African buffalo (*Syncerus caffer*)

**Conservation Status:** Least Concern

A massive animal, the African buffalo is Africa’s only wild cattle species and is recognized as one of the “Big Five” mammals by safari goers. It is an imposing animal with its oxlike barrel shape, broad chest, bulky limbs, sizable head, and thick horns. African buffalo can vary greatly in coloring, but generally are dark gray or black to reddish-brown. Soft hairs fringe the large ears and the long tail, which ends in a tuft of hairs.

**Fun Facts**

1. These formidable grazers are the only wild cattle species in Africa.
2. Herds of female African buffalos seem to have a unique way of deciding what direction they want to move: they vote on it! When the herd is ready to move, individuals stand upright and face the direction they wish to move. When enough herd members have “voted,” the dominant female leads the herd off in the direction that most of the individuals have faced.

**Habitat**

African buffalo can be found in a variety of habitats including the African savanna and tropical forests near the equator.

**Diet**

Grass forms the bulk of the African buffalo’s diet, but they also browse on bushes and trees. Because they can easily overheat, they generally feed during the cool of the early morning or at night.

**Predators**

Humans, lions

**Behavior**

The African buffalo is a gregarious animal, found in large herds of up to thousands of individuals. Herds are aggregations of distinct clans with related females and offspring, plus a small number of mature bulls. Males not belonging to a herd are solitary, or they form bachelor herds with other bulls that are not yet sexually mature or bulls past their prime. Herds have a stable home range and individuals cooperatively protect herd members, especially calves. If a herd member feels vulnerable, it will bellow and others will come to its defense. African buffalo will charge as a unit when threatened to drive away large predators, including entire herds of lions.

African buffalo do most of their feeding during the cool, early mornings and late afternoons. During the heat of the day, they are often found lying in the shade of trees or shrubs. The African buffalo has poor sight and hearing. They are quiet animals, but during the mating season they can be heard grunting and bellowing.

**Breeding**

Females have their first calves at age 4 or 5. After a gestation period of 11 to 12 months, they give birth to one calf. Calves are suckled for up to a year and during this time are completely dependent on their mothers. Generally females will calve once every two years.

**Size**

Length: 2.4-3.4 m

Height:1.4-1.6 m

**Weight**

500-700 kg

**Life Span:** 26 years

**Gestation Period:** 11 to 12 months

**Average number of offspring:** 1