



Animal Care & Welfare

**Project Chimps
Audit & Assessment
2026**

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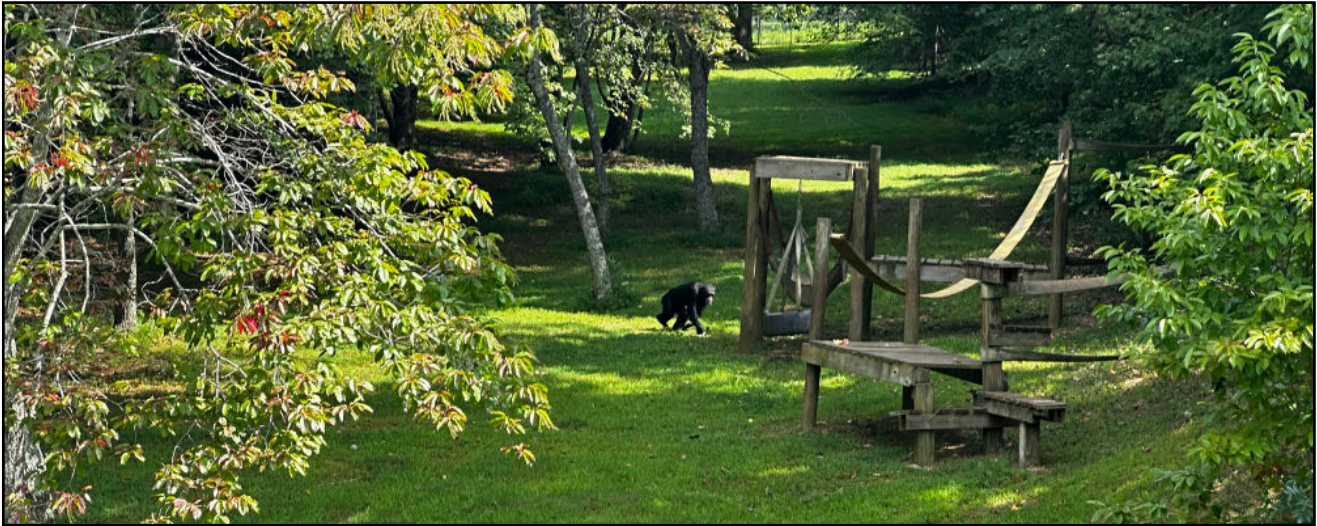


Figure 1: A chimpanzee enjoys the outdoor habitat at Project Chimps.

Introduction

The audit aims to comprehensively measure all aspects of animal welfare at the facility. The audit is holistic, in that it evaluates how all departments work together to provide a facility where animals can thrive, where their individual needs are met, and work together to provide evidence-based care in a proactive and consistent manner. The audit specifically measures how the facility provides evidence-based and individualized care, how the facility consistently adheres to written protocols, the facility's enrichment program and ability to self-assess its effectiveness, the facility's ability to provide a rich social environment to all animals based on their individual social thresholds, the housing, space, and climbing structures provided to the animals, the facility's general husbandry practices, the facility's general veterinary practices, the facility's diet and nutrition protocols, the records-keeping system employed by the facility, an assessment of a culture of safety present at the facility, the facility's handling of staff or public welfare concerns, the facility's transparency with staff and the public, the availability of required resources to provide adequate care to the animals, and the overall means to thrive for each animal. The results of this audit are owned by the facility to disseminate as the organization sees fit. The Elgin Centre maintains confidentiality regarding all aspects of this audit unless directed otherwise by the facility's leadership.

Project Chimps

Project Chimps is home to 104 chimpanzees retired from laboratory research. These chimpanzees live with an organized care program, a dedicated staff, and acres of forested habitat alongside climate-controlled indoor enclosures with large vertical spaces. The stated mission of the sanctuary is to provide lifetime exemplary care to chimpanzees retired from research. This audit finds that Project Chimps continues to meet that mission, and that conditions have improved since the September 2024 audit. The remaining work described below is tractable, and in several areas the sanctuary is already moving in the right direction.

A chimpanzee at Project Chimps lives with a large amount of space, relative to other captive settings, and within a large social group. That housing allows real choice about where to go and with whom to spend time. The enclosures, together with scheduled enrichment used in individual care plans and a strong operant-conditioning program, create a cognitively stimulating environment. Virtually all chimpanzees now participate in positive reinforcement training in some capacity — a remarkable result given current staffing constraints.

