

Visit to Japan for iCS9 conference, January 8th-18th, 2014

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This trip was my first to Japan, but it will definitely not be my last! I was impressed throughout the trip with the country and with the science conducted there. The scientific resources I experienced at PRI, Koshima Island, and Kyoto Zoo displayed this country's commitment to advancing our field, and I am excited about the prospect of collaborating with Japanese scientists in the future.

I began my trip at the Primate Research Institute in Inuyama. Shortly after arriving, I had the opportunity to meet with Dr. Adachi and see the daily touch screen computer testing by 4 of the PRI chimpanzees.

The iCS9 conference began on January 11th. During this conference, we learned many things about social cognition research ongoing in Japan and around the world. The diversity of research subjects, topics, and approaches presented during this short conference made for interesting discussions. Some of the highlights for me were hearing about social networks and complex behaviors by interesting but understudied species, such as degus, dolphins, hamsters, and squid!

On our final day in Inuyama, we had the honor to meet with Dr. Matsuzawa. We observed his research and interactions with Ai and Ayumu, and were given a tour of the new chimpanzee facilities. This included watching Ai and Ayumu participating in the famous masked numerical order task, which I had read about, but was very exciting to see in person.

A small international group of scientists, led by Dr. Tomonaga, then took a three day trip to Miyazaki to visit the monkeys on Koshima Island and a nearby wild horse sanctuary.



Map of the region with Koshima Island (middle left) and the wild horse sanctuary (bottom left).

Although I have worked with macaque monkeys for nearly 10 years, this trip to Koshima was the first time I have seen them in the wild, and it was very exciting. I was struck by how similar their overall behavior was to the animals I had worked with in captivity. We were able to observe the famous wheat washing behavior that is unique to this population of monkeys. I took many videos of this behavior as well as grooming, foraging, and aggressive interactions to show my students!

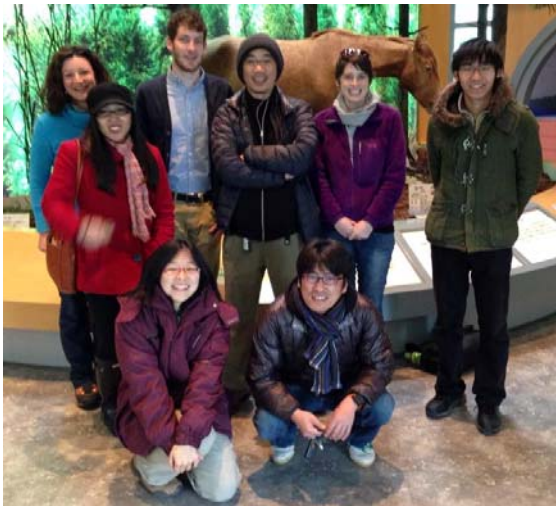


Entrance to Koshima Island



With the monkeys at Koshima Island

In the wild horse park, we learned about the social systems of the horses, and were able to observe some aggressive interactions between males. It was incredible how complex the social lives of these of these animals are when left to their own devices rather than living in a domestic environment.



Our international group visiting the wild horse sanctuary.

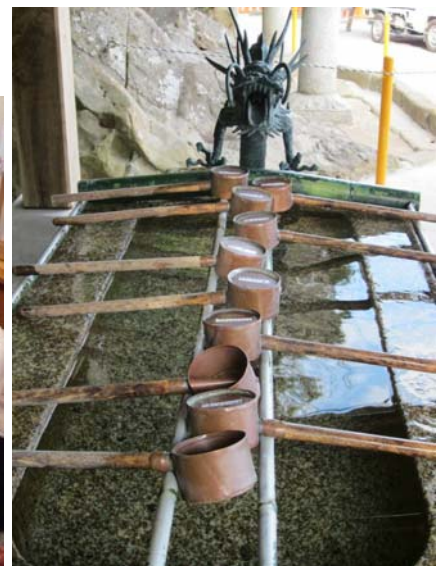


Male and female pair of horses.

During this few day trip, we also had the opportunity to experience Japanese culture through food, travel, and seeing some historical sites.



Experiencing Japanese culture!



My trip ended in Kyoto, where I visited Kyoto Zoo and met with Dr. Tanaka and the zoo staff. This part of the trip was particularly interesting to me because I also conduct research with primates at an urban zoo. It was very interesting to see the similarities and differences in how the research is conducted and how

the animals are managed and cared for at Kyoto Zoo and at Zoo Atlanta. I was able to see the chimpanzees, gibbon, and drills participating in cognitive research. It was the first time I had seen a gibbon use a touch screen computer, and I was very impressed with the very extensive and unique research system for the chimpanzees in a zoo environment. I was also able to hear from Professor Tanaka and Mr. Nagao about some exciting advances in Gorilla management, housing, and breeding.



On-exhibit cognitive testing room for chimpanzees at Kyoto Zoo



Professor Tanaka and a gibbon participating in research on a touch screen computer at Kyoto Zoo