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THE EXPANDING ROLE OF PRIMATE SANCTUARIES - GOING BEYOND RESCUE AND CARE

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Apes face a multitude of interrelated threats to their welfare in the wild and captivity. Habitat loss, the bushmeat trade and conflicts with growing human populations often result in the death or capture of wild chimpanzees. Captive-bred chimpanzees may be taken from their mothers for use in the pet and entertainment trade where they often suffer from abandonment, abuse and neglect by their owners. Chimpanzees are also still used as biomedical research models in some countries. Legitimate primate sanctuaries have served an important role in rescuing apes from inadequate or perilous circumstances, rehabilitating them, and providing them with the lifetime care they require or reintroducing them to the wild. The number of apes in need of sanctuary has been increasing over time. Many sanctuaries are now taking active roles in not only caring for their apes, but in advocating for changes necessary to alter the increasing influx of residents. Education programs on conservation, behavior and natural history are increasing in scope and sophistication at sanctuaries. Ape sanctuaries offer a unique environment for furthering our understanding of these endangered primates, through studies conducted by staff or visiting scientists. Sanctuaries may also play a role in law enforcement. This workshop will highlight the work that ape sanctuaries from across the world undertake, with emphasis on roles beyond caring for their residents. Discussion will center on the challenges and long-term responsibility faced by sanctuaries, increasing the positive impact on species conservation and the need for collaboration with primatologists, governments and funders.

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