In the spring of 2020 Project Chimps was approached by Dr. Steve Ross, the director of the Lester E. Fisher Center for the Study and Conservation of Apes, and we accepted his invitation to be the first group to participate in a developing independent welfare assessment of captive chimpanzees. At Project Chimps we’re always looking to improve and open to new ideas to provide the best life for our chimps and staff.

Funded by a grant from the Arcus Foundation (which has not provided any funding to Project Chimps), Dr. Ross conducted his review of our sanctuary to determine the degree to which we are meeting the welfare needs of our chimpanzees. We are happy to announce that Dr. Ross’ evaluation both confirmed the quality of Project Chimps and provided ideas for growth as we continue to evolve.

We are honored to be the pilot sanctuary for this new program, and have begun our review of Dr. Ross’ findings, which are valuable to the ongoing discussions of how we grow our young sanctuary and what changes we may be making as we move towards the day when we are caring for the 200 chimpanzees to whom we intend to provide lifelong care.

Overall, Dr. Ross found the chimpanzees’ social lives to be excellent with indicators of individual wellbeing to be largely positive. The assessment of the chimpanzees’ physical living spaces was very good with notations on which structures and yard setups we should consider replicating in our future expansion. Programmatically, he felt that there is room for improvement which he acknowledged would be expected of a program of our youth, and he confirmed the viability and value of our existing plans for growth as we increase in size.

Beyond those broad strokes, what follows on these pages is Dr. Ross’ complete report accompanied by annotations from the Project Chimps team that should provide context for the findings and, where applicable, our plans for addressing any areas where he suggested changes. You will find the unabridged detailed assessment from Dr. Ross on the left side of the document, and Project Chimps’ comments on the right.

We additionally encourage readers to review our strategic plan, which was implemented in 2019. Many of the areas Dr. Ross suggested focusing on have long been part of our future plans, already identified as priorities for the sanctuary. Our strategic plan provides a deeper outline of how and when we hope to develop and implement adjustments and changes to various aspects of the sanctuary’s facilities, staffing and programs.

We are grateful to Dr. Ross for spending his time with us and with our chimpanzees, and eager to continue our work for them. We’re hugely grateful, also, to our supporters for standing with us in our efforts, and for being so passionate about the welfare of these incredible animals. Our ability to continue our mission for these chimps and to bring the remaining chimps from the research lab depends on your support now more than ever.
Dr. Steve Ross’ Project ChimpCARE Chimpanzee Welfare Assessment & Project Chimps’ Response

Project ChimpCARE
Chimpanzee Welfare Assessment

Project Chimps
Morganton, GA

Site visit 1 (scheduled): June 2020
Site visit 2 (rescheduled): August 2020

Assessment by: Stephen Ross, PhD

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SOCIAL</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPACES</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PROGRAMS</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OVERALL</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Project Chimps is the *first and only* facility to be fully assessed using these methods, which were developed during the assessment process. We look forward to additional facilities participating in the same assessment so that we can share best practices and learn from each other.

Our highest score was in the social structure of the groups we have formed thus far at Project Chimps. Our team has completed 6 rounds of group introductions, which have resulted in stable and thriving chimp families. This is a fundamental part of our *strategic plan* and focuses on one of the most important things to Project Chimps – that our approach enables chimpanzees to be happy and thriving.

Our current facility was originally designed for gorillas and thus far we have remodeled existing infrastructure to accommodate chimpanzees. This has limited us in some ways. For example, we don’t have the ability to increase the heights of existing buildings. We had more flexibility with Chateau, which was a large building shell when we purchased the property, so we were able to design the interior structure of Chateau from scratch. We expect to build structures similar to Chateau in our Phase 2 expansion, always learning and adjusting as we see how the chimpanzees adapt and live within the building. While habitat access is rotated at present, it has always been our goal for every group to have a dedicated yard of its own to use daily, once social introductions are completed. During this current period, while we’re still conducting group introductions and establishing social stability, we find the habitat time-sharing method assists with our process of building the large chimpanzee family at Project Chimps. We can increase the amount of habitat access time, discussed later in this report.

Our lower score in “programs” makes us eager to continue to build our capacities in these areas. We are also sure that the way we have conducted some of our programs to date has helped us thrive with respect to important goals for us, such as the development of important social and family structure that the report specifically identifies as excellent. We look forward to increased collaboration with peers, including to address some of the challenges that Dr. Ross points out aren’t unique to Project Chimps, but are experienced throughout similar facilities.
The Chimpanzee Welfare Assessment Process

The objective of the Chimpanzee Welfare Assessment Process (hereafter simply “the Assessment”) is to provide organization feedback on care and management practices as they relate to addressing and improving the welfare of the resident chimpanzees.

