

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. 06, 24	
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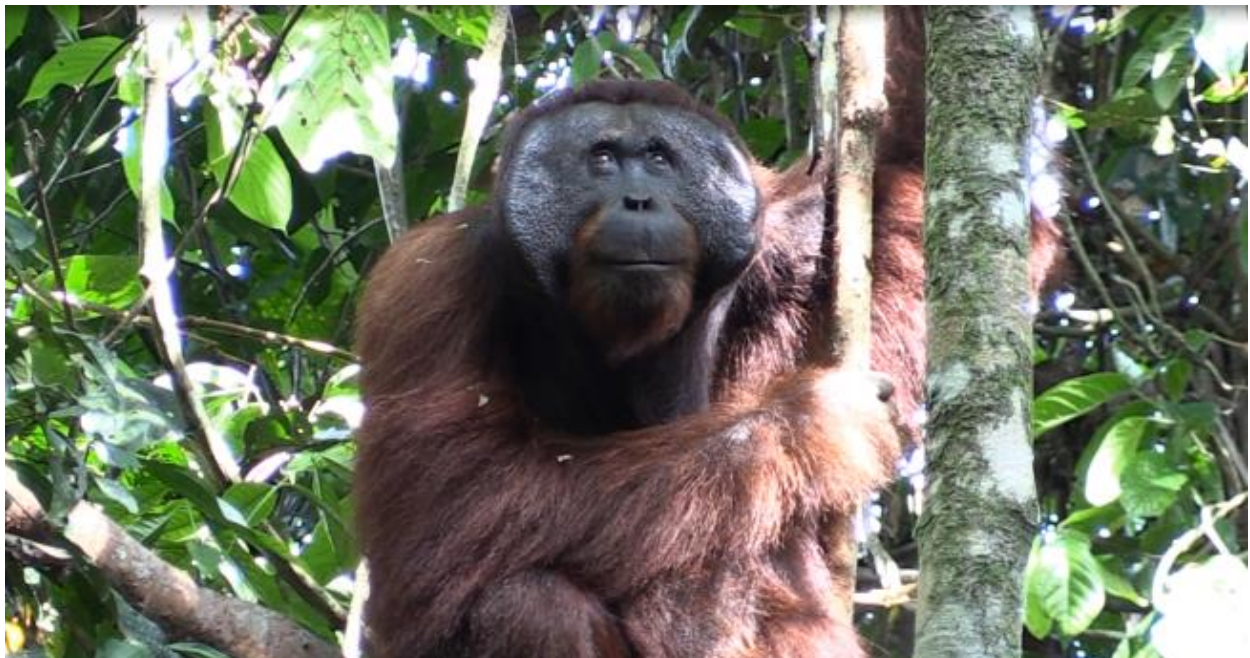
1. Country/location of visit
Malaysia, Sabah / Danum Valley Conservation Area
2. Research project
Visit of field site + conference on Rainforest Ecology, Diversity, and Conservation in Borneo
3. Date (departing from/returning to Japan)
2015. 06. 03 – 2015. 06. 12 (10 days)
4. Main host researcher and affiliation
Renata Mendonca, D3 student at Primate Research Institute
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>I have already been to Sabah (Malaysian Borneo) in order to do my master's thesis studying mother-infant relationship in wild orangutans (<i>Pongo pygmaeus morio</i>). I spent six months last year from January to June at Danau Girang Field Centre which is located along the Kinabatangan River. During this period I did not have time to visit Danum Valley neither Kyoto University's field site in Danum Valley Conservation Area (DVCA). Therefore, the purpose of this trip was to give me the opportunity to visit this field site. DVCA is composed of primary rain forest which is not the case at Danau Girang being composed of secondary rain forest and which is a very fragmented habitat due to palm tree plantations. However, both sites host the same species of orangutans <i>Pongo pygmaeus morio</i>, thus it was a great opportunity for me to observe the same species in different habitats. In addition of visiting this field site I had the chance to assist to an international conference on rainforest ecology, diversity, and conservation in Borneo which was hold in Kota Kinabalu.</p> <p>I left Japan on June 3rd and joined Professors Matsuzawa, Hirata, Morimura and Kimura on the 4th at Kota Kinabalu airport. We arrived in the afternoon at DVCA field site and had the chance to directly observe a mother-infant pair: Lina and Kate that we followed until they made their nest. We stayed at DVCA from June 4th to 8th, so we had three full days and two half-days to observe orangutans and others species. We conducted nest-to-nest follows starting the day at 5.30am to be sure to arrive before orangutans leave the nest until they make a nest for the night which is usually around 5.30-6.30pm. Thanks to the different research assistants who always followed the orangutans we were able to switch individuals when new ones were found in the area. In total we could observe 8 individuals: three mother-infant pairs (Lina and Kate [female ~ 3 years old] / Yanti and Sely [female ~ 3 years old] / Beth and Lom [male ~ 5 years old]), one flanged male (Ali), and one unflanged male (Oni). We had the chance to observe the flanged male being in the same tree as a mother-infant pair, however they did not directly interact together. We observed two mother-infant pairs being also in the same tree while the mothers were feeding and resting and the two infants playing together. I could observe playing between infants only twice in six months at Danau Girang so I was glad to see this interaction here in only five days of visit. Another interesting behavior was Lina an adult female and her daughter Kate drinking water from a tree hole.</p> <p>During our time in the forest we saw different species of primates. We saw red leaf monkeys in a very close proximity playing and feeding. I was impressed to be able to see them in such a close proximity because langurs are known to be quite shy species. Through the days we could hear gibbon's vocalizations without seeing the individuals but during our last morning on the 8th we could observe one pair in a tree and right in front of this tree across the main path another single individual.</p> <p>At the end of the first three days, after dinner, we went for a night drive and on the last night we went for a night walk in order to observe nocturnal animals. We could see different species such as Malay and palm civets, flying fox, mouse deer, red flying squirrel and the most impressive for me by its camouflage was the flying lemur which was with an offspring.</p>

