

## **9<sup>th</sup> Inuyama Comparative Social Cognition Symposium Report**

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Christopher Krupenye  
Duke University

Even before we reached our destination I could hear the excited vocalizations of a not-so-distant group of chimpanzees. Their calls echoed through the narrow residential streets as the car wove uphill past perfectly maintained gardens and homes that though new still exemplified the traditional Japanese aesthetic. And I, too, was excited. We soon arrived at the Primate Research Institute, a massive building constructed in the modern industrial style and buttressed to withstand even the most severe of earthquakes. PRI houses a unique intellectual power, all of which is devoted to understanding our closest phylogenetic relatives, the primates. As it was late, we quickly retired to our rooms in the dormitory building, jetlagged and in need of a good rest before the start of the symposium.

iCS<sup>2</sup>-9 assembled sixteen speakers and a large audience of professors, postdocs and graduate students for a diverse series of dynamic presentations, fruitful discussions and engaging social events, all centered on comparative social cognition. The topics, which ranged from affiliative behavior in dolphins to self-recognition in squids and from computational behavioral science to cognitive neuroscience, spanned the limits of comparative cognition. The breadth of topics engendered meaningful interdisciplinary exchange between the speakers, insightful questions from the audience and an important opportunity both to share ideas and to interact in English for all.

As one of the four speakers who was fortunate enough to be invited from outside of Japan to join the symposium, I am especially indebted to the Primate Research Institute and, in particular, to Masaki Tomonaga. During the course of the symposium, I learned about the latest in cognitive research being performed in Japan and in the west. I toured not only the unique resources for comparative cognitive research at the Primate Research Institute, but also those possessed by the encompassing Kyoto University. With Tomonaga-sensei and the other international speakers I traveled to the south of Japan to see several of the university's field projects. First we visited Koshima island, home to the longest continuous field study of wild primates anywhere in the world. The Japanese macaques, who have been studied there for 65 years and counting, are famous for a number of unique cultural traditions such as potato washing and wheat washing. The monkeys even graced us with a demonstration of some of these remarkable behaviors! The next day we moved on to visit a site where Japanese scientists are studying a reintroduced population of native horses. Finally, we returned to Inuyama, to engage with the many talented scientists at the Primate Research Institute before embarking on our journeys home to our native countries, the end of a stimulating and fruitful trip. On the day of my departure, like that of my arrival, as the car drove from PRI toward the train station the chimpanzees serenaded me with the sort of siren song that no primatologist can resist – and I won't. I'll be sure to return as soon as I can.



**An infant Japanese macaque on the beach of Koshima Island**



**An adult Japanese macaque in the forest on Koshima Island**



**Wild horses being studied by Kyoto University scientists in southern Japan**



**One horse gazes at other horses down the mountain**



**A dragon carved into a temple near Miyazaki, Japan**