

Dr. YASHIRO Toshihisa

My research

Why many organisms have males and females is one of the great mysteries of evolutionary biology. Sexual reproduction by the two sexes and asexual reproduction by the female only have both costs and benefits, respectively. Recent studies have revealed that termites have evolved a diversity of breeding systems where they use sexual and asexual reproduction as needed. The ultimate aim of my research is to understand the evolutionary significance of sex by studying the evolution of diversity in termite societies.

Advice on preparing to go abroad

As it takes time to acquire a visa, you should get started apply for one well in advance of your starting date. When dispatched to Australia as a JSPS Research Fellow, you will need to obtain a Temporary Activity visa (subclass 408). In my case, just before I was scheduled to receive my visa, the system was changed. As, moreover, the application period overlapped the government offices' long Christmas-New Year's holiday break, it took longer than usual for me to receive my visa. Although my destination Sydney is known to be a city of good public safety and order, I was careful in selecting the neighborhood where we would live because I would be staying with my wife and infant daughter. As there is much information that cannot be obtained from the Internet, I asked the advice of my wife's friend who lives in Sydney. When signing a rental contract for an apartment, I had to go there and check the place out with my own eyes. For this reason, I could not enter into a contract while I was still in Japan. For the purpose of apartment hunting, you will have to plan to stay at a hotel for a few weeks after arrival in the country.

Advice on problems that may arise while living abroad

You should open a bank account and acquire a cell phone quickly upon arrival in the country. That will facilitate making your rental contract and your electricity, water, gas and other contracts. I recommend that you get an Opal Card for using public transportation (e.g. trains, buses, ferries) in Sydney. It is troublesome to buy each ticket separately. The Opal Card is a prepaid IC card used within the state of New South Wales. It is purchased at convenience stores and other places and its balance can be charged at stations. This is first time for my wife to live abroad. Having a young daughter and a baby son born after arrival in Australia, her burden as a mother is quite

heavy. However, joining a Japanese Mothers Group which is held every week in the neighborhood, she is blessed with good friends, who offer her helpful advice on child raising in Sydney.

What is like living abroad?

The people in Sydney are mostly very kind. For example, when we had difficulty in doing something with our small children, people were quick to offer advice and/or give us assistance. Moreover, Australia is an English-speaking country but many people from non-English countries live here. Therefore, we've found Australians to be understanding to people who are not that fluent in English. The only thing is, Sydney is not a city that is easy on one's pocketbook. The cost of living in Sydney is high, especially the price of rentals, which has skyrocketed of late. Having both a charming urban and natural environment, Sydney is a well-known tourist destination. As such, it has many interesting places and events that can be enjoyed by families. Hence, I would like to recommend that, when possible, married researchers be accompanied by their families.

What is good about your receiving a Postdoctoral Fellowship for Research Abroad?

I am very grateful that, having received my host researcher's acceptance, I am able to concentrate on my research over a long period at my preferred university and lab. I am acquiring new research experiences and techniques, forming networks, and have become a member of an overseas research team. These will be valuable assets for me as I continue to advance my research in the future. In addition, during this stay in Australia, my wife gave birth to a son, so I took advantage of the provision in the Fellowship to suspend/extend my tenure for the purpose of child birth and child raising. This was very helpful as it allows me to maintain by fellowship status and to continue my research.