

Villagers use satellite pictures to help chimpanzees live in their forests

By NASA.gov, adapted by Newsela staff on 01.31.17

Word Count **386**

Level **590L**



TOP: Three chimpanzees sit on a rock in Gombe Stream National Park in Tanzania. Photo/Getty Images. BOTTOM: Landsat images compare the forest cover change between 1972 and 1999 in the region around Gombe. Photo/NASA/Goddard Scientific Visualization Studio/Cindy Starr

Chimpanzees are our closest cousins. But they are in danger. It is believed that fewer than 345,000 chimpanzees remain in the wild. There used to be far more. Scientists are turning to the NASA satellites to help preserve the chimps' forest homes. Satellites take pictures of the Earth from space. NASA is the U.S space agency.

Chimpanzees need help, says Lilian Pintea. He works with satellite pictures at the Jane Goodall Institute. The Jane Goodall Institute works for chimpanzee conservation. Conservation is the protection and care for living things.

Chimpanzees Are Losing Their Forests

There are many reasons why there are fewer chimpanzees in the world. Hunting, illness and habitat loss are just a few.

A chimpanzee's habitat is in the forest. But forests are getting smaller. Scientists can see this in the satellite pictures. They can use these pictures to make better plans for the chimps.

Pintea looked at satellite pictures of a forest in Africa. One photo was taken in 1972. The other was taken in 1999. The 1972 picture showed forests that grew far across the land. The 1999 picture showed large parts where trees had been cut down.

More people cut down the trees for farming, lumber and making charcoal. It happened because the population grew.

Pictures Tell An Important Story

Jane Goodall is a scientist. She has spent her whole life helping chimpanzees. She is 82 years old. She thinks it is important to work with the villagers. They help plan and protect forest lands that both people and chimps need.

Goodall said she was excited to see the villagers react to the satellite pictures. The pictures show the results of farming and logging. Both villagers and scientists can see how these things affect the chimps' habitat.

People And Chimps Both Suffer Without Trees

Cutting down trees hurts both chimps and people. The chimpanzees lose feeding and nesting grounds. It is very hard for the animals to move their homes. People lose food as well. Things like honey or seeds from special trees disappear when the forests go away.

The satellite pictures have improved conservation plans. The villagers use them to decide how to help.

The government makes satellite pictures available for free. Pintea says this is very important. It lets scientists help the chimpanzees more easily.