Since the 2024 audit the new annex has opened, and outdoor access has improved substantially. A further expansion — the Terrace — is planned. When completed, the Terrace will be a new outdoor habitat, fully enclosed by mesh, giving chimpanzees access around the clock. It is intended to be shared by three groups. Social introductions have increased. New chimpanzees have continued to arrive from research, so integration work remains an ongoing part of sanctuary life. The population stood at 95 chimpanzees in September 2024 and stands at 104 at the time of this audit.

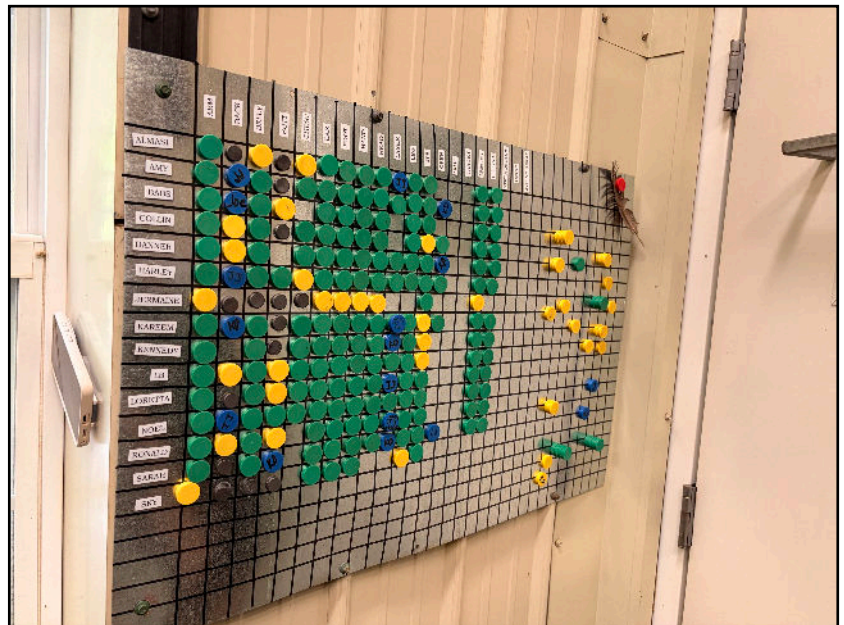


Figure 2: A training board marking each chimpanzee's progress for each operant conditioning behavior.

Project Chimps is committed to bringing in 24 more chimpanzees over the next three years. A significant portion of funding depends on completing those intakes within that period. Staff understand that reality and remain committed to the mission. At the same time, they would welcome the chance to consolidate care for the chimpanzees already in residence as trained caregiver numbers catch up. That tension is honest, and it is manageable if training, the Terrace, veterinary support, and the behavior program stay ahead of the intake calendar.

Staff continue to come from a variety of backgrounds and experience levels. What they share, from entry level through leadership, is a clear commitment to each chimpanzee. Camaraderie and organizational buy-in remain intact. Human Resources reports that staff dynamics have improved and that people are more willing to ask for help — a healthy sign in a demanding workplace.

The husbandry department is organized in three sections, each with a supervisor. Caregivers are trained to operate doors, shift chimpanzees, and provide full care. Aides clean and assist caregivers. As of August 10, 2026, husbandry headcount is full. The remaining work is training: the sanctuary is short three to six fully trained caregivers. Those roles are expected to be filled by promoting aides. An aide must be employed for one year before promotion, and internships count toward that year. At the present rate, and provided staffing remains stable, it would take approximately six months to have the full complement of trained caregivers. Recruitment and retention remain a real challenge because the sanctuary is remote and far from any urban center, and turnover is high. Pay, however, is very strong relative to other sanctuaries. The constraint is location and retention, not compensation.

A culture of safety remains evident. Staff operate within clearly defined roles and protocols. After Action reviews are used so that incidents and introductions can be examined and learned from. The volunteer program remains robust and continues to support daily husbandry and local outreach.

