
THE

REWARDS

OF

PATIENCE



Jane Goodall's work with chimpanzees in Africa brought her renown. Today she focuses her efforts on behalf of captive animals, and ChimpanZoo, a program designed to improve the quality of life for chimpanzees in zoos, is a reality.

By Sharon Elaine Thompson

For 30 years, Jane Goodall has followed chimpanzees over the hillsides and through the forests of Gombe National Park in Tanzania. She has watched them feed, play, mate, fight, hunt, raise their young and make and use tools. She knows the free-roaming wild chimps as few other people in the world. But she has always been haunted by the chimps that live in captivity. So in 1986 Goodall met with members of several zoos to develop a program that would help improve the physical and psychological conditions of chimps in captivity. ChimpanZoo was born.

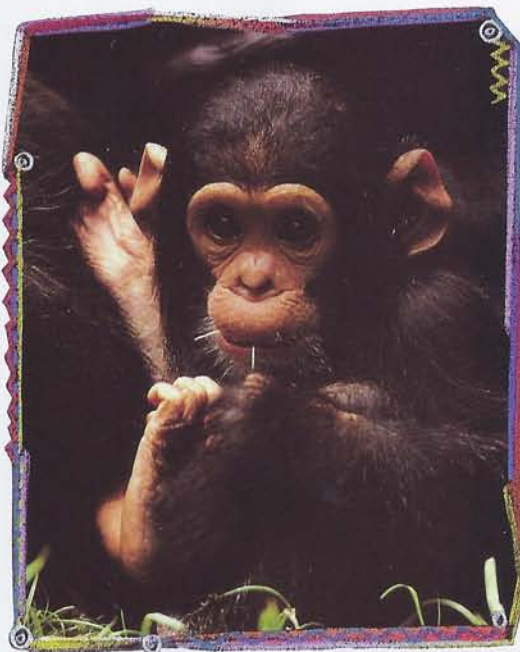
Before the institutions participating in ChimpanZoo could effectively improve the lot of chimps in their care, they needed a better understanding of zoo-chimp behavior. How were the apes affected by the unnatural world around them? How did they cope with it? In order to find out, they needed a behavioral study program almost as ambitious as Goodall's long-term project in Africa. The ChimpanZoo program now involves more than 150 chimps in 15 different facilities from coast to coast. It is the largest study of its kind.

The world of wild chimps is one of quiet forest, clear streams, tasty leaves and delicious fruit, one in which a chimp spends most of his time foraging for things to eat. It is a world of family and friends, where social bonds and mutual support are almost as important as food.

In contrast, a captive chimp's world may be one of concrete and steel. Although the chimp may live in an enclosure with others, they may not be members of his family. Captive chimps may be raised by humans and later introduced to an unrelated group; they may be moved to another

institution for breeding purposes.

No matter where they go, captive chimps are always in the presence of man. In Gombe, the occasional researcher can be as safely ignored as a log. Chimps in captivity, however, can neither avoid nor ignore man. They are in daily contact with keepers and veterinarians as well as crowds of visitors. As a result, "chimps in zoos are kind of 'street smart,'" says primatologist Virginia I. Landau, of the Jane Goodall Institute for Wildlife Research, Education and Conservation. Landau, who is the national coordinator of ChimpanZoo, adds,



GERRY ELLIS/THE WILDLIFE COLLECTION

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A YOUNG CHIMP GAINS VITAL
EXPERIENCE BY SOCIALIZING WITH
ITS FAMILY AND FRIENDS.
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"They're aware of people in ways that animals in the wild are not." Captive chimps face stresses that are unknown to chimps in the wild.

ChimpanZoo researchers scrupulously observe the social interaction between the animals, how various types of enclosures influence aberrant and aggressive behavior, and how enrichment techniques affect the chimps. They want to know how often (if at all) the chimps use the toys and structures they are given, how soon they get bored with an activity, how often their environment needs to be changed to prevent boredom, and how the animals cope with the interference of man. Beginning in 1991, all the ChimpanZoo facilities will feed their observations into a central database at the Jane Goodall Institute in Tucson, Arizona, for the use of program participants and others interested in chimpanzee behavior.

