

**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.)

2015. 08. 21	
<b>Affiliation/Position</b>	Primate Research Institute/D3
<b>Name</b>	Cintia Garai

<b>1. Country/location of visit</b>
Sri Lanka
<b>2. Research project</b>
Participating on the International Training Program on Terrestrial and Aquatic Wildlife and Primate Conservation
<b>3. Date (departing from/returning to Japan)</b>
2015. 07. 31 – 2015. 08. 17 (18 days)
<b>4. Main host researcher and affiliation</b>
Dr. Michael A Huffman, Professor at Primate Research Institute, Kyoto University; Dr. Charmalie Nahallage, Professor at Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Sri Jayewardenepura; Dr. Kamal Ranatunga, Professor at Faculty of Applied Sciences, University of Sri Jayewardenepura
<b>5. Progress and results of your research/activity</b> (You can attach extra pages if needed)
I attended the International Training Program on Terrestrial and Aquatic Wildlife and Primate Conservation in Sri Lanka in August 2015. I have never been in Sri Lanka or India before, and I feel truly lucky that I had the chance to discover this highly diverse island and also got to spend some time with its very kind and warm people. I was honored to have a special role during the trip: making a short film for the program to facilitate its work in the future.
On the first day of the program, 2 <sup>nd</sup> of August, we attended the inauguration ceremony in the outskirts of Colombo, at Golden Rose, Boralessgamuwa. The professors collaborating with the program gave presentations, so we could get a deeper insight into what we were about to see. We got all the more enthusiastic about the trip ahead of us. We were amazed by students from the University of Sri Jayewardenepura who kindly presented cultural dances.
Next day we travelled to Sinharaja Forest, and spent 2 days there to observe the flora and fauna of this world heritage site, one of the biodiversity hotspots of Sri Lanka. In this tropical lowland rainforest we could see – among many others – purple-faced langurs, Sri Lanka blue magpies, several frog species, and the national bird: Sri Lankan junglefowl.
Next we had a boat trip at Madu Ganga in the south, a very diverse river with its mangrove forest, which is a world heritage site and part of the Ramsar Convention. We could observe cormorants, egrets, kingfishers, hawks and eagles, and even water monitors swimming in the river. We also had the chance to engage in the culture a little when we visited a Buddhist monastery and a local cinnamon peeler.
On the 7 <sup>th</sup> August we visited Bundala National Park in the southeast. Bundala supports a very diverse migratory bird population; hence it is a Ramsar site. Unfortunately we were there one week before the flamingos arrive, but we could see many other bird species, such as Indian cormorant, spoonbill, black-necked stork, grey heron and painted stork, among many others. We also saw common monitors and star turtles, mongooses, grey langurs and toque macaques.
On the 8 <sup>th</sup> August we went to Kataragama, a multi-religious town. We could observe the grey langurs living in the parks in so close proximity with the human population as part of the tolerant culture. People feed the langurs, and the langurs also steal food from people and from the trashes, they can be just 1-meter distance from us without showing any sign of stress. This place provides perfect condition to study many kinds of different topics from animal behavior to zoonosis.
On the 9 <sup>th</sup> August we visited Yala National Park, still in southeast Sri Lanka. Yala is, in many ways, similar to Bundala, but it is heavily visited by tourists, almost to the level of traffic jam. The flora is dry monsoon forest with grasslands and we were there in the dry season: everything seemed to be grey. However, in and around the lakes we could observe many different species, including elephant, wild boar, water buffalo, toque macaque, mongoose, mugger crocodile, common monitor and many bird species.

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Next we visited Madunagala sanctuary for elephants, and learned about human-elephant conflict in the area. The elephants are separated from the local people by electric fence, but problems occur regularly: elephants can push the pillar of the electric fence and go to field crops, causing great damage to the farmers. Attacks also happen from time to time. Sri Lanka is home to more than 5000 elephants as for the estimations, and we could see many elephants during our journey on the road while in the bus. People and elephants seem to be very tolerant, but the conflicts are growing as the human population is increasing and the elephant habitats are shrinking.

On the 10<sup>th</sup> August we headed toward the mountains in the center of Sri Lanka, and in the evening we started to prepare our presentations, because on the 11<sup>th</sup> each student participant gave a 20-minute speech about one of the sites we visited during the program. Because of my filmmaking activities I was offered to prepare a rough-cut of my footage as presentation, and so I edited a 20-minute montage for the evening, and was very happy to see the reaction of the audience, students and professors as well.

On the 12<sup>th</sup> we went to the Horton Plains National Park to experience its montane grassland and cloud forest. We could observe the highly divers flora with many endemic species, and could see many Sri Lankan sambar deers among others.

On the 13<sup>th</sup> we headed to a very special place: the Pigeon Island National Park, named after its endemic population of rock pigeon, to observe coral reefs on the 14<sup>th</sup>. We could even swim with blacktip reef sharks. This was my first snorkeling experience, and I was amazed by the richness of the area. Unfortunately the island is overly popular among tourists, hence the coral reefs are seriously damaged, but the richness in biodiversity made me think that deeper in the ocean there is an incredible wildlife living in the national park. It was a truly memorable ending of the program, and the next day we went back to the outskirts of Colombo.

During every day, throughout all the programs I felt the careful protection of the organizers, and the eager wish from the part of professors to convey their knowledge to us.

Sri Lanka is a relatively small island, only 2/3<sup>rd</sup> of the size of my country, Hungary, but it is incredibly diverse. We were all surprised how we can get from the beach through the tropical lowland rainforest to the mountains within a few hours, and how can 20 million people live together with such a huge diversity of wildlife. Of course, such conditions provide a wide surface for human-wildlife conflicts, and we could see some of these. But we could also see the willingness of Sri Lankans to conserve the beauty of their island, and I hope they will succeed in doing so for a long time.

I am currently working on the film for the program and I hope it will be useful in recruiting more students, as I feel this experience is invaluable for young researchers as well as future conservationists. I believe I will be able to use my newly gained experiences in my future work in combining research, conservation and filmmaking.



Hide for elephant watching in the field in Madunagala



Common monitor

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Our jeep in Sinharaja



At Sinharaja



Grey langur at Kataragama



At Lunugamwehera

## 6. Others

I am deeply grateful for the support of PWS, which made it possible for me to attend this field trip. I am also very grateful for Mike, Charmalie, Kamal, and I really enjoyed their company. I thank Dr Prasad M. Jayaweera, Dr Swarna Piyasiri, Dr Sampath Amaratunga and the other professors who accompanied us in the different parts of the trip, and organized everything for us with such great care. I am grateful for the company of the students; it was an extremely nice little group, so easy to get along with everyone. I thank Nihal for taking us everywhere; he is a great driver. I thank Atheeq and Vidyani; I learned so much from them about the culture, they were always there when needed and they took care of us.