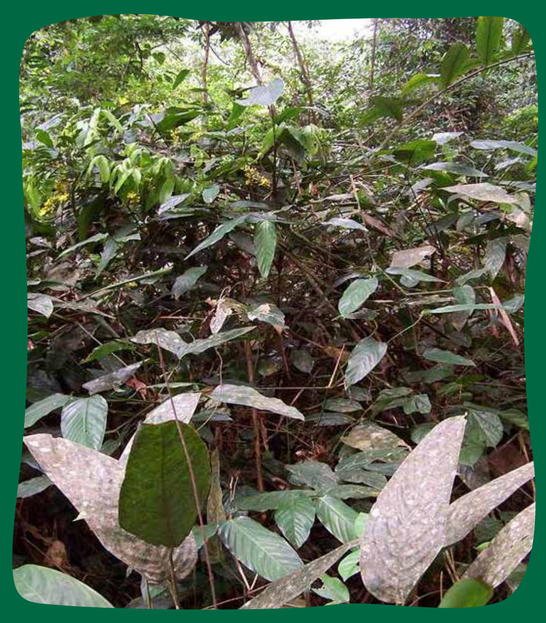
Okapi remained undiscovered to science until the 20th century

They're *very shy* and live in **dense tropical forests** in the Democratic Republic of Congo.



They were only known to local people until 1901

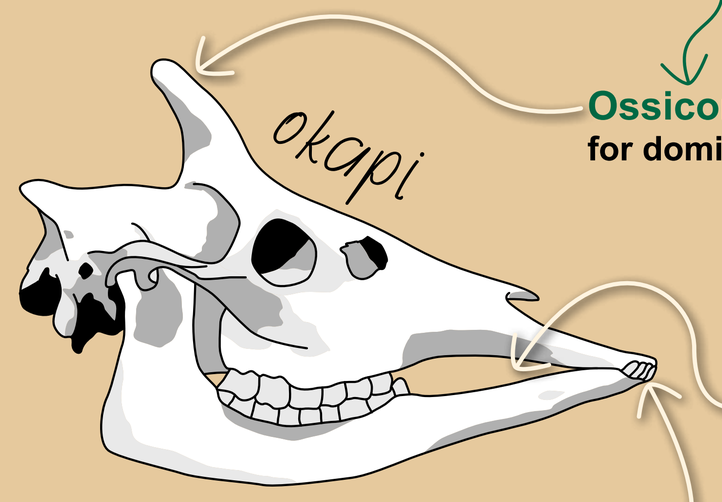
A team of scientists lead by Sir Henry Johnston went in search of this elusive animal. He sent **striped okapi skins** back to the British Museum for analysis.

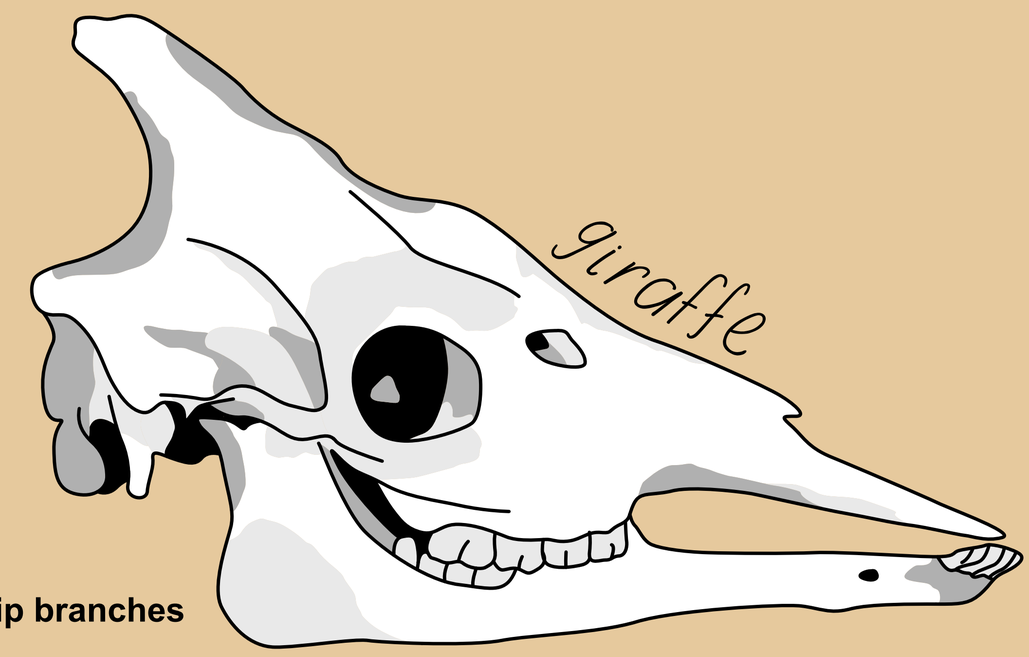
And scientists wrongly identified it as a new species of **zebra.**