One of the most remarkable features of the study is that most of the data-collecting observers are amateurs—volunteers with no formal training in animal research. One thing they all have in common, however, is their interest in chimpanzees or in animal behavior. "It's an excellent opportunity for the layperson to do research," says Rhonda Pietsch, head primate keeper and coordinator for the program at Lowry Park Zoo in Tampa, Florida.

Observing the antics of chimpanzees may seem like an ideal way to spend a Saturday at the zoo. But there's more to it than just watching chimps. "You have to understand what the animals are doing," says Landau. "That takes time and energy." And, she adds later, dedication.

The training program at Lowry Park is 16 weeks long, one to two days a week. The class of 25 volunteers

meets in the evenings and on Saturdays. Pietsch asks them to commit one year to the project and agree to take down data for at least two hours each week.

Volunteers learn about primates in general and about chimps in depth. They study slide after slide in order to recognize individual chimps. By observing the animals on videotape and "in person," they learn the animals' behaviors. Pietsch says she loves seeing the look of amazement that comes over a novice's face when a chimp performs a behavior that the volunteer had only read about or seen on film. Observers learn to take data on an ethogram, a list of 50 behaviors. Some of these behaviors are seen in the wild, while others, such as "fecal art" (smearing feces on walls), are strictly captive behaviors.

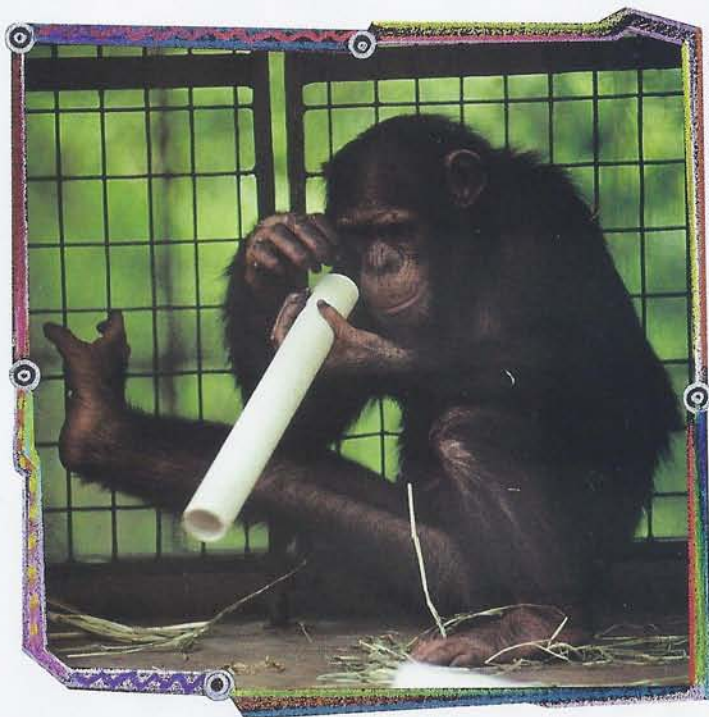
With the number of behaviors, chimps and observers involved, computers are a necessity, says Landau. Although she admits she is intimidated by machinery, "there's just no way we could remove [the information] from paper and translate it into numbers otherwise."

Once a minute the observers' laptop computers prompt them to record what the animal is doing at that moment. These timed observations are like taking a photo every 60 seconds, says Landau. "You take so many snapshots it gives you an idea of what's happening over time."

The success of a project like this depends on the accuracy and consistency of the observations recorded. So far, says Landau, "reliability is very high—higher than I expected." To keep things that way, ChimpanZoo

observers are tested every six months.

According to Pietsch, about half the volunteers drop out after six months. Those who stay on, however, are in for the long haul, says Landau.



ROBERT CABELLO/DALLAS ZOO

KEEPERS AND RESEARCHERS DEVISE WAYS TO KEEP CHIMPS ACTIVE AND CURIOUS. THIS 6-YEAR-OLD INVESTIGATES A TUBE.

THIS ENGAGING YOUNGSTER SHOWS WHY CHIMPANZOO VOLUNTEERS OFTEN GET CAUGHT UP IN THE LIVES OF THEIR SUBJECTS.

