

The Wild Animals of Congo

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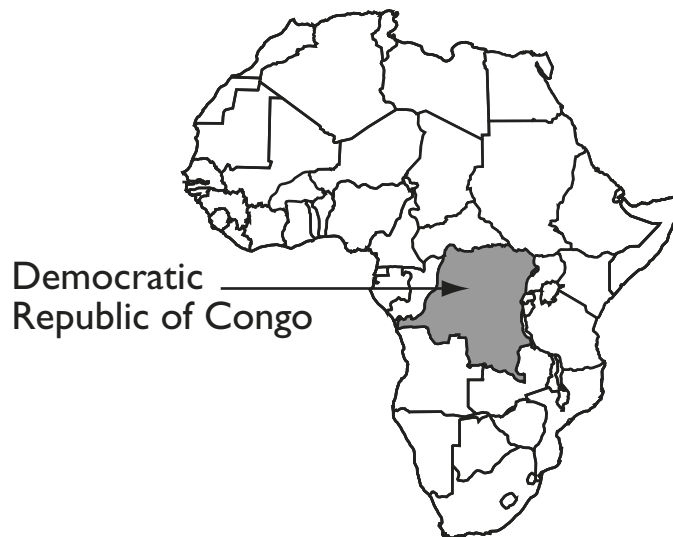
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The Democratic Republic of the Congo (sometimes called Congo) is a large country in central Africa that is about $\frac{1}{4}$ the size of the U.S. A large part of the country (more than 50%) is covered by tropical rainforests. Lots of beautiful and amazing wild animals live there – including some that are not found anywhere else on Earth! Have fun learning about and coloring the *Wildlife of Congo* – and don't forget to visit your library or search the Internet for more information about the people and animals of Congo.



Grey Parrot



In Congo, sharp whistles and loud squawks means a flock of grey parrots is flying overhead.

- There are not many parrot species living in Africa. The grey is the largest of all and they are a little taller than this page in your coloring book.
- They live in tropical forests and mangroves.
- Grey parrots like to live with lots of friends in large flocks and they stay with the same mate for life.
- These birds like to fly high and F A S T!
- African grey parrots can live a long time – over 50 years!
- When it is time to eat, the grey parrot looks for fruits, berries, buds, blossoms and seeds.
- When it is time to mate the parrots look for a hole high in a tree to lay their eggs and raise their family.
- The three or four baby parrots – called nestlings - will stay in the nest hole for almost three months.





