The 13th ICPS Post-Conference wetland expeditions

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Abstract: The 13th ICPS Post-Conference tour visited two areas to observe *Drosera rotundifolia*, *Drosera tokaiensis*, *Drosera.* aff. *spatulata*, and masses of *Drosera lunata*.

Following the field trips to Tegrayama Botanical Garden and Hyogo Prefectural Flower Center, 45 conference attendees set out on 30 May 2023 to visit two natural sites teaming with carnivorous plants in Kato City and Taka Town, a short distance from Himeji.

Seeing native carnivorous plants in their habitat is a highlight for any naturalist and the long-time tradition of field trips after an ICPS conference was what many conference attendees look forward to the most. Japan has an abundance of carnivorous plants with 2 species of *Pinguicula*, around 6 species of *Drosera*, around 10 species of *Utricularia*, and *Aldrovanda vesiculosa*. Given how widely spread they are across a large country and the restrictions on some of the more sensitive species sites, we were lucky to observe a diversity of Japanese carnivorous plants in their habitat.

I had been in contact with Koji Kondo in the months approaching the conference and expressed interest in seeing a variety of orchids and carnivorous plants. Koji was kind enough to not only provide insight into where some of these plants grew but offered to personally guide my friend and I to these sites before the start of the conference. Koji had been to some of the potential ICPS field trip sites that spring and two of them were excluded for being too small for a large group of people. We visited these two sites along with other orchid sites and got to observe *Drosera lunata*, *Drosera tokaiensis*, *Drosera* aff. *spatulata*, *Drosera rotundifolia*, and a variety of *Utricularia*. Having now visited these sites, I can understand why they were excluded from the ICPS field trips. One site would have only accommodated half a dozen people at a time and the other was limited to a single thin boardwalk of logs, hardly enough for 45 people to explore (Fig. 1). This sneak peek into what was to come only got me more excited for the next two field trips.

Figure 1: Koji and Justin on the boardwalk of the excluded site. Photo by Neil Baskerville-Bridges.

The first site on the official ICPS field trip was a 45-minute bus ride from Himeji to Kato and the group was split into two buses. The *Pinguicula ramosa* field trip was over 700 km away which meant that half of our group

Figure 2: *Drosera lunata* at Kato site.

needed to leave immediately after these field trips and were put onto a single bus so our tight schedule could be maintained. After arriving, we had a 500 m walk up to the site where we got to observe *D. rotundifolia*, *D. tokaiensis*, *D.* aff. *spatulata*, and masses of *D. lunata* (Fig. 2 & 3A-B). Having spent a huge portion of my life searching for carnivorous plants in Canadian bogs dominated by *Sphagnum* sp., I was surprised at how dry the site appeared to be and how the plants grew in predominantly sandy areas with seeps hydrating them. It was also interesting to see how the *D. lunata* grew at a higher elevation at the site and the more moisture dependent species grew lower in the seeps. Our Japanese guide also pointed out how the *D.* aff. *spatulata* and *D. tokaiensis* grew tucked into the surrounding plants to protect them from cold snaps while the *D. rotundifolia* were happy to grow in more exposed areas where frost was more likely to occur. After an hour of exploring, we headed back to the bus and onto our next destination.

After a short 30-minute bus ride and a stop for lunch, we were at the next site. This site was

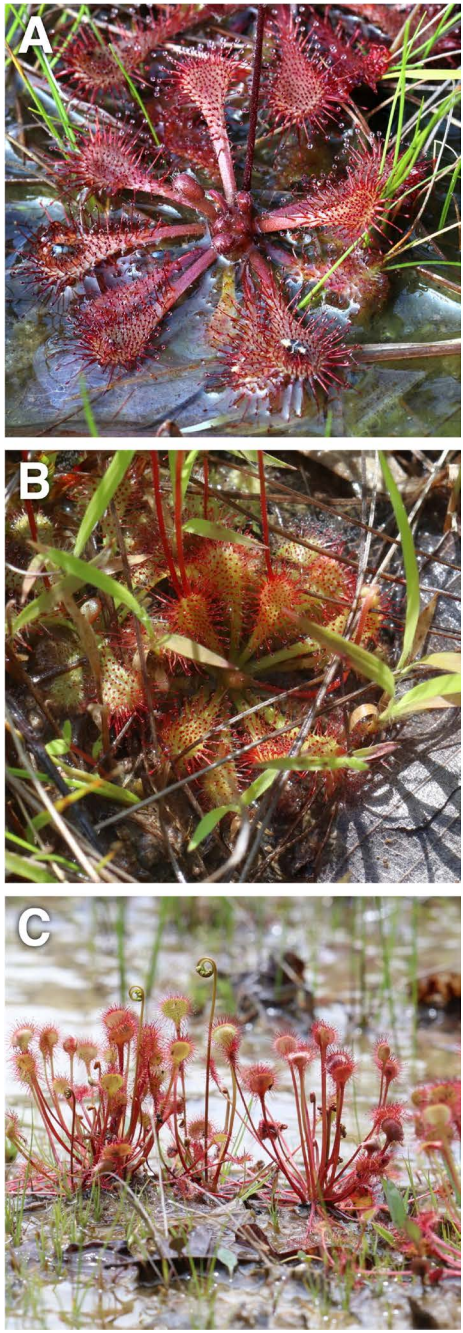

Figure 3: (A) *Drosera tokaiensis* at Kato site. (B) *D.* aff. *spatulata* at Kato site. (C) *D. rotundifolia* at Taka site.

a beautiful wetland with a seeping slope that transitioned into a marsh-like habitat dominated by sedges. The first plants on the driest parts of the slope were a small patch of *D. lunata* which quickly transitioned into a much wetter area packed with *D. tokaiensis* and *D. rotundifolia* (Fig. 3C). As the wetland expanded towards a small lake, species of both aquatic and terrestrial *Utricularia* were growing and accompanied by *Pogonia japonica* in perfect flower. Although we were too early to observe any of the *Utricularia* in flower it was still a highlight for many in our group. Unlike the previous site which was just *Drosera* and several interesting invertebrates, this site was teeming with wildlife. Frogs, a variety of dragonflies, a seemingly unbothered turtle, and a wide array of other plants were some of the highlights. After an hour and a half of exploring the wetlands, our group said goodbye to the plants and headed back to Himeji so the *P. ramosa* explorers could catch their train to Tokyo (Fig. 4).

I would like to thank the Japanese carnivorous plant societies for hosting this wonderful conference, even after dealing with multiple postponements, and for inviting us to experience your amazing country. I would also like to thank Koji Kondo for taking the time to show me around some fascinating sites. And thank you to Emmi Kurosawa for her group organization, and to all the conference attendees who made this conference possible.

Figure 4: Our group at the Taka site. Photo by Neil Baskerville-Bridges.