Project Chimps remains on sound financial footing. The opportunities ahead are programmatic rather than fiscal: completing caregiver training; adding certified veterinary technician capacity; staging veterinary work at the houses because steep gravel roads make clinic transport impractical; adopting structured care-and-welfare and enrichment assessments, building on the yearly quality-of-life reviews already in place; increasing indoor bedding; collecting social-threshold data beyond wounding; holding safety drills more often; supporting the behavior program as introductions increase; and finishing the Terrace.

This audit was conducted over three days — August 10–12, 2026. It included direct observation of current practices, review of written standards, and confidential conversations with staff at all levels of the organization, including the veterinary program.

Measures of Animal Welfare

Project Chimps scores remarkably well in this audit’s measures of animal welfare. In all categories, the sanctuary has scored above average (a score of ‘3’ is considered average); and has scored a score of ‘5’ in the majority of categories.

Category	Score
Evidence-based and Individualized Care	4
Adherence to Written Protocols	5
Proper Enrichment and Effective Assessment	4
Social Environment and Individual Assessment	4
Proper Housing, Space, and Climbing Structures	5
General Husbandry Practices	5
General Veterinary Practices	4
Diet and Nutrition	5
Veterinary and Husbandry Records Keeping	5
Culture of Safety for Staff and Animals	4
Handling Welfare Concerns and Anonymous Reporting System	5
Transparency with the Public and Staff	5
Availability of Required Resources	5
Means to Thrive for Animals	4
Composite score	4.6

1. Evidence-Based and Individualized Care

- Evaluate the facility's implementation of evidence-based practices in veterinary care and husbandry.
- Assess the provision of individualized care tailored to the specific needs of each animal.
- Likert Scale Scoring System:
 - 1: Inadequate practice of evidence-based and individualized care
 - 2: Limited practice of evidence-based and individualized care
 - 3: Moderate practice of evidence-based and individualized care
 - **4: Good practice of evidence-based and individualized care**
 - 5: Excellent practice of evidence-based and individualized care

Positive areas:

- Individual care plans are in use.
- The veterinary program has instituted a four-year cycle of routine physical examinations. Most chimpanzees have now caught up with their exams.
- Staff are trained and aware of known individual veterinary and behavioral needs.
- Yearly quality-of-life assessments are performed and review each chimpanzee's current health. Those QOLs are a solid foundation and can be built upon.
- Diet and nutrition continue to be individually prescribed based on body-condition scoring.

Opportunities for growth:

- There is not yet an official care-and-welfare assessment protocol. Leadership has identified that work as a long-term goal. Yearly QOLs currently focus on health; a broader, quantified welfare assessment over a set period would give care plans a stronger behavioral evidence base and would support the behavior program as introductions continue.

Recommendation:

Begin care and welfare assessments for each chimpanzee over a period of at least 60 days, using specific indicators of welfare. Quantified results can strengthen individual care plans and help chimpanzees overcome barriers to thriving. Upon request, The Elgin Centre can provide a Care and Welfare Assessment Protocol and a process for written individual care plans based on veterinary examinations and those assessments.

2. Adherence to Written Protocols

- Evaluate the facility's adherence to written protocols in veterinary care and husbandry practices.

- Assess the consistency and effectiveness of protocol implementation.
- Likert Scale Scoring System:
 - 1: Poor adherence to written protocols
 - 2: Limited adherence to written protocols
 - 3: Moderate adherence to written protocols
 - 4: Good adherence to written protocols
 - **5: Excellent adherence to written protocols**

Positive areas:

- The chimpanzee care manual, which was outdated in 2024, has been revised.
- Staff are following the revised written protocols consistently.
- Training continues according to defined levels, responsibilities, and protocols.
- Safety protocols remain consistent and well known.

Opportunities for growth:

- No further work is needed on this measure at this time.

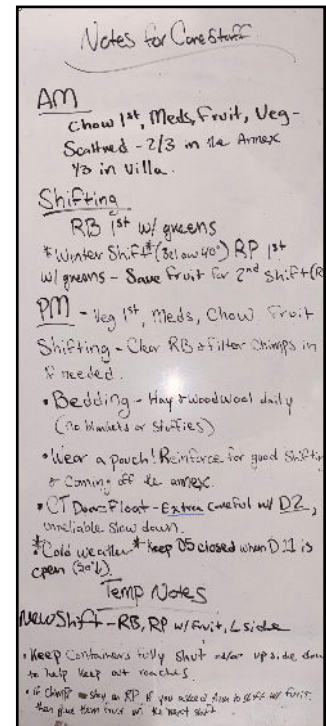


Figure 3: Husbandry notes at one of the chimpanzee houses.

