

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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| | 2019. 05, 02 |
| Affiliation/Position | Wildlife Research Center/D3 |
| Name | Nachiketha Sharma |

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| 1. | Country/location of visit |
| | Sasagamine, Nagano, Japan |
| 2. | Research project |
| | Sasagamine Snow Season |
| 3. | Date (departing from/returning to Japan) |
| | 2019. 03.16 – 2019. 03. 20 (5 days) |
| 4. | Main host researcher and affiliation |
| | Prof. Shigeru Sugiyama. Prof. Tetusro Matsuzawa, Prof. Shiro Kohshima |
| 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 snow season at Sasagamine was as beautiful as summer season. Snow capped mountains can make anyone get lost in happiness. This was the first time in my life, I saw snow in such quantity. The activities during the course was challenging and at the same time we learnt new skills, survival techniques which are required/essential to tackle extreme weather conditions.</p> <p>Skiing lessons:</p> <p>The ski lessons started 15 days before the actual course. We travelled to Okuibuki ski-jyo in Shiga to learn the basics of Skiing. During this trip we learnt, how to use the ski board and stocks, role of seal/skin while walking with ski.</p> <p>Sasagamine Course:</p> <p>Day 1: With the help of snow-cat, we reached the Hutte. It was a wonderful experience riding snow-cat. Prof. Sugiyama briefed about the activities for the next three days. Rest of the day was well spent with other participants discussing about different cultures, science and preparing dinner.</p> <p>Day 2: Activity during the first half was to walk around near “Shrine woods” with skis in search of different animal tracks. We mainly sighted footprints of hares, red foxes. The interwinding networks of animal tracks give away the clue, how animals use snow and tree holes to survive in extreme conditions to exploit available resources.</p> <p>Second half was even fascinating. It was snowing heavily and the challenge was to make an ‘igloo’. By using a saw, ice cubes were cut to prepare our igloo. The igloo helps mountaineers to stay warm and dry during extreme or harsh conditions. Success of the completion our task was celebrated with a sip of hot coca inside a ‘self-made igloo’.</p> |

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Day 3: With the help of Waken (a special support designed to walk on the snow), we climbed up Mt. Mitahara (1800m). The view of the landscape was mesmerizing from the top. Along the way, we saw many tracks of hares, red foxes and martens. We even saw a long track where a hare seemed to be running for its life (probably running to escape from an aerial predator).

Day 4: The main activity of the day was skiing. Although, my skiing skills was poor, with help of other participants, I managed to ski and most often stopped with the help of trees! The fascinating part of the trip was to sight fresh signs of Japanese macaques. Some was lucky enough to sight, photograph and observe them for a brief period. This was the first report of the activities by Japanese macaques at Sasagamine during February-March. At night, we learnt how to make fire with the help of tree bark which is an essential survival technique in cold conditions.

Day 5: The last day was meant to clean the Hutte. We returned to the civilization with the help snow-cart.

In conclusion, this course was an once in a life time experience for me. I hope and wish to go back to ski in Sasagamine in near future.



Snow capped mountains at Sasagamine



The Igloo

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Elephant carved in Snow by Moe Yanagi



The snow cat



Animal tracks on the snow field

6. Others

Sincere gratitude to Prof Tetsuro Matsuzawa, Prof. Shiro Kohshima and Prof Shigeru Sugiyama for encouragement and supporting me during the course. Big thanks Fukushima-san and other participants for arranging/helping us during the course. A special thanks PWS and PWS office members for their generous and continuous support.