

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

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| 2025/10/27                  |                             |
| <b>Affiliation/Position</b> | Wildlife Research Centre/M1 |
| <b>Name</b>                 | Alexander Hendry            |

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| <b>1. Country/location of visit</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| Uto, Kumamoto, Japan                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| <b>2. Research project</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| Animal Welfare Course                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| <b>3. Date (departing from/returning to Japan)</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| 2025/10/20 – 2025/10/23 (4 days)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| <b>4. Main host researcher and affiliation</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| Professor Satoshi Hirata, Wildlife Research Centre, Akihiro Itahara, Wildlife Research Centre                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| <b>5. Progress and results of your research/activity</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| <p>An appropriate understanding of animal welfare is essential for anyone working with or studying animals, particularly captive animals. Ensuring that their study subjects’ welfare is maintained at a high level is not only the ethical responsibility of animal caretakers and researchers but this also ensures that any research conducted on the animals will not be compromised by stress or stereotypic behaviour. In October 2025, I along with six other graduate students from Kyoto University visited Kumamoto Sanctuary in Uto City, Kumamoto prefecture, to learn more about animal welfare and its importance in a captive animal care setting.</p> <p><b>Day 1 – 20<sup>th</sup> of October 2025</b></p> <p>To start the Animal Welfare course, we assembled at Kumamoto Station then travelled to Kumamoto Sanctuary in a hire car. Kumamoto Sanctuary is Japan’s only sanctuary for rescued chimpanzees and bonobos. The facility was formerly a biomedical research facility but was converted to a sanctuary in 2007 and acquired by Kyoto University in 2011. Nowadays the sanctuary is only used for cognitive research and to provide lifetime care for 48 chimpanzees and six bonobos who have been ‘retired’ from the biomedical or entertainment industries. After getting changed into our overalls, we accompanied Hirata-sensei to see some of the male chimpanzees housed at the sanctuary. As Kumamoto Sanctuary does not wish to breed chimpanzees, these males were segregated from females. Next up we visited the sanctuary’s bonobos (Fig. 1). The six bonobos living at Kumamoto Sanctuary are the only bonobos living in Japan and perhaps Asia. The bonobos were quite noisy and I noticed that their vocalisations were distinct from chimpanzees and were higher pitched. Hirata-sensei informed us that the bonobos have been known to bite off their caretakers’ fingertips so we were warned not to get too close to them but because of the relationship he has built up with them, he was able to safely touch the bonobo’s backs. To complete the tour of the sanctuary Hirata-sensei took us to the main animal care facility at Kumamoto Sanctuary. He showed us the food freezer which is stocked with human quality food. Hirata-sensei also took us to the chimpanzee medical room where he explained the loading and use of a blow dart (Fig. 2). Next, we visited a small exhibition room where many interesting objects were on display. These objects included skulls (Fig. 3) from chimpanzees that had died at the sanctuary as well as nests made by wild born chimpanzees living at the sanctuary. Hirata-sensei said that only wild born chimpanzees make nests in captivity as captive born chimpanzees have no need to make nests and so never learn</p> |



*Fig. 1: The male bonobo Vijay, one of six living at Kumamoto Sanctuary.*

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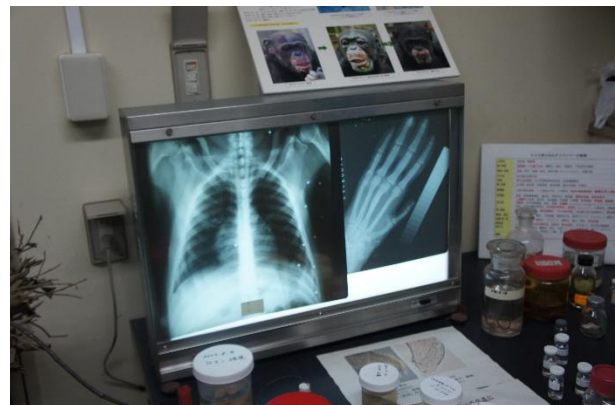
*Fig. 2: Hirata-sensei explaining the use of blow darts in anaesthetising great apes.*

