



THE
CHIMP LIFE
KEITHVILLE, LOUISIANA

Severe Weather Safety Calls for Creativity at Chimp Haven

With extreme weather events on the rise, the Chimp Haven team is getting creative to help ensure the chimps' safety.

When severe weather strikes, a few moments can make all the difference in saving lives. And when those lives include 300+ chimpanzees who don't rely on cell phone alerts during emergencies, the challenge can be downright daunting.

But the Chimp Haven team has never shied away from a challenge. As severe weather events have increased in recent years at the world's largest chimpanzee sanctuary, the team is on the cutting edge of new training efforts designed to quickly get the chimps' attention during emergencies and urge them to take shelter indoors.

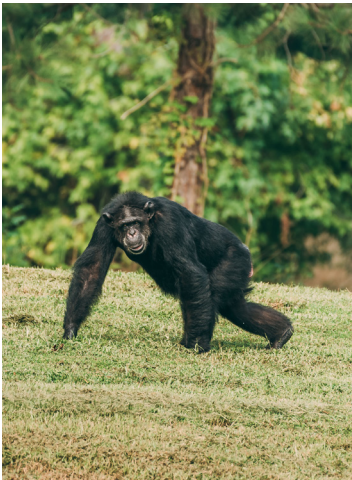
With hundreds of chimps living in more than 30 family groups at the 200-acre sanctuary, Chimp Haven staff are experts at working collaboratively with the chimps to provide for their care. Each morning, for example, chimp families are asked to shift outdoors for their breakfast so their caregivers can clean their indoor bedrooms. While most of the time the chimps are eager to head

outside for their morning selection of fresh produce, it's not uncommon for a single chimp to decide they want some extra time to snooze in their hammock, effectively throwing a wrench in a very intricate daily care schedule.

Through Positive Reinforcement Training (PRT), the Chimp Haven team works with individual chimps and family groups to encourage the chimps to participate in their care plans. In the case of a chimp who regularly resists coming outside during cleaning time, they might learn to meet their human caregiver in their yard for a training session, where they're rewarded with their favorite fruits and juice.

These training plans are often complex and can take months to master. And in the case of a weather emergency, time is of the essence.

That's why the team has begun running what they call "recall drills," a unique form of Positive Reinforcement Training meant to alert an entire chimp family to come in from their



Since Sheena is deaf, her caregivers have incorporated a visual cue to ensure she's included in the recall training.

forested habitat and take shelter indoors.

Nestled within 200 acres of pine-forest parkland in Keithville, Louisiana, about a 30-minute drive from Shreveport, no severe weather sirens are within earshot of Chimp Haven – a fact that became painfully obvious last December, when a tornado with winds of 130 miles per hour ripped through Keithville, destroying 12

homes, damaging 50 others, and killing two people. Chimp Haven was spared, but the sanctuary's quiet community was left reeling, and training the chimps on recall drills felt more critical than ever.

Even if there were sirens near the sanctuary, the chimps, most of which are retired from biomedical research, likely wouldn't know what to do and could be frightened by the unfamiliar sound. And then there are residents like Sheena, a 35-year-old deaf chimp, who need even more guidance.

That's where those cowbells and sound machines come in.

Working with their caregivers who they see every day, the chimps are learning to respond to a specific sound through Positive Reinforcement Training. When a chimp family like Gracie's group hears Care Coordinator Arden sound the alarm, they know it's time to head inside, where they're rewarded with forage, frozen fruit, or even a honey stick for their efforts.

"Most of the chimps in Gracie's group immediately begin barking when they hear the alarm and start running for the door," shares Arden. "Some buddies, like Austin Powers and Chester stop to find each other first before they run inside together."

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It might sound like a simple concept, but convincing an entire family of chimps to voluntarily cut their afternoon moatside lounge session short and head indoors is often akin to herding cats. When the care team runs recall drills, they strategically position themselves at various points along the perimeter of the habitat and encourage the chimps along their journey.

And how about Sheena, the deaf chimp who won't hear the chime? Caregiver Clara works with Sheena on her own special training plan.

"Instead of the audio cue we use for the rest of her group, we use a brightly colored frisbee as a visual cue for Sheena," says Clara. "When she sees her caregiver with this particular frisbee, she knows it's time to walk inside where that same caregiver will greet her with her reinforcer, like fruit. It did not take long for her to make the association, and she was up, making happy food noises, and marching to her bedroom!"

While the progress being made in recall training has been promising, it's still a work in progress. Once a chimp family is successfully performing the drill behaviors, those behaviors must be maintained through regular practice with the care team. As with everything the team does at Chimp Haven, it's all in the name of ensuring the chimps are safe and given the best life at sanctuary.

"I love the problem solving that goes into the training, and seeing how excited the chimps now are to participate," Arden says.

"They are so intelligent and social," adds Clara. "It's fun to watch those two things at play in this training."



GOODBYE SUMMER, HELLO FALL



While the chimps love the sunshine of summer, they're always excited to welcome the cooler days of fall. Sisters Carlee and Arden never miss an opportunity to share a morning popsicle break in the treetops, while their fellow retirees find ample ways to relax and enjoy sun-soaked afternoons.

BACK TO SCHOOL, CHIMP STYLE

Whether your student is learning in the classroom or at home, Chimp Haven has plenty of free chimp-inspired resources and activities to keep them pant-hooting! Download lessons for middle school students (inspired by Next Generation Science Standards) and early learners full of videos and interactive activities. Learn more at chimphaven.org/education/lesson-plans-activities/.

DISCOVER THE CHIMP LIFE THIS FALL

A few special days each year, the sanctuary opens its doors for a morning of discovery and chimp shenanigans. Join us Saturday, October 21 for Chimpanzee Discovery Day! Behind-the-scenes tours and Chimp Chats may also be available on a first come, first served basis. Purchase tickets online at chimphaven.org.



STOCK UP ON CHIMP GEAR



Introducing the Eco Classic Collection, including a cozy hoodie featuring the names of all your favorite chimp friends. Find this stylish conversation starter and more at chimphaven.org/store.

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

