

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

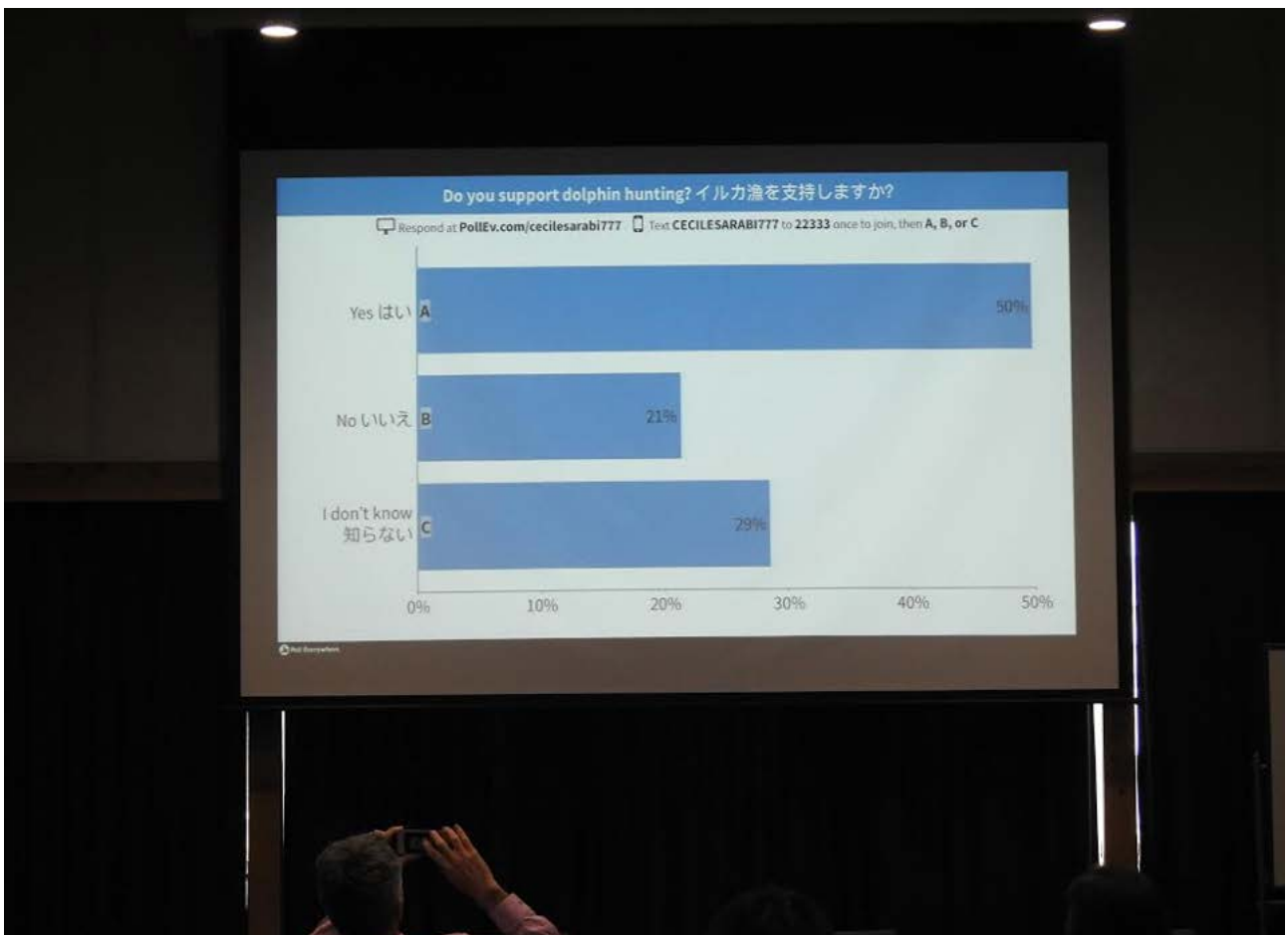
2017. 11, 02	
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1. Country/location of visit
Japan, Science Seminar House, North Campus, Kyoto University
2. Research project
Conserv'Session #11: Panel discussion 'A Whale of a Tale'
3. Date
2017. 10. 01
4. Main host researcher and affiliation
none
5. Progress and results of your outreach activity
<p>Last June, we organized a Conserv'Session on the topic of Taiji dolphin hunting and whaling (please, see here for June reports if interested: http://www.wildlife-science.org/en/reports.html). This was before a new film came out on the topic, 'A Whale of a tale' (- the third one after 'The Cove' and 'Behind The Cove'). As this latter film provides another perspective on this issue by incorporating the view of the local community in Taiji, we decided to organize a follow-up discussion rather focused on the community-livelihood, animal welfare, sustainability and conservation aspects of this practice. As such, we gave the floor to invited experts, and provided the opportunity to the public to interact with them. The session was bilingual (ENG/JP with simultaneous interpretation) and held under the form of a panel discussion, showing only ~30 min of the movie. Our invited speakers were: Megumi Sasaki (film director, Los Angeles/Tokyo); Dr. Fumitaka Wakamatsu (PhD from Harvard University on the Making of Scientific Whaling: Politics of Conservation, Science, and Culture in Japan, Kyoto University); Dr. Naobi Okayasu (previously director of Conservation at WWF Japan, now at the Japan Monkey Centre, Inuyama); and Jay Alabaster (journalist, PhD candidate at Arizona State University, currently writing a book about Taiji dolphin hunting and whaling, Tokyo/Taiji). The audience was a mix of people, Japanese and internationals, and we could gather a total of 23 individuals.</p> <p>After watching ~30 min of the film, the panel discussion was orientated as follow: Megumi Sasaki, the film director and Jay Alabaster, journalist featured in the film first discussed the possibility of alternative community-based livelihoods than dolphin hunting and whaling for Taiji whalers. Then, Dr. Naobi Okayasu made a parallel with community-based livelihoods based on bushmeat in Africa. Secondly, Dr. Fumitaka Wakamatsu and Jay Alabaster discussed the feasibility of overcoming cultural differences to make the debate about Taiji dolphin hunting progress. Third, Naobi Okayasu shared facts regarding the sustainability of Taiji dolphin hunting based on the scientific evidence we have and do not have. Then, all speakers discussed whether dolphin hunting poses any ethical issues at a national level. The discussion was followed by several questions and comments from the public following these four points. A simultaneous interpreter, Katagiri-san, was translating speakers from English to Japanese and the audience sometimes from Japanese to English. The discussion was audio-recorded with the agreement of the speakers and I hope to be able to make a podcast on this topic one day for The PrimateCast.</p> <p>I personally think it was one of the most interesting discussion we had so far as the speakers had lots of knowledge on different aspects of this issue and were complementary to each other. I also heard very good feedback from the audience after the session, which encourages us to propose more panel discussions in the future. That said, the issue remains very tricky, due to the many components that need to be taken into consideration (local people, science based on government will, ineffective approach of the activists in Taiji, no other alternative for the whalers, lack of education projects, town depending mainly on government money, etc) and it also has many unresolved replica around the world, i.e. community-based livelihoods relying on bushmeat in SE Asia or Western/Central Africa.</p>

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From left to right: I, Megumi Sasaki, Fumitaka Wakamatsu, Naobi Okayasu, Jay Alabaster and Katagiri-san



Anonymous poll before the discussion asking the audience and the speakers whether they support dolphin hunting

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Discussion with the audience on Taiji dolphin hunting



Megumi Sasaki answering a question from the audience

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6. Others

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