3. Proper Enrichment and Effectiveness Assessment

- Evaluate the provision of proper (and species-relevant) enrichment activities for animals.
- Assess the effectiveness of the enrichment program in promoting natural behaviors and overall well-being.
- Evaluate the facility's ability and practice of self assessing its enrichment program.
- Likert Scale Scoring System:
 - 1: Inadequate enrichment and effectiveness
 - 2: Limited enrichment and effectiveness
 - 3: Moderate enrichment and effectiveness
 - **4: Good enrichment and effectiveness**
 - 5: Excellent enrichment and effectiveness

Positive areas:

- Enrichment continues to be planned on a schedule, with an approval process for items.
- Enrichment is being used within individual care plans.

Opportunities for growth:

- There is not yet an official enrichment-assessment protocol. Leadership has identified that work as a long-term goal. Putting a simple assessment tool in place would show whether enrichment is meeting stated aims such as movement, socialization, and cognitive stimulation, and would make individually prescribed enrichment more precise.

Recommendation:

Adopt an enrichment assessment tool so that scheduled enrichment can be checked against its intended goals. Upon request, The Elgin Centre can provide an assessment tool and guidance on using enrichment to address specific welfare aims. Yearly QOLs already give a health snapshot; pairing them with enrichment and welfare assessments would complete the picture.

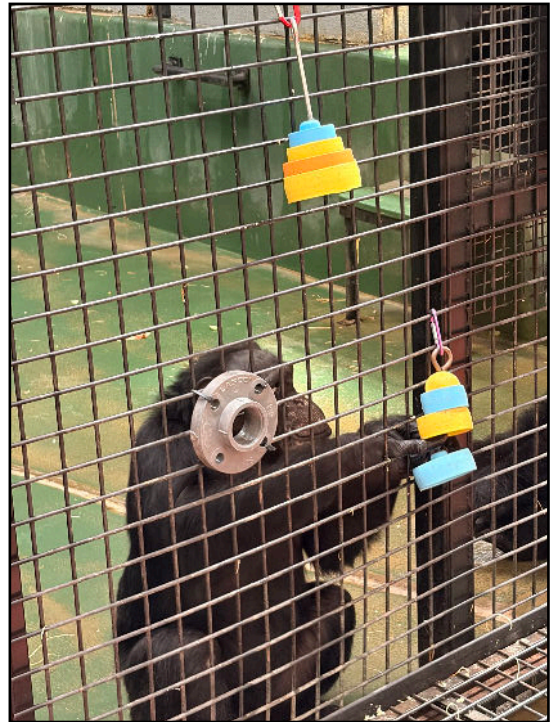


Figure 4: A chimpanzee enjoys an enrichment device.

4. Social Environment and Individual Assessment

- Assess the facility's ability to provide a rich social environment based on species specific needs for each animal.
- Evaluate the ability to individually assess a animal's social threshold and provide appropriate social interactions.
- Likert Scale Scoring System:
 - 1: Inadequate social environment
 - 2: Limited social environment
 - 3: Moderate social environment
 - **4: Good social environment**
 - 5: Excellent social environment

Positive areas:

- All chimpanzees continue to live in large social groups. None live alone or with limited companionship.
- Social introductions have increased since 2024.
- Wounding data continues to be recorded and can help identify individual social challenges.

- A part-time technician is being added to the behavior program, which will add capacity as introductions continue.

Opportunities for growth:

- Beyond wounding data, social-threshold information (grooming, proximity, alliance shifts) is not yet being collected or quantified. Adding those measures would strengthen future introduction planning.
- Introduction work is ongoing by nature, and will grow as further chimpanzees arrive. Building program capacity — including the part-time technician now being added — will help the behavior program keep pace with that work.

Recommendation:

Begin maintaining grooming and proximity charts that can show alliance shifts. Those records will support future introduction plans and give the behavior program a clearer basis for sequencing work as the population grows. A part-time technician is a welcome addition. Upon request, The Elgin Centre can provide a tool for collecting grooming and proximity data and guidance on how to use it.

