



EVOLUTION LINKS AT LONDON ZOO

Autumn
2023



LONDON ZOO
a ZSL conservation zoo



1. Compare the Giraffe and Okapi

The okapi is the closest living relative of the giraffe, both having evolved from a common ancestor. You can see this in their similar skull shapes.

Both animals evolved to meet the specific needs of their habitats, which can easily be seen in their camouflage and necks.



GIRAFFE

Giraffes have evolved to survive in the savannah habitat, and have various shades of tan and brown that help them to camouflage here.

The savannah supports a large variety of plant eating animals, so many species here have adapted to eat different plants or parts of plants. Giraffes' long necks help them to leaves fruit and flowers that are beyond the reach of most other grazing animals.

OKAPI

Okapis evolved to survive deep in the tropical rainforests of central Africa. Their dark brown colour and white stripes helps them to blend in with the dense foliage.

As there are plenty of trees and plants around to munch on, they don't need a long neck to reach every bit of the tree like giraffes do in the savannah.

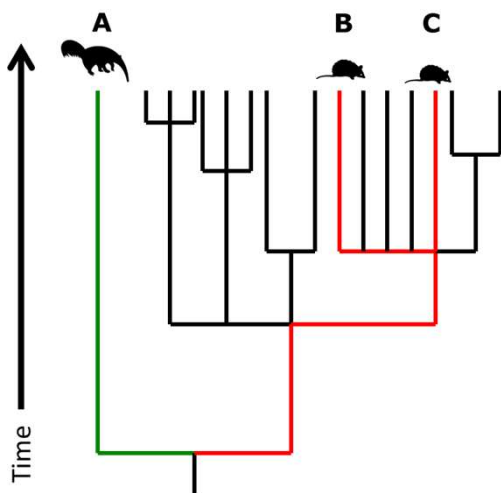




2. Visit an EDGE species

London Zoo is part of ZSL, an international conservation charity working to restore wildlife around the world.

The EDGE of Existence Programme highlights and protects some of the most unique species on the planet, which are on the verge of extinction.



EVOLUTIONARILY DISTINCT (ED)

EDGE species have few relatives on the tree of life and are often extremely unusual in the way they look, live and behave.

GLOBALLY ENDANGERED (GE)

An alarming proportion of EDGE species are on the verge of extinction. The EDGE programme aims to bring awareness to these little-known species and work to conserve those that deserve more attention.

VISIT THE PYGMY HIPPO

As you enter Into Africa, stop to check out an EDGE species. The Pygmy Hippo is a smaller, reclusive nocturnal cousin of the more widely known Common Hippo.





Classroom Activity:

Discover more EDGE species

The EDGE programme has a brilliant website where you can discover more weird and wonderful EDGE species who have amazing adaptations.

<https://www.edgeofexistence.org/>

Here are two of our favourites!



MARY RIVER TURTLE

That's not just an excellent hairdo. The Mary River Turtle allows algae to grow on its body to help it camouflage in its river habitat.

[Mary River Turtle
\(edgeofexistence.org\)](https://www.edgeofexistence.org/)



MYERS' SURINAME TOAD

A truly bizarre amphibian that incubates eggs under the skin on its back. When ready, the fully formed toadlets pop out of the mother's back! There are many excellent videos of this on Youtube.

[Myers' Suriname Toad
\(edgeofexistence.org\)](https://www.edgeofexistence.org/)