



Project Chimps

Activity Name: Wild versus Captive Chimps

Learning Objectives: SKL1, SKL2, S1L1, S2L1, S4L1, S5L1, SSWG5, S7L1, S7L4, SB5.b

Grade/Age Level: all

Estimated Time: 3-4 hours onsite w/ tour, 60-90 min. in classroom/virtual

Materials: pencils, pens, paper, colored pencils & markers

Methods: Discussion, hypothesize, observation, record, explore, create, write, review

Goal: Take a look at the similarities and differences in wild and captive chimps. Examine behaviors, environment, changes in diet, the biology of and why captive chimps were once considered separate from wild chimps.

Background:

1. History of Wild versus Captive Chimpanzees

○ The 1973 Endangered Species Act

- In the 1920s, wild chimpanzees began to be removed from the wild and used in different manners. Once in captivity, they were used in various types of research while being kept in cages, separated from others of their kind. In addition, some chimps were kept as pets and others were used in the entertainment industry. In **1973**, the **Federal Endangered Species Act (ESA)** declared chimpanzees as a threatened species. In 1990 wild chimpanzees earned the status of endangered and therefore, protected under the Act. However, there was a clause in the act that distinguished between wild and captive chimps. While the wild populations were considered endangered and protected, the captive populations were only considered threatened. Consequently, this caused a split listing of chimpanzees and while biologically captive and wild chimps are identical, under this law captive chimps were not protected even though wild chimps were.
 - **Endangered** – “any species that is in danger of extinction throughout all or a significant portion of its range”
 - **Threatened** – “any species that is likely to become an endangered species within the foreseeable future throughout all or a significant portion of its range”
 - In simple terms
 - Endangered species are at the brink of extinction now.
 - Threatened species are likely to be at the brink soon.



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- A positive note of this law was that it made it illegal to take a chimp from the wild. However, unfortunately, in order to continue to have chimpanzees for use in research and other industries, people began breeding programs and the number of captive chimpanzees increased exponentially.
- **The 2015 Endangered Species Act**
 - The above version of the ESA remained in effect until 2015 when it was amended by United States Fish and Wildlife Services (USFWS) to include captive chimps under the same protection afforded to wild chimps. **It now became illegal to conduct any type of medical research on chimpanzees!**
 - Many of the chimps being used in research have now been fortunate enough to be retired to sanctuaries throughout the world.
 - With the end of the split listing of captive and wild chimps, there were other changes besides in the biomedical industry. This change of law also affected chimps being used in areas such as entertainment and chimps being kept as pets. Unfortunately, the law did not make it illegal to use chimps in entertainment or to keep them as pets, but it most certainly encouraged people to move beyond using chimps in these ways and to ramp up the process of getting chimpanzees into appropriate sanctuaries and out of the general public. At this time, people's views began to change, and it started to become less accepted to have a chimp as a pet or to use chimps in entertainment, but it does still happen.
 - **State by state laws:**
 - While many US states have laws that ban personal possession of great apes, the following 20 states allow it.
 - Alabama
 - Delaware- w/ permit
 - Idaho- w/ permit
 - Indiana- w/ USDA license
 - Kansas
 - Michigan- w/ permit from USFW
 - Mississippi- w/ personal possession permit
 - Missouri- allowed if registered w/ local law enforcement
 - Nebraska- w/ permit
 - Nevada
 - New Mexico
 - North Carolina
 - North Dakota- w/ license
 - Pennsylvania- w/ permit



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- Rhode Island- w/ permit
- Tennessee- w/ permit
- Texas- w/ certificate of registration
- West Virginia
- Wisconsin- w/ license
- Wyoming

- **Environment:**
 - In the wild chimps live throughout 21 different countries in the equatorial forests of Africa. There are about 170,000-300,000 chimps living in the wild where chimps face dangers like poaching, the bushmeat trade and habitat destruction. Chimp groups fluctuate in the wild and they may encounter other groups of chimps at any time in addition to having to deal with potential predators.
 - Here at Project Chimps the chimpanzees live within a six-acre habitat that is split into 2 different sections. Different groups of chimps have access to three acres at different times and we can let two groups of chimps out each day. As of today, PC has six individual groups of chimpanzees who live in five different villas. The Chateau is currently split into two groups. Our chimps mainly only encounter other chimps living in their group. They may encounter some other animals in the habitat such as rabbits, rats, mice, snakes, and birds.

- **Diet:**
 - In the wild, chimps are omnivorous frugivores. While their diet is varied, they tend to prefer fruits. About 50% of their diet is composed of figs. In addition to fruits and vegetables, chimps also eat nuts, leaves, roots, insects and even small mammals. In the wild, chimps might spend up to 75% of their lives foraging for their food.
 - At Project Chimps our chimpanzees are vegan. They are not fed any animal products at all. The chimps are fed a wide variety of fruits, vegetables, nuts, seeds and even grains and herbs, as well as chow. Their meals are rotated throughout the week. We give chimps enrichment to mimic wild chimpanzee foraging patterns and encourage similar behavior. Enrichment is “the action of improving or enhancing the quality or value of something.” We provide enrichment to the chimps by creating activities for them where they must work at getting the food or treat. Enrichment is designed to target the brain and make the mind work, not just provide calories. With enrichment we are looking at the overall well-being of the chimps and trying to mimic some of things they would do in the wild to find food.