5. Proper Housing, Space, and Climbing Structures

- Evaluate the provision of proper housing, adequate space, and suitable structures for animals.
- Assess if these elements provide the ability for freedom of movement and natural behaviors.
- Likert Scale Scoring System:
 - 1: Inadequate housing, space, and structures
 - 2: Limited housing, space, and structures
 - 3: Moderate housing, space, and structures
 - 4: Good housing, space, and structures
 - **5: Excellent housing, space, and structures**

Positive areas:

- Outdoor habitats remain large and varied, and they offer a diverse and enriching environment.
- The new annex is open and has allowed far more outdoor access than in 2024, when three social groups shared the north yard and received access only once every two days.
- The Terrace is planned as a new outdoor habitat, fully enclosed by mesh, so chimpanzees will have access around the clock. It is intended to be shared by three groups.
- Indoor habitats continue to offer abundant vertical space, climate control, enrichment features, and outdoor patio areas relative to other indoor chimpanzee settings.
- Climbing structures appear safe and in good condition. No containment concern was observed.
- Increased social introductions support both space use and a richer social life.

Opportunities for growth:

- Until the Terrace is complete, outdoor access — already much improved — is not yet at an adequate level. Because the Terrace will be shared by three groups, a written sharing and introduction plan before opening will make the most of the new space.

Recommendation:

Complete the Terrace and prepare the three-group sharing plan before it opens, so around-the-clock mesh access can be used well from the first day. As groups grow, review indoor bedding and vertical furnishings so larger social units remain well provisioned.



Figure 5: Land clearing for the new Terrace.

6. General Husbandry Practices

- Assess the facility's cleaning and sanitation protocols and practices.
- Assess the facility's ability to maintain animal facilities.
- Assess the facility's ability to provide adequate bedding/substrate and proper climate control.
- Assess the effectiveness of pest control.
- Likert Scale Scoring System:
 - 1: Poor husbandry practices
 - 2: Limited husbandry practices
 - 3: Moderate husbandry practices
 - 4: Good husbandry practices
 - **5: Excellent husbandry practices**

Positive areas:

- Cleaning protocols remain effective. The facility is built in a way that supports sanitation, with good drainage and water supply.
- Buildings are observably clean. Disinfection protocols are effective and appropriate chemical disinfectants are in use.
- All indoor habitats remain climate controlled.

- Pest control continues, including snap traps for rodents and electric insect control. No pest problem was observed.

Opportunities for growth:

- No further work is needed on this measure at this time.

7. General Veterinary Practices

- Assess the facility's ability to provide preventive care to animals.
- Assess the facility's ability to provide emergency care to animals.
- Assess the facility's ability to provide routine veterinary examinations, including observational assessments such as body condition scoring and more thorough examinations requiring anesthesia.
- Assess the facility's system of reporting veterinary concerns.
- Likert Scale Scoring System:
 - 1: Poor veterinary practices
 - 2: Limited veterinary practices
 - 3: Moderate veterinary practices
 - **4: Good veterinary practices**
 - 5: Excellent veterinary practices

Positive areas:

- A licensed Veterinary Medical Director is now in post and practicing on site — resolving the principal veterinary gap identified in 2024.
- Routine physical examinations are planned every four years. Most of the population has now caught up with those exams.
- A majority of the chimpanzees continue to participate in Positive Reinforcement Training (PRT), which allows voluntary participation in care and reduces the stress of veterinary work.
- Body-condition scores, quality-of-life assessments, and other non-invasive veterinary assessments continue.
- A dedicated veterinary assistant remains on staff with deep knowledge of individual chimpanzees.

