CHIMPANZEE FACT SHEET

STATUS:
Endangered

DESCRIPTION:
Chimpanzee faces are pinkish to black, and the apes' bodies are covered with long black hair. Chimps lack a tail. Their opposable thumbs and toes help them grasp objects easily. Chimpanzees are quadrupedal, which means that they walk on all four limbs, although they can also walk upright (bipedal) for short distances.

SIZE:
Standing approximately 4 feet high, males weigh between 90 and 120 pounds, while females weigh between 60 and 110 pounds.

POPULATION:
An estimated 100,000 to 200,000 chimpanzees remain in the wild.

LIFESPAN:
Chimpanzees rarely live past the age of 50 in the wild, but have been known to reach the age of 60 in captivity.

RANGE:
Chimpanzees can be found in 21 African countries.

HABITAT:
Chimps prefer dense tropical rainforests but can also be found in secondary-growth forests, woodlands, bamboo forests, swamps, and even open savannah.

FOOD:
Chimpanzees are omnivores, meaning they eat a wide variety of foods that includes fruits, nuts, seeds, and insects. Chimps occasionally hunt and eat meat.

BEHAVIOR:
Chimps live in communities. These communities are composed of family groups of three to six individuals, totaling about 50 animals. Hierarchies are formed by the adult males of the community, which is led by one alpha (the highest) male. Adolescent females may move freely between communities, although territory is strictly patrolled and conflicts can occur between neighbors.

OFFSPRING:
Most mothers give birth to one young an average of every five to six years in the wild. Young chimps stay with their mothers for up to 10 years.
THREATS:
Habitat destruction is the greatest threat of the chimpanzee. Large population decreases are also blamed on hunting and commercial exportation. Fewer than 250,000 chimpanzees still exist in western and central Africa. Chimpanzees now occupy only a fraction of their former territory. Chimpanzee habitats, already small and isolated, are being further destroyed by increased commercial and agricultural development. In Africa, both species of chimpanzees—pan paniscus and pan troglodytes—are considered endangered. The U.S. Department of the Interior also lists them as endangered.

There are approximately 2,000 captive chimpanzees in the United States. About 300 are in zoos, and the remaining 1,700 were bred for inhumane medical research. Many are the offspring of chimpanzees captured in the wild before 1973, when the United States agreed to abide by an international treaty prohibiting the capture and importation of wild chimpanzees.

Chimpanzee meat is no longer exclusively the food of the forest peoples, but is now commercially available in urban areas too. Bushmeat, including chimpanzee flesh, is also eaten by people in logging camps.

CITES prohibits chimpanzees caught in the wild being used in circuses, but in countries where CITES has not been ratified or where it cannot be enforced, chimpanzees may be taken from the wild as infants, which often means the killing of the adults in their group.

Chimpanzees have been used in brain and skull research and in social deprivation studies. Chimpanzees are now popular subjects for AIDS research, although their immune system does not succumb to the virus. Chimpanzees are also used in painful cancer, hepatitis, and psychological tests, as well as for research into artificial insemination and birth control methods, blood diseases, organ transplants, and experimental surgery. Their use in military experiments is suspected, but such information is kept secret and is hard to verify. Because they are in short supply, captive chimps are often subjected to multiple experiments, each of which can last an average of two to four years.

During the late 1980s, the National Institutes of Health (NIH) developed its so-called "National Chimpanzee Management Plan." This plan is, in reality, just a funding mechanism for five breeding colonies to maintain a steady supply of chimpanzees for vivisectors. Current CMP guidelines do not prohibit any potentially painful or psychologically damaging experiment from being performed on chimpanzees, nor do they establish minimum housing standards. The plan has no provision for retiring old or "worn out" chimps, nor does it require that infant chimps be raised by their mothers. Two-thirds of the chimps raised under the CMP are released to research projects. The rest are used for breeding.

The National Institutes of Health is now considering giving $3.3 million to Columbia Presbyterian Hospital in New York to breed chimps that would be killed to provide hearts and other organs for human transplants. Each transplanted chimp heart would be used only until a human heart became available. No chimp-to-human heart transplant has yet been successful.

CAPTIVITY:
Animals used in the circus spend the majority of the year imprisoned in small cages or on chains, traveling from show to show. The training endured by circus animals is almost always based on intimidation; trainers must break the spirit of the animals in order to control them. While zoos and aquariums may appear to be educational and conservation-oriented, most are designed with the needs and desires of the visitors in mind, not the needs of the animals. Many animals in zoos and aquariums exhibit abnormal behavior as a result of being deprived of their natural environments and social structures. Some zoos and aquariums do rescue some animals and work to save endangered species, but most animals in zoos were either captured from the wild or bred in captivity for the purpose of public display, not species protection. The vast majority of captive-bred animals will never be returned to the wild. When the facility breeds too many animals they become "surplus" and often are sold to laboratories, traveling shows, shooting ranches, or to private individuals who may be unqualified to care for them.

PROTECTION:
*CITES, Appendix I, Endangered Species Act

*Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora, an international treaty with more than 144 member countries. Appendix I listed species cannot be traded commercially. Appendix II listed species can be traded commercially only if it does not harm their survival.