

INTRODUCTION

Section 2: The Status and Welfare of Great Apes and Gibbons

As in previous editions of the *State of the Apes* series, this section examines broader issues that affect great apes and gibbons around the world. In this volume, **Chapter 7** features an overview of the population status of apes in the wild, as well as a deeper consideration of the rele-

Photo: © Tatyana Humle



vance of evidence-based approaches to conservation; **Chapter 8** reports on the fight for personhood and rights for nonhuman animals, as well as the status of apes in captivity.

The online Abundance Annex—available at www.stateoftheapes.com—presents updated population estimates for apes across their ranges. In combination with figures provided in the previous volumes in this series, the annex allows for the tracking of population trends and patterns over time.

Chapter Highlights

Chapter 7. The Status of Apes: A Foundation for Systematic, Evidence-based Conservation

This chapter comprises two parts. The first focuses on the status of ape populations in their natural habitat, presenting statistics in the context of the various threats to apes and methods for interpreting population dynamics. The second part assesses the relevance of evidence-based conservation, highlighting the advantages of a more nuanced understanding of local contexts in the design of conservation action.

The status section is unparalleled in terms of its methodology, which aims to gather all available abundance data on all ape taxa. It collates what is understood about the main threats to apes across all ranges in Africa and Asia, namely climate breakdown, habitat loss and fragmentation, infectious disease, poaching, and human–wildlife conflict. The ubiquitous nature of these threats across all taxon highlights how global factors are at play. Identifying trends in ape distribution and density over time, this section contributes to an understanding of the impacts of these threats and allows for the design and evaluation of evidence-based conservation action. It also presents a historical overview of ape surveys, as well as current and emerging survey methods.

The second section demonstrates that conservation action requires accurate, site-specific socioeconomic, political and ecological data to be effective. It stresses that a thorough understanding of the complex systems at play in a conservation site is necessary if protection of nature is to be achieved. In making the case for a broader uptake of evidence-based conservation, this section presents a case study on the positive impacts of such an approach in the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo.

Chapter 8. The Campaign for Nonhuman Rights and the Status of Captive Apes

The first part of this chapter explores the struggle for personhood and rights for nonhuman animals. The second part updates and broadens the captive ape statistics that are included in each volume of the *State of the Apes* series.

The chapter begins by describing the strategic litigation campaign of the Florida-based Nonhuman Rights Project (NhRP), which argues that nonhuman animals such as chimpanzees deserve fundamental rights based on their complex cognition and autonomy. The NhRP strategy draws on the experience of the abolitionist and civil rights movements, situating the campaign for nonhuman rights in the broader context of struggles for social justice. The NhRP initially brought cases on behalf of individual captive apes in the United States, under the common law system; it subsequently expanded its campaign beyond chimpanzees to include elephants, thereby calling for an unprecedented consideration of nonhuman rights of species beyond humans' closest relatives. This section also demonstrates that the consideration of "personhood" for great apes has resulted in more explicit acknowledgment of rights in some civil law jurisdictions, including Brazil.

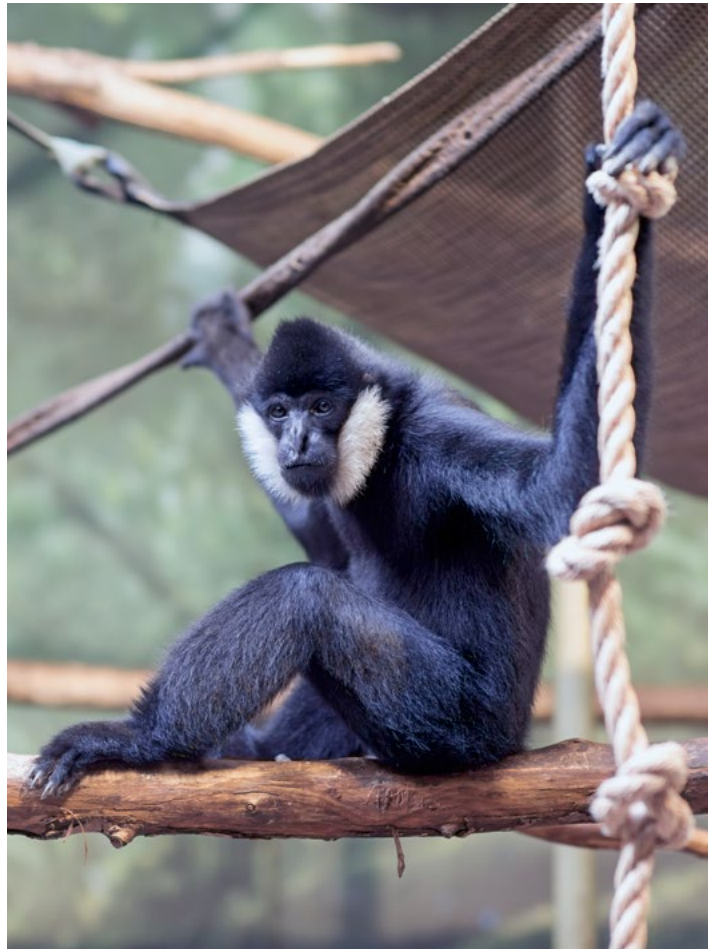


Photo: © Lincoln Park Zoo

The second part of this chapter presents captive ape population statistics and discusses the regulatory landscape affecting them. While data gaps and quality concerns preclude an accurate estimate of the total number of apes in captivity worldwide, available data suggest that the number of apes in most zoos is relatively static. In contrast, rescue centers and sanctuaries are taking in apes at an unsustainably high rate, suggesting that urgent measures are needed to combat the illegal trade in apes. Increases in the size or number of sanctuaries are often followed by surges in arrivals, indicating that insufficient space for seized and voluntarily released apes is a critical barrier to enforcement and compliance.