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生態文明 —中国の挑戦—

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隣国中国において、近年、生態系の保護・回復に向けた取り組みが急ピッチで進められています。日本との間を渡り鳥も行き来する中国で今、具体的にどのような取り組みが行われているのか——。その概要を紹介します。Over recent years in our neighbor China, efforts to protect and restore ecosystems have been going on at a rapid pace. What kind of concrete projects have been implemented in China? We are going to introduce a summary of these projects in this issue because China is important for Japanese natural ecosystems. For example, many migratory birds fly between China and Japan every year.

Ecological Civilization

The Challenge of China

China has enacted a new Environmental protection law on January 1, 2015. This law declared in its Article 1 that China will promote creation of an ecological civilization and development of a sustainable economic and social system.

In China, natural environments had been destroyed by human activities. Even its steepest mountain slopes have been cultivated and turned into farmlands. The result has been deluges in downstream areas due to loss of ecosystem services such as the flood control function provided by forested mountains. Since the establishment of People's Republic of China in 1949, China's government has not placed high importance on ecosystem conservation in its national economic policy, that has caused serious damage to the natural environment. Finally China's central government has changed its basic policy and introduced a new slogan initiative it calls 'Construction of Ecological Civilization'. Under this new policy, China has been actively promoting protection and restoration of its forests and wetlands.

A program called "The conversion of Slope Farmland into Forest and Grassland program" is popular in China now. This program was started after great floods happened along the Yangtze River and other major rivers in 1998. The program promotes reversion of farmlands and abandoned lands in steep mountain sides to forests and grasslands on a large scale. This program will be combined with economic support to farmers to help them acquire new skills for different types of jobs. These programs now cover over thirty million hectares across China.

China also has been promoting protection and restoration of wetlands. The total area of wetlands

in China is the largest in Asia but it has been shrinking due to excessive development. In recent years, China's government has been trying to protect wetlands by designating wetland reserves. In 2003, only 30.49 % of wetlands were under protection, but by 2013 the area had increased to 43.51%. China also has declared that as part of 'National Ecological Redline', the total area of wetlands must be more than 53 million ha in the year 2020.

As a member country of the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity, China established its "China National Biodiversity Conservation Strategy and Action Plan" in September, 2010. It then revised the Red List of Higher Plants in 2013 and the Red List of Vertebrates in 2015. Through this series of revisions, it became clear that many wildlife species in China are endangered. The most important and effective measure to protect biodiversity is to establish sanctuaries or refuges for nature and wildlife. China recently has been setting up nature reserves at an amazing speed. The first nature reserve in China was established in 1956. But since then only a few nature reserves were added for many years. However, since the late 1980s, many more natural areas have been put under protection. As of the end of 2014, 2,729 nature reserves had been established throughout China---about 1,500 of them after 2000.

In March of this year, China's government published 'the 13th Five-Year Plan (2016-2020)'. In the plan, construction of large-scale green ecological protection spaces and green corridors to connect them for 'enhancement of protection and restoration of ecosystems' is stated.

During springtime, a huge amount of 'Yellow Sands' will be blown over

to Japan from the direction of China in addition to polluted air (including PM2.5) and acid rains. Considering the fact that many migratory birds fly between China and Japan, it is also a very important issue to Japan whether Chinese ecological environments will be improved or not. We must promote cooperation between Chinese and Japanese governments in environmental areas alongside any private sector collaborative exchanges.



A site of the Natural Forest Protection Program in Guanshan, Henan Province. Efforts have been underway to restore natural forests without human intervention. In 2010, ten years after the project started, leopards were sighted, a proof their habitat had been restored.



705 National Wetland Parks have been established during the past ten years.



In China, the crested ibis, once considered extinct, has been recovering. There are now over 1000 birds seen in the field as a result of dedicated reintroduction efforts.