

Reintroduction of Crested Ibises to the Rice Paddies in Sado

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Crested Ibises disappeared from most part of Japan leaving the last remnant population in Sado island. A lot of efforts were taken to protect this last population, however, the population dwindled to only 5 individuals which were captured and protected in captivity in 1981.

People believed that there is no other wild population left in the world, but a population of 7 individuals was found in Shaanxi Province in China in the same year of 1981. Since then, China and Japan worked together in order to recover the population of this species. Unfortunately mating attempts between the ibises in China and Japan failed and native Ibises in Japan become extinct at last. However, China has conducted a successful breeding program and the population in China increased steadily.

Sado City and Yang County in China exchanged a friendship treaty in order to protect the species in 1998. In 1999, Jiang Zemin, the former general secretary of China, sent a pair of Crested Ibises to the emperor of Japan. Based on this pair, many ibises have been successfully raised up in Sado Japanese Crested Ibis Conservation Center.

The birds raised in captivity are now ready to be reintroduced to the wild. Ministry of the Environment of Japan set up a plan to establish a wild population of 60 ibises in the rice paddies in south-eastern Sado by 2015. At first, farmers rejected the plan because they were required to reduce the use of agrochemicals.

The government of Sado encouraged farmers who take various eco-friendly agriculture practices by giving them some subsidies and a certificate of "Rice from the Village Living Together with the Ibises". This project was welcomed by both farmers and consumers because farmers can sell their rice with a high price and consumers can get clean and safe rice as well as conserving biodiversity. The production of eco-friendly rice increased rapidly and the rice paddies in Sado have become a good habitat for Crested Ibises.

The effort in Sado for biodiversity conservation has been acknowledged in the world. It was introduced at CBO-COP10 in Nagoya last year. The farming system in Sado (Sado's Satoyama with

Ibis) was registered as the first two GIAHS (Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems) in Japan along with a site in Noto at the International Forum on GIAHS in Beijing in June 2011.

Sado City pledged to promote eco-friendly agriculture in a sustainable way with the Crested Ibis as a symbol of biodiversity in its beautiful countryside.