

The Life of the Pygmy Hippo

Pygmy hippos are endangered

Pygmy hippos are endangered and live in only 4 countries in this world (Sierra Leone, Liberia, Guinea and Côte d'Ivoire). They are protected by international law.

Within Sierra Leone, the Gola Forests and Tiwai Island are the most important habitats for pygmy hippos where they still survive. But they are facing many threats especially through habitat loss and poaching.

Pygmy hippos are very shy. Almost nothing is known about their life in the wild. In Gola and on Tiwai we sometimes record pygmy hippos with our camera traps. But most knowledge about their lives has been observed in captivity, for example in Basel Zoo in Switzerland in Europe.

Welcome to Nyande!

Nyande is a small pygmy hippo girl born in Basel Zoo in November 2016. "Nyande" means beautiful in the Sierra Leonean Mende language. The Gola research team suggested this name and now has a daughter in Switzerland!

Nyande will stay with her parents Ashaki and Napoleon for about a year. She will be weaned after 6-8 months.



© Zoo Basel

Swimming lessons

Pygmy hippos are born on land. For the first days, they cannot swim. But their skin needs to be wet and the mother helps the calf not to drown, by holding it over water with her mouth. In Basel Zoo, Nyande can simply take a bath – which she enjoys very much.



© Zoo Basel

A start from 6 kg

With 4-6 years pygmy hippos are sexually mature. After an average gestation length of 188 days, the new born pygmy hippo weighs 4.5-6.2 kg. The weight of an adult pygmy hippo is 180-275 kg. The oldest pygmy hippo in captivity died at the age of 50. Normally, pygmy hippos give birth to only one calf at the time.



© Zoo Basel

Pygmy hippo champions

In Basel Zoo, Mr. Roland Schweizer takes care of the pygmy hippos and tries to make them feel comfortable. Roland knows his friends very well and makes many important observations about their behaviour.

At Gola, the community members are helping the team of the Gola Rainforest National Park to protect pygmy hippos in their role as Community Youth Conservation Volunteers. They help with monitoring and awareness raising.



With special thanks to Basel Zoo for their continuous and ongoing support for the conservation of pygmy hippos in and around the Gola Rainforest National Park.

