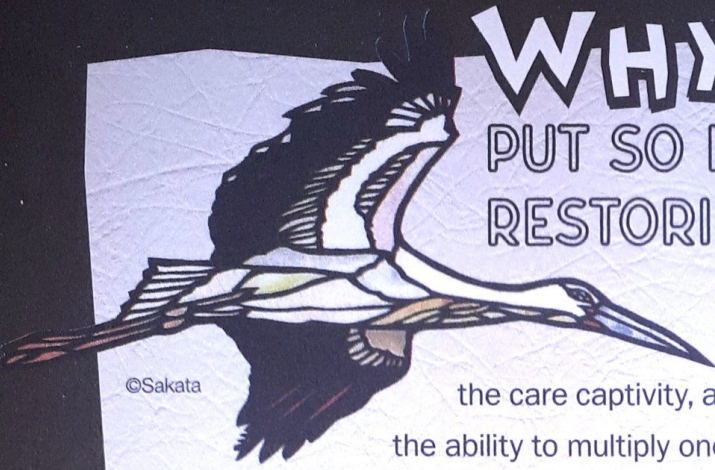


MAKING THE IMPOSSIBLE POSSIBLE



THIS IS THE STORY OF
THE RETURN OF THE ORIENTAL WHITE STORK TO
TOYOOKA AFTER EXTINCTION IN JAPAN.



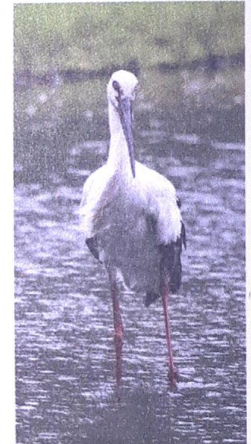
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WHY PUT SO MUCH EFFORT INTO RESTORING A DYING SPECIES?

A project on this scale is not being seen anywhere else in the world. Raised under the care captivity, a wild animal that went extinct is being granted the ability to multiply once more and make a return to its once natural environment. So why are we spending such a vast amount of time and money to restore an extinct species of bird? Because we are the ones who drove the bird to extinction, and thus it is our responsibility to make a contribution towards preserving the species. We believe that restoring a rich environment where the Oriental White Stork can live will create an abundant life not only for storks, but for human beings as well.

The Radiant Oriental White Stork

The Oriental White Stork is one of the largest birds in Japan. Its main feeding grounds are rice paddies and river shoals. The stork's prey includes fish, frogs, snakes, grasshoppers, and more. It inhabits not only Japan, but also Russia, China, and Korea. However, it is said that the remaining number of Oriental White Storks living in the wild approaches approximately 3,000, which brings fear of imminent extinction.



Why did the Oriental White Stork disappear in Japan?

The Oriental White Stork once inhabited all of Japan, but in the latter half of the 1800's it became the target of mass extermination.

After WWII, as Japan entered a period of rapid economic growth in the 1950's, the number of rice paddies dropped. Eventually, methods involving artificial pesticides began to be adopted. As a result, the number of creatures living in the rice paddies such as frogs and fish plummeted. Storks lost their natural habitat and disappeared from the skies of Japan entirely in 1971.

Why did Toyooka decide to protect the Oriental White Stork?



In 1965, before the Oriental White Stork went extinct, some were captured in the wild to be used for breeding in captivity. This is because the citizens of Toyooka considered it their moral duty to repay the price of driving the Oriental White Stork to the brink of extinction. However, the previously captured birds' bodies contained traces of mercury ingested from harmful agricultural pesticides, and these birds could no longer breed. We had come so close to success, only to have another door slam in our faces. The turning point occurred in 1985, when Japan received 6 young storks from the Vladivostok region of Russia. In 1989, a long-awaited chick finally hatched.



Our Promise to Oriental White Storks: Returning them to the skies of Japan

Once breeding the Oriental White Stork in captivity started to go smoothly, the project to return the species back to the wilderness began. Toyooka City and Hyogo Prefecture established the base systems for reintroduction of the Oriental White Stork to the wild and raising public awareness. In order to bring storks back to their natural habitat, rice paddies and river shoals would need to be re-introduced into the landscape. Thus, the local government and farmers started to research farming methods without the use of pesticides. The initiative, through the hard work and cooperation of the various parties involved, finally started to gain traction throughout the area. And then...



