

Fact Sheet

Orphan Chimpanzee Sanctuaries

Providing safe havens for orphan chimpanzees in Africa

The Jane Goodall Institute Sanctuary program came into being in response to the plight of chimpanzee infants whose mothers were shot for food.

There is little “meat” on infants, so hunters often try to sell them as pets or attractions in hotels or bars. This is illegal, as chimpanzees are classified as endangered in almost all African countries. But local authorities are reluctant to confiscate unless there is a sanctuary to receive the orphans. Caring for orphan chimpanzees is costly. They may live 60 years and can almost never be returned to the wild. “There were many who urged me not to get involved with orphan chimps,” recalls Jane Goodall, “but for me there was no dilemma. I could not turn my back on the outstretched hands, the pleading eyes, the pathetic, malnourished bodies of the orphans. And so, our sanctuary programs began.”

Today, JGI’s donors support chimpanzee sanctuaries in **Kenya, Uganda** and the **Republic of Congo**, with a fourth being constructed in **South Africa**. The bushmeat trade will not be halted without coordinated efforts by all the players involved, and the mandate of our sanctuaries has expanded to include education and outreach in support of conservation, sustainable development and health care for local people. The orphans serve as ambassadors: Many local people, after visiting one of our sanctuaries, say they will never eat chimpanzee meat again.

JGI began rescuing orphans in Burundi in the late 1980’s. Most of those infants had been smuggled over the border from the Democratic Republic of Congo, where their

mothers had been shot. Eventually fighting and political upheaval in Burundi led us to airlift the 22 chimpanzees we had rescued to our newly built **Sweetwaters Sanctuary** near Nanyuki, in Kenya. Today there are more than 20 chimpanzees living there, surrounded by the 23,000-acre Sweetwaters Reserve.

Ngamba Island Sanctuary, located in Uganda on a 97-acre island in Lake Victoria, was established in 1998 when JGI-Uganda formed the Chimpanzee Sanctuary and Wildlife Conservation Trust (CSWT). Ngamba was designed to have a carrying capacity of 30 chimpanzees, but today it houses 42.

To encourage preservation and restoration of wildlife habitat, Ngamba, like other JGI sanctuaries, is partnering with surrounding communities to provide education and awareness programs. These stress the long-term importance of a healthy, intact environment and sustainable practices.

Tchimpounga Sanctuary, located near Pointe Noire in Congo-Brazzaville, was built in 1992 by Conoco (now ConocoPhillips) oil company. At that time, JGI was responsible for 25 orphans living in two area zoos, both of which had been closed. Today, with 116 orphans, Tchimpounga is the largest chimpanzee sanctuary in Africa. It is surrounded by 18,000 acres of forest and savannah, which JGI is developing for the government as a wildlife refuge. More and more orphans continue to arrive at the sanctuary. There is an urgent need for infant dormitories and an expansion of enclosed forest areas for the older chimpanzees.