

Election of New Board members

Leslie Martin, Susan Smith and Michele Dave were elected to the ACE Board during the Oct. 15, 2016 meeting. They all have done fantastic jobs for ACE in the past, and we are thrilled to have them serving on the board for the next two years. Congratulations Michele, Leslie and Susan.

Board members whose terms expired were K.C. Thyne and Lynn Yakubinis. Although they are leaving the board, both people plan to remain very active in 2017 activities of ACE. K.C. and Lynn, thank you both for your past service to ACE as board members.

Your current board consists of Jane Barron, Michele Dave, Lori Kirkland, Leslie Martin, Donna Mayer Todd, Gene Todd, and Susan Smith. Officers will be announced at the Jan. 28 General Meeting.

The board is committed and ready, but we need all of you too. Please plan to participate this year!



Photo by DFGFI
Tara Stoinski with mountain gorillas in Rwanda

**January 28, 2017
General Meeting
With Tara Stoinski,
CEO of DFGFI, is
Guest Speaker**

***Please plan to attend!
Guests are welcome.***



*Happy Birthday
DFGFI!*

**Saving Gorillas:
50 years and
forever**

**Our successful
protection work is
increasing**

(This article was taken from *The Dian Fossey Gorilla Journal, Fall 2016*)

This fall, we begin celebrating our 50th anniversary, since it was on Sept. 24, 1967, that Dian Fossey set up her tent between Mt. Karisimbi and Mt. Bisoke, and gave it the name "Karisoke."

Fossey intended for Karisoke to become a center for scientific

understanding of the gorillas, and now, decades later, the majority of what is scientifically known about gorillas is actually based on studies conducted at Karisoke.

Our long-term database constitutes one of the largest of its kind for any species and is a powerhouse of information on gorillas. It is used by scientists from around the world, to answer questions about gorilla biology and the best methods for conserving them, and by extension, other wild apes as well.

Dian Fossey soon began to understand that the mountain gorillas faced many threats, and after doing a count that showed only about 240 of them left, she realized that they might well go extinct without direct protection. She founded the Dian Fossey Gorilla Fund, published "Gorillas in the Mist," and began publicizing their plight, but was killed in December 1985, before the movie based on her book was released.

The Dian Fossey Gorilla Fund was renamed the Dian Fossey Gorilla Fund and has greatly increased efforts to save mountain gorillas ever since, also expanding this protection to nearby critically endangered Grauer's gorillas. Thanks to this work, mountain gorillas now number nearly 900

overall and we await the results of a new count just completed. And our work in the core of Grauer's gorilla range, in nearby Democratic Republic of Congo, is now providing crucial daily monitoring in an unprotected area.

To solidify this work for the long term, the Fossey Fund is also a pioneer in building the next generation of conservationists in Africa, and in helping people thrive, along with wildlife.

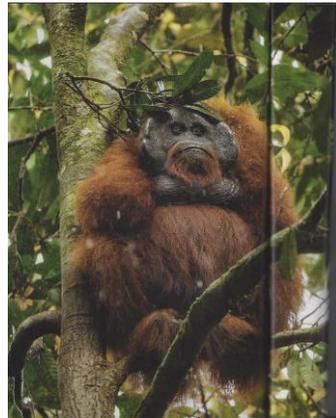


Photo by National Geographic

Out on a Limb

Scientists are gaining vital insights into the private lives of orangutans, but the elusive red apes face a precarious future.

By Mel White

The following are excerpts from an article appearing in the December 2016 issue of *National Geographic*

"Sometimes I feel like I've chosen the most difficult thing in the world to study," Cheryl Knott Tells me as we sit beneath the rain forest canopy at her orangutan research station in western Borneo. The high-pitched, dental-drill sound of cicadas fills the air, at times forcing us to pause our conversation. As we talk, Knott's associates are at work in the surrounding forest of Indonesia's Gunung Palung National Park with GPS units and iPads, following orangutans in their daily wanderings, recording what they're doing, what they're eating, and how they're interacting with others of their species.

