

In Africa, by African primatologists for Africa: A regional federation for Primatology to maintain IPS activity in between-congress years

Seasons' greetings. Almost four months have passed since we saw one another at the 25th IPS congress in Hanoi, Vietnam, August 11th-16th. We enjoyed many varied and interesting presentations – whether talks or posters – and productive discussions, held during the conference. I am confident that participants enjoyed the opportunity for information exchange and will have gained new insights and connections to benefit future endeavors and research. I am fortunate enough to have visited many different countries and regional areas within Asia including: China, Taiwan, South Korea, Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, India, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Nepal, and Bhutan. However, this was my first visit to Vietnam. The air of vitality and energy, the many young people and the warm hospitality that I experienced made a memorable impression. In my role as the president of IPS, I wish to express my warmest regards to the local organizing committee who made this congress into a huge success. I look forward to seeing you all again at the 26th IPS congress in Chicago, USA. Please do make a note of the congress dates in your diaries: August 21st - 27th 2016. The IPS congress is held every even-numbered year. I wish to propose how to maintain IPS activity and sustain primatologists in the odd-numbered, between congress-years. I will come to this proposal after a summary of my most recent endeavors.

For a great many consecutive years, I have spent several weeks in Africa during every December and January. Since 1986, my focus has been concentrated on the wild chimpanzees of Bossou-Nimba, Guinea-Conakry, West Africa. Bossou chimpanzees are renowned for their use of a pair of mobile stones as hammer and anvil to crack open oil-palm nuts. This year is my 29th annual survey in Bossou. However, as many of you will be aware, there has been an Ebola outbreak in Guinea. According to the Guinean government, the total number of Ebola patients, Dec 30th 2013 – Dec 14th 2014, was 2554, with 1545 dead. The death rate is about 60 %. Ebola also spread to the neighboring countries of Liberia and Sierra Leone. People all over the world have shown great concern and taken action to prevent the further spread of Ebola.

I had last been in Bossou in January 2014, then, in April, I took the decision that all researchers and students at Bossou should leave the study site. In July and August, I sent two highly experienced field researchers back to Bossou to provide a clear explanation of the Ebola disease to local people. At this stage, a series of camera-traps were introduced in order to

monitor the Bossou chimpanzees automatically and remotely. Our aim in doing so was to minimize any potential human impact on the chimpanzees, since this monitoring system circumvents possibility of any contact. Ebola continued to spread within Guinea, but stopped just short of Bossou, in Lola, the nearest city, and just 18km away. The Bossou research site is run by Guinean researchers (IREB: the Institute for Environmental Research in Bossou) and the local Manon people. The weekly report from Bossou via the internet informs us that, currently, the area is calm and peaceful; both villagers and chimpanzees appear well.

The Japanese government has placed a temporary ban on professors of any Japanese University visiting the three countries of West Africa. I therefore I took this opportunity to travel to East Africa. I am already familiar with the study populations of wild chimpanzees in West Africa, and the wild bonobos, of Wamba, in Central Africa. However, I previously had only limited field experience in East Africa. I had visited Ngamba Island Sanctuary chimpanzees when the 21st IPS was held in Entebbe, Uganda, in 2006 and observed the mountain gorillas of the Virunga volcanoes, Rwanda in 2011. My visit to Uganda, this year, gave me the chance to see the mountain gorillas in Bwindi and the wild chimpanzees in Kalinzu Forest Reserve in the Albertine Rift.

The main purpose of my trip to Uganda was not fieldwork, but to join the international meeting of JSPS (Japan Society for the Promotion of Science). This JSPS core-to-core program has the aim of providing a platform for encouraging and facilitating collaboration in primatology among African countries. The initiative was launched in 2009 under the leadership of Professors Takeshi Furuichi and Chie Hashimoto, of Kyoto University, who saw the key importance of promoting interaction and information exchange among African primatologists. The network has grown from modest beginnings, connecting three research institutes of three different African nations, to a much larger span. The core countries are Guinea in West Africa, DRC in Central Africa, and Uganda in East Africa. Core-to-core program meetings are now held within Africa annually, with these three core countries hosting the meeting in rotation.

