

**Research Activity Report**  
Supported by “Leading Graduate Program in Primatology and Wildlife Science”

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<b>1. Country/location of visit</b>	Japan, Kyoto University
<b>2. Outreach project</b>	Conserv'Session: The Ivory Game and discussion with ivory trade experts
<b>3. Date</b>	2016. 11. 26
<b>4. Main host researcher and affiliation</b>	None
<b>5. Progress and results of your outreach activity</b>	

This Conserv'Session was the second to be organized at Kyoto University main campus and open to the public. It gathered 50 students, post-doctoral fellows, professors, administrative officers and members of the public; some we had seen at our previous event last month and some new faces (- which is very exciting!). This month theme was the ivory trade, with the screening of the freshly released Netflix documentary: **The Ivory Game**, and a discussion with two ivory trade experts: **Airi Yamawaki**, director and co-founder of the Kenyan-Japanese NGO **Tears of the African Elephant** (<http://www.taelephants.org/>) and **Saeko Terada**, assistant director, wildlife division, conservation bureau, **Ministry of the Environment of Japan** (<http://www.env.go.jp/en/nature/biodiv/>).



**Conserv'Session**  
**CONSERVATION DOCUMENTARY NIGHTS**  
保護保全についてのドキュメンタリー  
**2016 November 26, 5-7.30 pm**

**Film:** The Ivory Game (112 min.)  
**Language:** English with Japanese subtitles / 日本語字幕付き  
**Location:** Graduate School of letters, Basement 1, Room L012, Main Campus, Kyoto University  
京都大学本部構内文学部校舎地下一階大会議室 L012

**Purpose:** The goal of Conserv'Session is to raise awareness of certain conservation issues by organizing screenings of related documentaries. During the monthly sessions, a new conservation issue will be introduced each time with opportunities for discussion and debate both in Japanese and in English.

STUDENTS, FACULTY MEMBERS, PUBLIC, YOU, WELCOME!

**No registration required!**

For more information, visit our Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/ConservSession>) or please contact:  
Cécile Sarabian ([sarabiancecile@gmail.com](mailto:sarabiancecile@gmail.com)) or Zsafia Budai ([budai.zsafia.28m@kyoto-u.jp](mailto:budai.zsafia.28m@kyoto-u.jp))

ゲストスピーカー！ Discussion with invited speakers at the end of the movie!



**Posters of the event**

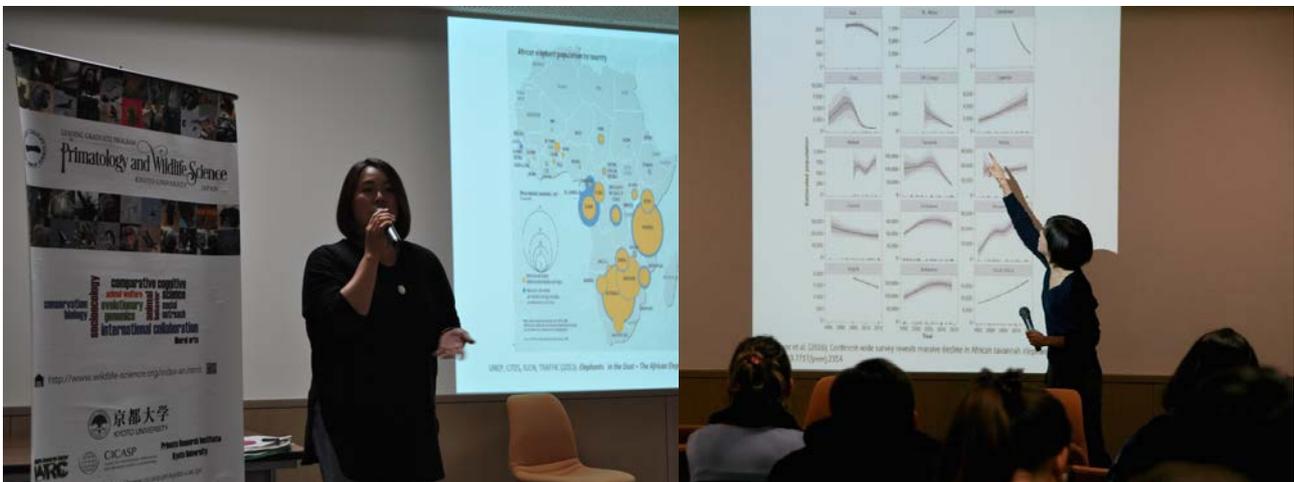
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This session took place after the IUCN World Conservation Congress in Hawaii (Sept. 1-10, 2016) and the CITES meeting (CoP17) in Johannesburg (Sept. 24-Oct. 5, 2016), where decisions have been made regarding both the ivory trade and the protection level of African elephants. In Hawaii, the motion to ban all domestic ivory markets was approved, however the proposition of strengthening the level of protection for all African elephant populations did not obtain the required majority in Johannesburg. In both meetings, Japan was opposed to close its ivory market and to strengthen the protection level of elephant populations in Botswana, Namibia, South Africa and Zimbabwe, despite the shocking fact reported by the Great Elephant Census (<http://www.greatelephantcensus.com>): 30% of African savannah elephants lost between 2007 and 2014.

