



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.)

2016. 10, 7

Affiliation/Position	Primate Research Institute/M2
Name	Gao Jie

1. Country/location of visit	
Tanzania, Gombe National Park, Selous Game Reserve	
2. Research project	
Wild chimpanzee and other wildlife observation	
3. Date (departing from/returning to Japan)	
2016. 9. 21 – 2016. 9. 30 (10 days)	
4. Main host researcher and affiliation	
Dr. Koichiro Zamma, Researcher at Graduate School of Asian and African Area Studies, 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>It was an amazing trip.</p> <p>There were many “first times” in this trip. It was my first time to Africa, first time to see wild chimpanzees, first time to see savanna scenery, first time to see wild savanna animals and plants, and also the first time to have a boat ride for three hours on a lake, which was a very unique experience. Also there were many “enjoy”s here. I enjoyed watching wild chimpanzees, enjoyed savanna environment, and local food. Local people were also very friendly. Our people in the team we made a happy group. Basically everything was amazing.</p> <p>There was one difficult thing on our arrival, but thanks to Zamma-san’s kind help, I could finally enter the country.</p> <p>Then we had our schedule as follows: 9/22: dinner at Dar es Salaam; 9/23: go to Kigoma and then Gombe; 9/24: chimpanzee observation in Gombe; 9/25: chimpanzee observation in Gombe and go to Kigoma; 9/26: go back to Dar es Salaam; 9/27: go to Selous, boat safari, game drive; 9/28: walking safari, another game drive, and go back to Dar es Salaam; 9/29: leave Tanzania.</p>	
	
(Lake)	(The boat we took)

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After three hours on the lake, we arrived at Gombe National Park. On the gate it writes information about the park. The beach was also beautiful.



(The gate of Gombe National Park)

The next two days, we went into the mountain to observe wild chimpanzees. There are three groups of chimpanzees in the park. The group that live in the middle area has been habituated, and has the most population. Before going to observe chimpanzees, chimpanzee trackers would tell the information to visitors about the location of chimpanzees. There are two other ways of tracking chimps: by food and sound. Chimpanzees should be around if we see fresh fruit eaten and left by them. Sometimes their locations can also be determined by listening to their calling.

Luckily enough for us, on the first day before our departure, around 8 am, we saw two chimpanzees come to the front of our building and eat mangos. I also heard their voice for eating delicious food.



(Chimpanzee eating on the tree in front of our building)

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(Looking at us)



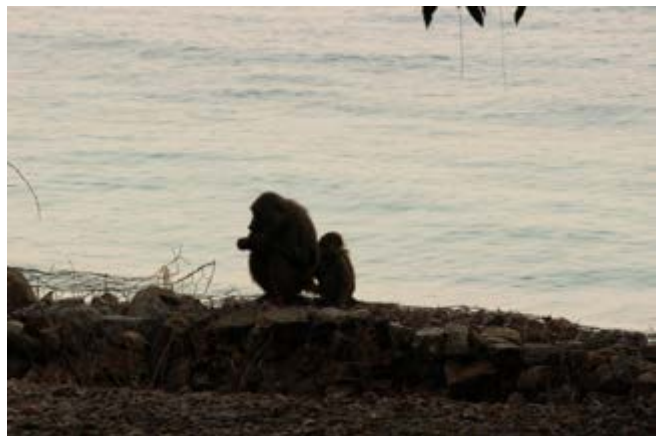
(Left)

I saw wild chimpanzees for the first time in this big surprise. My rough impression was that they were very peaceful. We were just ten meters from them, yet they came, ate fruit, looked at us for a few seconds, and then left, without any extra emotions or behaviors.

Olive baboons also came to the trees to eat and play.



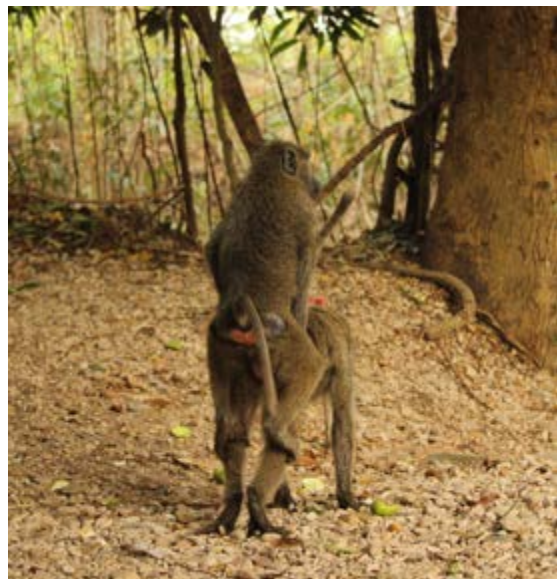
(Infant baboon)



(Mother and infant)



(Eating)



(Mating)

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On the first day, we took about three hours to find chimpanzees. We saw six of them, including three infants. They are from the “G” family.



