

Rita Chimpanzee

A success story at the Doha Zoo, Qatar

Hilda Tresz

Volunteer Coordinator

Keepers without borders

**ChimpanZoo: Research, Education and
Enrichment**

Jenny and Barbara Wilson

On March 23, 2009 Roots and Shoots teachers Jenny and Barbara Wilson were directed to Hilda Tresz ChimpanZoo Volunteer Coordinator to improve Rita, a lone female chimpanzee's behavioral enrichment at the Doha Zoo.

People once asked prophet Muhammad....**does**
God reward us when we treat
animals well ?

Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him) answered:

"There's a reward in
every wet kidney"

Mishkat al-masabih, Book 6; Chapter 6.

Barbara and Jenny Wilson with Mr. Mohammed Tariq





Rita Chimp

- Possibly different subspecies from the pair of chimpanzees in the zoo
- 10+ years old
- Housed alone all her life
- Didn't know much enrichment
- Kept on a cement with metal and some wooden furniture

Exhibit



Night House



Water area



Goal

Short term goal- map out what needed to be done and provide **immediate** relief at first:

- Fast
- Simple
- Free
- Easy to supply

Work one step at the time

Work on long term goals later

Let's get to work

First thing first- Getting managerial support

Jenny being already familiar with the situation and staff was to serve as a “middle man” between Hilda and the Doha Zoo

On Monday, April 13, 2009 Jenny received the news that the Doha zoo has agreed to work with ChimpanZoo

Team One- Doha Zoo Staff



Mr. Mohammed Hussein Hassan
Head Curator



Dr. Abubaker
Head Veterinarian

Team One- Doha Zoo Staff

**Mr. Mohammed Tariq
Lead chimpanzee keeper**



**Mr. Mohammed Abdulraheem-
Maintenance in Charge**



**Mr. Mohammed Nurnobi Chowdhory and Mr. Mohammed Tariq
Chimpanzee staff**

Team two
American
School of Doha
and
The Learning
Center
Students
observing Rita
chimpanzee receiving
new enrichment
items



Jenny's and Barbara's roll

- To create a report of current situation
- Taking pictures for precise information
- Find resources to accomplish plans
- Involve The Learning Center School and Roots and Shoots students of American School of Doha to help implementing enrichment ideas as well as to conduct behavioral observations
- Provide constant communication between the ChimpanZoo Representative and Doha Zoo Management
- Document proceedings by:
 - Written reports both to Doha Zoo Management and ChimpanZoo Volunteer Coordinator
 - Pictures and videos of new enrichment

The short term plan

Introducing Rita Chimpanzee to safe, simple and non-threatening ideas:

- **Substrate** for nest building and extending foraging time
- **Browse** for foraging and nest building
- **Extending feeding time**, variation of current diet presentation (scattering and hiding chopped basic diet, + novelty food items)
- **Manipulative items** (toys, paper boxes, etc.)

Step 1. Substrate

First choice of enrichment was providing substrate on and off exhibit due its multi-purpose

Obstacles and solutions

■ Public demands of feeding animals

When visitors see keepers scattering food in substrate in the outside cage, they demand to be able to do the same

■ Smoking and fire. People would throw cigarettes inside exhibits and lit them on fire.

Fire is still an issue and although the security guards are trained to watch visitor activities, it was not safe and shredded paper was taken out from the exhibit

Step 1. Substrate

Obstacles and solutions

- **Rita refuses to come inside.** Rita felt too comfortable in the evening in her nest she has made in her outdoor enclosure.

Shredded paper was substituted by sand

Rita receives paper the first time in her life
4-28-09



Hay and shredded paper on exhibit



Burrito Rita
.....with wrapping paper



Step 2. Browse

Obstacles and solutions

- **Difficult to come by in the desert**
- **Palm caused blood in the stool**
- **Lack of plant knowledge**
- Started out with commonly known edible plants such as date palms
- Coordinator sent list of edible browse (by scientific and common names) to veterinarian
- Coordinator identified plants via email for immediate use