But looking at their skulls tells a different story

They're actually related to **giraffes**

Giraffe and okapi have similar tooth structure and share *bony horn growths*





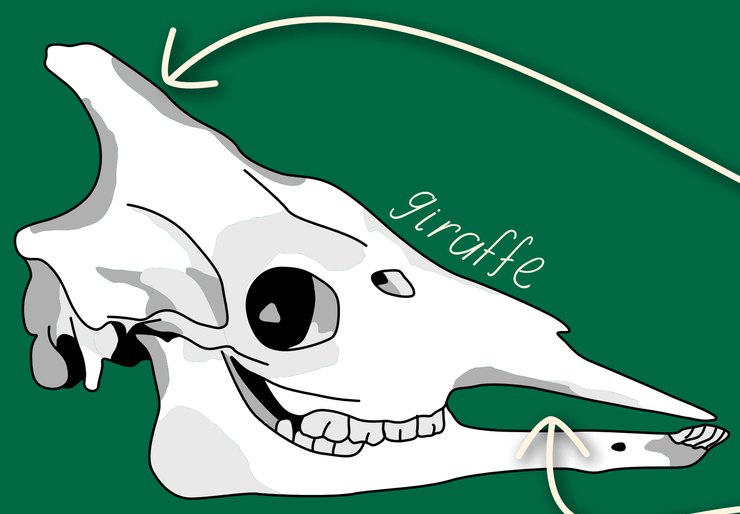
Zebras have *more incisors* and thicker lower jaws

Incisors on both upper and lower jaw
to help them crop grass

Thick strong jaw
hold the roots of their many molars

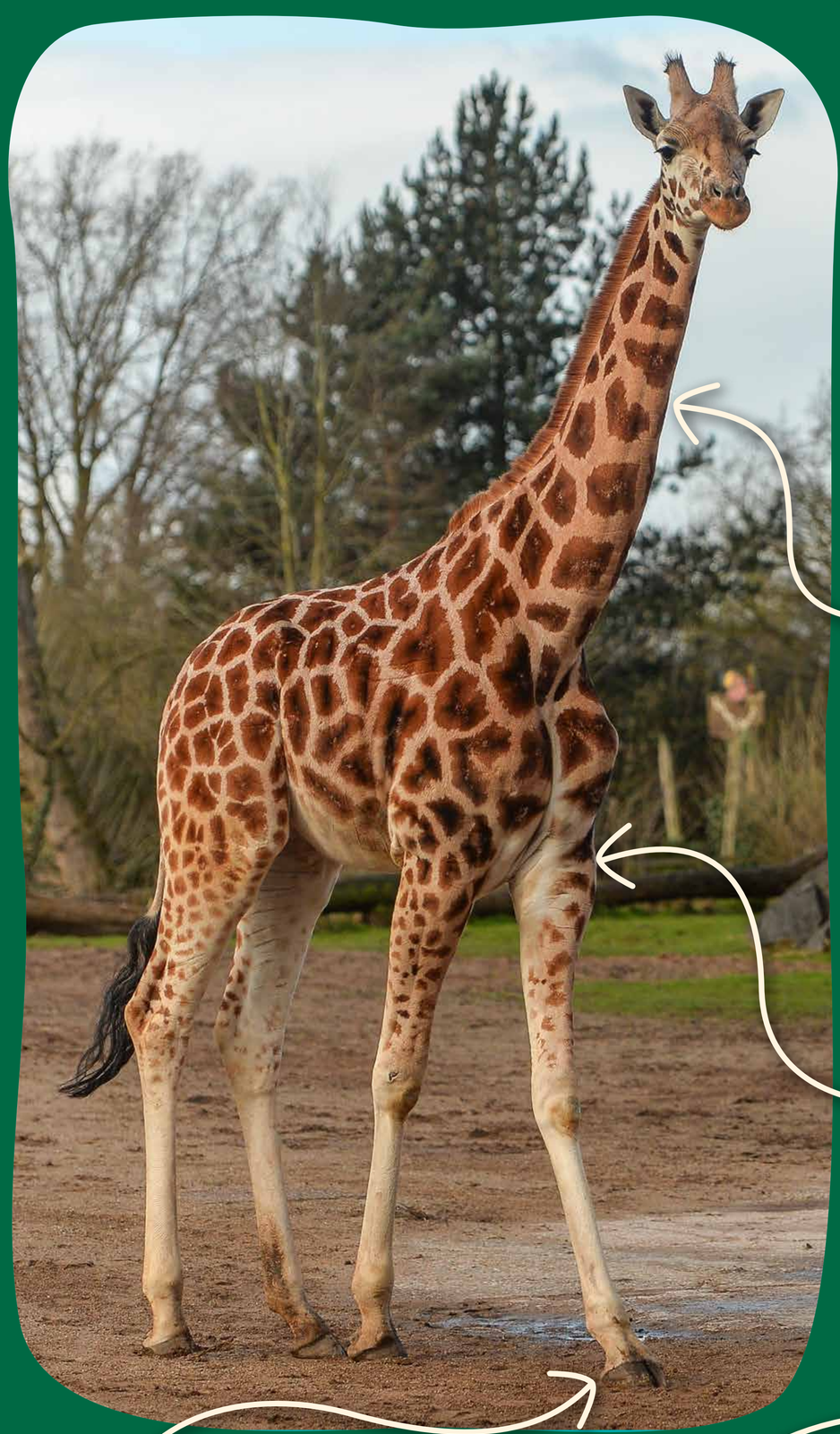
Giraffe and okapi are closely related

They evolved from a **common ancestor**.
We know this from studying their *anatomical features*.



Short blunt ossicones
are used to establish *dominance*.
Both male and female giraffes have ossicones.
But okapi are different, only males have them.

Similar tooth structure
They have a large gap between their front teeth and molars to help them strip branches.



Long necks and dark prehensile tongues
help them grasp young leaves and buds from tall branches

Tall forelimbs and sloping backs
help them reach up for food with no competition

Cloven hooves
tell us that they're *not* related to horses

The number of toes helps to classify the origin of hoofed animals
Horses, rhinos and tapirs have an **odd** number of toes. Giraffe, okapi and deer have an **even** number of toes.