


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. 10.05

Affiliation/Position	Primate Research Institute/D2/L4
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1. Country/locationofvisit
Sasagamine hutte, Niigata prefecture
2. Research project
Sasagamine Field Science Course
3. Date (departing from/returning to Japan)
2015.10.01– 2015. 10. 04(04days)
4. Main host researcher and affiliation
Prof. Shigeru Sugiyama
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 abrief description.
The aim of this course was to learn survival skills such as tying rope knots and camping tips, to provide field training by climbing a 2461m high mountain and to observe the wildlife around Sasagamine, in Niigata Prefecture.
We arrived at the hutte in the afternoon. Prof. Sugiyama was there to introduce the course and to guide us for the next 3 days. He took us outside to pick wild grapes, kiwis and strawberries (Figure 1). Although most of the fruits tasted quite sour, we made juice out of them. Due to the rain, we did not go any further. Instead, Prof. Sugiyama talked about the wildlife he has seen in the area, including golden eagles, foxes and Japanese monkeys, and he showed us the seasonal differences of the area. We then went outside to see old tombs near the Hutt.

Figure 1. Students picking up wild grapes
On the next day, we walked around the area, where we could admire the beautiful landscape and its flora and fauna, including domestic cows, wild Japanese macaques and a snake (Figure 2). In the evening, we had a lecture from Mr. Yamamoto, our guide to Mt Hiuchi. He explained to us how to read maps and how to use a compass. He also gave us details about the mountain and the hiking trail, so we all could get prepared for the climb.

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Figure 2. Wildlife of Sasagamine. An adult male Japanese monkey (left) and a snake (right)

We left the Hutt in early morning at 6AM and followed the guide through the trail. We took a break every hour, to rest, drink water, eat snacks and to admire the view. Our first stop was at Kurosawa River bridge, where we could drink cold water from the clean stream. The next route was very steep, but I enjoyed mostly because there were a lot of rock climbing. Approximately 3 hours later we arrived at the Mountain Hutt, where some people camp before reaching the top. However, we moved on after a short break, and the view was getting better every time, covered by yellow/orange/red leaves and some ponds (Figure 3). From there, we could see other mountains (Figure 4), including Mt. Yake right next to Hiuchi and even Mt. Fuji, far away. We got to the top around noon, and the view was amazing, but the feeling was even better. The sad part was that we only had about 15 min up there before we started to climb down. This time we took fewer breaks, and less time to reach the bottom of the mountain. Everyone looked exhausted in the end, but happy to have completed the hike. In the evening we had a bonfire in front of the hutte.



Figure 3. View from about 2000m at Mt. Hiuchi

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Figure 4. Mountain Hiuchi (right) and Mountain Yake (left)



Figure 5. We made it! The group at the top of the Mountain. Photo credit: Takuya Ohkawa

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On the last day, we learned about useful knots for climbing, such as square knots, used to secure a rope or line around an object; figure 8 knot, important knot stopper; fisherman's knot, for joining two lines; clove hitch, for securing lines running along a posts or for belaying; project hitch and autoblock (Figure 6), two kinds of knot that slides freely over another rope but jams in a event of a sudden drop to prevent a fall, commonly used for rappelling. To finish the course, Prof. Koshima showed us some simple but efficient tips to do in case of an emergency in the field, such as on how to improvise a tent (Figure 7), to keep dry and warm and an easier way to carry an injured person.



Figure 6. Mr. Yamamoto teaching us how to do the autoblock knot



Figure 7. Prof. Koshima showing us an easy way to make a tent.

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The course was a nice break from my daily activities at the Institute. It was also fun to get to talk more to the other students and to cook with everybody, but I wonder if we could save a little more time and get better ideas on survival skills if we prepared simple and quick meals instead of elaborated dishes. The hike was a good physical training for fieldwork, but perhaps we could enjoy more the landscape and the mountain if we camped overnight before reaching the top. It would be a nice experience to see the sunrise from there, and a good opportunity to practice field camping. But in general, it was good to feel in a rural area, at a beautiful hutte, calm surroundings and an astonishing view of mountains in autumn colors as background.



Figure 7. Kyodai hutte



Figure 8. The view in front of the hutte

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Figure 9. Sasagamine fall 2015 team in front of the hutte. (Photo credit: Reiko Takizawa)

6. Acknowledgements

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the PWS program and Prof. Tetsuro Matsuzawa for supporting this trip. Many thanks to Dr. Reiko Takizawa and Ms. Yoko Sakai for organizing the course and helping me to purchase the field gear needed for the course. Special thanks to our host Prof. Sugiyama, and all professors and students that joined this trip. I also thank my advisors, Prof. Michael Huffman and Prof. Fred Bercovitch for their continuous support and guidance.