The image shows a handwritten husbandry log for chimpanzees. It is divided into several sections:

- SHIFTING:** Contains handwritten notes about shifts, including "Shift 1: 08:00-16:00" and "Shift 2: 16:00-24:00".
- NOTES TO CARESTAFF:** Contains handwritten notes about care, including "ES be joined in an tank. If good, permanent" and "ES be joined in an tank. If good, permanent".
- BEHAVIOR:** Contains handwritten notes about behavior, including "ES be joined in an tank. If good, permanent" and "ES be joined in an tank. If good, permanent".
- DAILY:** A table with columns for "NAME", "DATE", "TIME", "ROUTE", "NAME", "DATE", "TIME", "ROUTE", "NAME", "DATE", "TIME", "ROUTE". It contains handwritten entries for "ES" and "ES" on "10/10/24".
- TEMPORARY:** A table with columns for "NAME", "DATE", "TIME", "ROUTE", "NAME", "DATE", "TIME", "ROUTE". It contains handwritten entries for "ES" and "ES" on "10/10/24".
- FEEDING ORDER:** A table with columns for "NAME", "DATE", "TIME", "ROUTE", "NAME", "DATE", "TIME", "ROUTE". It contains handwritten entries for "ES" and "ES" on "10/10/24".

Figure 6: Husbandry notes at a chimpanzee house.

Opportunities for growth:

- There is not yet a certified veterinary technician on staff. Adding that role would strengthen emergency coverage when the staff veterinarian is unavailable.
- Steep gravel roads make it impractical to move chimpanzees to the clinic, so procedures are performed at the chimpanzee houses. Staging veterinary equipment for immediate use at the houses remains the practical solution.
- Staff have begun training on Kardia (handheld ECG) for cardiac monitoring. Completing that training will make the tool more consistent across the team.
- Better scales would improve the accuracy of weights used for body-condition scoring and individual diets.

Recommendation:

Hire a certified veterinary technician, or certify a current staff member to administer anesthesia, and certify a staff member to administer euthanasia, so emergency care is available when the veterinarian is off site. Keep veterinary equipment staged at the houses. Continue the four-year physical-exam cycle and keep remaining individuals current as the population ages. Complete Kardia training so cardiac monitoring can be used consistently. Acquire better scales so weights used for body-condition scoring and individual diets are reliable.

8. Diet and Nutrition

- Assess the facility's diet and nutrition plan for animals.
- Assess the facility's ability to provide individualized diets to animals with special dietary needs.
- Assess the facility's feeding protocols.
- Assess the quality of food items at the facility.
- Assess the system of diet preparation at the facility.
- Assess how food is stored at the facility.
- Likert Scale Scoring System:
 - 1: Poor diet and nutrition practices
 - 2: Limited diet and nutrition practices
 - 3: Moderate diet and nutrition practices
 - 4: Good diet and nutrition practices
 - **5: Excellent diet and nutrition practices**

Positive areas:

- Chimpanzees continue to receive a varied diet that is thoughtfully presented.
- Feeding remains a mix of direct feeding (hopper) and scatter feeding, which allows foraging.
- Weekly diets continue to rotate through an A-menu and B-menu over each 14-day period.

- Diets remain individually prescribed and controlled based on body-condition scores.
- The program has held this standard through an increase from 95 to 104 chimpanzees.

Opportunities for growth:

- No further work is needed on this measure at this time.

9. Veterinary and Husbandry Records Keeping

- Assess the facility's practices for keeping and storing written veterinary and husbandry records.
- Evaluate the completeness, accuracy, and accessibility of records.
- Likert Scale Scoring System:
 - 1: Poor records keeping and storage
 - 2: Limited records keeping and storage
 - 3: Moderate records keeping and storage
 - 4: Good records keeping and storage
 - **5: Excellent records keeping and storage**

Positive areas:

- Records keeping has improved markedly since 2024, when caregivers wrote paper logs that were later entered into Animal Care Software by someone else, and floor staff had no access to the digital system.
- The records system now functions at a high standard, with staff able to work in the digital record rather than around it.

Opportunities for growth:

- No further work is needed on this measure at this time.

10. Culture of Safety for Staff and Animals

- Evaluate the facility's practices and protocols to ensure a culture of safety for both staff and animals.
- Assess the presence of safety training, emergency response plans, and risk mitigation measures.
- Likert Scale Scoring System:
 - 1: Unsafe culture for staff and animals
 - 2: Limited culture of safety for staff and animals

- 3: Moderate culture of safety for staff and animals
- **4: Good culture of safety for staff and animals**
- 5: Excellent culture of safety for staff and animals

Positive areas:

- Emergency-response protocols remain sound. Staff know the codes and the existing safety procedures.
- Double-lock checks, marked safe areas, assigned daily emergency-response managers, dart-gun access, electrified hot wire with malfunction protocols, and safety lines on indoor floors all remain in place.
- Role-playing safety training continues to give staff a practical way to rehearse emergency responses.
- After Action reviews are performed. Incidents and introductions are examined afterward so the organization can learn.

