," a kind of horse that was used by men in full armor hundreds of years ago. It's a sturdy, powerful horse.

The Shire horse averages about 17 hands, or 5 feet, 7 inches tall at the withers, which is the ridge between the shoulder blades. When you add the neck and head, which will vary in size, you have one tall animal.

American Bison



Rounding out the list of tallest land mammals is the American bison (*Bison bison*). On all fours males of this brown, shaggy-haired species stand between 5 feet, 6 inches and 6 feet, 1 inch at the shoulders. The American bison used to roam North America in large herds, but a combination of hunting, slaughter, and bovine viruses led to their near-extinction in the 19th century. Today, the species is considered near-threatened, with its roughly 31,000 individuals kept in U.S. national parks or preserves.