A miracle occurred

In September of 2005, five storks bred in captivity were released into the wilderness. Two years later, a stork chick was hatched in the wild. It's what we're been waiting for 46 long years.

Nowadays, several Oriental White Stork pairs build nests and rear chicks every year in Toyooka and around 150 birds take flight once more in the skies of Japan. The sight of Oriental White Storks has become an everyday sight for us.

When breeding in captivity first began, when not even one chick could be born, who could have imagined such a thing? We were able to bring back the Oriental White Stork as a result of many people tirelessly working together for a single vision, aiming for a landscape where storks are ever present.



Living together alongside the Oriental White Stork

In order to create an environment where we can co-exist with the Oriental White Stork, various efforts are ongoing. This includes creating wetlands for living creatures to inhabit, continuing to conduct environmental research for new sustainable initiatives, promoting ecotourism, advertising projects such as the organic "Stork Natural Rice" for contributing to a both ecological and economical virtuous cycle, and more. Some local residents, inspired by the sight of Oriental White Storks flying above, began to create wetland areas. There are also people who started to manage rice paddies which had long been stopped being used for cultivation, now turning them into biotopes. However, as we continued our efforts to preserve a rich environment where us humans could co-exist with living creatures, several battles managed to persist.

We had to create farming methods that aided the Oriental White Stork

In order for storks to be able to live in the natural world once again, they would be required to eat large quantities of food living in rice paddies and shallow area to survive. We needed to turn rice fields that became nearly void of creatures due to pesticides back into rice paddies full of life. The biggest thing that had to be changed with the Oriental White Stork revival process was the agriculture industry.

Many farmers living within Toyooka city, through trial and error, began to cultivate rice organically without the use of harmful pesticides.

Thus, the “Stork Friendly Farming Methods” were born while simultaneously trying to cultivate delicious rice and foster an increase of small animals, all without relying on pesticides and chemical fertilizers.



A method of contribution called consumption

As storks began to soar in the sky once more, elementary school students living in the city, who had never seen such creatures in the wild, started to think about how to make sure that more storks would come to live in the area. They ultimately decided that “in order to create a richer environment,

we need to expand the rice paddies that act as their habitat. And to do that, we need to consume more rice”. One of the ideas that came from this was using “Stork Natural Rice” for their school lunches each day. These kindhearted children asked to the City office and deeply moved the many adults, and now only “Stork Natural Rice” is used for school lunches in Toyooka. Many storks came to be supported thanks to the firm will and zeal of children.