Last year, the host country was Guinea; Guinean primatologists of IREB and Conakry University (CERE) welcomed visiting scholars in December 2013. African scholars were given access to the funds needed to organize the meeting to welcome scholars from other African countries. It was my great pleasure to attend and participate. The attendees enjoyed the academic meeting and also a field excursion to Bossou-Nimba. There they witnessed the chimpanzees using stone tools. They also saw the

tree-planting taking place in the savanna as part of the 'Green Corridor project' to connect Bossou and Nimba to allow migration of chimpanzees. Then, together, we climbed to the summit of Nimba Mountain (1752m). This mountain is perhaps the most prominent landmark in West Africa, and the reserve in which it stands is a Natural World Heritage site.

This year, 2014, Uganda hosted the 6th annual meeting of the core-to-core project. Ugandan scholars welcomed us to the University of Kampala venue. There was an impressive and varied turn-out, with more than 40 participants from five African countries: Uganda, Kenya, Rwanda, DRC, and Gabon. We heard scientific talks about gorillas, bonobos, chimpanzees, guenons and a range of other nonhuman primate species. Unfortunately Guinean scholars were prevented from attending because of the Ebola outbreak. There were also International attendees from academic institutions and conservation NGOs based in the UK, Portugal, Belgium, and Japan.

In the General Assembly, held on the last day of the IPS congress in Hanoi, I talked of my vision for there to be both an Asian Federation of Primatology and an African Federation of Primatology. As you may know, an European Federation of Primatology (EFP) and a Latin American federation for Primatology exist already. These two Federations represent and support primatologists in Europe and Latin America, respectively. The EFP was founded in 1993 and next year, 2015, will see their 6th biennial congress - Rome, Aug 25th - 28th. The EFP presents us with a valuable model example. I wish to recommend the creation of additional regional federations for primatology for those regions of the world currently without such an organization; scholars of nonhuman primate habitat-range countries.

As you may recall, at previous IPS congresses, I have spoken of the three 'C's, standing for: Continuity, Collaboration, and Commitment. These 'C's should be upheld by all IPS members, especially the youngest of our members (see IPS Bulletin, Dec. 2012). Our biennial meetings symbolize our collective striving for international collaboration among scholars committed to research, and to the conservation and welfare of nonhuman primates. To further promote Continuity, I wish to further recommend that the newly formed regional federations for primatology hold a biennial meeting in the intervening year between IPS biennial congresses, as does the European Federation for Primatology. It is my opinion that this would provide an ideal supplementary meeting to maintain IPS activity every single year. If implemented, this plan would not interfere with existing national societies, or indeed, with any other endeavors. It is a pleasure to see the diversity of

different organizations and endeavors initiated from the ground up.

Such diversity is also evident in recent progress in Asia. As you may remember, Chinese primatologists formed the Chinese association for primate studies and joined IPS as an affiliated society: decided in the IPS Hanoi Council meeting and declared in the IPS General Assembly. At the same time, in Hanoi, representatives from 11 Asian countries met together to create and talk about future possibilities for the Asian Federation for Primatology. The first meeting will be held in 2015, July 21st - 22nd, in Kyoto, as the satellite symposium of the annual meeting of the Primate Society of Japan. Please visit the following site: <http://www.wildlife-science.org/psj2015/index.html>

Primatologists all over the world come together for the biennial IPS congress: the most important opportunity for us to exchange information and opinions about nonhuman primates, and to discuss our scientific research. This vital meeting helps promote the conservation and welfare of our closest evolutionary neighbors. In this bulletin, I have proposed a way to maintain this activity in the intervening year with no IPS congress: regional activities for Primatology, including biennial between-congress Federation meetings. I look forward to seeing all IPS members in various places all over the world in 2015, wherever our paths may cross. My next trip, in January 2015, will be to visit Ratnakiri forest, in the north eastern corner of Cambodia. This is a forest awaiting exploration by primatologists. I wish everyone an enjoyable holiday season and a Happy New Year.

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