The Assessment is aimed to (a) leverage what is known about chimpanzee welfare in the scientific literature, to (b) encourage best practices in relation to those in place at peer organizations (accredited zoos and sanctuaries), and (c) summarize various measurable metrics into simple, understandable scores that (d) encourage continued refinement of management and prioritization of effort/resources and (e) ultimately improve chimpanzee welfare as a result.

The Assessment is as intentionally objective and empirical as possible. Whenever possible, important elements are quantitatively measured rather than subjectively rated. While this is not possible for every characteristic of chimpanzee management, it is the preferred method and helps both in terms of comparisons with peer organizations and measuring progress and improvement over time.

Importantly, the metrics utilized here are almost all “welfare inputs” rather than “welfare outputs”. That is, they are measuring what an organization is doing to improve welfare (e.g. housing, social management, enrichment, etc.) rather than what the result is for the chimpanzees themselves (e.g. behavior, physiology). While measuring outputs is a more direct representation of a chimpanzee’s welfare state, it is notoriously difficult to measure and requires substantial investment of time and resources. Instead, we primarily (though not exclusively) measure inputs that, based on what we know from the scientific literature, are reasonable proxies for what we might expect in terms of the chimpanzee’s welfare (see Appendix).

The specific metrics utilized for these scores are derived from Ross (2020). Here, a survey of experts in chimpanzee behavioral management were asked to rank the most important considerations for captive chimpanzee welfare. They responded with (in order of priority): social life, quality/complexity of space, choice and control, cognitive challenge, positive human relations, varied diet, nesting opportunities, quantity of space. The full list of measurable metrics is listed in the Appendix.

Measures were completed in two ways:

1. By the assessor during scheduled and unscheduled site visits.
2. By the organization under the direction of the assessor. In these cases, measures were verified by the assessor during unscheduled visits.

The three areas of focus are:

- **SOCIAL**: Assessing the social life of the chimpanzees living in their groups.
- **SPACES**: Assessing the quantity and quality of physical spaces in which the chimpanzees reside.
- **PROGRAMS**: Assessing the management practices that potentially affect chimpanzee welfare.

The result is a score (from 0-100) for each of these three areas and an overall score that is the average of the three areas, which represents the overall capacity of the organization to address the welfare of the resident chimpanzees.
The scores are solely the result of the assessment process and are not subject to negotiation with the organization. They are a reflection of what was seen and assessed during scheduled and unscheduled site visits. They also do not make any attempt to adjudicate past practices.

Many metrics that influence the scores are a result of a contextual analysis in which the practices of the organization are compared to those practices in place in peer organizations. In this case, metrics are compared to other accredited organizations that house chimpanzees including sanctuaries accredited by GTAS and those accredited by AZA. While those organizations have not undergone the full assessment process at this time, information on particular practices has been collected ad libitum.
Our team’s success in facilitating introductions of chimpanzees, which leads to the formation of stable, healthy chimpanzee groups, received the highest marks in this assessment.

The vitality of our chimpanzee residents is the heart of Project Chimps’ work, and we have achieved that goal even being the newest chimpanzee sanctuary in America, with a staff that is growing in experience every day. Continued forward progress and introduction of new ideas and programs is our constant goal. And as we move in that direction, we are proud to have notably stable and thriving chimp groups.

We received an outstanding score reflecting the low incidence of anxiety-related behaviors. In every society – chimpanzee and human – anxiety is present, even with completely healthy individuals; we all experience that daily. At Project Chimps, of course, we are also caring for chimps whose past experiences in research laboratories shaped their anxieties and the associated behaviors in ways we cannot know. But in any group of animals there will be dynamic relationships. It is a remarkable accomplishment that despite all of those factors, and our relative youth as an organization, the instances of anxiety-related behaviors averaged 8.1%. Compared to the average of 48% observed in zoo-housed chimpanzees, this is an exceptional score.
We are pleased with the validation of our introduction program and our group structures as noted in the areas of strength.

Regarding Dr. Ross’ notes about the (minimal) anxiety levels shown, we have always been, and continue to be, engaged in ongoing and robust conversations with our staff and independent experts on ways to decrease the chimps’ anxiety-related behaviors attributed to human activities. We will discuss this further in the program section of this report.
At present we have 78 chimps in five groups living in five buildings and sharing two yards.

It is our long-term goal to have 200 chimps in a total of eight large groups, with one or two smaller groups for individuals who have medical or psychological needs that require special attention.

Utilization of the time-shared yards has been very helpful in our group formation process, a key factor in providing a healthy social environment for our chimpanzees. This time-share will continue to be important as we welcome new chimps and form additional groups. This process will continue until we have successfully relocated all of the chimps from the New Iberia Research Center. Once all of the chimps are here, we can finalize the group formations and then allocate one large group to each yard for daily access. The process is dependent upon the receipt of funding for our capital campaign, currently estimated at $13.2M, which will allow the construction of two additional large buildings and six additional yards. This project can be started with the receipt of half of the funds and completed within three years from the receipt of the full funding.
The areas of strength identified by Dr. Ross confirm that our design of Chateau and the porches in each building are a successful model that supports the chimpanzees. What we are doing on this front is working, and we plan to replicate it in future construction.

