

Research Activity Report
Supported by “Leading Graduate Program in Primatology and Wildlife Science”
 (Please be sure to submit this report after the trip that supported by PWS.)

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Affiliation/Position	Primate Research Institute/D1
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1. Country/location of visit
Japan/ Koshima, Miyazaki
2. Research project
PWS Koshima Field Science Course
3. Date (departing from/returning to Japan)
2015.04.24 – 2015.05.02 (9 days)
4. Main host researcher and affiliation
Koshima Field Station, Wildlife Research Center, Kyoto University
5. Progress and results of your research/activity (You can attach extra pages if needed)
Please insert one or more pictures (to be publicly released). Below each picture, please provide a brief description
<p>Koshima is considered the cradle of Japanese primatology. After World War II, Kinji Imanishi started his field studies on feral horses in order to understand the evolution of animal societies and in particular, the human society. During a visit to Toimisaki, he and his students encountered a group of Japanese macaques that led them to study macaques as a better model for understanding human society. With that in mind, we headed to Koshima to learn the basic methodology for ecology and behavioral studies through a small project, develop a research proposal, collect and analyze the data and give a short presentation on the last day. I focused on space use and interactions between macaques during provisioning. We had two days of observation in the island, with the possibility of staying overnight. On the last day we went to Cape Toi to see the feral horses studied by Imanishi in the 50's (Fig. 1).</p> <p>Altogether, this was an interesting experience, but I do have a couple of suggestions for future field courses. First, about organization. The course lasted one week, but it took us two extra days of traveling to get there and come back. Taking the overnight ferry was a fun experience, but the transfers were tricky if you couldn't read Japanese and sometimes even Japanese students experienced some difficulties. Besides, since all of us were traveling as a group and carrying big bag packs, it was difficult not to bother other people taking the same transportation, especially in small local buses. Also, we did not get a detailed schedule for the course; none of the activities were programmed, which would have been useful for daily planning. Second, about the stay. Koshima is an important place for primatology and I missed having a bit more of an historical background while there. Same thing at Cape Toi, the visit itself was nice, but not emphasizing the historical importance of the place seemed to me a bit of a missed chance. For example, we never heard about Mito Satsue, the school teacher and female primate researcher that was working with Imanishi's group and discovered the sweet potato washing and its spread among macaques, or the curious pseudoscientific “Hundredth Monkey Phenomenon” which states that when enough individuals in a population adopt a behavior, it's spread by a sort of “mass consciousness” and then all individuals in the population spontaneously adopt it (Fig.2).</p>

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And finally, Koshima macaques have been designated a national treasure by the Japanese government and they should be treated with respect. The islet receives students a couple times a year and every student carries a small research project. I think it's great we had the freedom to choose and carry the experiments we wanted motivated by our own curiosity, but I also think it's important to do it with awareness. Our presence in the islet causes some level of stress on the macaques already, so if doing an experiment means adding stressors, we should rethink our research questions and/or experimental design. In addition, since the islet is constantly receiving visitors, we should take this chance to give an example on how to behave around the macaques.



Fig. 1. Visit to Koshima islet and cape Toi (Photo credit: Liesbeth Frias).

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Dinner party on the last night (Photo credit: Liesbeth Frias).



Fig. 2. Mito Satsue surrounded by macaques during a visit to Koshima in 2002 (Photo credit: Kazuhiro Eguchi, http://d.hatena.ne.jp/bluetears_osaka/20120408) and plaque in front of Koshima islet announcing the “100th Monkey Phenomenon” (Photo credit: <http://blog.livedoor.jp/gaebolg/archives/52243255.html>).

Acknowledgments

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