

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.)

	2018. 07, 28
Affiliation/Position	Wildlife Research Center/D3
Name	Nachiketha Sharma

1. Country/location of visit
Kuching, Malaysia
2. Research project
Asian Tropical Biology and Conservation conference (ATBC)-2018
3. Date (departing from/returning to Japan)
2018. 06. 29 – 2018. 07. 07 (9days)
4. Main host researcher and affiliation
Dr. Wong Ee Phin, Assistant Professor, School of Environmental and Geographical Sciences, University of Nottingham Malaysia Campus, Selangor Darul Ehsan, Malaysia.
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>Background: Asian elephants being endangered species are constantly threatened by the loss of their habitat. Because of which elephants are increasingly encountering humans, leading to adverse interactions. These interactions can turn fatal for both species. Therefore, it is important to bring in all the aspects of ‘elephant science’ for their conservation, which is by engaging local communities (and understanding their sentiments), behavioral ecologists, applied scientists, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and animal welfare organizations to develop better conservation strategies or plans.</p> <p>ATBC-2018: I was invited to participate as one of the speakers in the symposium organized by Dr. Wong Ee Phin. The symposium- ‘Moving towards coexistence - reconciling elephant conservation and humans' social dimension’, mainly aimed to bring researchers belonging to different disciplines with a diversity of perspectives spanning from academia, to conservation organizations and to animal welfare organizations.</p> <p>The main objectives of the symposium were as follows-</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To discuss current threats and future of Asian elephants in Anthropocene. 2. To fill up the knowledge gap to have a holistic understanding of elephant conservation. 3. To understand and analyze various scientific methods which could potentially promote human-elephant coexistence. <p>The symposium started with Dr Ananda Kumar’s talk. He is working in the Annamalai National Park (India) where human-elephant conflict is at the pinnacle. He has developed an early warning system which awares locals about elephants’ presence in their vicinity by sending messages through phones in their local language. As a result, the conflict in the region has been greatly reduced and no human deaths, due to elephants, has been reported in last five years.</p> <p>The second talk was by Jamie Wadey, a PhD student in Malaysia, working on the movement ecology of Borneo elephants. For my talk, I emphasized about my ongoing PhD project and initial findings where we recorded immediate vocal responses of Asian elephants to the human disturbance in a relatively undisturbed habitat. Dr. Wong presented her work about how changes in the physiology of an individual can contribute to their behavior. Probably, the most exciting talk during the symposium was by Mr. Asoka, an MPhil student from Sri Lanka. His study focuses on understanding how elephants use tools to overcome obstacles posed by humans during crop raiding. The elephants, in his study area, have learnt to use dead wooden logs to break the electric fences. This study has an immense potential to understand elephants’ behavior during conflict situations. Dr Simon Hedges and Alexander Zimmermann gave the audience an overview of insurance schemes for conflict scenarios and the problem associated with translocation of ‘problematic’ elephants. The last speaker of the symposium, Dr Varun Goswami, spoke about what are the scope for elephant conservation in large private holdings in the northeast state of India.</p>

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Speakers along with organizers of the symposium (ATBC-2018)

Apart from the symposium, the conference had various interesting talks on illegal wildlife trades such as ivory poaching, illegal pet trades in South-East Asian countries. Apart from learning from phenomenal researchers and their findings, this conference provided me an incredible opportunity to meet and establish collaborations for our future research on elephants.

6. Others

Sincere thanks to symposium organizers and my longtime friend and a colleague, Dr Vivek Tuppil (a member of the ATBC organizing committee), for encouraging me to participate in the symposium. Also, sincere gratitudes to Prof. Kohshima and Prof. Sukumar for their guidance and encouragement, PWS and PWS office members for their generous and continuous support.