

Los Angeles Times
October 1, 2006

Los Angeles Times

Goodall Talks Chimps and Peace in L.A. Visit

By CARLA HALL
Times Staff Writer

"The first thing I'm going to give you is a chimpanzee greeting, because it sounds lovely in a place like this," said Jane Goodall while looking out from a stage in Griffith Park across a meadow containing 1,000 people.

Her voice started off soft and low: "Oooo, oooo, oooo. . . ." Then her voice rose: "Hooo, hooo, HOOO! HOOO!"

She finished with a smile, leaving her audience stunned for a second before they burst into applause.

Goodall, arguably the world's most famous primatologist, was in Los Angeles this weekend combining two of her passions — world peace and chimpanzees —

in one locale: Griffith Park. Today she will address the ChimpanZoo conference being held at the Los Angeles Zoo, on protection of captive chimps. Later, at 12:30 p.m., she will speak at the zoo as part of its Ape Awareness Day.

On Saturday, she presided over the annual Day of Peace in Griffith Park, which was organized by volunteers and various chapters of the Jane Goodall Institute's youth service program, Roots & Shoots. Similar events were planned throughout the world, Goodall said.

A procession of giant white peace dove puppets, mostly constructed of recycled materials such as bedsheets and carried aloft on poles by youngsters,

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PEACE DAY: Jane Goodall and Washo Shadowhawk, 16, of Beaverton Ore., lead a parade of giant dove puppets during Saturday's Day of Peace at Griffith Park. The famed primatologist was in town also to speak at the Los Angeles Zoo on captive chimpanzees.

Jane Goodall Works to Save Habitats

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made its way down a forested hill and around the meadow. The parade has become the event's hallmark, and this year there were 57 puppet doves.

"I think it's great that so many people of so many ages came together to do this one project," said Lily Armstrong, 10, a sixth-grader who was working hard to grip one of the poles holding up her local Roots & Shoots chapter's peace dove.

Goodall agreed. "Everyone coming together here with peaceful thoughts in your hearts — it just moves me," she told the crowd before listing some of the projects her nonprofit institute has undertaken on behalf of environmental conservation and boosting economic conditions.

Near Gombe National Park, a protected 30-square-mile haven for chimpanzees in Tanzania, Goodall's institute has undertaken economic programs to help local villagers. "Instead of being mad at us — here are a bunch of people coming in only caring about chimpanzees — they feel good about us," she said. And in return, they have cooperated with her efforts to reforest the denuded area.

Goodall spent years crawling around grassy forests watching chimpanzees go about their lives. She named them, wrote about them, discovered that they used tools, and generally did for chimpanzees what Jacques Cousteau did for fish: revealed them as fascinating to the general population.

Now she travels 320 days a year, having shed the mantle of animal researcher for the role of global conservationist.

"I grew up in England in World War II," she told the crowd. "Of course I'm passionate about peace. So is everyone here. We don't want war."

Goodall parlayed her worldwide household name status into her institute, which, in addition to its environmental, economic and youth programs, works for the protection of chimpanzees in the wild and in captivity.

She managed to connect them all together when she told the story of a visitor to a zoo who watched a terrified chimp unwittingly throw himself into a deep-water moat — chimps don't swim — and struggle to come up for air. The zoo visitor jumped into the moat to save the chimp. He was later asked why. "Well, I happened to look into his eyes, and they were the eyes of a man, and they seemed to say, 'Won't anyone help me?'" Goodall recounted.

"I've seen that in the eyes of chimpanzees dressed up for entertainment," Goodall added. "I've seen it in the eyes of children in gang-ridden neighborhoods. I've seen it in the eyes of the homeless. Once you've seen it, you have got to do your bit."

Goodall's fascination with animals led to her peace activism. Hearing about the destruction of the forests at an academic conference in 1986, she decided to put aside her primate research and pursue environmentalism.

"It's the other side of it, you see," she said. "I had my dream of going off to Africa. . . . I had years of living my dream. Then when I realized the chimpanzees were in such dire needs and the forests were going — you have to pay back."

Chimpanzees in the wild have seen their numbers slashed and their forests ravaged. She says when she started there were 1 million chimpanzees across Africa. "Now there are about 200,000 at the most," she said. "You may think 200,000 sounds like a lot, but that's spread over 21 nations."

The British-born Goodall, who is 72 but swears she feels as energetic as she did at 30, has garnered just about every honor short of a Nobel Prize and was named a Messenger of Peace in 2002 by U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan.

Goodall was divorced, remarried and then widowed, and her one son is in his 30s. He lives in Tanzania, helping run one of the Goodall Institute's most ambitious projects: an organic food enterprise for the local Tanzanian farmers. Among the items for export will be coffee.

"I'm not an animal rights activist," she said, adding with her characteristic whimsy. "I don't know what to call myself."

It may be politic for someone of her stature who can raise millions of dollars — the Annenberg Foundation gave her institute \$1 million last year — to avoid labels. But Goodall's passion seems honestly tempered with a pragmatism she acquired from observing the world around her.

"The best of all places for a chimp is Gombe," she said, referring to the park forest in Tanzania that is home to almost 100 chimpanzees. "They're free, free from human interference." Other chimps in the wild don't have as secure a life. "The forests are being cut down, they get caught in wire snares," she said, "and then there is the bush meat trade."

Given all that, Goodall is no zoo-basher. "If you had a really good zoo with space and food and things to do, I'd probably choose to be there if I were a chimpanzee. People get very confrontational about their views. I try to back off and think what would a chimpanzee want?"

When the Los Angeles Zoo opened its Chimpanzees of Mahale Mountain exhibit, Goodall praised it as "state of the world." She won't comment on how the zoo's chimps are doing now because she hasn't seen them recently. The conferees are scheduled to visit them today. One of the zoo's male chimps died this summer after being bitten by a rattlesnake that made its way from the park into the exhibit. "You can't blame the zoo for that," she said, adding wryly: "I'm sure people did."

But she does have a bottom line on protecting chimpanzees: "They should stop being sold as pets; our closest living relatives can be bought and sold like slaves." She is also against using chimpanzees in entertainment and invasive medical research, but says gathering urine and blood samples from the primates is acceptable.

Speakers at the ChimpanZoo Conference — which is also a project of the Goodall Institute — laid out the problems facing chimpanzees used for entertainment or pet ownership.

Flashing a picture on a screen of a chimpanzee dressed up in pearls and blouse for an award-winning ad, Patti Ragan, who runs a Florida sanctuary for retired chimpanzees and orangutans, sighed.

“This is hard to compete with — to tell the public why this shouldn't be,” Ragan, of the Center for Great Apes in Wauchula, Fla., said Saturday. But she made a compelling case: Chimpanzees work until they're about 7 or 8 and then they are retired to a long and uncertain fate, often without the skills to bond with other chimps.

She flashed photos of her charges. “We have 50 to 60 years to care for them. These guys will outlive me.... That's why I'm against apes in entertainment — not because of the way they're treated. It's because of their future.”

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