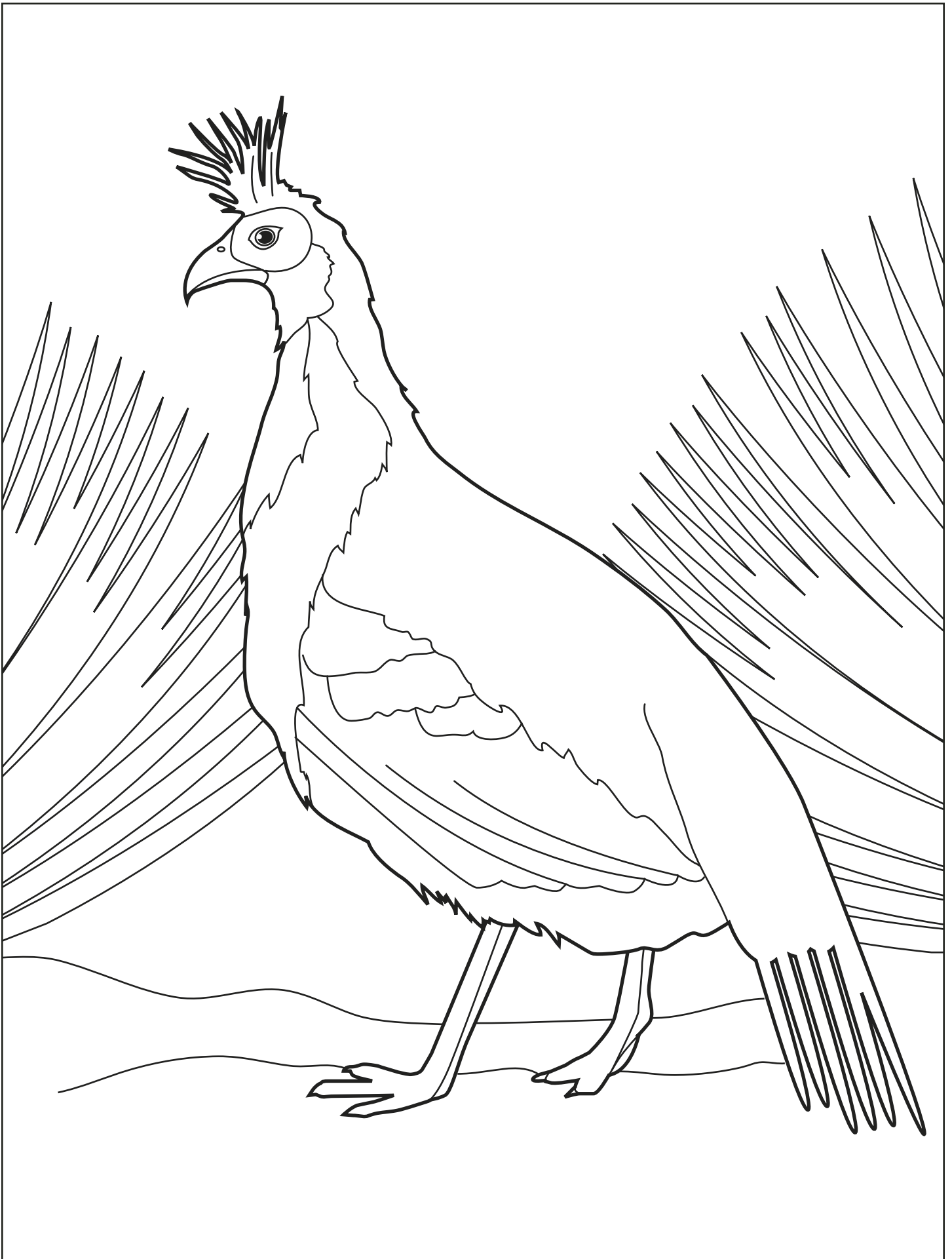
Congo Peafowl



The Congo peafowl is sometimes called “mythical” because it is very rarely seen and little is known about this beautiful bird.

- The peafowl is called “mbulu” by the people of Congo.
- The Congo peafowl is a type of the entire continent of Africa.
- They are only found in lowland forests in the heart of the Congo Basin and almost no outsiders have ever seen them.
- Congo peafowl live in small groups with one male and several females. The males are called “cocks” and the females are called “hens”.
- To attract a female, the Congo peacock makes a sound like “rrro-ho-ho-o-a” followed by a “gowe-gowah”. They call early in the morning.
- They like to eat different kinds of seeds, fruits and insects.
- Scientists think the Congo peafowl is probably endangered because of habitat destruction.





Bonobo



People who have lived among bonobos in the Congo forest have many stories about how bonobos and humans were brothers and sisters in the distant past. They have stories about bonobos showing people which foods to eat in the forest and even how bonobos themselves are trying to become human.

- Bonobos are great apes, along with chimpanzees, gorillas and orangutans.
- Bonobos are the closest you can get to being human without being human. Bonobos and people share over 98% of the same genetic make-up (DNA).
- Bonobos spend a lot of time high in the rainforest canopy. They also travel on the ground in search of food.
- They eat many foods including fruit, nuts, seeds, and mushrooms. When they feed on plants it might be the leaves, flowers, bark, stem or roots. Sometimes they eat small mammals, insect larvae, honey or eggs.
- When bonobos go to the trees to make their night nests, they fill the night air with lots of high-pitched squeaks and squeals – this is the language of bonobos that people do not really understand yet and maybe we never will!
- Compared to their close relatives the chimpanzees, the bonobo world is peaceful and the females carry the highest ranks in the group.
- Female bonobos form close bonds and friendships and adult bonobos are very affectionate with each other and with their babies and youngsters.
- Bonobos are found only in one country in the world – the Democratic Republic of the Congo – and they are threatened with extinction because of hunting and loss of their habitat. It is illegal to kill a bonobo or keep a bonobo as a pet. Please do what you can to become a Friend of the Bonobos!





Colobus Monkey



The first thing you notice about this tree-loving monkey is their beautiful black and white coloration. This helps them to blend in and hide among the sun and leaves.

- Because they spend almost all of their lives in the tree tops, colobus monkeys have special light weight bones and very long arms and legs that make it easy for them to leap from branch to branch. When dropping down, the long shoulder hair of the colobus monkey fans out and acts like a parachute.

- The colobus monkey feeds on leaves, flowers, buds and fruits.

