

THE

CHIMP LIFE
 KEITHVILLE, LOUISIANA

15 Years of the Chimp Life

As we celebrate the 15-year anniversary of arrival of the very first chimp retirees at Chimp Haven, we asked Co-founder and Director of Behavior and Research, Amy Fultz, to share behind-the-scenes memories of the sanctuary's earliest days and her thoughts on how Chimp Haven's legacy has changed and grown.



Amy Fultz, co-founder and Director of Behavior

Chimp Haven (CH): How did the idea for Chimp Haven begin?

Amy Fultz (AF): In the 1980s the government did a lot of chimpanzee breeding to support HIV research, but when the chimps turned out not to be an ideal model for that research (they do contract

the virus, but they experience basically none of the clinical symptoms that humans do), the research need for all of these chimps dwindled. By the 1990s, it had become a big topic of conversation in the research community: What do we do with the chimps?

Around that time my colleague and fellow Chimp Haven co-founder, Linda Brent, were at a primate conference in Arizona. We found ourselves discussing this issue with other colleagues at the place where all great ideas happen: at the bar, after sessions had wrapped for the day. That's really where the idea for Chimp Haven began!

CH: What was your vision for Chimp Haven at that time?

AF: We knew we wanted the chimps to have a place where they could have freedom over how they spent their time. We wanted them to be able to experience the forest, to build nests and receive enrichment, and to live in large groups like they would in the wild.

CH: How did having the sanctuary in Keithville first come about?

AF: A series of coincidences (or fate, if you believe in it) led us to a land developer in Shreveport. He was working on a big development in Caddo Parish; a

beautiful park with trails and a Veterans Cemetery. They had 200 acres of forested land they wanted developed. It was perfect.

CH: Let's fast-forward to the big day. The sanctuary has been developed and the first two chimps, Rita and Teresa, are scheduled to arrive from a research facility in Texas. What was that like?

AF: It was incredibly exciting. For months we'd had staff members preparing the sanctuary. There was a lot of excited, nervous energy. And of course, once Rita and Teresa were here everyone wanted to dote on them – they got a lot of extra treats and gourmet meals in those first days. We had to remind everyone that they needed to be left to themselves and that we couldn't overfeed them!

CH: And then more chimps began to arrive.

AF: Yes, that was a period of lots of chimpanzee introductions. As chimps arrived we began creating what we called our "supergroup." The intent was that, together, they would live in the first forested habitat at Chimp Haven, which was in the process of being completed at the time.



Rita and Teresa relaxing in their new forested home

...continued on page 2

CH: Were you nervous about how they would react to being in the forested habitat for the first time?

AF: There were so many questions about how they would react. Would they even be interested in going out into the habitat? Would they use the vegetation? Would they know how to build nests and climb trees? These are behaviors that chimpanzees learn from each other in the wild, and while some of the chimps – including Rita, Teresa, and matriarch Lolita – were all wild-born, they'd been brought to the U.S. as babies. We didn't know if they would remember these behaviors and be able to teach the others in their group.

CH: Tell us about that first habitat release.

AF: There was, of course, a ton of excitement the day-of. We'd placed the chimps' favorite foods and enrichment throughout the habitat to encourage them to explore and our staff was situated all around to observe throughout the day and make sure everything was safe.

When we opened the chimps' bedroom doors, all 32 of them came pouring out. There was lots of excited screaming and pant-hoots, lots of hugging and reassuring one another. This was the first time many of them had been in any kind of open-air enclosure so there were many perplexed expressions. Mason, one of my favorite boys, kept getting mud on his feet and would shake it off like, "What is this??"

Many of the chimps made their way down to the moat and the look of surprise on their faces to see us standing on the opposite side was quite funny. And of course – Rita and Teresa. This was their moment. They were taken from the wild as babies and now they were back in the forest. It was really special.

CH: Any surprises as the chimps got settled into their new homes?

AF: We observed the chimps all day, and that night I pitched a tent down by the moat so I could stay with them. While the frogs kept me up, the chimps were sound asleep, warm in their bedrooms! But that was the point – to give them the opportunity to choose where they wanted to be.

The next day, Lolita, who was also wild-born and served as the group's matriarch, was the first to climb a tree. It was like we were being rewarded for all of the hard work, blood, sweat, and tears. It had worked – she had remembered how to climb, and of course, now many of our chimps climb and teach one another to climb.

She also started eating the vegetation in the habitat. There was a moment when she had a briar



Lolita showing her group mates some of the edible vegetation found in their habitat

in her hand and several other chimps in her group gathered around to see what she was doing with it. It looked like she was telling them, "See, you can eat this," as they looked on a bit skeptically like, "Okay, wild matriarch."

We allowed the chimps to settle and didn't enter the habitat again for the next thirty days, but when we did, we found the first nests in the forest. All of it was just validation that what we'd hoped would be possible for them was possible. It was wonderful.

CH: As you look back over the past 15 years, do you feel Chimp Haven today has achieved the vision that you and the cofounders had back in the 90s?