Rita with palm leaves



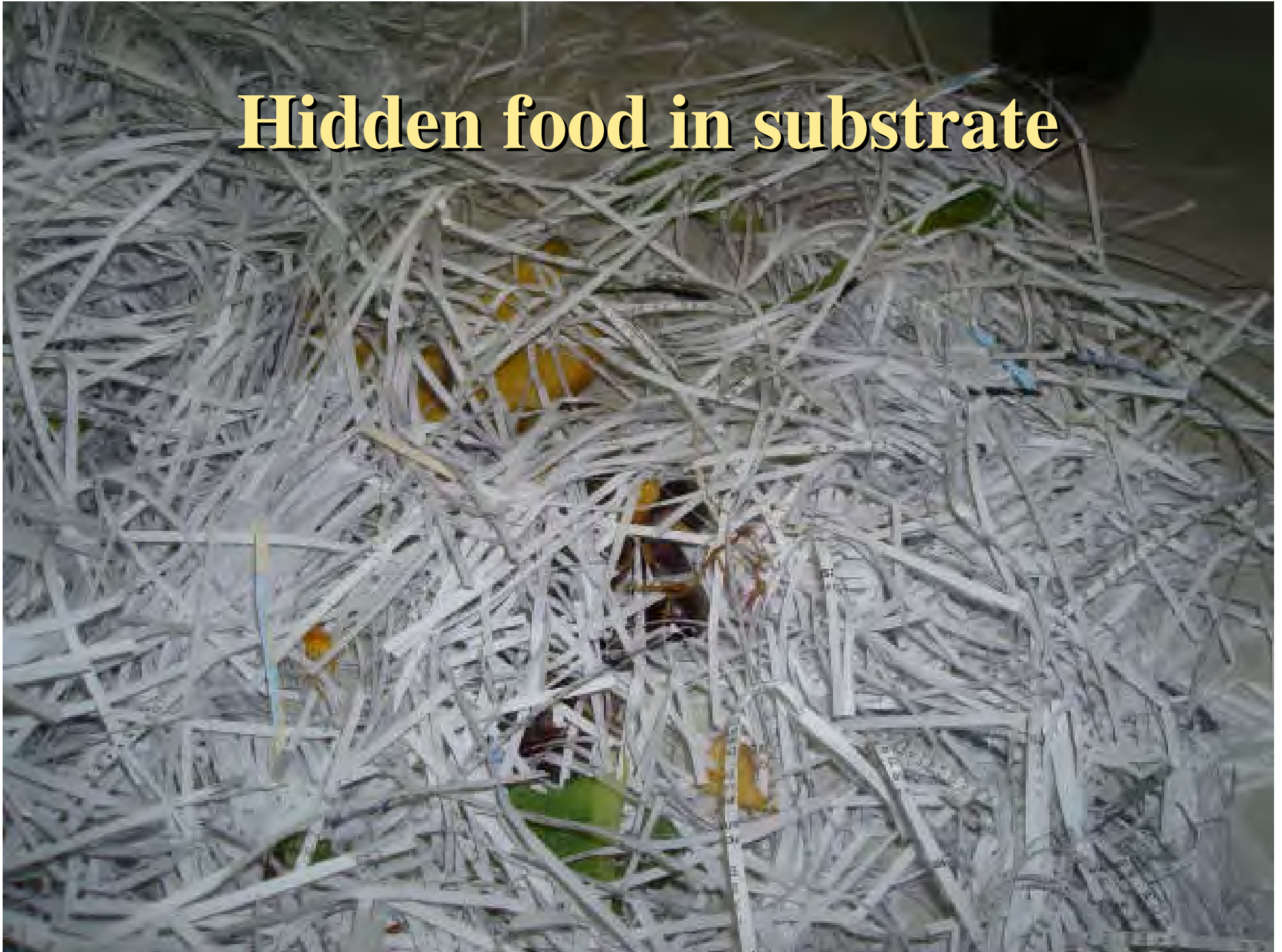
**Palm fronds gave Rita some bloody stools so we
switch over to deciduous plants**