Opportunities for growth:

- Safety drills are performed a minimum of twice a year. Because of shift patterns, some staff may not have been present for a drill. More frequent drills on rotating days would give every shift, including newer staff, hands-on familiarity with emergency response.

Recommendation:

Hold on-site safety drills once a month on different days of the week so that all staff, including those still in training, have hands-on familiarity with emergency responses.

11. Handling Welfare Concerns and Anonymous Reporting System

- Evaluate how the facility handles animal welfare concerns from staff.
- Assess the availability of an anonymous reporting system that protects concerned staff members.
- Likert Scale Scoring System:
 - 1: Inadequate handling of welfare concerns and reporting system
 - 2: Limited handling of welfare concerns and reporting system
 - 3: Moderate handling of welfare concerns and reporting system
 - 4: Good handling of welfare concerns and reporting system
 - **5: Excellent handling of welfare concerns and reporting system**

Positive areas:

- There is a clearly defined chain of command and chain of reporting in the care department, with more than one route available.
- Staff continue to report that they have an effective way to raise welfare concerns and that those concerns would be addressed.
- Leadership maintains an open-door policy and a confidential route for reporting concerns.
- Anonymous reporting suggestion boxes remain in place.
- These strengths have held through a period of substantial hiring.
- Human Resources reports improved staff dynamics and a greater willingness among staff to ask for help.

Opportunities for growth:

- No further work is needed on this measure at this time.

12. Transparency with the Public and Staff

- Evaluate the facility's transparency in sharing information with the public and staff.
- Assess the availability of public audits, communication channels, and engagement with stakeholders.
- Likert Scale Scoring System:
 - 1: Lack of transparency with the public and staff
 - 2: Limited transparency with the public and staff
 - 3: Moderate transparency with the public and staff
 - 4: Good transparency with the public and staff
 - **5: Excellent transparency with the public and staff**

Positive areas:

- Staff, in general, continue to feel a sense of transparency with the organization.
- Project Chimps reports challenges as well as successes to the public.
- Project Chimps publishes regular audits and assessments, including this report.

Opportunities for growth:

- No further work is needed on this measure at this time.

13. Availability of Required Resources

- Assess the availability of resources necessary to provide exemplary care to animals.
- Evaluate the adequacy of funding, staffing, facilities, and other resources.

- Likert Scale Scoring System:
 - 1: Inadequate availability of required resources
 - 2: Limited availability of required resources
 - 3: Moderate availability of required resources
 - 4: Good availability of required resources
 - **5: Excellent availability of required resources**

Positive areas:

- The sanctuary is in a sound budgetary position.
- As of August 10, 2026, husbandry headcount is full, in contrast to the shortages noted in 2024.
- Pay is very strong relative to other sanctuaries.
- The Terrace is planned as a mesh-enclosed outdoor habitat that will allow around-the-clock access and will be shared by three groups, alongside the annex already in use.
- The volunteer program remains a meaningful resource.
- A part-time technician is being added to the behavior program.



Figure 7: Outdoor annex enclosure.

Opportunities for growth:

- Project Chimps is committed to bringing in 24 more chimpanzees over the next three years, and a significant portion of funding depends on those intakes. Staff understand that reality and would also welcome time to consolidate care for chimpanzees already in residence.

14. Means to Thrive for Animals

- Assess the facility's practices and written protocols to ensure the well-being and thriving of animals.
- Evaluate the provision of physical and mental stimulation, social interactions, and opportunities for natural behaviors.
- Likert Scale Scoring System:
 - 1: Inadequate means to thrive
 - 2: Limited means to thrive
 - 3: Moderate means to thrive
 - **4: Good means to thrive**
 - 5: Excellent means to thrive

Positive areas:

- Chimpanzees at Project Chimps remain observably engaged with one another and with their environment.
- Existing protocols remain sound in their focus on thriving.
- Chimpanzees benefit from the nutrition program, the PRT program, an enrichment program that is now assessed and used in care plans, a licensed staff veterinarian, and a social environment of large groups with increasing introductions.
- Outdoor access has improved substantially with the annex. Further improvement is in prospect once the Terrace is complete, especially the planned around-the-clock access inside a fully meshed enclosure.

