

US government ends research on all chimpanzees

November 19 2015



Captive chimpanzees were listed as endangered by the US Fish and Wildlife Service last year

Chimpanzees will no longer be used for US government research and the remaining 50 chimps in federal custody will be sent to a sanctuary for retirement, health authorities said.

The decision by the National Institutes of Health came two and a half

years after the agency announced it would phase out most of its biomedical research using [chimpanzees](#), which are humans' closest living relative and share 98 percent of the same genes.

Since 2013, no new applications for research using chimps have been approved, and last year, captive chimps were listed as endangered by the US Fish and Wildlife Service.

The NIH said the endangered designation requires researchers to obtain an extra permit for any experiments that could harm the animal, and that no such permits have been sought.

"As a result of these numerous changes over the last few years and the significantly reduced demand for chimpanzees in NIH-supported biomedical research, it is clear that we've reached a tipping point," NIH director Francis Collins said in a statement.

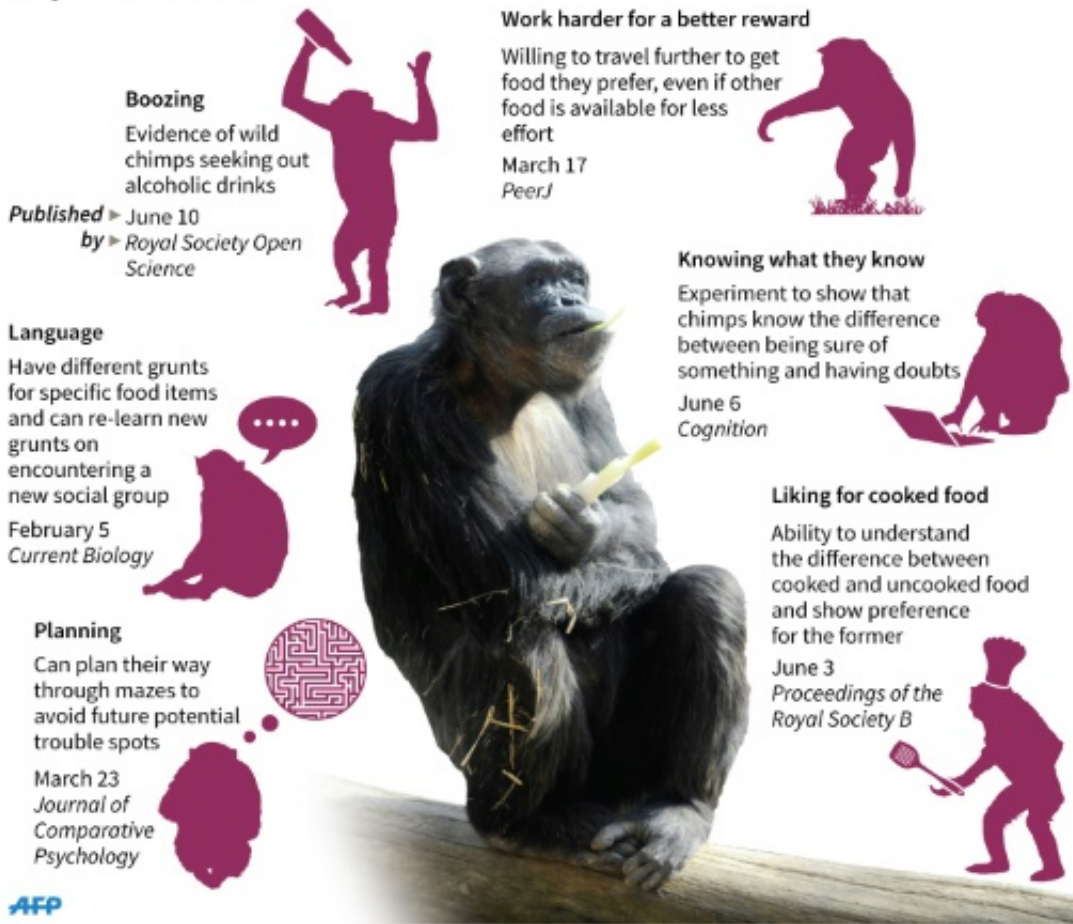
"In accordance with NIH's commitment in June 2013, I have reassessed the need to maintain chimpanzees for [biomedical research](#) and decided that effective immediately, NIH will no longer maintain a colony of 50 chimpanzees for future research."

The NIH-owned chimps are "now eligible for retirement" at the Federal Sanctuary System operated by Chimp Haven in Keithville, Louisiana, Collins said.

The NIH said it will continue to use other [non-human primates](#) for research.

Not so different from us

How research on captive and wild chimpanzees continues to reveal skills and behaviour that were long thought exclusive to humans



Boozing
Evidence of wild chimps seeking out alcoholic drinks
Published ▶ June 10
by ▶ Royal Society Open Science

Work harder for a better reward
Willing to travel further to get food they prefer, even if other food is available for less effort
March 17
PeerJ

Knowing what they know
Experiment to show that chimps know the difference between being sure of something and having doubts
June 6
Cognition

Liking for cooked food
Ability to understand the difference between cooked and uncooked food and show preference for the former
June 3
Proceedings of the Royal Society B

Language
Have different grunts for specific food items and can re-learn new grunts on encountering a new social group
February 5
Current Biology

Planning
Can plan their way through mazes to avoid future potential trouble spots
March 23
Journal of Comparative Psychology

AFP

Graphic on recent research on chimpanzee intelligence and behavior. US health authorities have announced they will halt the practice of using the species for biomedical experiments.

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