I chose my career in Ecology when I was an undergraduate student, but at that time I did not imagine that I would study in foreign countries for my Ph.D. research. I even boasted “if I can learn Ecology in Japan, why do I have to go to a foreign country!!” Now, where I am? I am in my office and have finished writing my Ph.D. thesis, at Utrecht University, the Netherlands. And for my Ph.D. I was studying in the Smithsonian Environmental Research Center (SERC), USA. Life is full of unexpected things. For me it was very interesting to live in two different continents at both sides of the Atlantic Ocean. Sometimes, however, living in foreign countries is tougher than one can imagine. You have to use the foreign language, deal with people whose customs you do not understand (I like Dutch culture but still I do not understand why Dutch people do not rinse the dishes after washing them). And, you do not have your old friends or families around you. It is tough.

But many people survive and I did, I even enjoyed life in two countries very much. It is because of the people around me, because of their help in many ways. Without their help, I would not have been able to finish my work. So, I would like to show my deep appreciation for all of you here. To be honest, I do not like repeating “thanks” for many people. I think it can shrink the meaning of “thanks”. But I can not find any better way, so please allow me to say “thanks” many times. And if you can not find your name here, it does not mean I do not appreciate you, simply I do not have enough space here (if you know me well, you know there are too many people I owe something).

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IKEGAMI Makihiko
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