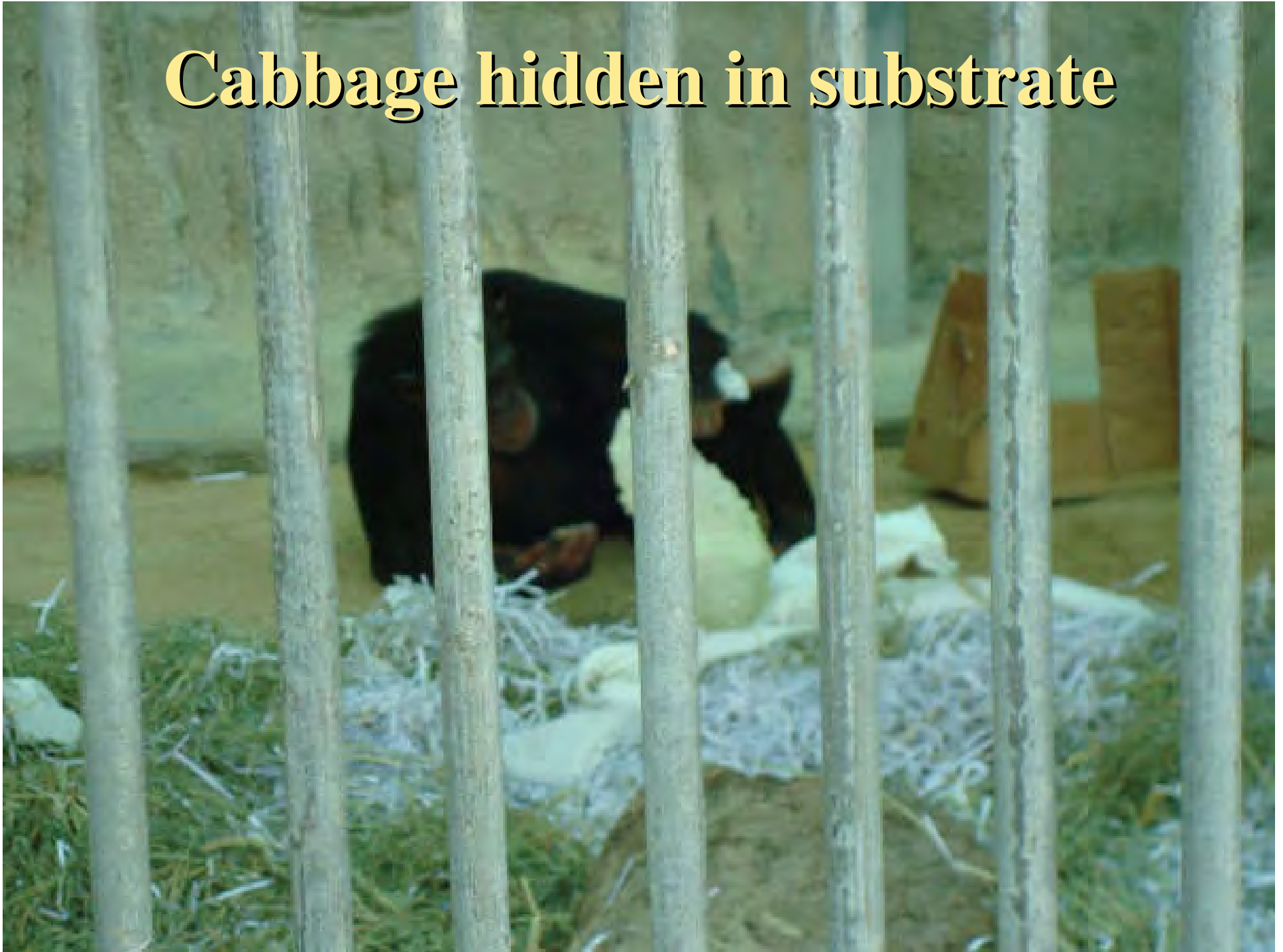
Step 3. Extending feeding time both on and off exhibit



Hidden food in substrate



Cabbage hidden in substrate



Long term plans

- 1. Creating re-usable/permanent fixtures that elicit species appropriate behaviors**
- 2. Find resources to fund these projects**
- 3. Document enrichment**
- 4. Companion for Rita**
- 5. Teach staff to be able to continue with enrichment**



The first permanent nest



Permanent puzzle feeder

Founding resources- Donations

- **From Jenny and Barbara**
- **The Learning Center School**
- **The American School of Doha**
- **Qatar Academy School**
- **American Woman's Association of Doha.**

Document enrichment



American School
of Doha and The
Learning Center
School students
observing new
enrichment given
to Rita

Companion for Rita

- We were looking at several ideas for Rita to be able to live with another chimpanzee.
- DNA testing of Timmy, Tina and Rita. The following institute has offered guidance:

- Mgr. Klara J. Petrzekova, Ph.D.
Department of Mammal Ecology
Institute of Vertebrate Biology
Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic
Kvetna 8
603 65 BRNO, CZECH REPUBLIC
phone:+420-543422549
fax:+420-543211346
<http://www.ivb.cz>

If the DNA matches we were to proceed to introduce the three chimps.

- If the DNA does not match, we would find another chimpanzee from another zoo to join Rita or put Rita on birth control.

More fun!

