

**Research Activity Report**  
**Supported by “Leading Graduate Program in Primatology and Wildlife Science”**

2025 03, 03	
<b>Affiliation/Position</b>	Wildlife Research Center/M1
<b>Name</b>	Xorlali Azimey

<b>1. Country/location of visit</b>
Kumamoto, Japan
<b>2. Research project</b>
Animal Welfare Course
<b>3. Date (departing from/returning to Japan)</b>
2025. 03. 26 – 2025. 03. 1 (4 days)
<b>4. Main host researcher and affiliation</b>
Prof. Satoshi Hirata, Wildlife Research Center, Kyoto University
<b>5. Progress and results of your research/activity</b> (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.
<b>Field Trip Report: Animal Welfare Course</b>
<p>Aim of the Course: The four-day intensive training introduces participants to the history and importance of animal welfare for captive animals, covering techniques for environmental, feeding, and cognitive enrichment, along with basic behavioral observation methods and comparative cognitive science for evaluating animal welfare.</p> <p>Specific implementation schedules are as follows: Upon arrival, participants were welcomed by the course instructor, Hirata-sensei, who conducted a brief orientation session about the safety guidelines, the schedule of activities, and the various facilities present at the sanctuary. Participants were provided with suitable outfits and taken on brief tours of the enclosures housing chimpanzees and bonobos. A significant portion of time was spent at Building 1, observing the chimpanzees' reactions to the new visitors. Their excitement was evident through behaviors like jumping, loud pant hoots, and intense banging of sticks and other objects against the metal rails and walls — a fascinating and slightly intimidating experience, especially for a first-time encounter with chimpanzees. Hirata-sensei explained various chimpanzee behaviors, including the grunting sounds they make while waiting for food and their vocalizations to express fear, distress, or assert dominance. He also advised participants to exercise caution when interacting with the chimps.</p> <p>We later visited building five, where we were introduced to the chimpanzees there who were quite interesting. Participants were shown around the medical facility, and how they get medical treatment, often after an injury or a required procedure. We were allowed to observe the interaction between Hirata-sensei and the chimps as he fed them. He had a good relationship with the chimps as they followed his instructions. Participants were tasked to learn the names of these chimps (Natsuki, Misaki, Mizuki, Zamba, Iroha, Hatsuka) to help them understand them better and improve their relationship. We also visited the bonobo enclosure, where we had the opportunity to gain experience about their behavior and characteristics. Hirata-sensei engaged playfully with a few of the bonobos, demonstrating their social and interactive nature. However, he also cautioned us to be careful, as bonobos can sometimes become aggressive and pose a risk of injury to the staff.</p> <p><b>Making enrichment tools</b> Participants crafted enrichment toys from bamboo, designed to provide mental stimulation and prevent boredom in captive animals. These toys were filled with treats like peanuts and snacks, mixed with shrubs, leaves, and twigs, and had small holes through which the chimpanzees and crows could retrieve the treats. The animals used different techniques and took varying amounts of time to access the rewards, influenced by their personalities and experiences.</p>

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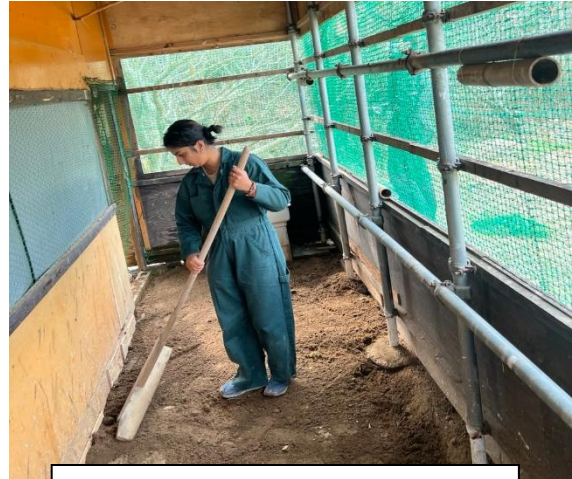
**Visit to the crow house.**

As part of the activities, we visited the crow house to conduct field enrichment work. The task involved collecting soil specifically gathered to fill holes and repair areas of eroded ground within the enclosure. Participants were also responsible for sorting out sharp objects, large debris, and other foreign materials that could pose a threat to the crows' safety. Additionally, we undertook some repair work on the nets covering the structure.

The crows' reaction to our presence in the enclosure was noticeably different from what we had observed in the chimp house. The crows exhibited significant fear and anxiety, which they expressed through their movement. They actively moved around the enclosure, making clear efforts to avoid us as much as possible.



**Fig.1 Soil collection for crow house**



**Fig.2 preparing soil in crow house.**



**Fig.3 Enrichment toys**



**Fig.4 Filling enrichment toys with snacks**

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**Bamboo installation in the chimp house:** We later harvest bamboo of specific measurements that would be installed in the chimp cages to serve as enrichment structures that the chimps can play with. 6-meter bamboo poles were erected vertically in the cages and bound with ropes for added extra solidity. The chimps were then allowed back into the cage after installation, and participants observed from a distance their reaction to the new structures. They expressed varying degrees of excitement and curiosity as they jumped and grunted and threw objects around. A few of them targeted the parts that held the binding ropes and were determined to tear them, which was successful, so the ropes had to be changed to metal ropes instead. Overall, they were excited with the enrichment structures.



**Fig.5 Chimp inspecting the bamboo pole.**

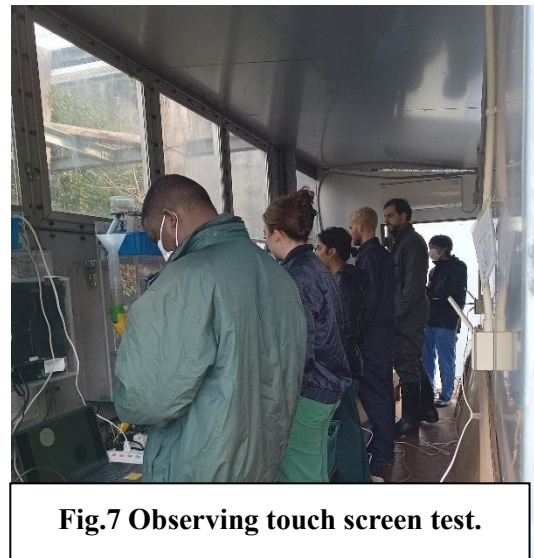
**Touch Screen Experiment:** Participants were also tasked with conducting a touch screen experiment with six chimpanzees, designed to enhance their cognitive abilities and focus. The task required the chimps to distinguish a blinking circle from a non-blinking one on the screen, with each correct response rewarded with a treat. A specialized computer software monitored their performance and recorded behavioral parameters relevant to the research objectives.

Careful planning and precise timing were essential for this activity, as an uneven start could lead to conflicts among the chimps. Some individuals were more aggressive than others and attempted to monopolize the treats, which required careful management to ensure fairness.

By the end of the experiment, the chimps enjoyed the activity, with some even displaying frustration when the test was concluded.



**Fig.6 Chimps engaging in touch screen experiment.**



**Fig.7 Observing touch screen test.**

**Conclusion**

Participants also took part in preparing animal feed, scattering fruits in the enclosures, and assisting with drug administration. These firsthand activities provided valuable insights into the care and management of captive wildlife, highlighting the discipline, dedication, and commitment required to ensure the animals' well-being.

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**6. Others (Additional photos)**



**Acknowledgement**

- I would like to express my sincere gratitude to Prof. Satoshi Hirata for sharing his 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, Casy Mack, and Itaraha-san, as well as the interns, whose support made this experience truly unforgettable.