Name: _____ Date: _____

What Did Jane Goodall Discover at Gombe?

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What did Jane Goodall discover at Gombe? The short answer is that wild chimpanzees make and use tools. The longer answer is a story about patience, a notebook and a very long study. It begins on July 14, 1960. That was the day Goodall first began her chimpanzee research in what is now Gombe, Tanzania. She was 26 years old, and she was about to change a big idea in science. This is the story of how.

Gombe lies on the eastern shore of Lake Tanganyika. Goodall had little science training and no fixed plan for how to study animals. She did have a keen eye and endless patience. In the 1950s she had saved money to go to Kenya, and there she met a scientist named Louis Leakey. He was looking for the right person to study chimpanzees. He thought that wild chimps could help him guess how Stone Age ancestors may have behaved.

Before this, most research on chimps had been done on animals in captivity. One report said Leakey saw her lack of training as a plus. She arrived with a notebook and some old binoculars. At first the chimps ran away from her. Goodall watched from a high ridge with a wide view. As the chimps got used to her, she moved closer. Years later she said she had been an intruder, and a strange one at that.

She also broke a habit of her day. Scientists who studied animals usually gave each one a number. Goodall gave the chimps names, such as David Greybeard, Goliath and Frodo. A name made it easy to follow one animal through her notes from day to day and from week to week. She used the names in her field notes. The Jane Goodall Institute says she came to see each chimp as an individual with its own personality.

Then came the fall of 1960. Some accounts say October, and others say November 4. Through her binoculars, she saw an older male chimp with silver hair on his face sitting by a termite mound. Again and again, he pushed a stem of grass into a hole and pulled it out. He picked termites off it with his mouth. When he left, Goodall tried the same motion, and termites stuck to her stem.

A few days later, Goodall saw chimps pick a small leafy twig and strip off the leaves before they fished. Why was that such big news? For a long time, people thought that only humans made and used tools. They even described people as "Man, the tool maker." A tool is an object used to do a job. Stripping a twig changes it to fit the job. Goodall called this the crude beginning of tool making.

Goodall sent the news to Louis Leakey by telegram. He replied that people would have to change their idea of a tool and of a human, or accept chimpanzees as human. Some people tried to discredit her because she was young and untrained. In the end, Leakey got a grant

from the National Geographic Society. Her study could go on, and a photographer could be sent to document the chimps.

She found out that chimps eat meat, too. In 1960 she saw a group eating a bushpig. Until then, people had assumed that chimpanzees ate no meat at all. She wrote a paper in the journal Nature. In it she said chimps used sticks, stalks, stems and twigs, mostly to eat insects. They also used leaves as drinking tools. In six months she saw tool use in 25 chimps of all ages and both sexes.

How do you keep notes on animals for years? Goodall wrote notes by hand. One says a young chimp named Flint nursed at 2:00, rested and then nursed again. Later, notes were spoken into a recorder and typed each night on carbon paper copies. In time the long stories became grids of short codes called check-sheets. Students and Tanzanian field staff joined the watching, so the work was shared by many people.

Today the researchers at Gombe do what are called focal follows. They follow one chosen chimp for the day. They write down who is in the group, what it eats and how it deals with the others. The Jane Goodall Institute says they do this every day of the year. It is the same plan Goodall used when she began, written down day after day. By its count, more than 165,000 hours of watching have been collected, from more than 320 chimps.

Fishing for termites turned out to be a skill that young chimps have to learn. In 2004, scientists reported in the journal Nature on a four-year study at Gombe of how the young learn it. The chimps make their tools from plants and push them into the mound. The report adds that chimp groups may use tools in different ways, a kind of local culture. The study found clear differences in how young females and young males developed the skill.

What has the long study found? Goodall saw chimps hunt monkeys and share the meat, which the Institute says hints at teamwork. She also launched a mother-infant study. The Institute reports that young chimps raised by more supportive mothers tend to do better as adults. By 2001, scientists could use dung samples to trace family ties between chimps without bothering the animals. The Institute adds that recent studies found males with strong social bonds father more young.

Goodall earned a doctorate in ethology, the science of animal behavior, at Cambridge in the mid-1960s. The Jane Goodall Institute was founded in 1977, first to support her work at Gombe. Jane Goodall died on October 1, 2025, at age 91. The Institute says that, thanks to her, many wildlife behavior studies now treat animals as individuals. A 2011 report said that almost every day since 1960, someone had gone out to watch the chimps. They wrote down what the chimps do.

Questions

1. Why did Goodall give the chimpanzees names instead of numbers?

A. Because the law said she had to
B. Names helped her follow single animals over time
C. Because chimps answer to names

2. What did the chimp do with the stem of grass?

A. He pushed it into a hole in a mound and picked termites off it
B. He used it to build a nest
C. He gave it to Goodall

3. Which sentence best tells why the twig-stripping scene was big news?

A. It was filmed for TV that week
B. Chimps are loud animals
C. Many people thought only humans made tools

4. In "an intruder, and a strange one at that," what does intruder mean?

A. Someone who is not welcome in a place
B. Someone who knows a lot
C. Someone who cooks

5. What is a focal follow?

A. A tool made of grass
B. Following a chosen chimpanzee and recording what it does
C. A fast telegram

Words to know

ridge: high, narrow hill
ethology: animal behavior science
intruder: unwelcome visitor
captivity: kept in cages
grant: project money

Answer key: What Did Jane Goodall Discover at Gombe?

1. B. Names helped her follow single animals over time
2. A. He pushed it into a hole in a mound and picked termites off it
3. C. Many people thought only humans made tools
4. A. Someone who is not welcome in a place
5. B. Following a chosen chimpanzee and recording what it does