Observing the chimps and watching their interactions, it seems that the time-shared rotational access to the yards has allowed us to be successful in establishing the stable groups that were noted earlier in this report. The suggested areas for change could occur if we were able to increase the length of each workday. As we are unable to allow the chimps to have habitat access without adequate staff on site, we would need to increase our caregiver staff by an additional 4.5 fulltime employees. This would add $140,400 to our annual operating budget. It could extend the time the chimps have in the yard from 6 hours per day to 10 hours.

The pool of individuals who have the experience to care for chimps is unfortunately small and keeping positions filled is challenging. As we grow and our staff gain experience, we hope that issue will be less of a concern.

As noted earlier, we are unable to raise the roofs of the smaller villas, and in fact, these lower vertical spaces will be necessary for geriatric or mobility-impaired chimps as our population ages. Younger and able-bodied chimps will be relocated into the larger buildings once they are constructed.

Our team has discussed bio-floors, or deep litter mulch, at length and has determined that our geographical location and physical facilities make this problematic. Our area has substantial humidity levels and other factors at Project Chimps means that such floors threaten chimp and human health. However, we are considering other options to experiment with additional woodwool, hay, and other disposable substrates during the first quarter of 2021. We will select one room in each building in which we will supply an increased quantity of substrate and then collect observations on how the chimps interact with the material, how the staff adjusts to cleaning, how frequently the material needs to be fully changed out, and the costs associated with the purchase of product and its disposition. While exact costs are unknown at present, this is expected to increase our operating budget by at least $15k annually for one room per group (6 rooms), and upwards of $60k per year for all rooms (16 rooms).
Project Chimps’ proven method of hand-feeding our residents for two of the three meals per day has been an important component in developing our social structures while also allowing close observations of each chimp every day and maintaining calorie control for chimps who have needed weight decreases or increases. Hand-feeding allows individual care and negates aggressive food behaviors that many animals exhibit. To address the concerns raised by Dr. Ross, and try to eliminate some of the anxiety-related behaviors, we will experiment with a green-leaf scatter as the first course of each meal so all chimps have access to a low-calorie snack while waiting their turn for hand-served meals.

We are pleased to have a new veterinarian with primate experience on staff and access to a wide range of independent subject matter experts in everything from captive chimpanzee care to oral surgery. We look forward to this department growing as the population and their needs increase. This planned growth is part of our strategic plan and has always been part of our plan for Project Chimps as we bring more chimps on site.

The Phase 2 buildings each have a medical wing already planned, and our team is always seeking donated equipment that will improve our medical team’s operations. The multi-purpose use issue has occurred because as we have grown, we have prioritized the construction and development of chimp spaces and not human spaces. Thus, meetings and trainings for our growing staff take place wherever there is room at the time. However, even with that effort, chimpanzee care and protection of staff and chimps is considered paramount. A dedicated office building (which will also serve as a visitor center), is planned for Phase 3, to follow the completion of Phase 2 likely in 2024 and is estimated at $3M. With currently 32 employees but plans to grow to over 60 employees, we have always planned to grow the facilities as our numbers increase.

There are areas of campus that have extremely poor radio reception. This will be corrected by the addition of an on-campus repeater which has been budgeted for 2021 at $6,000.

Every caregiver was tasked with inventing one new enrichment device as his or her 2020 goal; many of these are in prototype testing to ensure chimp safety and will be fully implemented in 2021.
We currently have a staffing plan that would provide for two full time staff members with each chimp group daily. However, there is a staffing shortfall with several vacancies that have proven difficult to fill for the past few months, as many sanctuaries and zoos are also hiring from a limited pool of experienced candidates. With the pandemic, many are unwilling or unable to relocate. Once we’re able to fill these positions, this dilemma will be resolved.

As noted, there is a new behaviorist on staff who joined just before this assessment took place and is in the early stages of developing what we expect to be a comprehensive behavior and training programs.

