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All 40 stranded Wildlife Waystation chimps rescued

Final 10 chimpanzees arrive safely at Chimp Haven; donations still needed

LOS ANGELES – Having spent the last three winters in the empty solitude of a defunct wildlife refuge outside Los Angeles, the last of 40 stranded chimpanzees will spend the holidays surrounded by the sights and sounds of hundreds of chimpanzees living among the pine forests of the world’s largest chimpanzee sanctuary, Chimp Haven.

The last 10 chimpanzees from the Wildlife Waystation – affectionately called *The Treetop Ten* because they will soon be able to climb real trees likely for the first times in their lives – made the 1,600-mile trek from Sylmar, Ca., to Chimp Haven in Keithville, La. Axil’s group, the first eight, arrived just days before Thanksgiving. The final two arrived late Sunday night, just in time for them to enjoy holiday treats and a new forever home for the new year.

“We’ve been working tirelessly for three years to rescue the chimps impacted by the closure of the Wildlife Waystation, and I’m ecstatic that the final moves to sanctuary have been done,” said Erika Fleury, program director for the North American Primate Sanctuary Alliance (NAPSA), the organization that’s leading the *Chimpanzees in Need* emergency fundraising campaign. “Raising more than \$4 million to rehome these chimpanzees took a dedicated and relentless team effort and the generosity of thousands of donors. This holiday season we have so much to be grateful for, and top of the list is that 10 chimpanzees will be spending it enjoying one of the best sanctuaries in the world.”

The Treetop Ten were the last of 40 chimpanzees, and more than 400 other animals, left behind when the Wildlife Waystation refuge closed unexpectedly in 2019. The California Department of Fish and Wildlife stepped in and quickly rehomed most of the animals, but for the chimpanzees, who require complex and specialized care, there was no place to go. The *Chimpanzees in Need* emergency fundraising rescue effort was formed, and over a three-year period, worked with a handful of facilities across the country capable of caring for chimps to expand their habitats to welcome the chimpanzees, most of whom were retired from biomedical research or the entertainment industry.

For the final rescue, Axil, Buster, Connor, December, Denise, Inky, Mocha and Tequila, all members of the same chimpanzee social group, were accompanied on the cross-country journey by a team of experts, including Dr. Raven Jackson, Chimp Haven attending veterinarian and director of Veterinary Care. The sweet duo of Amber and Mousse followed shortly after, and for the first time ever laid eyes on their Wildlife Waystation neighbors after years of only hearing their sounds at the Wildlife Waystation.

“It was a long trip from central California to Louisiana, but the chimpanzees were comforted by their soft fleece travel blankets and the attentive veterinary and care-team who monitored them closely along the entire route,” Jackson said. “All 10 arrived safely at Chimp Haven and are getting settled into their new surroundings.”

Chimp Haven President and CEO Rana Smith, who was at the Waystation to meet The Treetop Ten prior to their departure, shared her excitement about welcoming these chimpanzees in need to Chimp Haven.

“Everyone at Chimp Haven is thrilled to welcome The Treetop Ten to the sanctuary and provide these individuals with what we call the Chimp Life. Every aspect of our sanctuary is designed to meet the social, physical and psychological needs of chimpanzees. It is a place where they will thrive,” Smith said. “Once they have time to acclimate to their new home, our team will offer opportunities for them to meet other chimpanzees and potentially expand their social groups, giving them the closest possible experience to life in the wild.”

Fleury said that though all involved with *Chimpanzees in Need* are elated to have rescued all 40 chimpanzees, another \$500,000 is still needed to help sanctuaries cover initial care costs for the chimps and finalize construction projects.

“The facilities that have taken in the chimpanzees are committed to the animals’ lifetime care, which costs \$25,000 each per year. Chimpanzees can live for decades, and *Chimpanzees in Need* is determined to help the sanctuaries that have taken them in have the financial resources they need during the chimps’ first year in their new homes,” Fleury said. In addition to Chimp Haven, chimpanzees have been rehomed to accredited zoos and sanctuaries, including Chimpanzee Sanctuary Northwest, Center for Great Apes, Save the Chimps and Primarily Primates.

“With less than \$500K left to raise and all the chimpanzees rehomed, everyone is feeling filled with gratitude this holiday season. We are especially thankful for the handful of deeply committed caregivers and board member from Wildlife Waystation who have stayed behind to make sure these chimpanzees get safely rehomed, and the California Department of Fish and Wildlife who has been an incredible partner through everything as they oversaw animal care,” said Fleury.

Chimpanzees In Need has the endorsement of leading ethologist and activist Dr. Jane Goodall.

“I’ve visited these sanctuaries,” Goodall said of Chimp Haven and other accredited sanctuaries working to save the Wildlife Waystation chimpanzees. “They’ll provide perfect environments where these chimpanzees, who’ve known so much suffering, can live out their lives in peace.”

To learn more about the chimpanzee rescue effort and donate to support their care in sanctuary, visit www.chimpsinneed.org

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About Chimpanzees in Need

Chimpanzees in Need is an emergency rescue fund led by NAPSA, a coalition of the leading primate sanctuaries in North America. Chimpanzees in Need is a fiscally sponsored project of 7th Generation Advisors, a 501(c)(3) non-profit corporation that donates their services in support of this emergency

fund to ensure all donations are tax deductible. The coalition works in collaboration with California Department of Fish and Wildlife, which is managing the closed Wildlife Waystation. All donations go directly toward the continuing care and rehoming efforts for the chimpanzees. All donations will be accepted and administered by 7th Generation Advisors.