Unlike gorillas and chimpanzees - fellow great apes that live in groups and can be followed and observed relatively easily - orangutans live mostly solitary lives. They spend nearly all their time in the treetops, they wander widely, and for the most part they inhabit rugged forest or swampy lowland that's hard for humans to traverse. As a result, orangutans long remained among the least known of Earth's large land animals. Only during the past 20 years or so has scientific evidence begun to outweigh speculation as a generation of researchers has tracked the elusive apes across the islands of

Borneo and Sumatra, the only places orangutans live.

For more than two decades Knott has supervised the research at Gunung Palung, looking at many aspects of orangutan life history but focusing especially on the way the availability of food affects female hormones and reproduction. "At the time we started here, no one had really worked on hormones in wild apes," she says. "People said I was crazy."

Knott's studies have special significance because female orangutans give birth only every six to nine years. No other mammal has a longer interval between births. And there's no telling what her research might mean for our knowledge of human fertility; we and orangutans are so similar that Knott can use standard drugstore test kits on urine from female orangutans to determine whether they're pregnant.

Typical of many forests in southeastern Asia, the trees at Gunung Palung produce little or no fruit in most seasons. Then, every four years or so, trees of various species simultaneously bring forth massive amounts of fruit in a process called masting. The phenomenon led Knott to

wonder about the connection between food abundance and orangutan reproduction.



Photo by National Geographic

Knott discovered that researchers could collect and preserve urine from female orangutans on filter paper so that the samples could be tested for hormones later. Her work has shown that reproductive hormones in female orangutans peak when fruit is most abundant in the forest - an adaptation to the boom-and-bust environment.

"It makes a lot of sense," Knott says. "They're putting on weight during these high-fruit periods, and then they live off that during the low-fruit periods. During these high-fruit periods, females are more likely to conceive."

It's an exciting time for Knott and other orangutan researchers, as advances in technology (including the possibility of using drones to find and follow orangutans in rugged terrain) means that the pace of

discovery, already far more rapid than it was just two decades ago, will almost certainly increase. This assumes, of course, that there will still be orangutans left to study in the forests of Borneo and Sumatra.

In the 1980s and '90s some conservationists predicted that orangutans would go extinct in the wild within 20 or 30 years. Fortunately that didn't happen. Many thousands more orangutans are now known to exist than were recognized at the turn of the millennium.

This doesn't mean that all is well in the orangutans' world. The higher figures come thanks to improved survey methods and the discovery of previously unknown populations, not because the actual numbers have increased. In fact, the overall population of orangutans has fallen by at least 80 percent in the past 75 years. It's indicative of the difficulty of orangutan research that scientist Erik Meijaard, who has long studied the species' population trends, is willing to say only that between 40,000 and 100,000 live on Borneo. Conservationists on Sumatra estimate that only 14,000 survive there. Much of this loss has been driven by habitat destruction from logging and the rapid spread of vast plantations of oil palm, the fruit of which is

sold to make oil used in cooking and in many food products.

There's another factor at work as well. A 2013 report by several top researchers said that as many as 65,000 of the apes may be killed on Borneo alone in recent decades. Some were killed for bush meat by people struggling to survive. Others were shot because they were raiding crops - or protecting their young. The expressive, heart-melting faces of baby orangutans make them highly valuable in the black-market pet trade, within Indonesia as well as smuggled out of Borneo or Sumatra to foreign destinations. The ferocious protectiveness of female orangutans means that the easiest way to obtain a baby is to kill the mother - a compounded tragedy that not only removes two animals from the wild but also eliminates the additional offspring the female would produce during her lifetime.

At rehabilitation centers such as International Animal Rescue near Gunung Palung, the steady influx of orphaned orangutans shows that this killing remains a serious problem. More than a thousand orangutans now live at rehab sites, and though the goal is to release as many as possible back to the forest, attempting to teach survival skills to

young orangutans is challenging and unproven.