We are pleased that Dr. Ross noted our high success with our introduction process and the team who conducts introductions with our chimps. Our method of time-sharing and rotational access to yards has contributed to this success, as it allows unknown chimps to become familiar with each other from a safe distance, and to carefully observe each other as they utilize the same areas on different days. This shared use also eliminates territorial strongholds by any one group, thus decreasing the chance of aggression when groups do meet in the same physical space.
As mentioned above, there is a limited pool of “experienced” candidates for the highly-skilled work it takes to care for chimpanzees, and as a young organization we are happy to be, in significant part, growing from within. Our robust and successful volunteer pool has already generated new staff and we expect that trend to continue. Our student intern program has equally resulted in new staff. Project Chimps is only six years old, and we have only had chimps present for four years; and so we expect that we will naturally develop a higher percentage of staff with 5+ years’ experience within the next few years. The percentage now would be expected to be relatively low, particularly when compared with other organizations -- several of which are decades old and have retained staff from their early years. We also recognize that, due to the location of our sanctuary in a remote part of Georgia, in order to attract candidates from other parts of the country, more attractive relocation packages may become essential.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Experience Level</th>
<th>Project Chimps</th>
<th>Average comparison group response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>This is my first professional experience with chimps</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than one year experience with chimps</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-4 years experience with chimps</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-9 years experience with chimps</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10+ years experience with chimps</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

At Project Chimps, there is a slightly lower level of experience compared to similar organizations. Only a small proportion of caregivers have five or more years of experience (14%) compared to other organizations (48%). This is likely highly influenced by the fact that some caregivers are volunteers or interns/aides. Continued retention of staff will help augment caregiver experience overall. The internal promotion system of volunteers and aides to fulltime caregivers provides good opportunities to identify qualified candidates and increase overall experience levels.
Of the areas highlighted in orange, Dr. Ross correctly notes that new positions were hired just as this survey was being issued, demonstrating our commitment to constant growth and development of our programs. This also means that the staff identified here were responding to the questions without the ability to evaluate the new programs these new hires have already begun, and the constantly growing programs at Project Chimps. We look forward to completing a similar staff survey to compare perceptions of this program once these new hires, and their programs, have been in place for some time.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Project Chimps</th>
<th>Average comparison group response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To what degree do you feel the organization meets the welfare needs of the chimps</td>
<td>12% slightly worse than comparison group</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Care staff capacity</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vet capacity</td>
<td>17% moderately worse than comparison group</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Admin capacity</td>
<td>16% slightly better than comparison group</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monitoring capacity</td>
<td>21% moderately worse than comparison group</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scientific capacity</td>
<td>22% no difference from comparison group</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behavioral science</td>
<td>40% moderately worse than comparison group</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These scores indicate how the internal staff perceive the strengths and weaknesses of the organization to address the welfare needs of the chimpanzees in different areas. They are NOT scores that necessarily reflect the aptitude of the areas, but indicate where staff confidence in particular departments may be tenuous and MAY indicate a need for attention. Overall, there appears to be lower internal/staff confidence in programs at Project Chimps compared to other similar organizations. This is especially true of the veterinary capacity (which may be remedied as the new veterinarian continues) and behavioral science (there has been a recent addition of a behaviorist). Scores higher than 20% may indicate a systemic perception of a programmatic weakness.
Consistent with Dr. Ross’ overall conclusions, the staff surveyed do not have concerns about chimpanzee welfare. This is consistent with the evaluations and assessments made by independent subject matter experts with years of experience with chimpanzees, who have had the opportunity to personally observe our operations and the chimpanzees directly.

Final notes:

We look forward to providing ongoing care to our current residents, planning for the future arrival of more chimps, and continuously improving our operations. As time goes on, we will learn, continue to grow and develop our knowledge base and expertise, and we will always be willing to adjust our practices to accommodate the individual needs of new chimps while continuing to provide for the population in residence. These types of changes will be ongoing as long as Project Chimps is in existence, even after we have met our goal of relocating all 200 chimps and have completed our fission-fusion setup for the best possible social structure of the chimps.

With generous support from the public, we will be able to fund all of the needs for these chimps now and into the future. We strive to fulfill our mission of providing exemplary lifelong care, for however long each chimp may have. Because it’s their time to live.
Appendix A

Total metrics utilized for this assessment (*indicates a welfare output rather than an input (see Assessment Process, p. 3))

- group site
- group composition: sex ratio
- group composition: adult males
- group stability
- number of separations
- indications of aggression/wounding *
- body condition scores*
- indoor space (footprint)
- outdoor space (footprint)
- indoor vertical space
- outdoor vertical space
- indoor space substrate
- outdoor space substrate
- access to outdoor space
- use of indoor space *
- use of outdoor space *
- use of vertical space *
- relative quantity of visual barriers
- relative quantity of elevated resting areas
- relative quantity of climbing elements
- diet composition and variety
- feeding management plan
- veterinary experience
- veterinary staff coverage
- veterinary equipment and resources
- safety protocols
- emergency protocols, training and drills
- staff experience
- staff ratio (chimpanzees/staff)
- quality of interactions with staff *
- behavior monitoring program
- data collection, use and storage
- welfare assessment programs
- enrichment evaluation
- enrichment planning
- positive reinforcement training program
- positive reinforcement training evaluation
- social introduction planning process
- social introduction evaluation
- bedding/substrate management