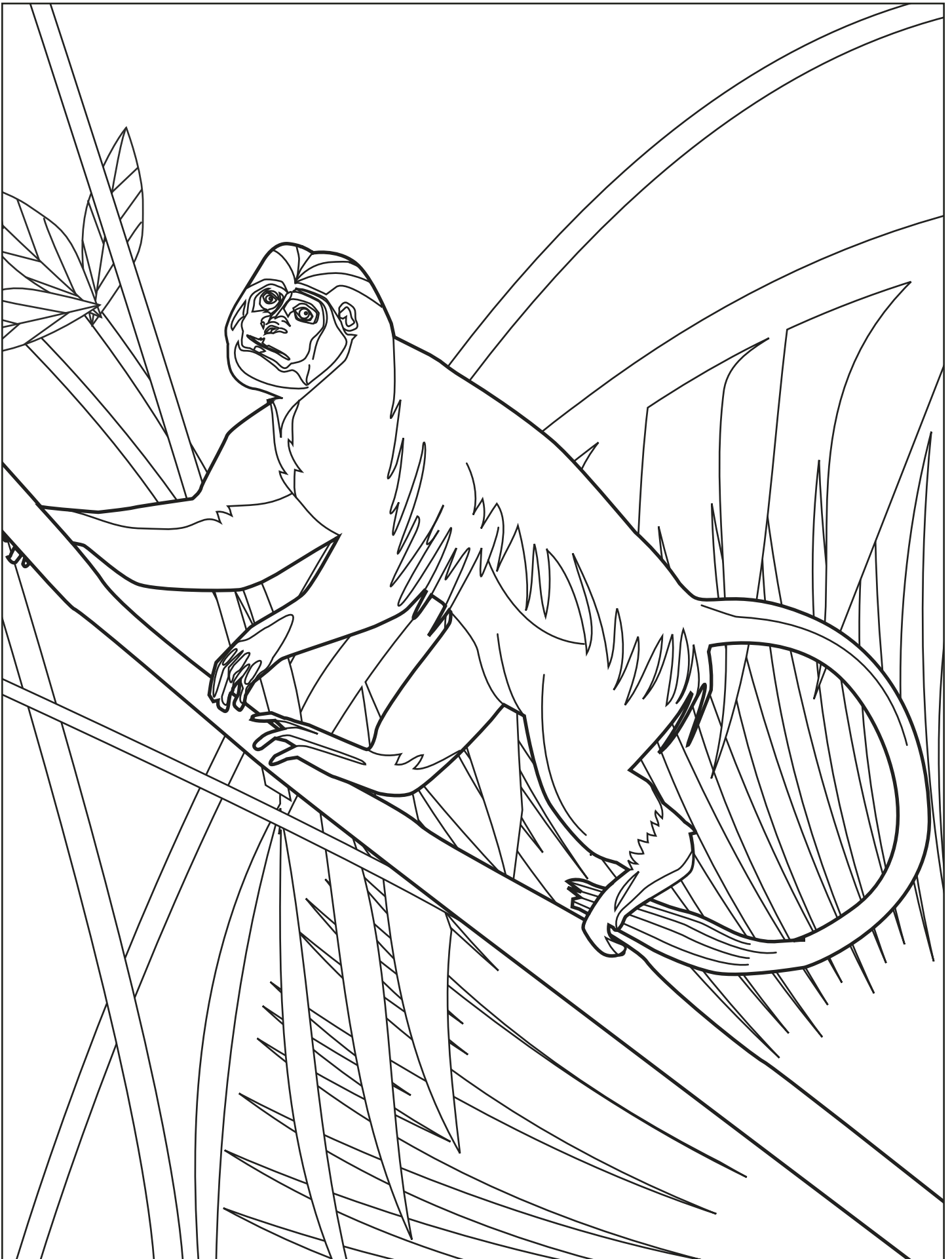
- The mother colobus carries her baby inside for about 5 to 7 months. When it is time for the baby, she leaves the group with the male. She comes back a few days later holding her baby close. Sometimes the other members of the group help her by carrying the baby.

- The newborn colobus

baby is covered with white fur. After about one month, they will begin to grow black and white fur like the adults.

- Like many other kinds of monkeys, colobus monkeys live in groups called “troops”.