Threats to orangutans come as the recent boom in research is revealing a surprising range in their genetic makeup, physical structure, and behavior - including the beginnings of cultural development that could help us understand how we transitioned from ape to human.

For centuries, scientists considered all orangutans to belong to one species, but in the past two decades new insights have led researchers to see Bornean and Sumatran orangutans as distinct species, both of which are critically endangered. Surprisingly, researchers have found that a recently discovered population at a site called Batang Toru in western Sumatra is actually closer genetically to Bornean orangutans than to other Sumatran populations - possibly the result of differing waves of migration to the islands from mainland Asia.

The Batang Toru orangutans are believed by some researchers to diverge from others enough to constitute a third species. Numbering as few as 400 individuals, they're threatened by a proposed hydropower project that would fragment their habitat and open the area to more

human intrusion, including illegal hunting.

What's more, several populations on Borneo are now deemed to be separate subspecies, based on factors such as differing body types, vocalizations, and adaptations to the environment. The diversity of orangutans extends even further - into differences whose origins continue to resist scientific understanding.

Some scientists believe the dichotomy between male orangutans arose in part because of the differing geologic histories of Sumatra and Borneo. Sumatra is more fertile than Borneo, where ancient, weathered soil lacks plant nutrients, and many forests see the boom-and-bust cycles of masting fruit trees, leading to periods of low food availability. Orangutans on Sumatra don't have to travel far to find enough food, and female density is higher. This gives males the ability to remain in a single place and develop associations. The relatively poorer environment of Borneo has created a free-for-all in which individuals roam over large areas, finding food and mating opportunities where they can.

This may explain why the development of dominant male characteristics differs between the

islands. But it brings up a far more difficult question.



Photo by National Geographic

"How does a Sumatran male know that if he grows flanges and he's not the boss, he's not going to be successful at mating?" Carel van Schaik asks as we talk in his office in Switzerland, at the University of Zurich, where he and his colleagues have published dozens of scientific papers on orangutan research from both Sumatra and Borneo.

The answer to van Schaik's question, of course, is that the male doesn't "know," in the human sense. "It's not something they can learn," van Schaik says. "There has to be a switch, the sensitivity of the switch has to be different for different populations, and it has to be somehow genetic."

This question of how male development is triggered remains unanswered, in part because of the same challenge that faces orangutan researchers on so many fronts: Their subjects are just so difficult to study.

Researchers see more than just animals' behavior when they watch orangutans. After all, these scientists (and you and I) took only a slightly divergent route on the great-ape evolutionary highway than did their arboreal subjects. Behind the field notes and data points is the question of what orangutans can tell us about humans.

Unlocking all the secrets contained in the brains and bodies of these great-ape relatives means preserving the entire spectrum of adaptations. "If every group is unique, it's not good enough to say we'll protect them at just a few spots," Knott says. The loss of any single population brings an end to any chance to learn from its unique environmental and cultural adaptations.

For orangutans to survive in their present diversity, governments and conservationists must make smart choices about where to establish preserves, how to manage them, and how to use limited resources. They must find ways for the species to coexist with humans on two islands where habitat is constantly shrinking.

"I see a lot of people trying to do conservation with their heart, with their feelings, which is fine." Ancrenaz says. (Marc Ancrenaz has since 1996

directed an orangutan research and conservation project on the Kinabatangan River, in the Sabah region of northeastern Borneo.). "But conservation has to be backed up with strong science. The goal of people doing research is to produce better knowledge, better understanding of orangutan ecology and genetics. The rest is actually using this knowledge to impact land use and communities. This is where conservation takes place."

