



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**THE JANE GOODALL INSTITUTE MOURNS THE PASSING OF GREGOIRE,  
AFRICA'S OLDEST-KNOWN CHIMPANZEE**

**Toronto, Ontario** – It is with heavy hearts that the staff of the Jane Goodall Institute (JGI) announced today the passing of Gregoire, the oldest-known chimpanzee living in Africa and a dear friend of the entire JGI family. Gregoire, who was approximately 66 years old, died peacefully in his sleep yesterday at JGI's [Tchimpounga Chimpanzee Rehabilitation Center](#) alongside his long-time companion Clara. Gregoire had lived at the sanctuary in the Republic of Congo for the past 11 years. Prior to his rescue by world-renowned primatologist Jane Goodall, Ph.D., DBE, Gregoire survived more than 40 years of solitary confinement in a barren cage at the Brazzaville Zoo and a subsequent airlift evacuation during a civil war.

Gregoire was already a national celebrity, albeit a lonely one, when Dr. Goodall first encountered him in harsh conditions in 1990. As she later explained, "I gazed at this strange being, alone in his bleak cement-floored cage. His pale, almost hairless skin was stretched tightly over his emaciated body so that every bone could be seen. His eyes were dull as he reached out with a thin, bony hand for a proffered morsel of food. Was this really a chimpanzee?"

Gregoire had lived in the cage at the Brazzaville Zoo since 1944. Dr. Goodall arranged for a caretaker to look after him and to provide him with a healthier diet. Then, in 1996, Gregoire was introduced to two new chimpanzees: a young male orphan and an infant female. The stubborn spirit that had kept Gregoire alive during decades of lonely confinement was intact. He began to play like a child with the young chimpanzees.

In 1997, the intermittent civil war in the Congo worsened. The zoo, a mere half mile from the airport, became the center of much fighting. Each time a shell exploded, Gregoire ducked under his wooden sleeping shelf, scraping his back raw.

JGI, the John Aspinall Foundation and the American Embassy arranged to have the zoo chimpanzees airlifted to Point Noire and, subsequently, taken to the Tchimpounga sanctuary.

It took Gregoire many days to recover from the trauma in Brazzaville and the transport by military helicopter. Eventually, though, he adjusted to his new environment. He lived for playtime with his young friends. Later, as the youngsters grew and became too rough for old Gregoire, he moved to an area of the sanctuary with La Vielle, a low-key adult female rescued from the Pointe Noire Zoo. There, he had his own 'special garden' and played grandfather to the infant chimps.

Gregoire will be buried on the grounds of the Tchimpounga sanctuary, the home that provided him a safe haven, loving caregivers and a chance at happiness in the twilight of his life. Gregoire will be fondly remembered and missed by humans and chimpanzees alike.

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***About the Jane Goodall Institute***

*Founded in 1977, the Jane Goodall Institute continues Dr. Goodall's pioneering research of chimpanzee behavior—research that transformed scientific perceptions of the relationship between humans and animals. Today, the Institute is a global leader in the effort to protect chimpanzees and their habitats. It also is widely recognized for establishing innovative community-centered conservation and development programs in Africa, and the Roots & Shoots global environmental and humanitarian youth program, which has groups in almost 100 countries. For more information, please visit [www.janegoodall.ca](http://www.janegoodall.ca)*