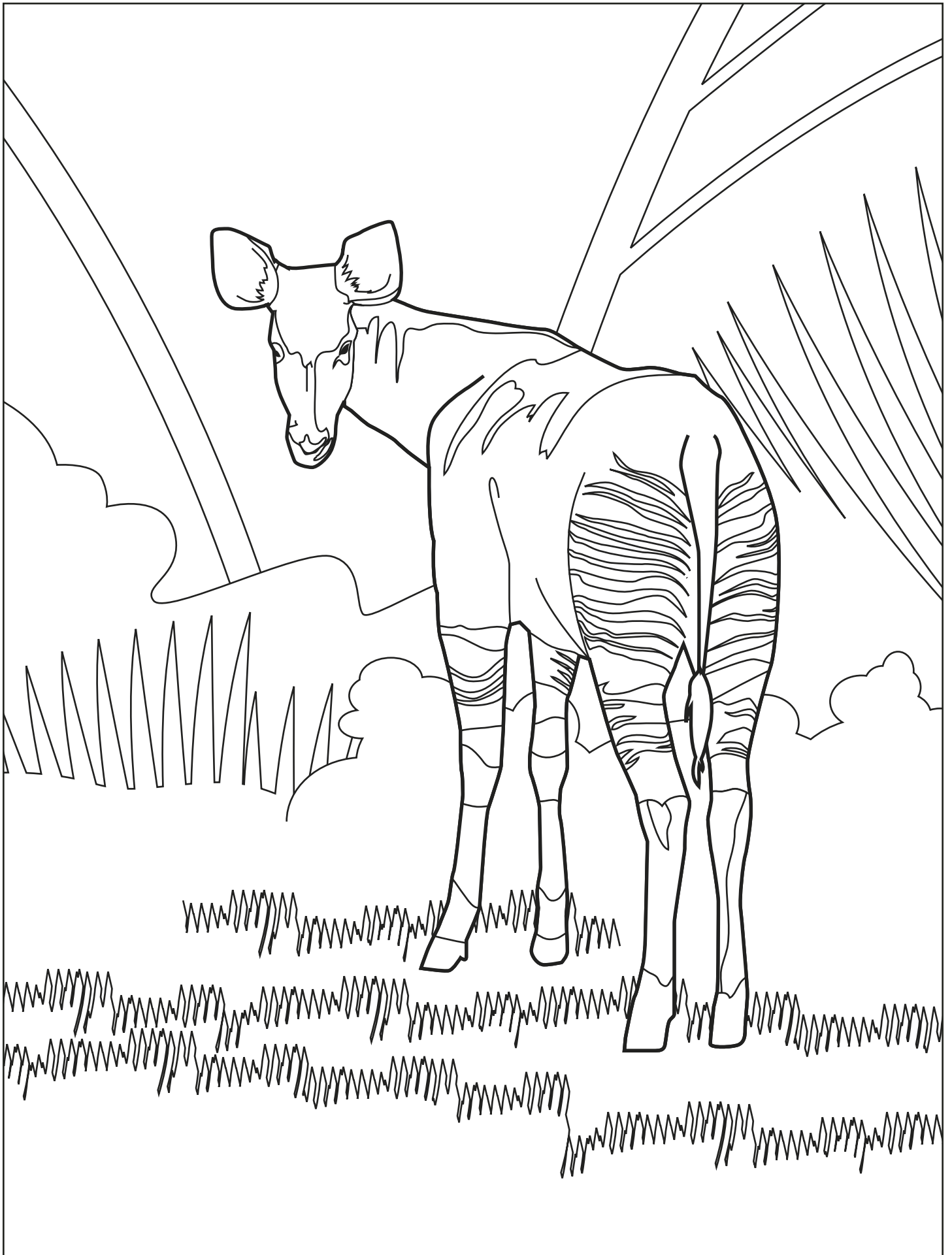
Okapi



The name okapi comes from the Wambutti word – o'api.

- The beautiful okapi is a very unusual animal. They have stripes like zebras, and they look a little bit like horses. It took scientists awhile to discover that the okapi is really a relative of the giraffe – the only relative of the giraffe!
- Like the giraffe, an okapi has a VERY long tongue that can grasp like a finger. They use it to reach out and pluck leaves or fruits from forest trees. They can even clean their ears with their long tongues!
- Okapis live in thick forests. Their dark brown velvety coat and their striped legs help them to blend in perfectly with their habitat.
- When the mother okapi is about to give birth she moves deep into the forest. The mother is very protective of her baby.
- Sometimes leopards kill and eat okapis, but they can escape quickly if they sense that danger is near.
- Okapis live only in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Their numbers are going down because of too much hunting and cutting of the forest by people.





Chimpanzee



Chimpanzees are one of 3 kinds of apes that live in Africa. The other two are gorillas and bonobos.

- Chimps are closely related to people. They live in different types of forests and grasslands too. A chimpanzee may live to be 50 years old and weigh about 120 pounds.
- Here are some of the things that chimps eat: fruit, leaves, flowers, seeds, buds, bark, stems, insects, monkeys, duikers.
- Young chimpanzees learn about the world from their mothers and other adults in their family. They learn important things like where to find certain foods, how to build a sleeping nest, how to groom, and how to use tools.
- No other animal uses as many tools as a chimpanzee. They use stones as clubs and hammers, twigs to “fish” for termites, and leaves as “sponges” for drinking water.
- Young chimpanzees really like to play! Playing helps chimps learn important skills they will need as adults.
- Chimpanzees talk to each other using many different sounds. They also hold hands, hug each other, and even kiss.
- Because of habitat loss, chimpanzees are an endangered species.





