

Jane Goodall: World's Best-Known Naturalist

[B2]

La novantenne etologa e conservazionista britannica studia gli scimpanzé da oltre 60 anni. Le sue scoperte sulla vita sociale delle scimmie hanno ridefinito il rapporto tra esseri umani e animali.

British ethologist Jane Goodall **trans**formed the world's understanding of the relationship between humans and animals through her long-term observation of the behaviour of chimpanzees, man's closest relative. She spent more than fifty years in the African jungle and her work there forced scientists to accept that humans were part of, and not separate from, the rest of the animal kingdom.

OBSESSED WITH ANIMALS

Goodall was born in London, England in April 1934. Captivated by animals almost from birth, she took **earthworms** from the garden into her bed aged just eighteen months. Rejecting **dolls**, Jane only wanted toy animals, and later dreamt of travelling to Africa throughout her teenage years. Leaving school at eighteen, she worked until she had enough money to realise her dream.

STUDYING CHIMPANZEES

Once in Tanzania, she was introduced to the famous paleontologist and anthropologist Louis Leakey, who was looking for someone to study chimpanzees **in the wild** and to find evidence of shared **ancestry** between humans and the **great apes** (di primati"). Establishing a camp in Gombe Stream National Park, in June 1960, she spent months earning the **trust** of the chimpanzees. One day she saw a large male chimp **foraging** for food. The animal took a **twig**, **bent** it, removed the leaves, and stuck it in a termite's **nest**. **Withdrawing** the **twig**, now covered in termites, the chimp

started to eat. Goodall had just made one of the most important scientific observations of modern times.

REDEFINING HUMANS

Completely untrained in scientific research, Goodall had seen — and understood the significance of — a creature other than a human making and using a tool. Only humans made and used tools! Goodall phoned Leakey. His response became famous: “Now we must redefine man, redefine tools, or accept chimpanzees as humans.” Stephen Jay Gould, Harvard paleontologist, described Goodall’s observation as “one of the great achievements of 20th-century [scholarship](#).” The primatologist’s [seismic](#) discovery made her famous.

ANGERING THE ACADEMICS

In her research, Goodall gave names, not numbers, to the chimpanzees, to the anger of academics. Studying for a [PhD](#) at Cambridge University in 1962, she angered them again when she suggested the animals had “personalities, minds and feelings.” Three years later, a photo in National Geographic of Goodall and an infant chimpanzee, Flint, [reaching out](#) to touch hands, [made headlines](#) around the world. Her first book, *My Friends, The Wild Chimpanzees* (1967), became a worldwide bestseller. This and subsequent books were so widely read that when one of her subjects, Flo, died in 1972, The Sunday Times [ran](#) an obituary!

LAUNCHING PROJECTS

Between 1977 and 1994, Goodall launched a number of projects [aimed at](#) promoting wildlife research, protecting chimpanzees and interesting young people in the environment. In the last four decades, she has focused her energies on animal and human conservation, regularly travelling nearly three hundred days a year [to spread](#) her message.

UNDERSTANDING ANIMALS

Goodall's greatest achievement is that her work with chimpanzees, and the chimpanzees themselves, "led science to admit that humans are part of the animal kingdom. That work has helped more people understand the true nature of animals. They are sentient beings."

Glossary

- **trust** = fiducia
- **nest** = nido
- **made headlines** = fare notizia
- **aimed at** = puntare, mirare
- **to spread** = diffondere
- **great apes** = grandi primati
- **twig** = rametto, ramoscello
- **seismic** = sismica, di grande impatto
- **ran** = pubblicare
- **dolls** = bambole
- **bent** = piegare
- **PhD** = dottorato di ricerca (Doctor of Philosophy)
- **reaching out** = avvicinarsi, estendersi fino a
- **Withdrawing** = ritirare
- **scholarship** = erudizione
- **sentient** = senziente, dotato di senso
- **earthworms** = lombrichi
- **in the wild** = nell'ambiente naturale, selvaggi
- **ancestry** = stirpe, ascendenza
- **foraging** = andare alla ricerca di cibo