

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.)

	2016.7.7
Affiliation/Position	Wildlife Research Center/M2
Name	Natsuko Tajima

1. Country/location of visit
Rausu-cho, Hokkaido
2. Research project
PWS Rausu Killer whale research course
3. Date (departing from/returning to Japan)
2016.6.29-2016.7.4
4. Main host researcher and affiliation
Wildlife Research Center Yukiko Yamamoto
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>The schedule of this trip is as follows.</p> <p>6/29 move to Rausu from Kyoto 6/30-7/3 Killer whale observation 7/4 back to Kyoto</p> <p>The aim of this trip is to learn how to observe Whales from vessels, and to know what kind of animals are there in Shiretoko. We could go to observation four times by research vessel. We left Rausu port at 5:30 am, and return at around 16:00 pm. After leaving the port, we searched Killer whales on the vessel using binoculars. If we found Killer whale, we tried to approach and observe them.</p> <p>On first day, we could find 3 groups of Killer whales. Soon after leaving the port, we could find Pacific white-sided Dolphins. They usually come to this area in June, so captain said this is the first time they saw this species in this year. We found first group of Killer whale after 5 hours from departure. It was about 10 individuals and they often do tail slap and breaching (jumping) again and again. In the afternoon, we found one adult male which had beacon on its dorsal fin. And it has distinguish scar on its dorsal fin, it is easy to identification.</p> <p>On second day, we could find 4 groups. There some variation in group size, the first group has about 5 individuals, and second group has 30~50 individuals. In large group, members tend to swim with 2~5 members together. I think it is similar to Dolphins in Mikura island. It will be interesting to analyze individual relationships by swimming members.</p> <p>On third day, we could find 3 groups. The group found in the morning did not willing to come close to the vessel. We tried to approach several times, but they dived and appeared in far away from vessel. It was interesting that if Killer whales willing to come closer, they come very near to the vessel or swim across the bottom of the vessel, but if they are not willing to approach the vessel, they disappear quickly. The group found in the afternoon was also interesting. At first, there are about 3 groups consisted by about 5 individuals. Then, these groups swim toward same direction at once and Gathered in same point. They synchronized their breath and stop at surface in a while, and separated again. I did not know why they gathered, but I think it was very interesting behavior. And also I feel it was very difficult to define “group” in Killer whale.</p> <p>0</p>

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On fourth day, we could not find any groups. It is very good experience to know how difficult the field observation in the sea.

In this trip, I had very good experiences. I was surprised to see Killer whales in such a close distance. And also I could learn how to observe Killer whales from vessels. I want to use this experience in my field study.



Photo: Natsuko Tajima

Mother and Juvenile



Killer whale groups

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How to observe from vessel



How to observe from vessel

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Photo: Natsuko Tajima

Killer whales approaching the vessel

6. Others

I appreciate Yukiko Yamamoto who coordinate this course. And I appreciate Clues of Sightseeing boat “Hamanasu” and members of “Uni-Horp” to accept to join us. Also I am grateful to the PWS program and members.