"They become involved in the animal's life ... it's like a friend or family. You get caught up in their lives and you don't want to go off and leave them." Volunteer Wendy Wood has become caught up in the chimps' lives. She is an occupational therapist who received the first Goodall Scholarship awarded by the Univer-

sity of Southern California in 1990.

Occupational therapists and primatologists share many common interests. Jane Goodall was struck by the similarities between captive chimps and people who had been institutionalized. Both groups become bored and apathetic. They show little variety in their behavior—and their behavior may become bizarre. Goodall realized occupational therapy had a great deal to offer captive chimps.

An occupational therapist works with patients whose ability to control their daily routine is impaired, whether the problem stems from disease or disability. Wood's goal as a therapist is to enrich her patients' lives by giving them as much control as possible. She uses these same skills as a ChimpanZoo volunteer at the Los Angeles Zoo.

Zookeepers and researchers are trying to come up with ways to keep chimps busy and get them "out of their rut." Because wild chimps spend so much of their time foraging, many of these enrichment techniques center on feeding. For example, keepers have covered the floor with hay and sprinkled raisins and sunflower seeds in it. Chimps spend hours picking through the hay to find the treats. In the wild, chimps use twigs to fish for insects in termite mounds. At Tampa's Lowry Park Zoo, the chimps' man-made termite mound contains honey and jam instead of insects. The animals don't seem to miss the real thing; they eagerly tear up the plants in the enclosure for suitable tools to dig out the sweets. According to Pietsch, that's what the plants are there for.

Lowry Park Zoo also provides a half-

full bucket of frozen Kool-Aid, topped off with the drink in liquid form, and placed out of reach of the chimps. They must use the flexible tubing the keepers give them like a straw, threading it through a fence and into the bucket. Pietsch reports that the chimpanzees love the challenge—it keeps them busy for hours.

Not all the activities dreamed up by keepers and volunteers are unqualified successes. At the Los Angeles Zoo, keepers tried hiding raisins and sunflower seeds in the pages of a phone book tied up with strips of cloth. The well-meaning humans envisioned the chimps leafing through the book to look for goodies. But the chimps proved to be even more imaginative than the activity planners. They ripped off the cloth strips, shook the book and scooped up the treats. Time elapsed: about 15 seconds. Although tearing pages out of the book kept the chimps occupied for a short while, it kept keepers occupied even longer. The pages had to be scrubbed off the floors of the chimps' night quarters.

Behind the scenes, ChimpanZoo researchers and zookeepers have provided chimps with old clothes, rag dolls, rawhide bones, balls, cardboard boxes, paper bags and nesting material. At one zoo, the chimps spend hours looking in mirrors and brushing their teeth. Keepers are very careful about keeping certain items out of chimpanzee hands while on exhibit, says Pietsch. The temptation to hurl things at visi-

tors is much too strong.

Enrichment activities are definitely worthwhile. But, says Wood, "the most important thing is to have chimps

with other chimps." A large social group prevents aberrant behavior. Pietsch agrees. She has seen the human-raised chimps in her group

become "more chimplike" since they were introduced to chimpanzees raised by their own kind. The hand-raised individuals have begun to vocalize correctly and learn behaviors (such as grooming, touching and kissing) so important to promoting harmony in a chimpanzee group.

Pietsch notes that behavior sharing can go both ways. Jaimie, a hand-raised female at Lowry Park, sucks her thumb. Shortly after Chester and Rukiya—two chimp-raised individuals—were introduced to Jaimie, they picked up the habit. Now all three can be seen sitting around and sucking their thumbs.

In her book *In the Shadow of Man*, Jane Goodall wrote that laboratory chimps "should be given much-improved living conditions ... we should make every effort to see that he is a well-treated and honored guest in our laboratories." Landau and Wood hope that the techniques developed through ChimpanZoo will be used to improve the quality of life for these animals that do so much to help man.

Thomas Wolfe said you can't go home again. Most captive chimpanzees will never return to the wild. But ChimpanZoo is working to make chimps' home away from home a good deal more livable. □

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HERMAN, AN ADULT MALE, IS A MEMBER
OF TAMPA'S LOWRY PARK ZOO GROUP.

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CHIMPANZOO AIMS TO IMPROVE
THE QUALITY OF LIFE FOR CHIMPANZEES
IN CAPTIVITY.