

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.)

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Affiliation/Position	Primate Research Institute / D1
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1. Country/location of visit
Sri Lanka / Univeristy of Sri Jayewardenepura
2. Research project
International training program on terrestrial / aquatic wildlife and primate conservation
3. Date (departing from/returning to Japan)
2015. 07. 31 – 2015. 08. 17 (18 days)
4. Main host researcher and affiliation
Dr. Charmalie Nahallage (Sri Jayewardenepura University), Dr. Kamal Ranatunga (Sri Jayewardenepura Univeristy), and Prof. Michael Huffman (Primate Research Institute, Kyoto University)
5. Progress and results of your research/activity (You can attach extra pages if needed)
<p>Sri Lanka is a tropical island situated in the Indian Ocean with a total land area of 65 610 km². The country is considerate as a biodiversity hotspot and has a remarkable high species endemism with 23% of the flowering plants and 16% of the mammals in the island being endemic. With six students and two professors from Kyoto university I joined the international training program on terrestrial/aquatic wildlife and primate conservation organized by the university of Sri Jayewardenepura in Sri Lanka. The purpose of this program was to gain an understanding of the diversity in terms of fauna, flora, and habitats, to gain knowledge on the wildlife management and conservation, and to experience a new culture.</p> <p>In Sri Lanka, we can find different types of habitats such as wet, dry, arid zones or mountain area. We started the program by exploring the wet zone going for two days to Sinharaja. Sinharaja was declared as an International Man and Biosphere Reserve by UNESCO in 1978, as a National Wilderness Area in 1988, and as a World Heritage Site in 1989. Prof. Kotagama, a bird expert, working here since 1980 introduced the flora of Sinharaja and explained the bird flock mechanism that we have observed during our stay where different species of birds meet after a specific call to forage and travel together during the day. Among the other animals, we observed Southern purple-faced leaf langurs (<i>Trachypithecus vetulus vetulus</i>), monitor lizards (<i>Varanus salvator</i>), the National bird: the Sri Lankan junglefowl (<i>Gallus lafayetii</i>), and the least appreciated ones: the leaches. Prof. Gunathilake then introduced the flora of Sinharaja, where 70% of the tree species are endemic. Moreover, we discovered another kind of forest of the wet zone by having a boat trip in the mangrove forest in Madu Ganga.</p> <p>The second zone that we explored was the dry zone. We stayed three nights in a bungalow situated in the middle of Lunugamwehera National Park. It was a great experience, sleeping outside and waking up with the sunrise watching wild animals such as spotted deers (<i>Axis axis</i>) and grey langurs (<i>Semnopithecus priam thersites</i>). We first went to Bundala National Park. Bundala is composed of 62 km² and five lagoons. It is considerate as a wetland because of the presence of the five lagoons although it is situated in the dry zone. Bundala is an important place for the migratory birds. The migratory season is from mid-August to April, we were here a little bit too early. We took a jeep to explore the park. We observed our first wild elephants (<i>Elephas maximus</i>). It was the first time for me to observe wild elephants so I was really excited about it! Usually, it is quite rare to find elephants there but we saw them three times so we were very lucky! Bundala Park is situated near by the ocean, we went to the sand dunes where the turtles make their nest and we could observe one nest. We also went to Yala National Park which is composed by five blocks and has a total superficies of 979 km². In both parks, we observed a great diversity of animals such as wild water buffalos (<i>Bubalus arnee</i>), crocodiles, elephants (<i>Elephas maximus</i>), wild boars, spotted deers (<i>Axis axis</i>), grey langurs (<i>Semnopithecus priam thersites</i>), toque macaques (<i>Macaca sinica</i>), mongooses, and many birds. My favorite was Bundala but it is probably due to the fact that we were alone in the park compared to Yala were many people were visiting the park at the same time. We were even sometimes stuck in a traffic jam because of the high number of the jeeps. Anyway it didn't decrease my excitement of seeing such an impressive number of animals in such a beautiful place. In the dry zone, we also went to Kataragama known to be a pilgrimage town where there is a big temple. We had the introduction</p>

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of the primates here by Dr. Charmalie Nahallage and by Prof. Michael Huffman. Grey langurs are culturally respected, it is very common to see them in the temple areas where people offer food to them. We observed a very high density of grey langurs. I was really impressed by the number of individuals and by the proximity between humans and non-human primates. This place was a good illustration for the problem that all primates (human and non-human) are facing in Sri Lanka which is the zoonosis, infectious disease that can be transmitted between species. Because of the expansion of agricultural and developmental activities, there is an increase in contact with wild primates and thus an increase of the risk of contracting zoonotic infections.

We then moved to a third kind of habitat which was the mountain zone. We spent three days there and were very cold, we didn't expect that it will be that much cold. On the first day, we were able to observe the Montane purple-faced leaf langur (*Trachypitecus vetulus monticola*) also called “bear monkey” because of its impressive size. On the second day we had to prepare for a mini-symposium where all students had to prepare a presentation on the different topics that were introducing to us during the last previous days. In my case, I presented a talk on the primates of Sri Lanka. On the following day, we went to the Horton Plains National Park where Dr. Enoka Kudawidange introduced the fauna and Dr. Sisira Ediriweera the flora. Horton plains are situated 2000 meters above sea level and were designated as a National Park in 1988. We walked along an eight-kilometer trail watching the different species. We observed many plants such as carnivorous plants (*Drosera burmanni*) and different animals such as the Sri lankan Samba deers (*Rusa unicolor unicolor*).

The last ecosystem that we explored was the coral reefs. We went to two different places. First, we went to Hikkaduwa which became a National Park in 2002 because of the increase of the number of visitors which caused a big degradation of the coral reefs. Dr. Kamal Ranatunga and Dr. Arjan Rajasuriya presented about coral reefs. Our final destination was Pigeon Island, where Dr. Turney Pradeep Kumara gave a lecture. Pigeon Island is an amazing place to observe corals and fishes, I was amazed by everything there, such a wonderful and colorful underwater world. I had the chance to swim with a turtle and many sharks!

In general, this program, in addition to be very well organized, was a wonderful experience, we got to see many different places with many different species. We had the chance to have the best resource researchers of the country to explain us about the different places or topics integrating the program. We visited many national parks, many temples, we also went to Sinharaja and Sigiriya which are two World Heritage Sites. Sri Lankan people are very warm welcoming, very kind and smiling. I have learned a lot about the country in terms of fauna, flora, and habitats that we can observe here and I enjoyed being integrated to a new culture and got to experience it.



Blue magpie in Sinharaja rainforest



National bird, the junglefowl, in Sinharaja rainforest



Monitor lizard in Madu Ganga



Southern Purple-faced leaf langur in Madu Ganga

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Grey langur in Bundala National Park



Asian elephant in Bundala National Park



Crocodile, birds, and water buffalo in Bundala



Spotted deers and wild boars in Yala National Park



Carnivorous plant in Horton Plains National Park



Bird eating a dry frog in Horton Plains National Park



Me swimming with a turtle in Pigeon Island
(credits: Kasumi Sakakiraba)



Group photo in Sinharaja rainforest
(credits: Kamal Ranatunga)

6. Others

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to Profs. Swarna Piyasiri, Sampath Amaratunga, Charmalie Nahallage, Michael Huffman, Kamal Ranatunga, Prasad Jayaweera and the others for organizing this program, all the resource persons for giving their time and sharing their knowledge with us, Prof. Matsuzawa and the Leading Graduate Program in Primatology and Wildlife Science for supporting this trip, all the participants for having a wonderful time together, and Atheeq and Vidyani for their friendship and daily care.