this skill. Also on display in the exhibition room was a damaged drone with large bite marks in it. This drone had been flown over one of the chimpanzee enclosures when a chimpanzee threw a stick at it resulting in the drone crashing and then promptly being destroyed by the chimpanzees. The most poignant item on display was an x-ray of a bullet-riddled chimpanzee torso (Fig. 4). This x-ray was taken from a wild-born chimpanzee living at Kumamoto Sanctuary. In order to acquire baby chimpanzees, poachers must kill the mother and usually other group members who try to protect the infant. This particular chimpanzee must have been acquired in this violent manner and still retained bullet fragments from this terrible incident. Hirata-sensei said that for every live chimpanzee infant that enters the pet trade, an estimated 10 more have died in the process. This statistic made me realize

how important it is to prevent poaching of great apes and other animals and the severity of the illegal wildlife trade. We ended the day by watching Hirata-sensei call the chimpanzees inside for their dinner whilst he and the other caretakers cleaned their enclosures.



*Fig. 3: Collection of primate skulls, some are real and some are models*



*Fig. 4: X-ray image of a chimpanzee which survived a violent capture from the wild.*

## **Day 2 – 21<sup>st</sup> of October 2025**

The second day of the course started early as we went to feed the chimpanzees their breakfast at 8:00 a.m. We cut up fruit and vegetables for them (Fig. 5) and dissolved birth-control pills into juice for the female chimpanzees as the group we were visiting contained both males and females. Hirata-sensei gave the juice to the females whilst the graduate students went into the enclosure to hide the pieces of fruit and vegetables to encourage natural foraging behaviour (Fig. 6). Afterwards we watched the chimpanzees search for the hidden food, mikan (mandarin) was their favourite by far. We then returned to the main office of Kumamoto Sanctuary where PhD students Elizabeth Sharkey and Kazaho Tsumura gave a fascinating bilingual presentation on animal welfare. This presentation concluded with Hirata-sensei showing diagrams of enrichment devices made out of bamboo that we were to create. We then headed out to the small bamboo grove growing near the Sanctuary's driveway to cut bamboo and spent the next few hours making enrichment devices from bamboo (Fig. 7). Enrichment is a fundamental concept in captive animal welfare. In an animal welfare context, enrichment refers to anything that encourages an animal to express natural behaviour. Enrichment can take many forms, such as feeding enrichment, sensory enrichment, or structural enrichment. The bamboo devices that we made fell into the category of feeding enrichment. We make two types of enrichment devices. The first consisted of single bamboo segment (or 節) that had holes drilled into it. We then inserted soybeans and honey into these holes. The second bamboo device

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*Fig. 5: Fruit and vegetables to be hidden in the chimpanzees' enclosures.*

