

CHIMPANZEES

Chimpanzees are highly intelligent animals who share 98.6% of their genetic DNA with humans, making them our closest relative. They make use of tools such as rocks to crack nuts in half or sticks inserted into mounds to 'fish' for termites, and are the only primates to have developed tool use to such an advanced level.



RANGE OF THE CHIMPANZEE:

Chimpanzees are the most widespread of all the great apes and live in Savannah grasslands and forests throughout East, West and Central Africa. Habitat destruction and over-exploitation, however, has reduced their distribution in many countries.



SCIENTIFIC NAME: Pan troglodytes

CLASS: Mammalia

ORDER: Primates

FAMILY: Pongidae (great apes)

DISTRIBUTION: East, West and Central Africa

SIZE AND APPEARANCE:

Chimpanzees are part of the great ape family along with orangutans and gorillas. The males, at over a metre tall and weighing between 35 and 70 kilograms, are larger and stronger than the females. Chimpanzees have long, strong arms for climbing and strong, nimble hands and feet with thumbs to grasp objects and branches.

HABIT:

Chimpanzees are extremely sociable animals, living in complex communities of between 15 and 100 animals. The groups are led by dominant males, who establish a hierarchy based on physical strength, age and intelligence, although friendships and personality are also extremely important. The chimpanzees spend hours grooming each other.

DIET:

The agile chimpanzee is able to climb and reach a variety of foods including many ripe fruits, young leaves, seeds, bark and flowers. They also supplement their diet with ants, termites, caterpillars and occasionally small mammals such as antelopes and monkeys, which they hunt together in a group.

LIFE EXPECTANCY:

Life expectancy for a chimp in the wild is between 40 and 50 years old.



THREATS TO THE CHIMPANZEE:

The greatest threat facing chimpanzees is the destruction of their habitat by commercial logging. As well as destroying the forests chimpanzees depend upon for their survival, the loggers open up



previously inaccessible areas to poachers who kill chimpanzees for the commercial bushmeat trade, or capture infants to sell as exotic pets. Only one in four chimpanzees survive being taken from the wild. Most of the traumatised orphans will die from disease, malnutrition and dehydration.

© Captive Animals' Protection Society

CONSERVATION STATUS:

It is estimated that Africa has 191,000 wild chimpanzees. On the surface, this sounds like a large number, but many of these animals live in fragmented 'relic' populations that are separated from other chimpanzees by areas that are heavily cultivated. The chimpanzee is officially classified as an endangered species.

Chimpanzees are protected by international law under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES), but destruction of habitat and the illegal bushmeat trade continue to pose a serious threat to their future.

CHIMPANZEES AND THEIR YOUNG:

A female chimp is ready to mate at around 13 years of age but a male is not fully fertile until he reaches 15. Pregnancy lasts for about eight months and mothers give birth to a single baby. Twins are very rare.

A baby chimp is totally reliant on its mother for milk and protection. Weaning occurs after four years but the infant will stay close to its mother until it is seven or eight years old, playing with other chimpanzees and learning how to be part of chimp society. Chimpanzees pass on information from one generation to the next and young babies will watch the mother perform daily tasks, imitating her and gradually becoming skilled themselves. Ties between mother and offspring appear to last for life.

HOW CARE FOR THE WILD INTERNATIONAL IS HELPING CHIMPANZEES:

Care for the Wild International (CFTWI) supports the Sweetwaters Chimpanzee Sanctuary in Kenya which provides a home to chimpanzees with tragic backgrounds: mothers shot by poachers, chimpanzees sold as pets and then disregarded when their owners couldn't cope any more, or animals rescued from the entertainment industry.

The Sanctuary is one of the largest of its kind in the world, and CFTWI funding has enabled the sanctuary to extend further into the forest. At Sweetwaters, chimpanzees are carefully nursed back to full health and can spend the rest of their days in a vast natural habitat enclosure.

Baby Zee (right), confiscated from a pet shop in Dubai and now being given the opportunity to start a new life in the Sweetwaters Chimpanzee Sanctuary.



If you would like to help CFTWI help chimpanzees please contact:

Care for the Wild International, Tickfold Farm, Kingsfold, West Sussex, RH12 3SE

Telephone: (01306) 627900 Fax: (01306) 627901

E-mail: info@careforthewild.com Web: www.careforthewild.com

Registered Charity No. 288802