

ARK & TENT



Uniting people & animals...through travel

info@arkandtent.com

Home

Articles Index

Travel Articles

World Beat

Helping Hands

Pet Projects

Field Notes

Trips & Tours

Reader's Corner

Newsletter

About Us

TAKING CARE

Great Ape Protection: An Organization Strives to Save Our Closest Cousins

By Jeannine Clark

Did you know chimpanzees are capable of donating blood to humans, and



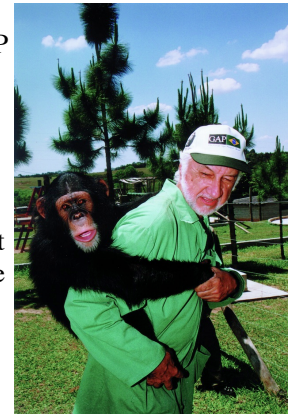
vice-versa? The chimpanzee - who walks on two feet and erect most of the time - and modern man had an ancestor in common two million years ago. In fact, we share 99.4% of the chimpanzee's DNA, according to research coordinated by biologist Morris Goodman from Wayne State University. Considering that the genetic difference is so small, Morris believes that the chimpanzee should be included

in the scientific classification for humans.

British primatologist Jane Goodall's observations in the African forests gained worldwide attention when she shared her groundbreaking findings from her years spent studying chimpanzees. She reported to *National Geographic* that human beings and great primates share important characteristics, such as: social organization, communication and strong affectionate bonds. Also (and some would argue most importantly), chimpanzees use tools, a characteristic previously believed to differentiate us from other animals. Knowing and acknowledging this demonstrates they are intelligent, and deserve rights similar to ours, according to an organization in Brazil dedicated to protecting the rights of the great apes.

Great Ape Protection (GAP) Brazil is an international movement that was created in 1994. GAP's main purpose is to guarantee the basic rights to life, freedom and non-torture of the non-human great apes: chimpanzees, gorillas, orangutans and bonobos (our closest relatives in the animal kingdom). GAP was the result of ideas developed from a book with the same name, written by philosophers Paola Cavalieri and Peter Singer, considered to be (two of) the fathers of the animal defense and rights' movement.

In 2000, microbiologist Dr. Pedro Ynterian established the first Brazilian sanctuary for chimpanzees. The start of GAP Brazil's activities began when Dr. Ynterian adopted an orphaned three-month old chimpanzee and raised the rescued baby as a human. The baby chimp was named Guga, and aroused the interest of many.



"A chimpanzee is not a pet and cannot be used as an object for fun or scientific experiment," says Ynterian. "He or she thinks, develops affection, hates, suffers, learns and even transmits knowledge. To sum it up, they are just like us. The only difference is that they don't speak, but they communicate through gestures, sounds and facial expressions. We need to guarantee their rights to life and to liberty."

As a result of these beliefs, GAP works tirelessly to defend the rights of the great primates to live free, in their natural habitats. GAP believes the exploitation of great primates in laboratories, circuses, and entertainment shows (even in zoos) can be considered a kind of slavery. The organization is working hard to put an end to primate slavery. The project successfully created the World Declaration on Great Primates, a document that declares these rights to be official.

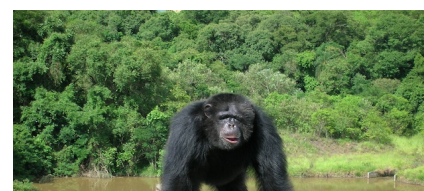
GAP reminds us that it was only about a century ago that men enslaved human beings who were considered to be inferior. Viewed in that light, the enormous drop in numbers of great primates in the African and Asian forests is a result of this exploitation. And as these apes are removed from their natural habitats, the balance of the ecosystems are greatly impacted.

Part of GAP's mission is to provide the best quality of life for animals kept in captivity. At sanctuaries throughout Brazil, chimpanzees are treated for physical abuse, including mutilation and teeth extraction, and psychological traumas and stress caused by life in a cage. They have the chance to recover from bad traumas, to form social groups, and even to reproduce - just as they do in nature.



An important part of GAP's work is to improve legislation. Advanced legislation protects native fauna in Brazil, but does not protect exotic animals. Animals are subjected to cruelty due to greed and lack of protection, and GAP believes that must end. One of the objectives of GAP Brazil is to extend the Brazilian Fauna Law to a World Fauna legislation that includes the protection of wild animals.

Since 2006, GAP Brazil is officially represented by the NGO (non-governmental organization), GAP Project – Support Group for Primates. Since 2008, Brazil has facilitated four sanctuaries affiliated and aligned with GAP's mission to "re-home" 71 chimpanzees; the majority rescued and recovered after being mistreated at circuses or from living under inadequate conditions in zoos. That number continues to grow, but with awareness and action, we can help put an end to the mistreatment of the great apes and protect one of our closest genetic cousins.



If you'd like to pledge to support the World Declaration On Great Primates, which makes the rights of fair treatment official, you can go to GAP Brazil and agree to sign their online form: www.projetogap.org.br/en-US/oprojetogap/Declaracao/declaracao-mundial-dos-grandes-primatas



Photos courtesy of GAP Brazil
Posted December 2010 (ArkandTent.com)

Site Map