

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.)

2016.01.22

Affiliation/Position	Primate Research Institute/D1
Name	Liesbeth FRIAS

1. Country/location of visit
Peru/ Iquitos
2. Research project
EMBO Practical Course on Phylogenetics in the –omics era
3. Date (departing from/returning to Japan)
2016.01.08-2016.01.20 (13 days)
4. Main host researcher and affiliation
Mary O’Connell (Leeds University, UK) and Chris Creevey and Karen Siu Ting (Aberystwyth University, Wales)
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 European Molecular Biology Organization (EMBO) supports researchers at different stages of their careers, promoting the exchange of scientific knowledge and establishment of research networks. EMBO courses are designed to communicate the latest research and offer training in specialized techniques. The EMBO Practical Course on Phylogenetics in the –omics era was held between January 10th and January 17th in the city of Iquitos. Iquitos is located in the Peruvian Amazon and it is only accessible by plane or boat. To move around town, people use motocarros, a motorcycle with a rickshaw-like passenger cabin in the back. The city was also part of the rubber boom, related to the extraction and commercialization of rubber, resulting in a large immigration of Europeans in the area and a big influence on local architecture.</p> <p>The practical course was held at the Peruvian Amazon Research Institute, which focuses on scientific and technologic research for the sustainable use of biological diversity in the Peruvian amazon. It focused on large-scale data analysis in an evolutionary framework. Every day consisted of a morning lecture followed by a practical session in the afternoon and a research seminar given by one of the instructors in the evening. Lectures provided an overview on computational tools for phylogenetic analysis that students would later put into practice, and seminars were a fun way of ending the day with an update of research being carried by invited lecturers. During the week we also had a trip to the Amazon Rescue Center. The center hosts several animal species, such as turtles, otters and howler monkeys, but they are better known for their work on manatee rescue and rehabilitation. The Amazonian manatee is a vulnerable species that lives exclusively in freshwater and is distributed throughout the Amazon River Basin. Its population decrease is primarily due to hunting, calf mortality and habitat loss. Some people hunt calves to sell them as pets, and since their diets are very specific, they die very soon. The center’s mission is to rescue these animals and rehabilitate them before releasing them back to protected areas.</p> <p>This trip was a fantastic experience. Through EMBO’s course I got to review and practice the latest techniques for phylogenetic analysis, giving me the chance of putting my research into perspective and re-evaluate the way I’m looking at my data. The fact that members of the course had to spend every day together put us in close contact with each other’s research topics and trouble-shooting, giving us a sense of community and comfort in the thought that “we’re all together in the same boat”.</p>

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Research seminars, practical sessions and lectures. Photo credit: EMBO 2016 and Liesbeth Frias (bottom right).

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Historic center and cathedral by night and members of EMBO 2016 after-class. Photo credit: Liesbeth Frias (top), EMBO 2016 (bottom).

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The Amazon Rescue Center hosts several animal species, but the most charismatic is the manatee.
Photo credit: Liesbeth Frias.

Acknowledgments

I would like to express my gratitude to PWS and Prof. Matsuzawa for supporting this practical course. I would also like to thank Mary O’Connell, Chris Creevey and Karen Siu Ting for the great organization, and the outstanding instructors for their enormous patience and feedback. To the participants of this course that contributed to make it a unique and unforgettable experience, specially to the students from Iquitos, for showing us around and organizing fun side activities.