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A PRIMATE BEHAVIORAL ECOLOGY COURSE FOR EMERGING PRIMATOLOGISTS IN ASIA

C.L. Tan¹, S. Atsalis^{1,2}, T.H. Dong³, Q. Le Khac⁴

¹*Zoological Society of San Diego, San Diego, CA, USA*, ²*Field Museum, Chicago, IL, USA*, ³*Vietnam Forestry University, Xuan Mai, Hanoi, Vietnam*, ⁴*College of Science-Vietnam National University, Hanoi, Hanoi, Vietnam*

Presenter's Email: ctan@sandiegozoo.org

Over forty percent of primate taxa in Asia are threatened and require immediate, effective conservation measures to prevent extinction. For those conservation actions to be locally sustainable, the training of habitat-country primatologists is essential. Yet, the curricula of most Asian universities do not offer courses in primatology. Responding to this deficiency, we designed an intensive (10-day) primate course that parallels instruction received in U.S. graduate programs. Ten students, selected through recommendation only, represented China, Vietnam, Cambodia and Singapore. Priority was given to students who are actively engaged in research and conservation of endangered primates and who aspire toward a career in primatology. Organized by the Asia Conservation Program of the Zoological Society of San Diego, the course was conducted at the Vietnam Forestry University in Hanoi. In addition to gaining basic knowledge in primate behavior and ecology, students received practical training, expanded their professional networks, and increased inter-cultural understanding. Students also presented preliminary results from their current research, and received critical, constructive comments from both instructors and their peers. Students left the course feeling empowered and inspired to lead future primate conservation efforts in their respective home countries. Formal student evaluations and discussions indicated that this course, unlike previous training courses held in Vietnam, greatly enhanced students' interest in pursuing future primate studies.

Keywords: conservation, capacity-building, primate course, Asia