

# ***JANE GOODALL'S WILD CHIMPANZEES***

## **The Making of *Jane Goodall's Wild Chimpanzees***

In a forest clearing, crew members assemble their equipment for the day's shoot. From ahead, they hear a bellowing "hoot, hoot, hoot." They've heard Frodo, the dominant male chimpanzee of the local group. A hectic day of shooting begins.

The production of the new giant screen film, *Jane Goodall's Wild Chimpanzees*, was a long series of fast-action shooting followed by long stretches of waiting. "It's a challenge when many of the stars—the chimpanzees—don't take direction well," laughs executive producer Mike Day. But a chance to work with legendary researcher Dr. Jane Goodall and "her" chimpanzees in the Tanzanian forest sanctuary of Gombe Stream National Park made all the challenges more than worthwhile.

A production of the Science Museum of Minnesota, Science North, and Discovery Place, Inc., *Jane Goodall's Wild Chimpanzees* tells the story of Jane Goodall, her work with wild chimpanzees, and her life-long mission of raising awareness for environmental responsibility. At age 26, Goodall was sent by Dr. Louis Leaky to study wild chimpanzees at Gombe. Over the next forty years, she made revolutionary discoveries about chimpanzees – discoveries that permanently changed our thinking about our own human behavior.

"I think these [giant screen] films work really well when you can focus the story around a very strong, dynamic personality," says producer/director David Lickley. "And when you're looking at the field of science there are very few people who have the prestige and reputation of Dr. Goodall. So if her location is remote and challenging, we'll figure that part out."

Gombe is definitely remote and challenging. It's 20 square miles of forest surrounded by human habitation. The western border of the park is Lake Tanganyika; the eastern border is the Great Rift Valley escarpment. Local Tanzanians farm along the other borders. No roads lead into the park. Extreme humidity caused moisture-related problems with the cameras. Shadows and dark subject matter created lighting challenges. And with the film's unpredictable stars, "the biggest challenge was to be in the right place at the right time," notes director of photography Reed Smoot.

It took five years to produce the film, beginning with a proposal to the National Science Foundation suggesting the project in 1996 and culminating with the final cut, which premieres in 2002. After an initial scouting trip in May 1998, a skeleton crew went out for the first month of filming in May of 1999. The

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**THE MAKING OF JANE GOODALL'S WILD CHIMPANZEES**  
**PAGE 2 OF 4**

crew flew to Kigoma, Tanzania, where they boarded a boat headed for Gombe. With no roads or airstrips nearby, the waterways were the only option for reaching the spectacular forests and beaches of the national park. The Gombe Stream Research Center became home for the next month as the crew adjusted to life away from civilization.

“In Gombe, even though there have been a lot of people who’ve filmed these wild chimpanzees, it’s not a safari location,” says Day. “You have to handle the logistics and bring your own infrastructure. You have to bring your water, you have to bring your kitchen, your cooks...you have to hire people to do your laundry, and you have to bring your satellite phone to make sure you have communication. It’s just this little outpost with some researchers.”

Dr. Anne Pusey, director of the Jane Goodall Institute’s Center for Primate Studies at the University of Minnesota, knew a great deal about what to expect at Gombe. She has spent considerable time there as a researcher and was the driving force behind bringing Goodall’s research notes to the University of Minnesota for archiving. She attended the scouting trip and gave the production crew a good idea of what they were looking for in the chimpanzee’s behaviors.

“A lot of things chimpanzees do foreshadow our own behavior,” says Pusey. “Inter-group competition, primitive warfare, hunting and meat sharing, and tool using are some really interesting samples of behavior we never suspected when Jane set out to study them over 40 years ago.”

Daily activities started at 5 a.m., when line producer Kathryn Liptrott awoke to get the cooks started on breakfast. Three charcoal braziers cooked bacon, eggs, and creative dinner recipes. After the crew ate, they hiked with their equipment to a suitable location for filming. Foot baths and surgical masks were necessary parts of the morning ritual to guard against bringing human illnesses to the chimpanzees. Park guides helped show the crew where to find the chimpanzees. The crew then set up to wait for the chimpanzees to wander into the selected “stage.”

“The thing that awed me every time was the devotion of the parks people,” says Liptrott. “These are guys who trudge through mud and rain or sweltering temperatures every single day to go out and track chimpanzees and take care of their natural resources. They’re truly amazing.”

After two weeks, the first batch of film was transported through a driving rainstorm on an open-sided boat, where porters were bailing water to keep from capsizing. Once the film made it back to Kigoma, it was dropped off at the FedEx office for delivery back to the United States. This series of events became routine, as film was sent back to the United States every ten to fourteen days.

**THE MAKING OF JANE GOODALL'S WILD CHIMPANZEES**  
**PAGE 3 OF 4**

The third trip to Gombe was scheduled to coincide with one of Goodall's major discoveries – the “termite-fishing” season when the chimpanzees can be seen making and using tools to obtain food. With such a major event taking place, the crew had to know exactly where the chimpanzees were going to be every day in order to obtain needed shots.

“An adult chimpanzee will build a new nest to sleep in every night,” remembers Day. “So you watch them nest and then you can go back to camp and wash up and have dinner and go to bed. Then you’ve got to come back to the nesting sight before daylight to be there when the chimp de-nests. Basically, you get a shorter night sleep than a chimpanzee does.”

A veteran chimp-tracker with three Gombe seasons under her belt, researcher Elizabeth Lonsdorf was able to offer the production crew helpful tips for finding chimpanzees and avoiding snakes and pestering baboons.

“The baboons will run into your room and steal something right from your hand,” says Lonsdorf. “One of the baboons had to be transported to another part of the park after breaking into one of the crew members’ rooms by pulling a window out of its cement casing.”

Beyond baboons, the crew contended with snakes, bees, malaria-carrying mosquitoes, and the chimpanzees themselves. Nearly every time, he encountered the film crew, Frodo attempted to assert his dominance by tossing a crew member into the bushes or knocking someone down.

“You’re always working on a fairly high level of caution, because there is a lot of stuff out there that can hurt you,” says Smoot. “With the realization that we were a long way from any kind of medical help, we were always extremely cautious and watching out for one another as well.”

The fourth trip to Gombe was scheduled to take place at a chimpanzee sanctuary in the Republic of Congo, but a dangerous political situation arose before filming and the crew was redirected to Ingamba Island in Uganda’s Lake Victoria.

“The first trip was with a small crew on the ground only, to get a baseline of chimpanzees. That allowed us to flesh out our story,” continues Day. “The second main shoot developed that story line further and the third shoot, in essence, became an opportunity to pick up additional shots to provide more emphasis to parts

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**THE MAKING OF JANE GOODALL'S WILD CHIMPANZEES**  
**PAGE 4 OF 4**

of the story that our test audiences said they wanted to see more of. *Jane Goodall's Wild Chimpanzees* will be a much better film because it's been shot over a three year period."

With the filming completed, the production team flew out of Tanzania with a new perspective on life.

"You're going to meet those chimpanzees and experience this incredible environment, so the film is wonderful education and great science. But it's also something more, and it's something more because of Jane," says Day. "Jane is an inspiration for all of us to aspire to loftier goals. Those dreams can be realized and we can make a difference. I think audiences are going to take that from the film. It's absolutely uplifting."

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