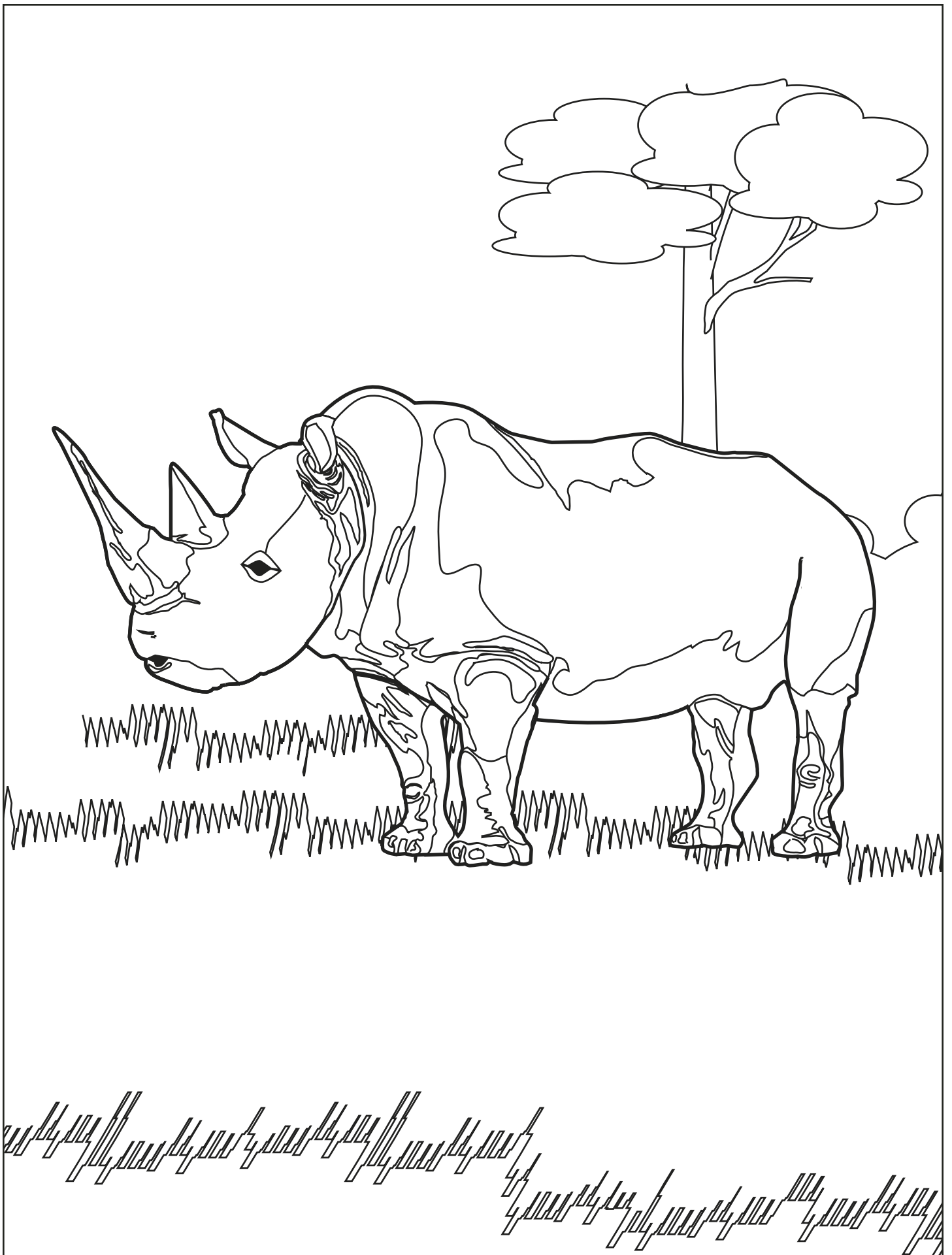
Rhinoceros



The rhinoceros is called “rhino” for short. There are two kinds of rhinos in Africa – the black rhino and the white rhino.

- Rhinos live in the grasslands of eastern and southern Africa. A very rare kind of rhino called the Northern White Rhino lives in central Africa.
- The white rhino is the second largest land mammal next to the elephant. They can grow to 6 feet tall at the shoulder and weigh thousands of pounds!
- Scientists think that rhinos can live for about 35 years.
- All rhinos are herbivores. This means that they only eat plants like grasses and leaves.
- The African rhinos have two horns. The horns are made of the same material that is found in hair and nails.
- Rhinos use their horns to fight with other rhinos and to defend themselves from predators like lions and hyenas.
- After male and female rhinos mate, they leave each other. A baby rhino – called a calf – is born 14 to 18 months later.
- Rhinos are one of the most endangered groups of animals on Earth. They are killed for their horns which some people believe can cure fevers and other health problems.





Leopard



The leopard is a strong hunter that lives in Africa, the Middle East and in other parts of Asia.

- Leopards have golden coats and are covered with black spots called “rosettes”.
- They usually like to hunt at night.
- In the forests of central Africa, leopards hunt for small antelope called duikers, small monkeys, and rodents like rats, squirrels and porcupines. In the open grasslands they hunt for young wildebeest, gazelle, impala and even reptiles and insects. What they eat depends on where they live.
- Leopards are very strong, but sometimes even stronger predators like lions try to steal their food. So leopards use their strength to carry their prey up into a tree and can even carry something that weighs three times as much as they do!
- A mother leopard usually gives birth to 2 or 3 little cubs. She keeps them safe by hiding them in a cave or a hollow tree.
- The cubs are born with dark, woolly fur – and they also have their spots! When they are about 1 ½ or 2 years old they are ready to leave their mother.





Otter



There are two kinds of otters in Congo - the Congo clawless otter and the spotted-necked otter.

- There are 13 kinds of otters alive today and they live in most areas of the world. The only continents where otters do not live are Australia and Antarctica.
- Otters are aquatic mammals. Most otters can be found in freshwater streams, rivers, lakes and in coastal areas. All otters have long, slim bodies and are VERY graceful and flexible.
- These animals like to play! They play with other otters and even when they are alone. Sometimes otter cubs play a game of fetch by tossing an object in the water and diving in to catch it before it reaches the bottom.
- Otters are related to weasels, polecats, and badgers. They are carnivores (meat-eaters).
- Fish is the main food of most otters. They also like to eat earthworms, frogs, crayfish and crabs.
- Crocodiles, eagles and pythons sometimes kill and eat otters.
- Not very much is known about otters in Africa and there are many questions that scientists would like to answer. Otters suffer from destruction of their habitat and also pollution.





