

Chimps explore their new digs at the zoo's Primate Forest

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New chimp habitat expands on improvements first helped along by Jane Goodall

Construction of Primate Forest, the Oregon Zoo's ambitious new habitat for chimpanzees and orangutans, is nearly complete, and the chimps are already making themselves right at home.

Primate Forest opens to the public later this year, but in the meantime Portland's chimp troop will have a high-profile settling-in period. Last week, Chloe, Delilah, Leah and Jackson got their first look at the indoor "day room," and yesterday they explored one of two new outdoor yards. Both areas are visible from the main visitor pathway, and zoogoers may catch glimpses of the chimps — and hear some excited vocalizing — as everyone settles in.

"Leah was the first one into the new space," said keeper Colleen Reed. "She went straight to the top of one of the climbing structures. Everyone seemed very confident and relaxed. We heard lots of happy vocalizations, and they appeared to feel right at home."

Delilah even gave care staff a chimp's-eye look at the new space. She quickly took charge of a GoPro keepers had placed inside the new outdoor yard as enrichment, and chronicled much of the yesterday's events.

"It's especially gratifying to see Chloe interacting with the new space," Reed added. "She has such a long history here, and has been loved by so many people over the years."

Before coming to the Oregon Zoo in 1975, Chloe had been kept as a pet. She had only been around humans, and had to learn chimp behavior to be accepted by the others. Around that time, the zoo's pioneering work with chimpanzees drew the attention of famed conservationist Jane Goodall, who visited Portland regularly, getting to know Chloe, Leah, Delilah and the others.

This fall, as the chimp's moved into their new Primate Forest home, keepers reflected on Portland's decades-long connection to Dr. Goodall, and looked ahead to a new era of care for chimpanzees and other primates.

"Back in 1970s and '80s, Dr. Goodall helped the zoo find funding for a big outdoor area to house all the chimps here," Reed said. "And the new Primate Forest habitat is a natural outgrowth of those early developments. It's so great to see Chloe and the others enjoying

that space."

Primate Forest features climbing structures, complex spaces for family groups, and enhanced opportunities for enrichment and keeper interaction. Gone are the Eisenhower-era indoor portions of the old chimp habitat, considered state-of-the-art when the zoo first moved to its current site in 1959, but not so great by today's standards.

The day room features natural flooring and a pair of 26-foot-tall, floor-to-ceiling climbing structures. A simulated termite mound encourages natural foraging behavior, and five roof hatches allow keepers to scatter food from above.

Many of the new features at Primate Forest — such as a stream, waterfall, large boulders, logs and more — were made possible through the Oregon Zoo Foundation's \$8.5 million Heart of the Oregon Zoo campaign, which is currently raising funds to support the zoo's efforts in advancing animal welfare, conservation and education. To learn more or to make a gift, call 503-505-5494 or email do-more@oregonzoo.org.

Primate Forest is one of eight major projects funded by a community-supported zoo bond measure passed in 2008. The final three projects — new habitats for primates and polar bears and an improved space for rhinos — are being managed as a single construction project to increase efficiency.

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