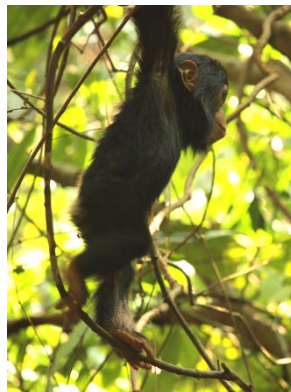
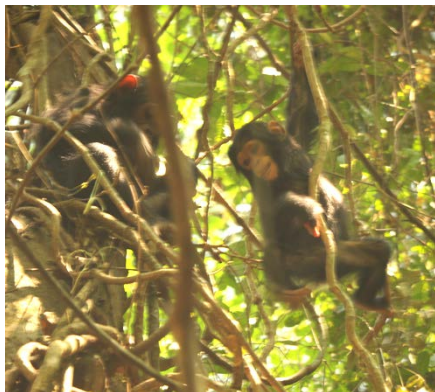
(Grooming)



(Self-grooming)



(Watching the children that were playing on the tree)



(Infants)

We observed the chimps for an hour. They groomed each other, and had a rest. The infants were playing on the trees most of the time.

On our way back, we saw the house Dr. Jane Goodall used to use to put bananas and to attract the chimps. Research is still going on here, and sometimes if researchers find diseases in the chimps, they would put the medicine in the bananas, so that chimps could be cured by eating them.

On the second day, we first saw two chimpanzees, mother and infant of G family, eating on the trees.

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(Chimpanzee on the tree)



(Mother grooming infant)

Later it was very difficult to see them, and we could only take pictures from a little hole across branches and leaves. However, we could actually “feel” them even we couldn’t see them. They were eating fruits, and dropping the kernels. The sounds of kernels bumping into plants and the ground lasted the whole time of eating. Some were very close, and we had to dodge them.

On our way back, again, luckily enough for us, we saw chimpanzees fish termites, even the infant. They used a little branch, inserted to the nest, and then ate their food. They would also use hands directly to pick termites. Mother and infant were fishing at two different places at first. After the mother finished fishing and left the spot, the infant went to mother’s place and continued fishing there.



(Mother)



(Infant)

Chimpanzees in Gombe were very quiet during our stay. The only time I heard them calling in the mountain was to contact. Chimpanzees in PRI often fight and scream... It’s not cautious to say anything about the difference between wild and captivity because our observation in Gombe was not representative in two days, but I was glad to see something different here. Also about the termite fishing, I was impressed by the skills of the infant, and that later the infant changed to the mother’s spot to fish.

After Gombe, we started another amazing trip in Selous Game Reserve. We had a boat safari, two game drives, and a walking safari. We met many savanna animals, and got to know some interesting knowledge about animals and plants.

Many trees in this environment are flat. It’s because that when they are young, the animals eat the above part, so that part become flat to prevent being eaten; and when they grow up, the animals eat the below part, so that part become flat, too. There is another kind of trees, acacias. Whistling thorn acacias have giant thorns all over the tiny leaves.

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Giraffes can only eat the first few leaves because the thorns in the front are relatively soft. Ants live together with this species of tree. The tree provides nest and food for ants, and the ants would come out to guard it when animals eat the leaves and the branches shake. The spine trees would connect to each other by their roots, and have chemicals transmitted to neighbors when one gets bitten. Then, the trees make their leaves taste bad so that the animals stop eating. Lives are connected to each other in their way here in the nature. Not only animals and plants, but also with other animals. In our safari we saw giraffes and zebras peacefully eat together, and we also saw fresh buffalo bones on the field. It is the real nature. We met several hungry lions. They seemed very hungry, kind of weak, and lazy from being hot. Our guide said “but we’re not going to do anything to ‘help’. If they can’t find food, they can’t.”



(Whistling thorn acacia)



(Our safari car)



(Nest of weaverbird)



(Bird near the water)



(Crocodile)



(Hippo. They tend to hide under the water because they are afraid of humans and water makes them feel safe.)



(A pretty giraffe near spine trees.)



(Elephants coming (in a line) to drink water.)

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(Buffalo)



(Yellow baboon mother grooming her child)



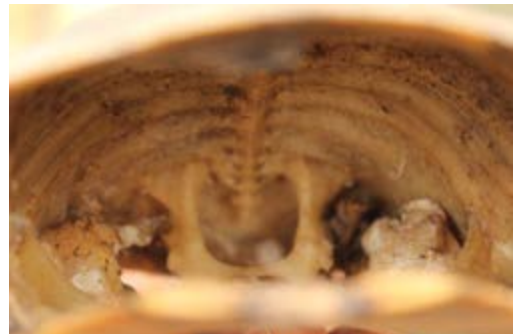
(Running gnu)



(ground hornbill)



(Giraffes and zebras)



(Through a turtle's shell)

