

JSPS report
Ruth H. Leeney

Name of research institution: Nagasaki University

Department: Graduate School of Fisheries Science and Environmental Studies

Host name: Prof. Masao Amano

Research Plan summary:

I worked with the cetacean research group over a seven month period. My research focused on investigating the effects of a new 'pinger', designed to reduce accidental entanglement of dolphins and porpoises in fishing nets, to on finless porpoises in Kawatana Bay. This involved setting the pinger on a fishing net in the bay and using hydrophones (underwater microphones) to record porpoise activity close to the net, over the course of six months. I also worked with a PhD student studying bottlenose dolphins in Amakusa, to investigate the importance of the dolphin-watching industry to the local community and to develop plans for more sustainable tourism activities in the region. I took part in monthly surveys on board Nagasaki University's impressive research vessel, and I used my JSPS travel allowance to travel to Hokkaido and learn more about the whale- and dolphin-watching tourism industry there.

Nagasaki University provided excellent, comfortable accommodation in its 'International House', and provided free Japanese lessons to foreign students. My time in Japan allowed me to focus on a new field project and on writing publications, whilst also assisting other members of the research group with presentations and the English language.

Tips for living in Japan:

Learning the language either before departing for Japan, or once one arrives, is certainly a good idea. Especially outside of Tokyo, few people are confident in their English and it helps enormously to be able to speak some basic Japanese. I found the beginners Japanese classes offered by Nagasaki University to be an excellent way not only to refresh my basic knowledge of the language but also to meet other foreign researchers and to ask questions about getting around in Nagasaki.

Visiting rural Japan provides a wonderful opportunity to see some beautiful areas and experience more of the culture than one encounters in the cities. There are also numerous festivals throughout the year which are fun to watch; in Nagasaki, the 'Kunchi' festival was a highlight for me, with groups of locals hauling a huge float in the shape of a whale through the city's streets.



Studying the dolphin-watching industry off Amakusa Island, Kyushu