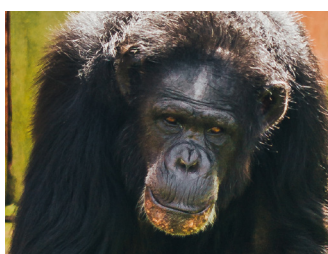
AF: I think Chimp Haven has far exceeded the vision. I don't think we could have ever foreseen that we would have welcomed more than 400 chimps today. It's amazing to me! We had no idea the decision would eventually be made (in 2015) to end biomedical research on chimps and what that would mean for the sanctuary and the chimps. Now, 15 years later, we're building to bring the rest of them home and we're able to assist when other facilities or sanctuaries can no longer care for their chimps. I'm so grateful that Chimp Haven is here and will be here for years to come. And I'm proud that we're still trying new things, and still learning about the chimps. Chimp Haven will endure for them, and I look forward to seeing what the next 15 years bring.

Lives You've Touched

This amazing crew arrived at Chimp Haven in February, just before new arrivals were paused due to COVID-19. They've settled in wonderfully, and we look forward to resuming new chimpanzee arrivals in October.



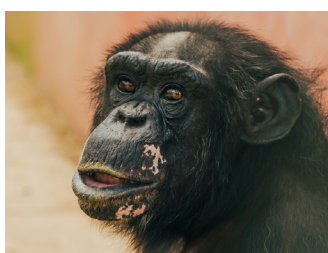
Faline may come across as a bit timid, but that doesn't mean she's not game for a play session! This girl is sweet and smart, and loves her favorite enrichment item, boomer balls.



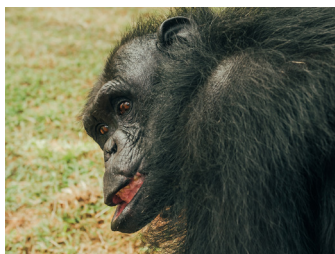
We love a strong lady with confidence and **Poppy** has it in droves. Unfortunately for Sean, she usually expresses it by stealing his bananas!



Sweet, shy **Virginia** loves to groom and be groomed. When care staff enters her bedroom in the morning, she'll drowsily wake up, do a big stretch, and present her back for a nice morning scratch.



Confident, sassy **Eve** loves to play chase outside – staff says she can do laps and laps around her play yard and never tires. She gets excited at any opportunity to play and has a cute foot stomp to show she's raring to go.



Kevin is a big ball of playful energy – he could play chase all day long! He loves to make nice cozy nests out of bedding and even toys, and he's become known for a signature toe-tapping dance he does when excited.



Sean is a very smart boy – recently, he was the first and only chimp in his group to figure out how to use a bamboo stick as a tool for his enrichment activity. He loves to play hide-and-seek, especially with the night shift. (Spoiler alert, he's hiding behind a barrel.)



Welcome Them Home

With nearly 100 chimpanzees still in research facilities waiting their turn to come to Chimp Haven, we're working with urgency to complete the final stages of fundraising and construction for our Welcome Them Home sanctuary expansion. The expansion – which will include new multi-acre forested habitats, chimp bedrooms, veterinary clinics, and so much more – will support Chimp Haven's growing colony for years to come. But the clock is ticking for those chimps still waiting, and we must complete chimpanzee living areas this year to continue to welcome new chimps to sanctuary throughout 2021. Please visit chimphaven.org/welcomethemhome to learn how you can be involved in this historic project today.



Natalie
Living the Chimp Life
since August 2012

COVID-19 Update

As all of us face the ongoing challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, we're remain so grateful for your support. We're glad to report that the expanded safety protocols put in place at the sanctuary this spring have kept our staff and chimps healthy and safe, and we continue to carefully adhere to these procedures and monitor the situation in our area. For the time being, sanctuary events such as Chimpanzee Discovery Day are postponed, but we look forward to having visitors back at Chimp Haven as soon as it is safe to do so. For the most up-to-date information on Chimp Haven events, please visit chimphaven.org/visit.

Coming Up at Chimp Haven

Meet the Chimps

Save the date: A documentary series featuring the Chimp Haven retirees is coming your way! The six-part series from National Geographic will track the ups and downs of our extraordinary group of chimps, giving unparalleled access to everything happening at Chimp Haven, including food squabbles, alliances, romances, 'bromances', tears, tantrums, high jinxes and heartbreaks. Stream the series on Disney+ beginning in October and follow @ChimpHaven on social media for the latest.

Chimp Haven at Home

With visits to the sanctuary on pause for now, we're bringing the chimps to you! Check out the latest ways to connect with the sanctuary from the comfort of your own home.

Free Webinar Series

From medical emergencies, to chimp friendships and shenanigans, there's never a dull moment at the sanctuary – and we're bringing it all to you. Join us for a series of free webinars exploring all aspects of sanctuary life. Space is limited, so register today at <https://chimphaven.org/visit/chimp-haven-at-home/>.

Learn with the Chimps

Dive into these online, chimp-themed educational materials for early learners and middle schoolers. Middle school lesson plans are inspired by Next Generation Science Standards and suitable for classroom, virtual, or hybrid learning. All lessons are packed full of chimp knowledge, videos, activities, and more. www.chimphaven.org/learn

Please remember to include Chimp Haven in your will or estate plans – and let us know when you do so we can thank you.