

PYGMY HIPPOS

With its plump body and private nature, the pygmy hippopotamus has long fascinated scientists. Read on to learn more about this half-pint hippo!

ADAPTATIONS

The pygmy hippo is found in tropical rainforests, rivers and swamps. Amazingly, its features help it survive in those environments.

Its eyes, ears and nostrils are positioned high on its head, so it can see, hear and breathe in the water.

The long snout pushes weeds aside, so that the mammal can access its food.

Thick, oily skin protects against sun damage, thorns and parasites.

Thanks to the hippo's muscly legs, it can move easily through thick grass.

Wide, webbed feet help with climbing muddy banks and wading through water.



STATUS endangered		HABITATS dense tropical rainforests, rivers and swamps	
POPULATION 2,000 - 2,500	TOP SPEED 30 mph (18 mph on average)	LENGTH 1.5 - 1.75 m	WEIGHT 180 - 275 kg (fully grown)

DIET

Pygmy hippos are herbivores, for they eat fruits, leaves and aquatic plants. Vegetation is difficult to digest, so the hippos have four stomach chambers to absorb enough nutrients to survive. Because plants are low in calories, pygmy hippos graze for around 6 hours each night. This helps them meet their energy requirements. Interestingly, they are nocturnal feeders so that they stay cool, avoid predators and get first dibs on food!

DID YOU KNOW?

Pygmy hippos are the smallest species of hippopotamus.



BEHAVIOUR

Pygmy hippos are placid, so they usually hide from danger. They can grunt and squeak, but they prefer communicating in other ways. Sometimes, they use body language like arching their back, stamping their feet or blinking. These shy animals also spray urine to mark their territory. Recently, research has shown that pygmy hippos are rather clever. If one got lost, it could find its way home!



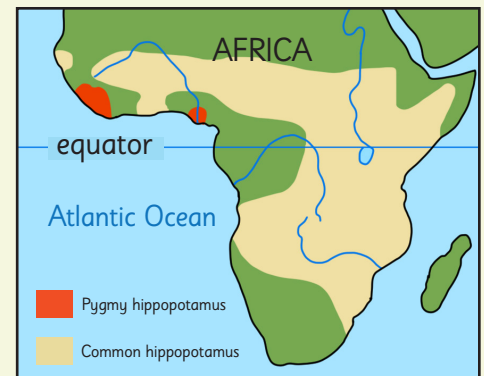
Fun Fact!
Pygmy hippos spend 20 hours per day in water.

They bare their teeth if they feel threatened, trapped or provoked.



Born at Khao Kheow Zoo in Thailand, Moo Deng is a famous pygmy hippo. In September 2024, her images were shared online and she became an internet sensation. Within days, visitors to the zoo doubled and Moo Deng merchandise was flying off the shelves. Thanks to Moo Deng's popularity, the zoo has raised enough money to fund breeding programmes for endangered species!

	Pygmy hippo	Common hippo
Scientific name	Choeropsis liberiensis	Hippopotamus amphibius
Average length	1.5 - 1.75 m	Around 3.5 m
Average height	Up to 1 m	Up to 1.5 m
Average weight	180 - 275 kg	1,500 - 1,800 kg
Lifespan	30 - 50 years	40 - 50 years
Conservation status	Endangered	Vulnerable
Estimated population in the wild	Around 2,000	115,000 - 130,000



ENDANGERED

Pygmy hippos are endangered because humans have destroyed their habitats. Deforestation has reduced the amount of space these animals have to live in. Often, they are forced to fight for food and shelter with other animals. As they are driven closer to human settlements, pygmy hippos face a higher risk of hunting, poaching and injury. Climate change is also damaging plants and shrinking rivers. If this continues, these unique creatures might disappear forever!

The pygmy hippopotamus is an extraordinary creature, but its future is uncertain. How can you help ensure its survival?