

# エコシステム

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## 大型水鳥と地域振興

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大型水鳥をシンボルにエコネットを構築し、環境と経済が共鳴する新しいまちづくりが全国各地で始められています。

To promote co-existence with ecosystems, networks that are symbolized by large water-birds such as swans, cranes, and storks can be a new way of community building that enables both environmental protection and promotion of economic development.

# Recovery of Large Water-Birds and Local Economic Growth

Japanese communities used to look different from each other; each had its own unique characteristics. However, because of rapid economic development mainly based on 'grey' (concrete) infrastructure throughout Japan, most local communities have lost their uniqueness and have become cookie-cutter, bland landscapes. Japan now has various problems such as population decline, an aging population, and an exodus from rural areas to cities. As a result, rural communities are expected to face worsening financial hardship. We should begin to consider natural environments as a new social capital. "Green infrastructure" that utilizes natural areas as parts of infrastructure is financially less burdensome. It is necessary to build beautiful communities that can coexist with green infrastructure.

Since ancient times, many wetlands and rice paddies have existed in Japan. Within these landscapes large water birds, symbols of wetland ecosystems, lived and coexisted with people. However, through modernization of Japanese agriculture, most wildlife in those areas has been decimated. Learning from this mistake, some local municipalities have been recovering their wildlife and biodiversity. People in those communities are beginning to realize that large water birds attract tourists to their communities and that they are also valuable economic assets.

The main themes of the Thirteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biodiversity (CBD COP13) held in Cancun, Mexico in December, 2016 were 'Agriculture, Forestry, Fisheries and Tourism'. These industries can be sustainable only if healthy ecosystems are conserved. At COP13 delegates discussed how to protect healthy ecosystems and agreed

that it is necessary to create charming communities that residents can love and be proud of.

The concept of 'ecosystem network' is useful to help plan and to achieve maintain our convenient daily lives and at the same time protect and nurture our local nature. This concept is a guideline for construction at both community and national levels by promoting ecosystem integrity and not ecosystem fragmentation.

It is necessary that various stake holders collaborate to promote community development using ecological networks. It is effective to use a large water bird as a common symbol for interest groups to unite under as a common goal. Most people love large water birds. These birds use various habitats such as rivers, wetlands and farmlands including rice paddies and move around through large areas. People can easily recognize their recovery and appreciate the results of efforts for building ecological networks.

There are a few communities that have successfully increased the number of their tourists by recognizing, conserving and utilizing natural environments as tourism resources. It is very important to understand that anybody can visit and use their natural places with easy access. One of the effective methods is to build a boardwalk. For example, Suncheon Bay area in Korea receives more than 2 million tourists a year. The Great Salt Lake Shorelands Preserve in the United States invites more than three thousands of school children a year to its environmental education programs using its extensive boardwalks. In Japan, Shiretoko Goko Lakes of Shiretoko National Park is very popular with its raised boardwalk where even wheel chaired persons can go through and enjoy the scenery.

Population decline should be considered as an opportunity, not as a disaster, to recover natural areas. We must recognize that natural environments can be foundation to create unique characteristics for each local community and at the same time they become tourist attractions. If we restore local natural ecosystems and utilize them wisely, we can also promote local economic revitalization.



A landscape with large water birds provides attractive natural features for the whole community



Ecological networks are necessary for large water birds to thrive as they need large areas to move around in.



Boardwalks are effective tools to show beautiful natural areas



Community development using large water birds has begun in many areas of Japan.

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