As such, this meeting was a good opportunity to gather two different views on Japan’s position regarding the ivory trade: the NGO side represented by Airi Yamawaki and the government side represented by Saeko Terada. Tears of the African Elephant supports the proposed ban for Japan’s ivory market and wished that all African elephant populations had been uplisted to Appendix I in Johannesburg, while the Ministry of the Environment prefers to keep the ivory market open and states that due to an increase in numbers, the African elephant populations mentioned above cannot be uplisted.

We started the session with the screening of *The Ivory Game* depicting the illegal trade in elephant tusks including conservationists battling poachers, investigative journalists following the money trails, wildlife law enforcement NGOs leading undercover investigations and black market traders in China. After the film, we contextualize the role of Japan into the ivory trade – something absent from the movie. Airi Yamawaki and Saeko Terada both described their respective work regarding the issue and answered questions from the public. The audience interrogations were about poachers motivation to kill elephants; the scale of illegal ivory trade regarding other crime markets; why Japan does not want to close its ivory market; what were the decisions taken at recent international meetings regarding elephant conservation; what kind of law exist to regulate the ivory trade, etc. Both invited speakers tried to answer those questions keeping their opinion in mind. The discussion was sometimes hard to moderate as time was limited and as the speakers were answering each other comments. At the end, we did not reach a consensus between the two invited parties but both acknowledged the importance of informing the public and both expressing their views in this kind of setting.



**Airi Yamawaki (left) and Saeko Terada (right) talking ivory poaching and African elephant populations**

An interesting part of these sessions is the diversity of people that can be brought together in the same room: persons coming from countries where poaching is happening and others from where ivory is consumed; government officials and NGOs; scientists and the public; students and professors. Even better, when they can relate to their own experience of the issue and share it with others. The first challenge facing conservation is education. One might think that such initiative is not an efficient strategy considering the well-started countdown for certain species. However, this is underestimating the power that such initiatives can have on public opinion and political decisions. Examples of how political decisions regarding conservation were taken after a film, a book, a campaign, or a person initiated a movement are many. As such, China banned the trade in shark products for shark fin soup; Obama created one of the largest marine reserves in Hawaii; African leaders banned great ape meat in official banquets; the British oil company SOCO abandons explorations in the Virunga, etc.

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At the end of the session, we also announced our next Conserv’Session screening planned for January 9<sup>th</sup>, 2016: Virunga, followed by a discussion with Prof. Juichi Yamagiwa (gorilla expert and president of Kyoto University) and Naobi Okayasu (previous Conservation director of WWF Japan and present director of Habitat Conservation at the Japan Monkey Centre in Inuyama).



**Conserv’Session vol. 2 at a glance**

**Feedback from students supported by PWS to attend this event:**

*“It was good to pick up a really sensitive issue, which people often avoid to talk about. It was good to invite two very different speakers (one from the conservationists working in the field and another from the policy makers) but all at the same time in the very front line of this ivory trade issue. It was a shame to not have enough time to come up with a conclusion, which can be applicable and satisfactory for both of the parties, even though we may have not been able to change the policy or the law related to that. But, still I really believe that this kind of action and dedication is actually gradually changing people's perception on conservation and the value of biodiversity and nature.”* **Yena Kim, PhD student, Kyoto University Primate Research Institute**

*“I didn't know much about ivory trade before the session, so I was surprised to find that ivory trade wasn't forbidden until recently in some countries. I'm sorry for serious illegal ivory trade in China, China has her duty to take action to protect elephants, and I think Chinese government has began to do so, and I could find some posters of animal conservation in public places, which would help to improve people's animal protection awareness. However, I think it's an international duty to protect elephants. No profit should lead to extinction. Illegalization of ivory trade, improvement of people's animal protection awareness, improvement of livings of local people living with elephants and others are all important to protect animals.”* **Zhijie Liao, undergraduate student, Sun Yat-Sen University, China**

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*“It was really a meaningful meeting! Share the movie and discuss it with students from all around the world, that's amazing! And also, the two invited speakers were master of the field we discussed about, so they provided us with lots of information that we may not have known before. I'm really looking forward to the next Conserv'Session!”*  
**Xu Zhihong, undergraduate student, Sun Yat-Sen University, China**