Opportunities for growth:

- There is always room to grow on this measure. Structured care-and-welfare assessments, social-threshold data beyond wounding, more indoor bedding, and a larger group of fully trained caregivers would all strengthen daily life for the chimpanzees.
- Outdoor access, though better, is still bounded by staff hours and constraints of chimpanzees shifting until the Terrace is meshed and open.
- Certified veterinary technician capacity will matter more as the population ages and grows.
- 24 further chimpanzees over three years will increase demand on space, trained caregivers, introductions, and veterinary time. Staff understand the funding tied to that plan and would also welcome the chance to consolidate care for current residents as capacity grows.

Recommendation:

Complete the Terrace and write the three-group sharing plan before it opens. Institute the 60-day care-and-welfare assessments recommended in 2024. Collect grooming and proximity data. Increase indoor bedding. Promote three to six aides to caregiver so that assessments, enrichment work, and additional PRT can run alongside basic husbandry. Consider staggering shifts or moving to 10 hour shifts to cover more of the day until around-the-clock Terrace access is available. Hire or certify a veterinary technician.

General Comments

Of the 14 areas assessed in this audit, Project Chimps holds an average score of 4.5, for an overall score of 4.56 out of 5. That score represents **GOOD TO EXCELLENT MEASURES OF WELFARE** at Project Chimps.

This is an improvement on the September 2024 audit, which returned an average of 4.0 and a finding of good measures of welfare. The gains sit where the 2024 report was most pointed: a licensed veterinarian is now in post and most chimpanzees have caught up on a four-year cycle of routine physicals (veterinary practices: 2 to 4); the care manual has been revised and is followed (protocols: 4 to 5); enrichment remains well scheduled and is used in care plans, though an official assessment protocol is still a long-term goal (enrichment: remains 4); records are no longer trapped on paper (records: 3 to 5); and housing and outdoor access have improved with the open annex and the planned Terrace (housing: 4 to 5). Evidence-based individualized care has also moved (3 to 4) on the strength of individual care plans and scheduled physicals, even though the full welfare-assessment protocol has not yet been adopted.

It is remarkable that Project Chimps scores above average in every category (a '3' would represent an average score). Six measures sit at 4 (evidence-based care, enrichment assessment, social assessment, veterinary practices, culture of safety and drill frequency, and means to thrive). Eight sit at 5 (protocols, general husbandry housing, diet, records, welfare reporting, transparency, and resources). The work that would most reliably lift the remaining 4s is already in reach: assessments, social-threshold data, bedding, monthly drills, and training the current cohort through to caregiver level. Certified veterinary technician capacity and the clinic-access limits created by the gravel roads are the two veterinary steps still sitting between good and excellent on that measure. In January 2026 the sanctuary lost a chimpanzee who had lived there for eight years. The death followed a fight that stemmed from an introduction. That individual had a preexisting condition, including a hernia that may have ruptured. Staff supported one another and moved forward. There was no revolt. After Action reviews are performed. That combination — looking at what happened, without a culture of blame — is a strong sign of a healthy organization.

The overall finding of this audit is that Project Chimps is an even better sanctuary in August 2026 than it was in September 2024. The remaining work is known and doable. The Terrace, once complete, meshed, and open around the clock, gives a clear path to still better outdoor access and therefore to still better means to thrive. The six-month runway to a full trained-caregiver complement is the operational condition on which that improvement most immediately depends. That runway is exposed to high turnover in a remote location far from any urban center. Pay is already strong relative to other sanctuaries; the remaining task is recruitment and retention, not the wage.

So is the sequence of the next three years. 24 more chimpanzees are planned, and a significant portion of funding depends on those arrivals. Staff understand why the intakes matter

and would also welcome time to consolidate care for the chimpanzees already home. That is not resistance. It is a useful signal that trained caregiver capacity, the behavior program, the Terrace, and veterinary support should stay ahead of the intake calendar. If they do, Project Chimps is well placed to keep the gains of the last two years and to welcome the next residents without losing the quality of life already built for the 104 who are there now.

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