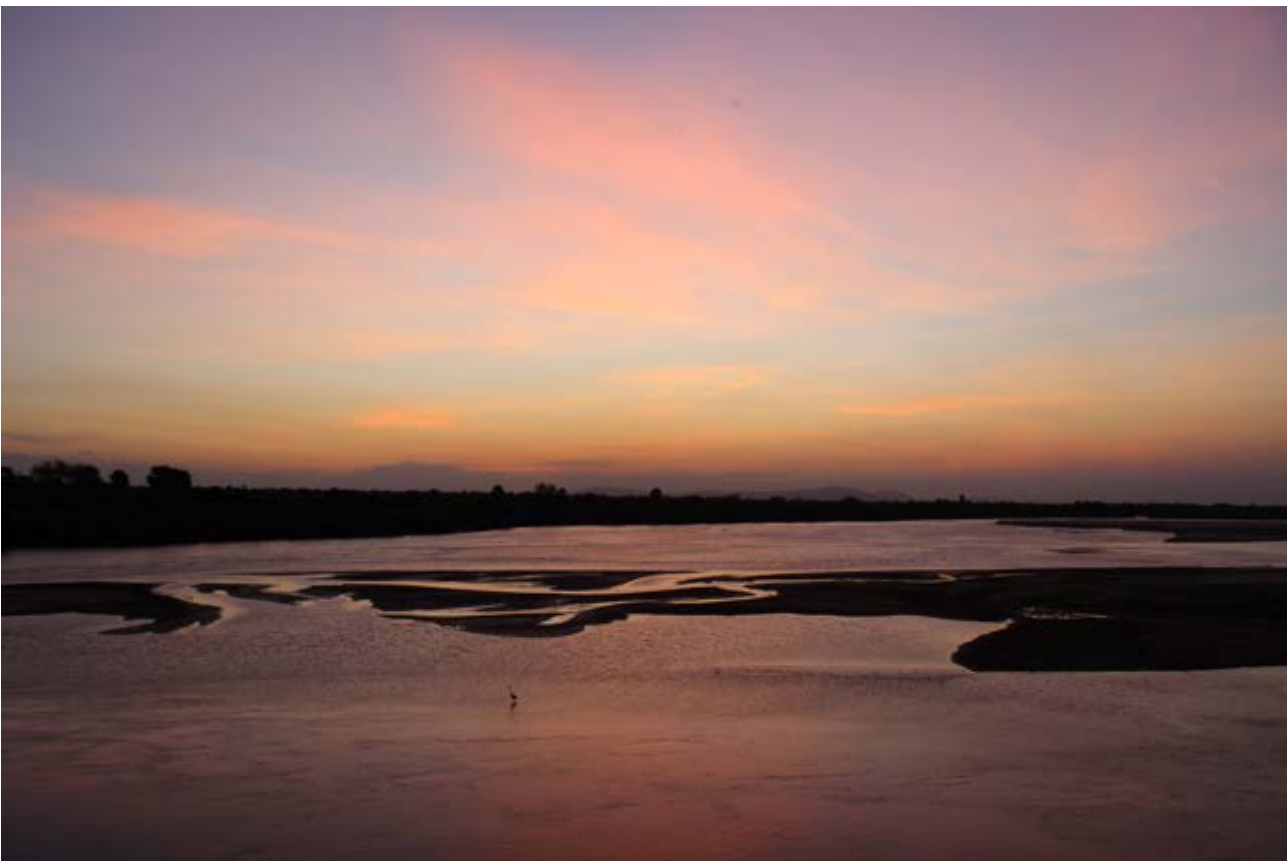


(Lions)



(Velvet monkeys)

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(Sunset at the river)

Apart from observing animals and plants, I also loved savanna scenery. I had the most romantic moments of my life when we were discussing human origin, just in savanna in Tanzania where probably human originated, with the meandering river around and the starry sky above. We had a clear sky, with the milky way, and even a meteor that day. It made me imagine how ancient humans interacted with the environment they were in: how they fought against the heat and wind, how they made the best use of water, how they cooperated to hunt and share meat, how they struggled to produce and to create... I've been aware of the significance of the cognitive comparison of chimps and humans we've been doing all the time theoretically, but this was the first time I felt it vividly from where I was, and what I saw and experienced. We could not detect cognition from the bones and remains ancient humans left, so our close relatives became one of the ways to explore how human became human and what shaped us, to trace the route of how nature “tinkered” our common ancestor, despite that chimpanzees and humans live in totally different environments in this era.

About our life there, everything was great. Local people were very friendly, and so nice to help us with many things. Things go in a nice order in Tanzania. We enjoyed the local food every day, and everybody ate a lot... We also enjoyed Chinese food in Dar es Salaam.



(This sign indicates there are hearing-disabled people and traffic should go slowly. At Kigoma.)



(Hen with her different-colored children. At Kigoma.)

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(Savanna sunset)

At last I want to say that this trip is not for field work, strictly speaking, but it provided me the valuable opportunity to observe wild chimpanzees and other wildlife, and made me more aware of the interactions organisms have with their environments, and how lives are connected to each other in nature.

6. Others

I would like to thank Zamma-san, for his help to get me enter the country, and many efforts during the trip as the leader and an incredible translator. I also want to thank other people in our group. We shared so happy time together. I would like to thank PWS for supporting this wonderful trip.