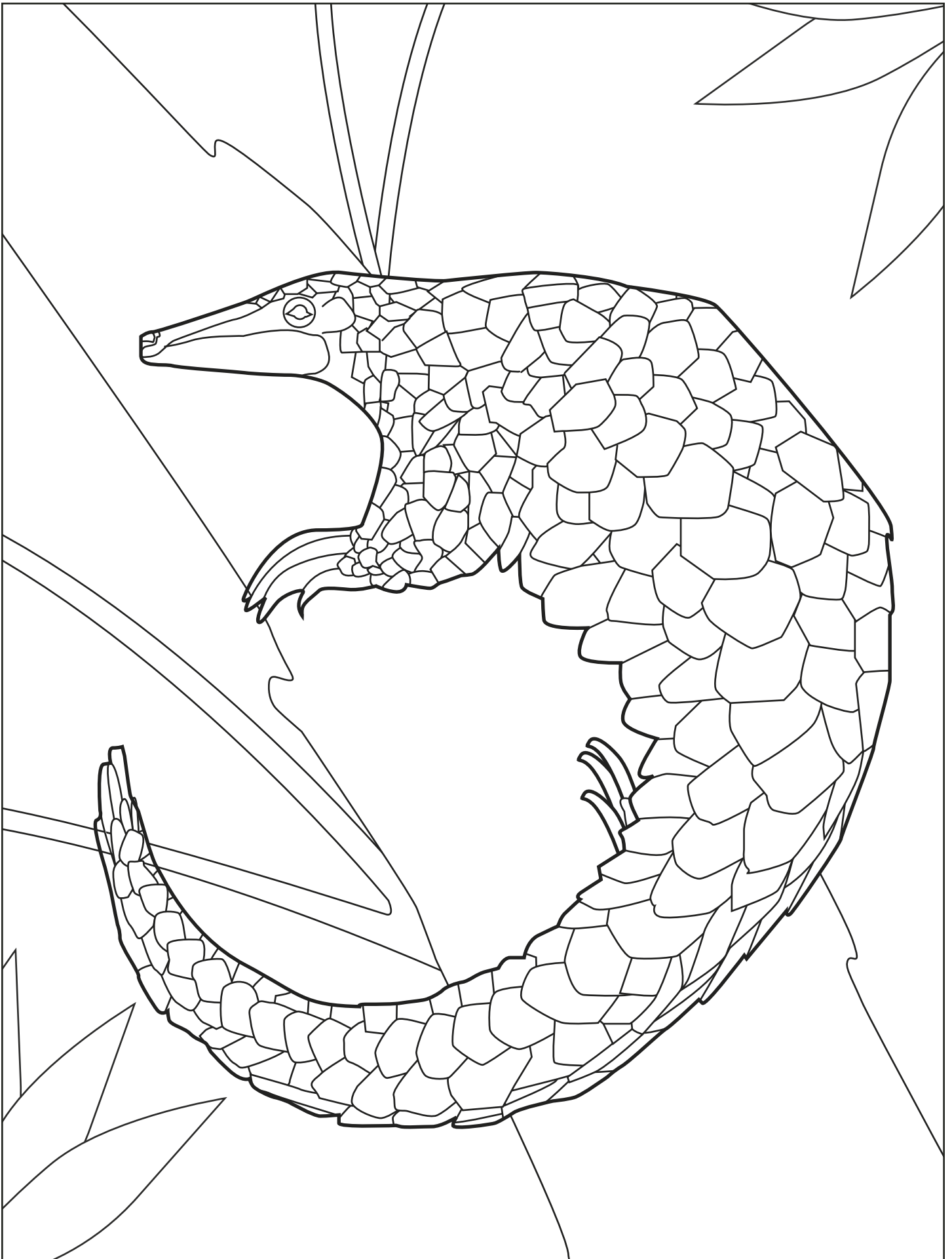
Pangolin



The pangolin is the only mammal that is covered with scales.

- This unusual animal really has a great defense! Their scales form a suit of armor and when a predator comes near they roll up into a tight ball.
- Pangolins have no teeth. Instead, they use their very long and super sticky tongues to scoop up ants and termites – their favorite foods.
- A mother pangolin has one baby at a time. At birth, the baby is 6 inches long and weighs less than one pound. The baby is born with very pale, soft scales that begin to harden by the second day.
- Mother gives milk to her baby for about 4 months, but the baby starts to eat termites when it is only one month old. Now the baby is ready to travel – and might even hitch a ride on the mother's tale.
- If danger is near, the baby slips under the mother and is protected when she rolls into a ball.
- Leopards and other large animals sometimes kill and eat pangolins, but people are their main predators.