In the forests of Borneo and Sumatra, orangutan behavior determined by millions of years of evolution endures: Males challenge each other with their calls, young males wait for their chances to assert dominance, and females teach their young how to survive in the treetops. Some of the mysteries of their lives have been revealed. What else we learn will depend on the success of this teaming of science and conservation, seeking answers about the links between humans and these apes that seem so like us when we look into their eyes.

"As a scientist you're supposed to be objective," Knott says, as we talk at her camp deep in the Borneo rain forest. "But you're also human,

and the connection is why I'm here."



Apes in the Arts A Big Success

by Lori Kirkland

This year's event was held November, 5, 2016. (Next year we will take a break from Apes in the Arts and hold the 5k Run for the Redheads.)



The Space graciously hosted us for the second year in a row, plus provided a wide variety of aerial and grounded performing artists for the evening's entertainment.



photo by: Laura Anne Watson Photography

Aerialist performers provided entertainment

We were delighted that Richard Zimmerman, the

Executive Director of Orangutan Outreach, and his wife Robin, were able to join us. Orangutan Outreach is the organization selected this year to receive the funds raised at Apes in the Arts. He presented a very moving and informative presentation about what his organization does and the plight of the orangutans.



Photo by: Orangutan Outreach
Richard Zimmerman

Nineteen artists contributed their time and talents to this year's silent auction, creating very different and very inspiring pieces of work based on original paintings by orangutans and gorillas at Zoo Atlanta, such as a 3-D Mask with 6 ft. trailing ribbons, a stained glass window, and an orangutan portrait, to name a few.



Photo by: Laura Anne Watson Photography

A lot of bidding on the silent auction art

Antonio Raimo of Antonio Raimo Galleries generously provided framing for all canvases. Large walls of reclaimed wood were built to showcase the pieces and give the venue an industrial art gallery feel. Simple carnival games were brought to entertain children of all ages. There was plenty of tasty finger-foods, and the drinks were cold and refreshing.

The total raised that night was \$3,000.00 and ACE voted to match the amount to be able to send a total of \$6,000.00 to Orangutan Outreach! The guests were touched by the artwork, awed by the performers, and moved by Richard's words. ACE thanks all who contributed to making the night a success - Constance Palmer and The Space, Antonio Raimo Galleries, all of the artists, all of the volunteers, and all of the ACE members on the team.

www.thespaceatl.com
and on facebook:
www.facebook.com/thespaceatl.



Did you know?

Since the establishment of Ape Conservation Effort in 2006, ACE has donated a total of \$156,774 to support non-profit groups working in Africa and Indonesia trying to save great apes and their habitats.



6th Annual Gorilla Golf - Another Successful Year

by Susan Smith,
Event Co-Chair



Photo by Gene Todd
ACE member and golfer
Jenny Reineck is ready to play

2016 marked another successful year for the ACE Gorilla Golf Tournament. The event

was held on September 27th at the Brookfield Country Club in Roswell, GA. This year 21 golfers participated and through sponsorships and corporate matching gifts, each golfer raised \$500 or more to benefit the Dian Fossey Gorilla Fund International (DFGFI). These monies along with the sale of raffle tickets and mulligans gave us a grand total of \$19,177 donated to DFGFI, giving us another record-breaking year.

Golfers started the day with a continental breakfast and then teed off in a "shot gun start." As they played the course, signs provided information about endangered gorillas, as well as listing various sponsors for the event.

On one hole they spotted a "gorilla" which marked the "closest to the gorilla" hole. Participants then enjoyed a buffet lunch and participated in a raffle of great donated prizes.

Awards were then presented for First Place - Dave Singer, Second Place - Mike Zeldes, Third Place - Stu Lieblich, Closest to Gorilla - Bretton McIlrath, and Longest Drive - Brad Ferguson.