*“It was moving to know how many hard works the scientists had done to stop ivory trade and save elephants. To compare with the past, when they got those illegal ivories, they decided to burn them instead of auctioning them to earn the fund for elephant protection, which is a great progress or, a significant correction. As far as I am concerned, the limited legal trade will increase the price of ivory and stimulate the black market. How can we point to one ivory and tell it “you are legal” but to another one “illegal”? That's why I think banning is better than limiting. Except just banning the ivory trade simply, one more important factor I think is opinion changing. We cannot stop people chasing luxury goods, but it is possible to change the area of luxury goods. Why couples need diamond or expensive metal ring if it cannot keep their love warm? The composing of culture and popularity depends on how we consume. Culture is more steady, while popularity is always changing.”*  
**Zhang Jingyi, undergraduate student, Sun Yat-Sen University, China**

*“Conserv'Session #2 offered a stimulating environment for discussion about such a delicate topic, that is the ivory trade. Both invited speakers and organizers of the event provided extra information on the problematic, which directed a deeper understanding and debates about possible solutions. If manageable, time for debating should be flexible or extended. Although the debate took about two hours, I think the audience would benefit from having even extra time for questions.”*  
**Valeria Romano, PhD student, Institut Pluridisciplinaire Hubert Curien, France**

*“The documentary itself was a good case study example on the illegal workings of the ivory trade. However, like most documentaries of this kind, it creates strong dichotomies of “good guy” and “bad guy”. The world is not black and white. How did the “bad guys” end up in a position to want to pursue such a high risk and illegal profession? And what can we do to mitigate this? This is a point I think people don't want to discuss at length not only because of its great complexity but more so because it requires the comfortable in this world to (1) imagine the pain and suffering of those less fortunate than ourselves and (2) empower these people with resources, a sustainable life, and a strong foundation to prosper. Catching the “bad guy” barely scratches the surface of deep economic and systemic political issues facing us today and is only a temporary fix at best. I found the discussion with the two guest speakers after the film engaging. They were both informed and experienced with the issue, which allowed me to learn quite a bit further. For example, I wasn't aware of the Japanese government's official position on the ivory trade, essentially still allowing some “legal” ivory into the country (though “legal” wasn't clearly defined). I think many of us benefitted by having guest speakers and I hope to see more of this interactive part in future sessions.”*  
**Nelson Broche, Master student, Kyoto University Primate Research Institute**

*“This Conserv'Session gave us many knowledges and perceptions. Based on the “The Ivory Game” film, we learn that elephants, especially in Africa are facing so many threats, the biggest one being ivory trade. This film gave us many values that this species must be conserve. By discussing with speakers, it added more about trading in ivory. I hope it will continue with another interesting topic in the future because there are so many values that we will receive from this session.”*  
**Irvan Prasetio, undergraduate student, Andalas University, Indonesia**

*“Showing a documentary is an indirect way of conservation, I am involved in such kind of activities in India as well where we show village people, school documentaries based on nature and wildlife and teach about the importance of nature they are surrounded by. I really appreciate this kind of documentary screenings at Kyoto University. At the end of a documentary, I can see that most of the people were surprised about the fact that African elephants are facing this serious threat and were talking about it very seriously. Percentage of the people who actually know about the current threat is very low, only researchers involve in such activities know about it. Showing such documentary, at least get people aware of what is actually going on and how we can contribute towards conservation. I also support that when we have an expert from the field, it makes people watching the movie more engaged. We had a good discussion between speakers and students from the non-wildlife background. I would like to be involved in this kind of activities more in near future, which would give me an opportunity to contribute towards conservation of our valuable wildlife.”*  
**Himani Nautiyal, PhD student, Kyoto University Primate Research Institute**

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*“I’m very lucky to have had the opportunity to watch ‘The Ivory Game’ documentary with many persons, who are interested in African biodiversity conservation. The documentary offered a good chance to understand the situation of elephant environment and conflicts between local people and animals. As reported previously for whales and eels, numerous endangered species are seen as substances in traditional culture. People capture the animals as a way to make a living, but do not realize the problem about animal conservation. I think it is necessary to consider the welfare of local people at the same time of species conservation. That means some measures have to be taken by the governments as well, and not only by biologists or NGOs.”* **Xiaochan Yan, undergraduate student, Sun Yat-Sen University, China**



**From left to right: Zsofia Budai (PhD student in Psychology/co-organizer); Airi Yamawaki (director/co-founder Tears of the African Elephant); Saeko Terada (Ministry of the Environment, Japan); and I.**

## 6. Others

Acknowledgements: I would like to thank again PWS for supporting this initiative; Himani Nautiyal and Yena Kim for helping with the preparation of the event; Nachiketha Sharma for compiling sounds and pictures from Asian elephants he is studying in India; our two invited speakers: Airi Yamawaki and Saeko Terada for coming from Tokyo and sharing their insights and experience with the public; Miku Akiyama for helping with the logistics; Yoshiko Kashimoto for translating Terada-san’s talk; and of course Zsofia Budai for her dedication to make this event a success.