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

	2025 05 30
Affiliation/Position	Wildlife Research Center/M1
Name	Xorlali Azimey

1. Country/location of visit

Koshima, Miyazaki Prefecture, Japan

2. Research project

Field Training course in Animal Behavior and Ecology

3. Date (departing from/returning to Japan)

2025.05.19–2025.05.25 (7 days)

4. Main host researcher and affiliation

Associate Prof. Hideki Sugiura, Wildlife Research Center, Kyoto University

5. Progress and results of your research/activity

Please insert one or more pictures (to be publicly released). Below each picture, please provide a brief description.

Field Trip Report: Animal Behavior and Ecology Course

The course aimed to equip participants with knowledge of behavior data collection techniques and field observation methods. The main aim is to observe wild Japanese macaques on Koshima Island and feral horses at Cape Toi. Furthermore, it aimed to equip participants with insight into diverse ecological dynamics related to the target species.

Upon arrival, the course instructors, Sugiura-sensei, Suzumura-sensei, and Toyoda-sensei, outlined the purpose of the trip to participants, as well as the safety guidelines, schedule of activities, and facilities available at the facility.

Prior to the field activity, Toyoda-sensei conducted a photography session that focused on the observation and collection of data on wildlife species. He highlighted the significance of capturing the features and behavior of the species under observation in a wildlife photograph, including the need for specific details such as scars, body defects, and/or any fascinating feature that can accurately convey the subject matter.

Fig.1. Session on wildlife photography

Fig.2. Guidance on camera usage

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Visit to Miyazaki Prefectural Museum of Nature and History

We had the privilege of visiting Miyazaki's Museum, where we observed the prefecture's captivating cultural and natural collections throughout history. The museum featured a detailed blend of local flora and fauna species, as well as reconstructions of ancient settlements and the ways in which the locals interacted with their environment throughout history. I observed the traditional thatched homes and the process of producing white charcoal. Additionally, the historical use of farming methods and equipment was on display. I also went on a journey through the history of cameras, exploring their evolution over time and their significance to the Japanese people, particularly in the context of historical storytelling and art.

The most fun aspect of the trip for me was my interaction with some Japanese junior high students who visited the museum as well. They were intrigued by African origin and had many interesting questions about my country, Ghana and why I was currently in Japan. My interaction with the school kids made me realize I had a lot to learn about my country and its connections to the rest of the world. The overall experience was wholesome and presented an opportunity for me to learn much about Southern Kyushu and the Japanese culture as whole.

Fig.3. Session at the Miyazaki Prefectural Museum

Feral Horse Observation at Cape Toi

The next activity involved gearing up in field clothes to observe feral horses at Cape Toi. The activity included observing the interaction between the horses, their social grouping, and feeding behavior. We were provided with handbooks that included the identities of all individuals, as well as their distinctive features, which were used as identification markers. We also interacted with some WRC members who were performing field research at the site. They explained the group dynamics and relationships that they had been observing.

A key observation I made was how the horses spent much of their time grazing the field, with few individuals

spending some time interacting with others or resting. They, however, appeared to be less active than I presumed.

Fig.4. Horses grazing at Cape Toi

Fig.5. A harem grazing

Observing Wild Japanese Macaques on Koshima Island

We traveled to Koshima Island by boat to observe Japanese macaques in their natural habitats. Prior to arrival, we were briefed by Sugiura-sensei about the safety measures and precautions to take during this field observation. A key point was about being situationally aware, especially of the wild animals, even though we were dealing with wild macaques that were familiar with human presence. We were also provided handbooks that contained the details of the macaques we were to observe to aid identification and behavior data collection.

At about 9:00 a.m., we began our observation, during which only a handful of macaques were observed to be resting and primarily engaged in self-grooming and allogrooming. The remaining individuals were in the trees and only joined the plain site when they heard the calling noises of food being distributed by Sugiura-sensei. I observed that some of the macaques exhibited aggressive behavior toward others during the feeding, despite the abundance of feed on the ground, in accordance with their dominance hierarchies (both in males and females). I also noticed that the females who had infants did not pay much attention to their wards during this time, with the exception of one individual who had recently given birth and carried her infant constantly. The feeding activity continued for some time, and when the food had run out, they began resting, with a few going back to the trees. Those that remained moved around to find shade and began grooming.

The macaques engaged in grooming to varying degrees, depending on the part of the body, the duration, and the individual involved. Some resorted to self-grooming, and some performed mother-infant grooming, while others also performed adult-adult grooming or a combination of the three. This activity continued for about an hour and a half until the sun was shining fully and they began shade-seeking.

A notable behavior during this process was the subtle vocalization that preceded changes in sequence and position during allogrooming (an individual grooms another). This happened often, but there were times when position or the direction of grooming (who grooms whom) changed without any observed

vocalization. I also observed that there were varying preferences in the body parts that were being groomed, as some individuals focused more on the back, around the neck, or on top of the head. Others spent time grooming their legs and feet.

Fig.6. Observation of grooming behavior

After this observation, we were tasked to collect data on specific behavior traits of interest, which we will present on subsequently. The task involved following individuals of our choosing and observing behaviors (e.g., allogrooming or playing behavior in infants) and recording their associated time and patterns. In my case, I tried to get a deeper understanding of the social organization and bonding mechanisms within macaque groups enforced through grooming activity. I monitored one individual (Tsuwa) to compare its self-grooming duration and frequency with its allogrooming activities towards other group members. Subsequently, we observed the macaques inside the forested areas, analyzed the acquired data, and gave presentations.

The observation was fascinating as I got to observe some interesting foraging activities and calling sounds (especially around twilight) as well as infant care among the macaques.

Fig.7. Presentation session at research station

Conclusion

The experience was insightful as I was able to learn about the behavior and ecology of feral horses at Cape Toi and Japanese macaques on Koshima Island. We were also able to learn about other organisms in the ecosystems, like the coprophilous fungi, some ticks of horses, and plant species.

Overall, my understanding of the nuances of fieldwork, experimental designs, and statistical methodologies has significantly improved.

6. Acknowledgement

- I would like to express my sincere gratitude to Sugiura-sensei, Toyada-sensei, and Suzumura-san for sharing their invaluable knowledge throughout the training.
- A heartfelt thank you also goes to the PWS and WRC teams for making this incredible experience possible.
- Finally, I am deeply grateful to my colleagues, the interns, and other researchers at the station who made the experience an unforgettable one.