

TRIBUTE

(1934–2025)

Jane Goodall

A Life in the Service of Nature and Humanity

From her pioneering study of chimpanzees in Gombe to her global campaign for compassion toward all living beings, Jane Goodall devoted her life to bridging the gap between people and nature.



STORY BY
DANIEL STILES

In July 1960, at the age of 26, Jane Goodall travelled from England to what is now Tanzania and courageously entered the extraordinary world of wild chimpanzees. She was equipped with nothing more than a notebook and a pair of binoculars.

With no formal training, but with the encouragement of Louis Leakey and her resolute patience and optimism, she won the trust of these initially wary creatures. She managed to open a window into their mysterious lives, finding surprising similarities with our own. The public remains fascinated to this day. Her 1971 book, *In the Shadow of Man*, was an international best-seller.

However, Jane Goodall was more than just a primatologist, earning a PhD in ethology from the University of Cambridge in 1965. She wanted to change the way in which humans perceived chimpanzees, and by extension, all animals and the natural world. As she said in an interview shown on Netflix in October after her passing, she felt that she had been placed



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on Earth for a purpose. She was on a mission to create an understanding with humans that they are animals, equal to others, and that we are part of the natural world.

As Jane emphasised in her thousands of presentations made around the world over the past 50 years, humans depend on Mother Nature for our existence and survival. Nature provides clean air, water, sustenance, the basics of survival. And it was beautiful and fascinating. Jane was extremely observant; even as a child back in England, she observed the behaviour of insects, birds, and her own dogs. One of her happiest recollections was discovering where chicken eggs came from after sitting for hours under a roosting hen waiting for one to appear. More recently, she recounted in the Netflix interview that she had been at the Denver airport, where people walked around staring into their cell phones,



SUMY SADURNI/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES

TOP RIGHT
British primatologist Jane Goodall visits a chimp rescue center on June 9, 2018, in Entebbe, Uganda.

BELOW
Jane at the Gombe Stream Game Reserve in Tanzania where she discovered, with the help of David Greybeard that chimps hunt for meat and, ground breakingly, that they make and use tools.

as a mating display ritual was unfolding between a male and female bird above them. Jane saw it, of course, and stopped to watch.

Jane's organisations

To reach and involve more people in her mission, Jane established the Jane Goodall Institute, targeting adults, and her Roots & Shoots programme, aimed at young people. She was also actively engaged in establishing chimpanzee sanctuaries around Africa and was a strong supporter of the Pan African



PHOTO BY JANE GOODALL INSTITUTE/TEMPLETON PRIZE

Sanctuary Alliance. Two of the sanctuaries are located in East Africa, one on Lake Victoria's Ngamba Island in Uganda and the other on Ol Pejeta Conservancy in Kenya.

The Jane Goodall Institute, which supports the Gombe research, works mainly to protect chimpanzees and their habitats. With more than 25 offices around the world, the JGI is widely recognised for community-centred conservation and development programmes in Africa. Jane said that she founded it after she realised that the forest around the Gombe Stream Game Reserve was disappearing due to land clearance for farms made by poverty-stricken people.

JGI's youth programme, Roots & Shoots, began in 1991 when a group of 12 local teenagers met with Goodall on her back porch in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. They were eager to discuss a range of environmental problems with which they had firsthand experience, which caused them deep concern. The organisation has grown to encompass over 8,000 local groups worldwide, spanning more than 140 countries and involving nearly 150,000 youth. They are taught from a young



TOP RIGHT

Jane Goodall visited Ol Pejeta in 2016 and reunited with Uruhara, pictured in this iconic photo.

BELOW

Jane Goodall was a titan in the world of conservation who revealed much of what we know about chimpanzees and animal behaviour.

age about the value of nature and the actions each person can take to preserve it.

Jane teaches through JGI's activities that no positive action to do good for the world is too small, as long as cooperation exists. One person recycling or switching to renewable energy might not seem significant, but if millions do, it can have a substantial positive impact.

Jane has been recognised for her work, appointed a Dame in 2003 and received the US Presidential Medal of Freedom in 2025, along with many other awards. She was



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PHOTO BY OL PEJETA CONSERVANCY

known for travelling constantly for her work, telling *The Times* newspaper in 2022 that she had not slept in the same bed for more than three weeks since 1986. She was scheduled to speak again at a sold-out event in California on October 3, 2025.

Personal reflections

I first met Jane Goodall in the early 1970s, while I was a student at the University of California, Berkeley. She had come to speak publicly and reunite with her old friends J. Desmond Clark and Glynn Isaac, my supervisors. I was impressed by her beautiful, calm speaking voice and eloquence. The next day, I met her in person at a seminar attended by the paleoanthropology staff and graduate students, where she presented her evidence for chimpanzee hunting, meat-eating, and toolmaking that had so revolutionised thinking about what made humans distinct from other animals.

The next time I met her was 40 years later, in 2015, when I attended a gala dinner in Nairobi for Roots & Shoots, where I accepted an award on behalf of Ol Pejeta for the work they had done in furthering JGI's aims. Jane was charming and eloquent as usual, with a message rarely heard amongst conservationists or professed animal lovers:

“There are many animal welfare groups that sometimes seem to forget that human beings are animals too, that we need to include humans in our sphere of compassion,” Jane said. “There are people, particularly in the animal welfare and conservation communities, who seem to have very little regard for the social injustices and miseries around the world. “If you know enough about poverty and its hopelessness, you totally understand why people are cutting down trees and setting snares.”

A year later, Jane visited Ol Pejeta, and I guided her around. In August 2015, we met privately in Chicago during a joint International Primatological Society/American Society of Primatologists Congress to discuss various matters. Her presentation there included a new addition to her repertoire of inspirational advice:

“You cannot get through a single day without having an impact on the world around you. What you do makes a difference, and you have to decide what kind of difference you want to make”. ●

Dan Stiles has been researching natural resource use and management in Africa and Asia since the 1970s, specializing in illegal wildlife trade since the 1990s.

TOP

Receiving Ol Pejeta Conservancy's award. Dame Jane Goodall received numerous prestigious awards throughout her lifetime, recognizing her groundbreaking scientific research, decades of conservation work, and global advocacy. Her discovery that chimpanzees make and use tools forever changed our understanding of the relationship between humans and the rest of the animal kingdom.