Photo by Gene Todd
Second Place - Mike Zeldes



Photo by Gene Todd
Third Place - Stu Lieblich

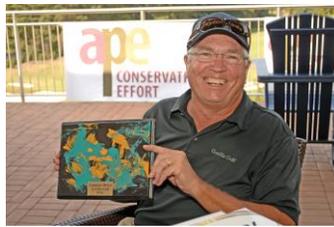


Photo by Gene Todd
Longest Drive -
Brad Ferguson

All of the golfers had a great time and many are already looking forward to playing next year. In 2017, the tournament again will be held at the Brookfield Country Club and the date has already been set for Tuesday, September 26.

This event could not happen without the efforts of the Gorilla Golf Committee, our ACE members, the golfers' sponsors, corporate sponsors and the Brookfield Country Club. Each of these groups, makes it possible to put on this event. Thank you for your support and contributions which allows ACE to play a part in saving gorillas in Rwanda and the Congo

through the Dian Fossey Gorilla Fund International.

Simian City North Georgia Welcomes a new type of retiree- chimpanzees

by Michele Cohen Marill

Halfway up a mountain road, the unmarked runoff looks like it leads to a summer camp. A gravel driveway snakes through the thick North Georgia woods and emerges at an opening flanked by tall pines. But just ahead looms a gate, a 10-foot-high barbed-wire fence, and a warning sign: "Danger-High Voltage." Suddenly this feels more like a mountainous version of *Jurassic Park*.

Fortunately, the creatures that will occupy this enclosure are more benign than velociraptors.

Soon, as many as 300 chimpanzees will climb trees, drink smoothies, and play with toy trucks and stuffed bears in their version of retirement on a 236-acre spread about 10 miles from the town of Blue Ridge.

The new sanctuary is partly the result of a major change in policy by the National Institutes of Health. Acknowledging the ethical burdens posed by the close link between

chimpanzees and humans-they share 98.8 percent of our DNA-the agency in 2013 phased out the use of the apes in federally funded medical research. Two years later the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service extended "endangered" status to chimps in captivity, which means even privately funded research must benefit the animals as well as humans.

Since no existing sanctuary could absorb the abrupt retirement of so many chimpanzees, primatologist Sarah Baeckler Davis co-founded Project Chimps to provide a home for apes that had been bred or kept for research.

Several of the chimps had given birth repeatedly only to have their babies taken away, says Baeckler Davis, the nonprofit's president and CEO, who visited the chimps at a research center. "Having been there and met the chimps and looked into their eyes-there wasn't any way I could not do this," she says.

Project Chimps chose this bucolic corner of Georgia best known for vacation cabins and fly-fishing because the spot was already established as a refuge for great apes. Almost 20 years ago, software mogul C.E. Steuart Dewar and his

then-wife Jane came to Blue Ridge after deciding to use their millions to help gorillas. They determined that the area's pristine mountains and streams provided the perfect setting for gorillas coming from zoos.

The Dewars quickly found that not everyone shared their vision. At the time Blue Ridge was down on its luck, its main street lined with empty storefronts. Local leaders were looking to re-brand the town as a weekend getaway spot for wealthy vacationers from Atlanta. Concerned Citizens Against Gorillas in Fannin County gathered about 1,200 signatures, an impressive feat in a county with a population of less than 18,000. Opponents evoked images of gorillas rampaging King Kong-like through the forests, wreaking havoc, and spreading disease.

But the Dewars didn't give up. Arguing that most gorillas have a gentle nature, they convinced the county commission to pass an exotic animal ordinance that allowed them to obtain the necessary permits to open the sanctuary. The couple built the electrified fence to enclose about 60 acres, a 15-foot-tall concrete wall to encompass five gorilla "villas" that open out to a wooded habitat, a

state-of-the-art veterinary clinic, and other ancillary buildings.

"This was no mom-and-pop operations," says Stuart Dewar. "Our facility was generally considered the finest in the world for gorillas."