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It is difficult to compare the two populations of *Pongo pygmaeus morio* orangutans living in two different kinds of habitats because we stayed only five days at DVCA and an extended period is clearly necessary to make a valuable comparison. In their behaviors and development by talking with Renata it seems that the two populations show the same trend. The offspring are mainly in contact until the age of three years old. At three years old the contact is mainly for transportation. After this age, when the offspring are not directly in contact with their mother they stay in close proximity. It seems that three-year-old infants at DVCA spend more time playing on their own than the one at Danau Girang. Six-year-old offspring at DVCA sleep in the same nest as the mother but the one that I followed at Danau Girang sleeps on its own. I cannot conclude anything this is just some facts about some individuals.

About the comparison of the two field sites the main difference is the height of the trees. It is very impressive at DVCA where the trees are about 40 meters high compared to Danau Girang where the trees are more about 20-30 meters high. In my opinion it is easier to observe orangutans at Danau Girang because the trees are much smaller. Another major difference is the presence of fig trees at DVCA and their absence at Danau Girang. The fig trees are important in orangutan's diet. Furthermore, I was really surprised by the number of individuals in the vicinity of DVCA, for me it was unbelievable to see so many individuals in such a short period of time and in such small area (we did not go really far in the forest when following individuals). At the beginning I thought that the population density of orangutans here is much bigger than at Danau Girang where you cannot find this number of individuals in close proximity. After talking with Renata I realized that I was wrong. She told me that it is very unusual, she has rarely seen that number of individuals, that is usually quite difficult to find individuals and it was probably due to the fruiting season where the fig trees were fruiting.

On June 8th, we came back to Kota Kinabalu to attend a conference from June 9th to 11th. The conference was about rainforest ecology, diversity, and conservation in Borneo. I could not present because when we planned this trip the deadline was already passed. However, I appreciated to see the talk of Prof. Matsuzawa and Renata and the others talks also. It also allowed me to see my colleagues from Danau Girang and thus to have an update about the orangutans there.



Ali – Flanged male

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Ali – Flanged male



Kate – Female infant orangutan around 3 years old practicing her kiss-squeak

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Red leaf monkey (*Presbytis rubicunda*)



Muller's Bornean gibbon (*Hylobates muelleri*)

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Sunda flying lemur (*Galeopterus variegatus*) with offspring



Kuala Sungai Danum Field station settled by Kyoto University in 2010



Group photo from left to right: me, Renata, Profs. Hirata, Morimura, Matsuzawa, Kimura

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From view point



Primary rain forest



Conference in Kota Kinabalu

6. Others

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to Renata Mendonca for guiding us in DVCA, the two research assistants Peo and Mizi, the PWS program and Prof. Matsuzawa for giving me this great opportunity of visiting DVCA.