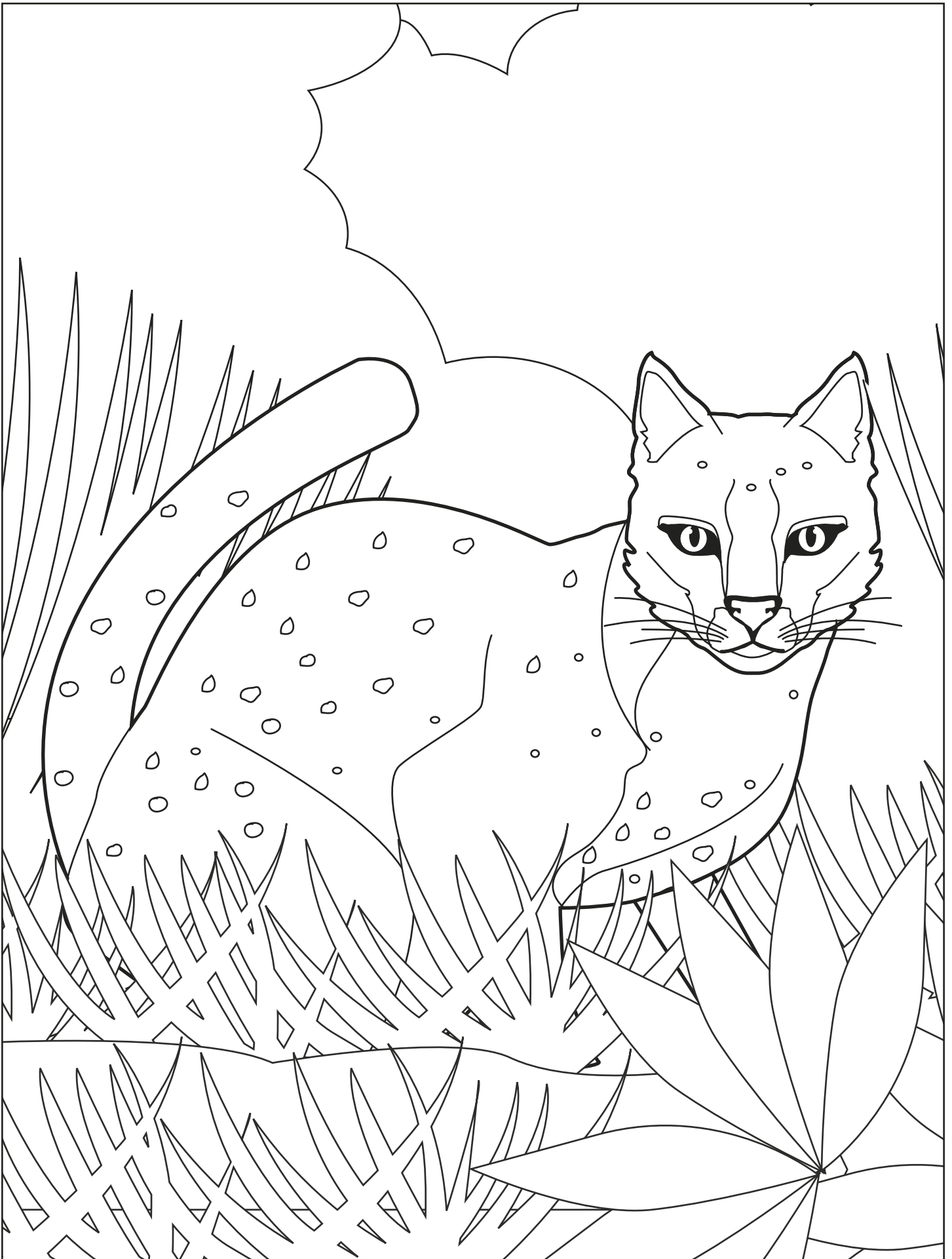
Golden Cat



The golden cat lives in thick tropical rainforest habitat, so they are hard to see in the wild.

- Golden cats grow to about 3 feet and weigh about 35 pounds.
- Even though they are called “golden” – sometimes they are not! Their fur can be reddish brown or even silvery grey. Some golden cats even have black fur.
- The golden cat is strong – with long legs and big paws. Like all cats, they are carnivores (meat-eaters). They capture wild animals like rodents, small antelope, birds and monkeys. Sometimes they eat chickens.
- Golden cats hunt in the early morning, evening, and during the night, so they sleep during the day in the lower branches of trees.
- After the male and female golden cats mate, it takes about 2 ½ months for the babies to grow inside the mother. Then she gives birth to one, two, or sometimes even three kittens.
- The kittens grow up fast! After 6 days they open their eyes. At 10 days they start walking – and on the 38th day they begin to eat meat.





