



Large numbers of herd animals, such as these zebras are a star attraction at the Bangkok Safari Park. Visitors go around most of the zoo in special "visitor mobiles" designed for the purpose.

Note on Environmental Enrichment: Automated reconfiguration of primate zoo closures

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The purpose of this note is to share a possibility to reduce the boredom of primates, notably chimpanzees, held captive in zoo enclosures. Much has been done in some zoos to this end, but once investment has been made in an installation it becomes unacceptably costly to modify it.

Another approach would be to use a system of rigging, variously attached to poles and logs, which could be used to reconfigure the structures over which the chimpanzees climb. One example is a conventional theater where rigging can be used to raise, lower and move items required for any show.

A high-tech variant for a primate enclosure would be to control such movement by program -- as is done in some theaters -- perhaps adjusting the level and angle of logs/poles/ropes.

More sophisticated variants could be introduced by using programs with a variety of options and shifting sequentially (or randomly) between these options.

It would be possible to experiment with changing the configuration according to different schedules: daily/nightly, weekly, hourly, etc

Given the intelligence of primates, possibilities for their own interaction with configuration changes and their timings could be envisaged. For example, if there were five preset configurations, a primate could be allowed to push one of five buttons to trigger a preferred change possibly one which would allow for a particular pattern of movement through the space of the enclosure

The primary purpose would be to reduce the boredom of primates exposed over long periods to a predictable spatial environment through which they are able to climb. A secondary purpose might be to increase the interest of a changeable enclosure for visitors.

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