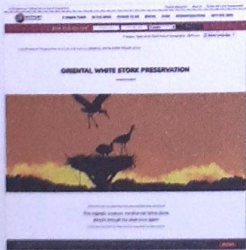
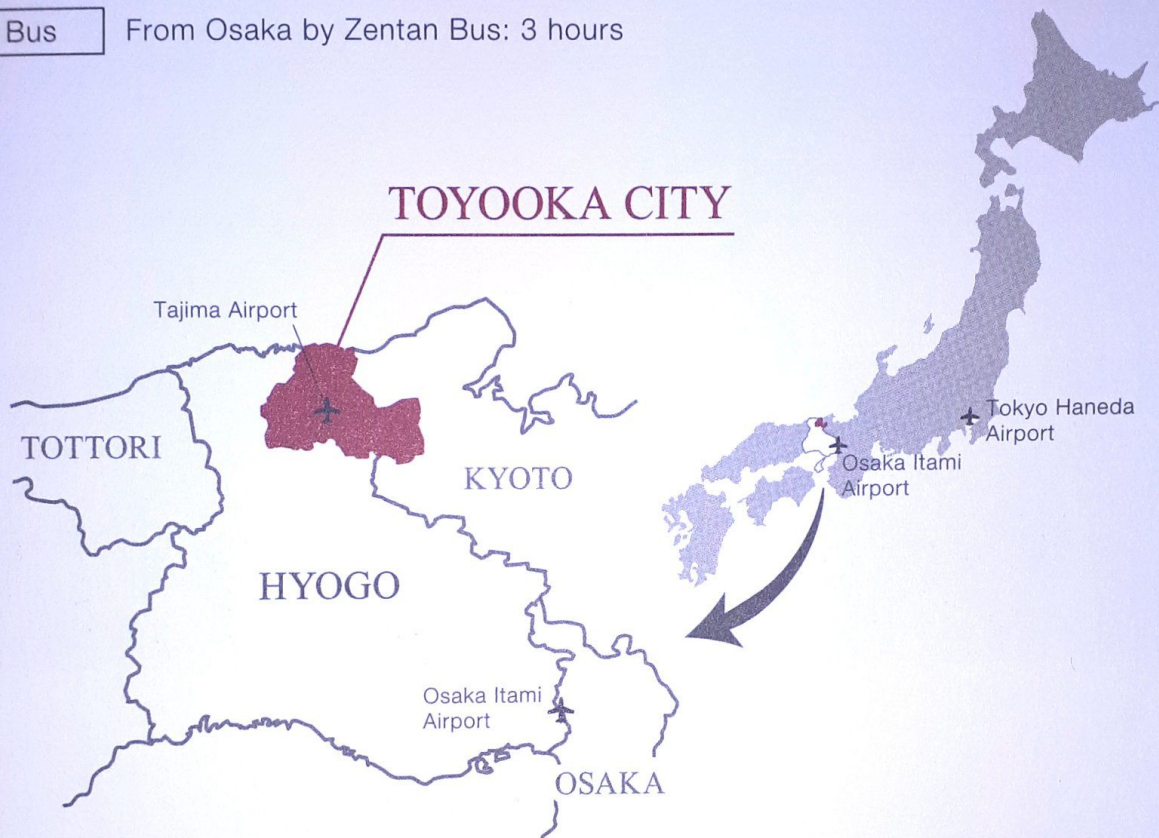


Access to Toyooka City

Airplane From Tokyo Haneda Airport to Osaka Itami Airport: 1 hour
From Osaka Itami Airport: 35 minutes

JR Train From Tokyo to Kyoto: 2 hours and 20 minutes by bullet train
From Kyoto by JR limited express train: 2.5 hours
From Osaka by JR limited express train: 2 hours and 40 minutes

Bus From Osaka by Zentan Bus: 3 hours



For more information >



<https://visitkinosaki.com/things-to-do/preservation-efforts/>

CONTACT

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VISIT STORKS

Kinosaki Onsen Kounoyu Onsen The hot spring first discovered by storks



The hot springs of Kinosaki are said to have been discovered as much as 1300 years ago when an Oriental White Stork was seen healing its injured legs

in the hot spring water. There are 6 other hot springs in Kinosaki besides Kounoyu Onsen, and tourists can wear a traditional light cotton summer kimono (yukata) while going around the relaxing hot springs.

Kukuhi Shrine



Kukuhi Shrine is the shrine that holds the legend of storks. Today, many people visit the shrine to pray for childbirth, believing that storks bring them babies.

Hachigoro Toshima Wetlands



We developed the rice fields into a wetland area. Visitors can observe Oriental White Storks raising their chicks in the artificial nests during springtime and many other birds.

Museum hours: 9:00am-5:00pm
Museum holiday: every Tuesday

Hyogo Park of The Oriental White Stork Toyooka Municipal Museum of the Oriental White Stork



The Oriental White Stork protection and propagation facility. Here, the Oriental White Stork may be observed up-close in their open-cage. A video about the story of the storks is available in English, French and Korean.

Museum hours: 9:00am-5:00pm **Park holiday: every Monday**

Kaya Waterside Park



We developed flood plains into a wetland habitat. Not only can the Oriental White Storks be seen flying above, but they can also be observed resting on the surface of the water.

Museum hours: 9:00am-5:00pm
Museum holiday: every Tuesday

