

Thomson's Gazelle

- Thomson's gazelles are a numerous antelope in the Serengeti who typically live 10-12 years.
- Male: 23 - 28in high and 37 to 64lbs / Female: 23 - 25in high and 29 to 53lbs
- The Thomson's gazelle (*called Tommie*) is a small gazelle with a light-brown coat and a white belly, a white rump patch that extends up to the tail, and **a horizontal black side stripe**.
- These small gazelles are named for researcher Joseph Thomson.
- From behind, Tommies show a rusty brown area above the tail. (*Grant's Gazelles have a white horizontal strip above their tails.*)
- They have ridged, corrugated, S-shaped horns that curve backward. Females have shorter, smoother, and slimmer horns than males or sometimes - none at all.
- Travelers on safari barely glance at these sweet creatures, probably because they are found in abundance. Consider that even in *The Lion King*, all antelope are grouped together as "antelope" - though they are vastly different in size, colors and horn shapes. They are not very significant other than for food.
- They are grazers and browsers. In the dry season, grasses make up about 90 percent of their diets. They will also eat seeds and browse on shrubs.
- They will congregate with larger ungulates, such as wildebeest and zebra, which trample and graze on tall grass, making it easier for them to feed on short grass.
- By eating the greenest grasses, Tommies get all the water they need during the rainy season, but migrate to find drinking water during dry periods.
- Tommies are easily identified by their tail motion. It swings side to side like a windshield wiper.
- They are **extremely alert to sounds and movements**, relying on visual awareness of one another to stay in contact. Their **strong senses of hearing, sight, and smell** balance its vulnerability and small size on the open plains.
- They do not require shade like most of the other animals in the Serengeti. **They may be seen facing east to get the airflow over their nostrils which cools them down.**
- Thomson's gazelles are an important food source for many predators especially Cheetahs and Cape Hunting Dogs. They are regular meals for lions, leopards, hyenas, wild dogs, and jackals.
- Thomson's gazelle can reach speeds of 40 miles an hour and use high speed jinks and turns to attempt to outrun cheetahs or other predators.
- They use **stotting maneuvers** - leaping into the air with exaggerated rocking bounces to show a flash of white under the tail. This action tells the predator they are healthy and would be difficult to catch.
- Thomson's gazelles, along with Zebras and Wildebeests are part of the main 3 migratory species that make up the vast Serengeti migration. (*1½ million wildebeests, about ½ million zebra and about 300,000 gazelles*) *Though the gazelles do not undertake the length of migration that Wildebeests travel.*
- Grant's gazelles are sometimes confused with Thomson's. However, Thomson's is distinguished from Grant's by its smaller size, the black side stripe and the white patch on its rump.
- Tommies live in buck or doe herds of 10 up to 100 individuals, or mixed groups of up to 700.
- The strongest of Thomson's gazelle males set up territories in home ranges using an exaggerated display posture and scent gland secretions to mark their boundaries. Females and offspring form groups of five to 50 and wander through male territories. However, the groups change members and numbers by the hour, so no obvious patterns of hierarchy or leadership emerge.
- After a pregnancy of about six months, female gazelles give birth to one or two young.

- Births usually peak right after the rainy seasons. After giving birth, the mother hides the newborn in the grass and returns several times a day to nurse it.
- These offspring will remain out of sight for days or even weeks, until they are old enough to join the mother's herd, in the case of females, or a bachelor herd.
- Predation on the young is heavy, and many predators are able to feed solely on newborns during the calving peaks.
- Sadly, they often wander onto ranches and farmlands to feed on the short grasses exposed by cattle. Here, they are an easy target and are frequently shot or snared for food.
- The Thomson's gazelle's habitat is decreasing as human populations grow and agriculture, settlements, and roads expand.

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