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KAMPALA. Uganda's conservation fraternity has been dealt yet another blow with the death of Zakayo, the 54-year-old chimpanzee.

The chimpanzee, known to be the oldest in East West and Central Africa, died at the Uganda Wildlife Education Centre in Entebbe.

"With deep sorrow and grief, the Uganda Wildlife Conservation Education Centre, popularly known as Entebbe Zoo, hereby announces the death of the oldest known captive chimpanzee in the name of Zakayo who was aged 54 years," the centre's executive director, Mr James Musinguzi, said.

Zakayo had lived at the centre for the last 42 years.

Complications

Mr Musinguzi said the chimpanzee started feeling unwell about three years ago and the doctors started treating him but "yesterday, he refused all medicine and the doctors had to use other means to administer it, unfortunately he did not make it."

He said preliminary findings indicate that Zakayo died of chronic gastroenteritis (stomach flu). Due to his old age, he was highly susceptible to opportunistic infections.

Mr Musinguzi said they have organised a vigil for Zakayo today evening while burial will take place tomorrow at the centre.

Ms Lilly Ajarova, the Chimpanzee Trust executive director, took to social media on Zakayo's passing. "We have lost the grand papa of Chimps

Uganda's chimp Zakayo dies at 54



Missed. Zakayo at Uganda Wildlife Education Centre in Entebbe where he had lived for 42 years. FILE PHOTO

in Uganda. He did a great job in educating the public about the plight of chimps since he lived in captivity. I will miss the birthdays every October."

Chimpazees in captivity can live for about 50-60 years while their mates in the wild live for 40-50 years.

Additional reporting by Eric Ntalumbwa

ABOUT ZAKAYO

Zakayo was found abandoned on June 10, 1964 in Semiliki National Park in Bundibugyo District. He was hand raised by a white man who surrendered him to UWEC on June 19, 1976 as he was becoming aggressive and difficult to manage. Zakayo used to stay in a cage and

visitors would tease him, offer him cigarettes and alcohol, which would make him very excited. In 2012, Zakayo lost his alpha male position to another chimpanzee, Matooke, although he still commanded a lot of respect from the group.