But the need for a gorilla sanctuary turned out to be less than they'd thought, and the compound never took in more than a handful of guests (including Willie B. Jr. and his buddy Jasiri during their two-year hiatus from Zoo Atlanta). By the time Baeckler Davis came knocking, the site was unoccupied. Project Chimps bought the property for about \$1.6 million, and the Dewar Wildlife Trust donated the facilities.

Beginning this fall, the New Iberia Research Center at the University of Louisiana at Lafayette, the world's largest chimpanzee research facility, will relocate all 220 of its chimps to Blue Ridge. The animals will arrive in social groups of about 10 at a time, a process that will take a few years to complete.

The reception to Project Chimps has been remarkably warmer than when the Dewars first arrived in 1997. Although it won't be open to the public, Project Chimps will offer occasional educational tours. More importantly,

it will put Fannin County in a national spotlight. Renowned chimpanzee expert Jane Goodall has given the project her thumbs-up, and Animal Planet is considering a show.

Celebrity support helps, too, considering that it costs \$20,000 to house a chimp for one year. TV chef Rachael Ray designed and funded a kitchen, and Kat Bon D created a limited-edition Project Chimps lipstick, with a percentage of the proceeds benefiting the nonprofit. The long-term cost for the sanctuary, which will likely be needed for about 45 years, is projected to be as much as \$100 million, says Baeckler Davis, with support coming from New Iberia and the Humane Society, as well as private donations.

Holly Kaylor Nelson of nearby Mineral Bluff once protested the gorillas but has no problem with the chimpanzees. In the past 20 years, her real estate and cabin rental business has flourished, and she looks back on the gorilla ruckus as a misunderstanding. "It was a huge gossip train that went around in small town living," she says.

County attorney Lynn Doss agrees; Project Chimps, she says, is "just one more unique thing about our wonderful part of God's great creation."

This article appeared in October 2016 issue of Atlanta magazine.

Thank you from IAR

On the behalf of Karmele and her team I would like to thank ACE for the generous donation of \$3,500 towards our Orangutan Project in Kalimantan, Borneo.

The funds will be used to rescue, rehabilitate and release orangutans back into protected forests.

Karmele and I thank the ACE staff for their hospitality during our stay in Atlanta. It was wonderful to meet some of the team and we thoroughly enjoyed coming to the zoo.

Thanks again for your continued support of our efforts to save the orangutan.

*Sincerely yours,
Sophie Pollmann
Development Director,
IAR*

Think about it- Wolves

by Jane Barron

Years ago I became interested in the work of Delia and Mark Owens. a married couple from Georgia, who were working to save lions in the Kalahari and elephants in Luangwa. Not only were they both graduates of the University of Georgia (Go Dawgs!), but they were researchers, adventurers and authors.

When they had to leave Africa, they decided to continue working for wildlife - but North American wildlife, this time. They are based in the northern Rockies and study grizzly bears, wolves and the wetlands. They still have their friends and contacts in Africa, and their foundation continues to support those original efforts, too.

They have authored several books. (Actually, I believe Delia has an incredible gift of expression and usually does most of the writing.) For years I have given annual donations to the Owens Foundation for Wildlife Conservation, based in Stone Mountain, Georgia, and I have enjoyed their newsletters.

Delia is a positive person, and it comes out in her writings. This latest

newsletter was a struggle. She states that "A few years ago, wolves, who had almost disappeared, recovered at an unbelievable rate, venturing into the meadows and mountains where we often observed them. All it took was a little bit of protection. That lasted only five years. Now, once again, they have been nearly exterminated - mostly with cruel traps - in much of the range. The wolves came and went so fast, my heart couldn't keep up."

However, true to her encouraging nature, she ends the newsletter with the following, which I believe is a call to us trying to save great apes as well. "Aldo Leopold began his book with the words, 'There are some who can live without wild things, and some who cannot.' Those of us who cannot live without the wild are becoming fewer and fewer. That means we have to work harder and harder. The little bit of wild left is in our hands."

Think about it. Get more involved in ACE and make things happen!

2017 ACE Board

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