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- **Behavior:**
 - In the wild, chimpanzees live in a fission-fusion society. This means there are times the chimps come together (fusion) such as sleeping at night, in addition to times when the chimps split up (fission) such as looking for food during the day.
 - Chimps in captivity live in set groups. It is a complicated and potentially lengthy process to introduce chimps to new chimps, so most groups stay together for the length of time they are in captivity. These groups do not fluctuate, unless we are making introductions and bringing new chimps in. However, with access to the outdoor habitat at Project Chimps the chimps can split up (fission) and forage for food (enrichment) during the day but they always all come back together to sleep in their villas at night (fusion). This set up is as close as we can get for chimps in captivity to mimic the fission-fusion society chimps live in when wild. As we continue to build more habitats, we will continue to do our best to create space where the chimps can embrace a fission-fusion society.
 - A similarity in both wild and captive chimp populations is that chimps have a hierarchical system with a clear alpha male. Even females have their own hierarchy, but males tend always to be the clear dominant leader in both populations.
- **Biology:**
 - There is absolutely nothing biologically different between a wild chimp and a captive chimp.

Procedures:

1. **Hypothesize.** Write a hypothesis. A hypothesis is an “if” _____ “then” _____ statement that can be tested with scientific research, without using personal pronouns. Before you take your tour and observe the chimps, write a hypothesis concerning the chimp’s behavior, environment, or diet. For example:
 - If chimps in captivity are observed, then less food options will be available to them in captivity compared to in the wild.
 - If chimps in captivity are observed, then foraging, using tools and creating bonds as done in the wild, will also be seen in captivity.
 - If chimps in captivity are observed, then an environment with less space will be observed in captivity compared to in the wild.
2. **Discuss.** Have a discussion about:
 - The environment and habitats at Project Chimps versus the natural equatorial forest habitat that wild chimps live in.



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- The diets fed at Project Chimps in comparison to the diet of wild chimps
 - Similarities and differences in behavior of wild and captive chimps.
 - The fact that there is no biological difference between captive and wild chimpanzees
3. **Tour/Observe.** Students take a tour while observing the chimps in their captive setting. Students will look for and record observations that will help them to ascertain whether their hypothesis is correct.
 4. **Activities.** Complete 1 or more of the activities below. All lesson plans can be shared to complete more activities back in the classroom post field trip.
 5. **Assessment.** Complete the assessment by reviewing the hypotheses and discussing the results.

Activities:

1. **Explore.** (all) Take an in depth look at the food chains of wild and captive chimps.
 - Use these [Chimp Food Chain cutouts](#) to create food chains for both wild and captive chimps.
 - Use the white board, brown paper or poster board to attach the pictures in the correct orders to demonstrate the differences between a chimp's food chain in the wild versus that in captivity.
2. **Learn.** (all) Look at the [state laws](#) and complete this [State by State Law](#) activity to see where it is legal to own a pet chimp.
3. **Research.** (k-6) Learn the difference between [Endangered and Threatened](#) animals.
4. **Create.** (k-6) Explore the chimp's diet and create some fun sample [Chimp Menus](#) for them!
5. **Compare & Contrast.** (6-12) Create a Venn diagram looking at the biology, environment, and diet of wild chimpanzees to the biology, environment, and diet of the chimpanzees at Project Chimps.
6. **Extension Activity.** (9-12) Using the information gathered at Project Chimps and the research prior to the visit, students will write a summary that compares the biology, environment, and diet of wild chimpanzees to that of chimpanzees at Project Chimps.

Assessment:

1. After all groups have had the opportunity to view the chimps, students will come together to record their findings.
 - a. Was your hypothesis correct?
 - i. It's ok if it wasn't!! Sometimes that's just as important.
 - ii. Take time to discuss the hypotheses and review what was learned on the tour.
2. What is the difference between wild and captive chimps?



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3. What is a fission-fusion society?
4. How did the laws change to eventually help protect captive chimps?

Conclusion:

The lives of captive chimps are drastically different from that of wild chimps. While captive chimps might have less space compared to wild chimps, they receive a plethora of different foods, enrichment, medical care, when needed and are safe from predators. While nothing can replace growing up in the wild, Project Chimps does its best to make sure chimps in sanctuary have a happy and healthy life in captivity that is full of enrichment.

Notes to Instructor:

- [Wild VS Captive Chimps Assessment Questions](#)
- [Elementary Assessment Question worksheet](#)
- [Chimp Food Chain Cutouts](#)
- [State Laws Answer Key](#)
- Thank you for being a part of our community!
- Please use your judgement to adapt this lesson to different age groups.
- <https://www.animallaw.info/site/great-ape-laws-state>