

Go nose-to-nose with gorillas and chimpanzees at Regenstein Center for African Apes

What: This award-winning, state-of-the art habitat is the most expensive endeavor ever constructed at Lincoln Park Zoo and is recognized as one of the best great ape habitats in the country. It features large naturalistic living space, both indoors and out for endangered gorillas and chimpanzees. Huge glass windows give guests an opportunity to literally go nose-to-nose with the curious and complex apes. The habitat includes fallen logs, a waterfall, termite mounds, dozens of trees and 5,000 feet of artificial vines for climbing. The center's primary features are three spacious habitats: the Kovler Gorilla Bamboo Forest, the Strangler Fig Forest (which accommodates either chimpanzees or gorillas) and the Dry Riverbed Valley (which also accommodates chimpanzees or gorillas).

Populations of African apes are facing dramatic decline in the wild due to poaching, loss of habitat, disease and encroachment by humans. Lincoln Park Zoo is dedicated to their conservation. A major element of the facility is the Lester E. Fisher Center for the Study and Conservation of Apes. The center engages zoo visitors, members and students in science and conservation initiatives through an integrated program of research, science education and the conservation of wild populations. Lincoln Park Zoo researchers engage in conservation science not only at the zoo, but also in Tanzania and the Republic of Congo. The zoo also supports young African scientists who participate in conservation projects for chimpanzees and lowland gorillas. This helps groom a new generation of researchers as environmental decision-makers and strengthens conservation leadership in the countries where great apes live.

Size: 29,000-square-foot-facility
Opened: 2004
Cost: \$26 million

Featured wildlife: Western lowland gorillas and chimpanzees.

Noteworthy Awards:

- **Exhibit of the Year – 2006**
Significant Achievement Honor – American Zoo and Aquarium Association
- **Brick in Architecture Award – 2006**
Gold Medal – Brick Industry Association
- **Best of 2004 Awards**
Award of Merit – Cultural Category
McGraw Hill/Midwest Construction Magazine
- **Merit Award – 2005**
Winner: New Construction Category – Chicago Building Congress

- **Excellence in Masonry – 2004**
Silver Medal Award – Illinois Indiana Masonry Council

Conservation Science Underway at the Fisher Center and abroad:

- **Cognitive psychology research using computer touch-screens:** Lincoln Park Zoo scientists are breaking ground and shedding new light on a subject that is very difficult to explore – ape cognition. The zoo is the only place in the world conducting cognitive research using computer touch-screens with both chimpanzees AND gorillas. The goal of the research is to better understand how apes perceive their physical and social environments. These studies provide the apes with the opportunity to voluntarily engage in cognitive tasks. As such, scientists are given insight into how the apes are able to address questions of categorization and perception.
- **Chimpanzee tool-use studies:** Chimpanzees use tools for more purposes than any other animal except humans. Scientists at the Fisher Center are gaining a better understanding about how apes learn and develop tool-use skills by observing them using an artificial termite mound that is “baited” with various types of treats. These types of studies help researchers understand how and if apes can solve complex problems and the extent to which these skills come from observing others. Tool-use studies are also underway with wild populations in the Republic of Congo.
- **Gombe Health Monitoring (Tanzania):** Zoo scientists, in cooperation with the Jane Goodall Institute (JGI) and Tanzania National Parks (TANAPA), are conducting a health-monitoring study of chimpanzees in Tanzania’s Gombe National Park. This study includes observational health data collection and fecal and urine sampling for diagnoses. By developing baseline measures of health in the population, scientists can help park managers decide when and if to take action to treat a sick chimpanzee. In addition, zoo staff and JGI investigate ways to prevent transmission of disease between humans and chimpanzees.
- **Endocrinology Investigations of the Stress Response** Lincoln Park Zoo is currently investigating the impact of different management routines at the Regenstein Center for African Apes to determine what it is environmentally enriching or potentially stressful. Fecal samples are collected along with behavioral observations to assess the impact of various changes, including exhibit switches and provision of different enrichment routines. Additionally, the zoo is utilizing fecal hormone analysis to investigate how maternal stress affects maternal behavior and the health and development of offspring in the wild chimpanzees (*Pan troglodytes schweinfurthii*) of Gombe National Park, Tanzania.

- **Goualougo Triangle great ape research (Republic of Congo):**
 The main goals of the Goualougo Triangle Ape Project are to enhance our knowledge of the central subspecies of chimpanzee (*Pan troglodytes troglodytes*) and improve their conservation status throughout central Africa. A long-term site-based conservation and research program is in place to document the social structure and ecology of this ape population, monitor the densities of chimpanzees and gorillas in the Goualougo Triangle, improve survey methods to estimate ape abundance in the region and document the effect of timber exploitation on the apes residing in an active logging concession.
- **Partnering with Pan-African Sanctuary Alliance:**
 While wild populations continue to decrease, the number of orphaned primates has increased. An umbrella organization called the Pan-African Sanctuary Alliance (PASA) was formed in 2000 to help coordinate the efforts of 17 African sanctuaries. These facilities house more than 800 great apes. One of PASA's goals is to reintroduce primates to the natural environment. The zoo is assisting PASA with predicting the future population size of sanctuary apes, and managing the risk of disease spread both in sanctuaries and in reintroduction efforts.
- **Partnering with the Mountain Gorilla Veterinary Project (Uganda, Rwanda and Democratic Republic of Congo):**
 The Mountain Gorilla Veterinary Project (MGVP) provides veterinary services to endangered gorillas in Uganda, Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. MGVP initiatives include providing basic veterinary services as well as disease surveillance, risk assessment, outbreak response and targeted research for specific health issues. The zoo provides epidemiological expertise to MGVP in all of these areas.
- **Great Ape Space-Use Study:**
 Apes pose some of the greatest challenges to the design of habitats due to their size, strength and intelligence. Studies indicate that the complexity of an environment is as influential as habitat size when it comes to behavior patterns. The exhibits in the Regenstein Center for African Apes were built to foster natural behavior and to provide numerous opportunities for locomotion, feeding and socializing that are typical of the individual species. An ongoing habitat study examines the ways chimpanzees and gorillas use the space, with the results helping scientists determine the success of exhibit elements such as climbing structures, vines and live trees.
- **Species Survival Plans:**
 Gorillas and chimpanzees are part of the Association of Zoos and Aquarium's Species Survival Plans (SSP) which coordinate conservation education and field conservation efforts for threatened and endangered species. Zoo scientist Steve Ross serves as chair of the chimpanzee SSP which manages the entire population of chimpanzees living in accredited zoos across North America.