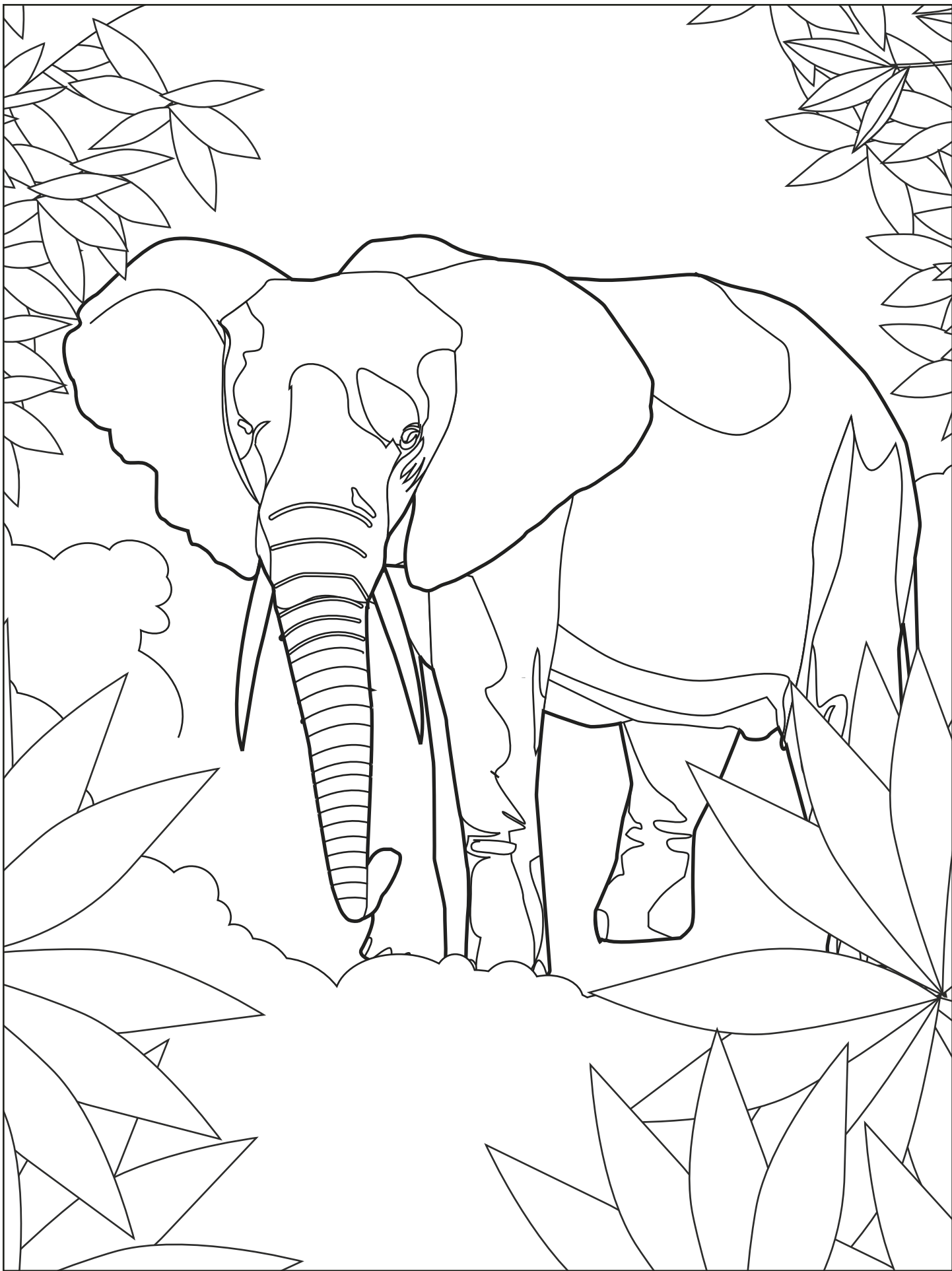
Forest Elephant



There are two kinds of elephants in Africa; forest elephants and savannah elephants. They can live for 60 years in the wild and up to 80 years in captivity.

- Forest elephants live in dense jungles in Central and West Africa.
- Because of their habitat, forest elephants live in much smaller groups than their larger cousins the savannah elephants. Male forest elephants usually live alone and the mothers stay with one or two of their calves.
- Elephants eat bark, fruit, grass and leaves – AND – they can drink up to 50 gallons of water each day!
- Forest elephants sometimes come together in large groups in big, swampy clearings in the forest known as “bais” (pronounced “buys”). Here they dig in the soil with their trunks and tusks to get at mineral salts.
- Elephants have their own language for keeping in touch with each other. They use calls that are too low for people to hear.
- Because people want their ivory tusks, elephants have been hunted to the brink of extinction. All elephants are listed as endangered.





Dwarf Crocodile



Crocodiles belong to a group of reptiles called “crocodilians”. Alligators, caimans and gavials are also in this group. There are 23 kinds of crocodilians living around the world. They are among the oldest animals on Earth!

- Dwarf crocodiles live in pools and swamps in the rainforest. They rest during the day in their burrows, then come out at night to hunt near the water’s edge or on the land.
- They like to eat fish, frogs, crustaceans, and maybe even some small mammals they find on land.
- Crocodiles are loners except during the breeding season. Then the males and females come together to build a nest that is a big mound of leaves.
- The mother lays about 10 eggs. She guards the nest and when the little crocodiles hatch, she guards them too.
- Crocodiles can live to be 100 years old and they can wait a year between meals.
- These reptiles can become endangered if people destroy their habitat or kill too many of them for food or for their skins.





Mountain Gorilla



Mountain gorillas live in the Virunga Volcano mountains in the countries of Rwanda, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Uganda.

- The forests where the gorillas live are often cloudy, misty and cold.
- A mountain gorilla family has one or two silverbacks (males that are 12 or older), some younger males called blackbacks, several adult females, young gorillas, and baby gorillas.
- There is not much fruit where mountain gorillas live, so they eat mostly plants like celery, nettles, bamboo and thistles.
- A full-grown mountain gorilla can eat up to 60 pounds of plants each day, so they spend a lot of time traveling and searching for food.
- People that have spent time with mountain gorillas agree that they are peaceful and gentle animals. But if they feel threatened, they sometimes charge, scream or show their teeth.
- Dian Fossey is famous for her work with the gorillas and now the Dian Fossey Gorilla Fund International (DFGFI) works hard to protect these beautiful primates.
- There are about 350 mountain gorillas left in the world. Hundreds of people travel to Africa each year to see the animals in their natural habitat.





Lowland Gorilla



The lowland gorilla is the largest of all primates. Males can weigh 400 pounds and females weigh about 225 pounds.

- Gorillas can live for 30 to 40 years in the wild and about 40 to 50 years in Zoos.
- Female gorillas carry their babies inside for about 9 months. This is the same amount of time that human mothers carry their babies.
- In the early weeks, the mother clutches the baby and holds it very close. When it is two months old, the baby has the strength to cling onto mother's hair. Eventually, the little ones can ride on mother's back.
- Lowland gorillas eat over 200 kinds of plants – including fruits, stems, flowers, shoots, bulbs, bark and leaves. Like chimpanzees, they also eat termites and ants.
- When gorillas, chimpanzees, forest elephants and other animals go to the bathroom, they leave behind many seeds that grow into new plants. In this way, they spread plants when they travel from region to region.
- Lowland gorillas are shy and live in very thick tropical forests, making them difficult for scientists to study.







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