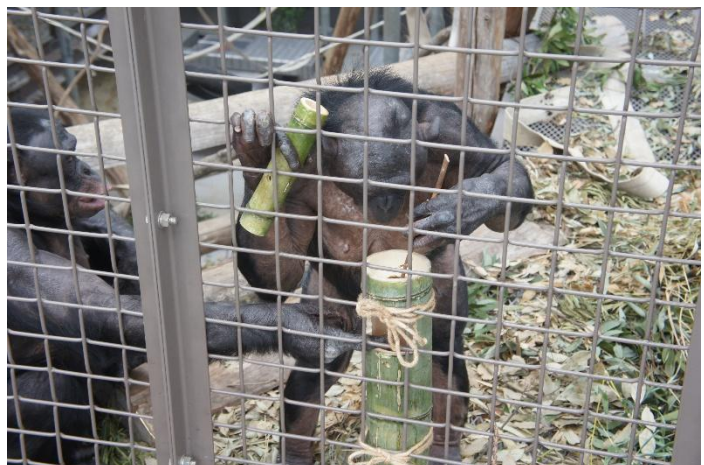


*Fig. 6: Students hiding food in a chimpanzee enclosure to encourage foraging.*

was more complex and consisted of two connected bamboo segments. Holes were drilled in the top and bottom of the first segment and peanuts and soybeans were then inserted into this segment. A small window at the bottom was then drilled into the second segment. The concept behind both of these enrichment devices was to encourage tool use among the sanctuary's apes. The honey in the first enrichment device was intended to be extracted using a stick fashioned into a brush and a stick was meant to be used to poke out the food in the second enrichment device. We then entered the bonobo's enclosure (with them safely secured in their indoor quarters) whilst we installed the enrichment devices by tying them to the wire mesh of the enclosure. Then bonobos were then let out to interact with the devices. They loudly vocalised and raced towards to the enrichment. It was interesting watching how each bonobo had a different strategy to extract food from the two-segment device. One male bonobo attempted to pull the devices off the mesh and eventually succeed. He then bit into the tube to access the tasty peanuts inside. A second male attempted to untie the string holding the bamboo tube in place. The female bonobo living in this enclosure quickly figured out how to use tools to extract the food and made a small brush with a stick to soak up and eat the honey from the small tubes and used a stick to poke out the food in the two-segment devices (Fig. 8). As an aspiring primatologist, it was fascinating watching this highly intelligent ape make and use tools with no prompting from humans. The enrichment devices kept the bonobos occupied for well over an hour, demonstrating that simple and cheap enrichment can have long lasting welfare benefits on captive apes. This day concluded by watching Hirata-sensei feed the chimpanzees their evening meal again.



*Fig. 7: Students busily constructing enrichment devices out of bamboo.*



*Fig. 8: Bonobos interacting with the enrichment device. Note the use of a tool.*

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**Day 3 – 22<sup>nd</sup> of October 2025**

This day also started at 8:00 a.m. with the morning feeding of the chimpanzees. We once again went into their enclosure to hide fruit and vegetables. When they added soybeans and honey to bamboo devices that we had made the previous day. Following this we then had the unique opportunity to watch a medical procedure being performed on one of the sanctuary’s chimpanzees (Fig. 9). The chimpanzee being treated was called Haruna and she was receiving a check-up as it had been five years since her last medical procedure. During the check-up she received an x-ray and a blood draw and her uterus was inspected with an endoscope as a previous medical examination had identified a uterine tumour. Overall, it was fascinating watching this process. After lunch we then installed the bamboo devices into the chimpanzee enclosure. As it was raining the chimpanzees were not as enthusiastic about interacting with the enrichment as the bonobos. They had similar strategies to extracting the food as the bonobos did. One chimpanzee ripped the bamboo device off the mesh and others used stick give to them by Hirata-sensei or other caretakers to try and poke out the food. Some differences between the chimpanzee and the bonobos response to the enrichment was that the chimpanzees did not attempt to untie the devices and they needed to be prompted to use tools unlike the bonobos. At this point the rain grew heavier and the animal welfare course concluded as we were unable to make any more enrichment in the rainy weather. We celebrated our time in Kumamoto Sanctuary by having a delicious BBQ dinner.



*Fig. 9: The chimpanzee Haruna undergoing a medical examination.*

**Day 4 – 23<sup>rd</sup> of October 2025**

Our fascinating time at the Kumamoto Sanctuary was coming to an end. We spent the morning of our fourth day at the sanctuary cleaning our dormitories and the shared kitchen. At midday we returned to Kumamoto Station and bade our farewells.

**Reflection**

Visiting Kumamoto Sanctuary was an incredible experience. A facility such as this does not exist in Australia, so I am grateful for the opportunity to visit and learn more about how the apes are cared for at Kumamoto Sanctuary. Visiting the sanctuary has made me to reflect on the importance of animal welfare and what can be done to promote it in a captive wildlife facility. I hope to one day work for a major zoo-based conservation organisation so visiting Kumamoto Sanctuary has given me a unique insight into the operations of such a facility.

**6. Others**

I would like to take this opportunity to thanks the following people:

- Hirata-sensei, for organising this course, and allowing us students to visit Kumamoto Sanctuary and contribute to the welfare of the apes living at the sanctuary
- Akihiro Itahara for assisting us with the construction of the bamboo enrichment devices
- The other staff members of Kumamoto Sanctuary for allowing us into their workplace
- The six other graduate students we attended the course, Yuka Goto, Sara Kim, Chaoyu Lin, Eiichiro Ozasa, Elizabeth Sharkey, and Kazaho Tsumura for being great company