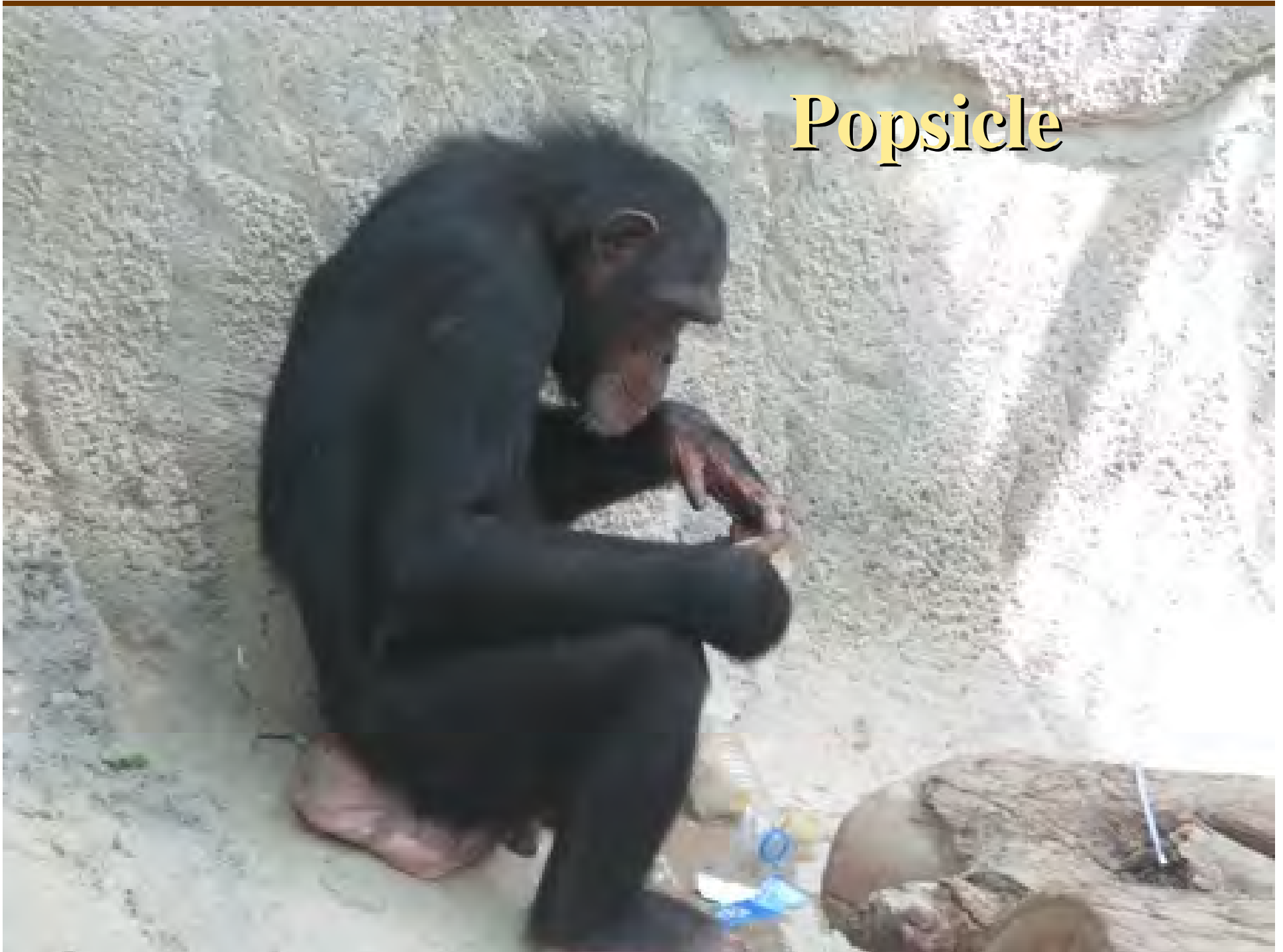
Rita chimpanzee received many more enrichments:

- Popsicles
- Date palm branches
- Cardboard tubes with seeds and tissue
- Large tire
- Basketball
- Logs
- Cloth
- Ribbon
- Books
- Frozen bananas
- Plastic tubing
- Mortar and pestle
- Necklace
- Cleaning brushes
- Toothbrush and toothpaste

During the
following slide
show please
enjoy with us the
many fun ideas
that made Rita
chimps life
better?



Popsicle



Cardboard tube with diet



Cardboard boxes



Tennis ball



Tooth brush



Plastic dishes



Rite loves them dishes!



Fruit popsicle



Rita loves them papers!



She really loves them papers!



Mirror



Human companion



Barb and Rita



New nest



One happy Rita!



Two smiles!!



***"He is not a perfect
believer, who goes to bed
full and knows that his
neighbor is hungry.
[Mishkat Al-Masabih 2/424]"***

**Special thanks for all the good hearted people
who worked hard to make Rita chimpanze's
life better!**