

This is Great in Shikoku! April 2015 – January 2016

1. Promoting environmental activities in Kagawa Prefecture. April 30, 2015

The Japan Fund for Global Environment is a project subsidized by the Environmental Restoration and Conservation Agency of Japan. This agency subsidizes various environmental restoration and conservation activities conducted by NGOs, NPOs and other civil groups in developing areas in Japan and overseas.

In fiscal 2015, ¥600 million was allocated to 209 projects, which was the largest in number and scale in the past five years. Civil groups can apply according to their activity scales and their development stages. From this fiscal year, Japan Fishing Tackle Manufacturers Association began a project called “Fishing Environment Vision”, which promotes various frameworks for collaboration and support activities.

Shikoku EPO introduced subsidy programs in many places to accelerate environmental conservation activities within the Shikoku region. Among them, four projects were newly-nominated in Kagawa. This was impressive, since no projects had been nominated in Kagawa in the previous 10 years. The Udon Total Recycling Project and the Kagawa Citizens Museum of Natural History were subsidized as start-ups, and Umimori Sanukikai and Archipelago were subsidized by the Fishing Environment Vision.

Many environmental-related activities such as events marking the 80th anniversary of the designation of the Seto Inland Sea National Park and community-based sea projects led mainly by Kagawa Prefecture might have been a great opportunity for people to get more attention on the environment. However, some people said “we seldom heard the term ‘environment’ in policies”. Thus, EPO must determine how to convey the importance of “collaboration with policy” and the “environment” to the activists.

2. Promoting the “Food Recycling Loop” in Kagawa Prefecture. May 29, 2015

We often hear about food loss or the “food recycling loop.” Despite the worldwide demand for grain, one-third of the world food production is wasted every year. Reducing this food loss is one of the pressing global problems. As such, “garbage” is a common topic in primary school textbooks, and students often visit waste disposal facilities. So, we too visited one in Kannonji, Kagawa Prefecture.

During the tour, we saw workers separating plastics, metals, and wooden pieces by hand. Food waste is also separated, then sent to Marugame Recycle Plaza where it is turned into compost. The compost is named “Re-Green” and sold to farmers and others. At the facility, there is space to grow seasonable organic vegetables and it establishes the safety and quality. Their produce is then sold to the public at a designated shop, which is a part of community-based place focusing on health promotion. This process completes the food recycling loop. This concept is not yet main stream, but it will be common in the very near future.

3. Launching eco-consciousness events (and a toilet!) on Mt. Ishizuchi. June 11, 2015.

Mt. Ishizuchi (1982m) is the highest mountain in western Japan, and highly venerated. On Nov. 20, 2014, after four years of local collaboration on the issue, a new restroom was opened. The location is at 1820m, at the bottom of the second chain, at the meeting point from the trails from Saijo city and Kumakogen town. The restroom is also intended as a shelter, and people can get in and out to evacuate from the 2nd floor window when it snows heavily.

The toilet is a soil treated type – common in mountains because they need less servicing and low maintenance. Users pay ¥100 as a part of the maintenance cost. However, as the toilet disposal capacity is limited, hikers are encouraged to use the toilet at the start of the trail.

The people committed to this project had long-awaited for installation of the eco-toilet. The old toilets were effluent disposal type so many people avoided them, and instead excreted beside the trail, which was not environmentally appropriate. To face the problem directly, various entities took action. The Ehime Mountaineering Association, climbers groups, lodges, and local NPOs started the Exploratory Committee for Toilet Issues of Mt. Ishizuchi in 2010. Along with them, the environmental restoration department in the Ehime Prefecture Office recommended the establishment of the Cleaning Up Promotion Group for Mt. Ishizuchi. Saijo city, Kumakogen town, and Ishizuchi Shrine joined to research the situation choose the appropriate toilet type and location. Awareness activities were also conducted.

In April 2014, a new committee -- the Cleaning Up Promotion Committee -- was developed from the promotion group. They recruited supporters to restore the environment of Mt. Ishizuchi, and to raise money for the installation maintenance, and introduction of the eco portable toilets, and the removal of the old ones.. They continue to work to for the mountain's cleanliness.

2015 was the 60th anniversary of Mt. Ishizuchi being designated as a quasi-national park. On May 23, the onset of the mountaineering season, the Cleaning Up Promotion Committee hosted an environmental-awareness climbing event that included a ceremony at the new restroom. Further events were held on Aug. 9 and Sept. 12. There were events including eco-tours and connecting children's message papers at the top of the mountain. On Nov. 1, a commemorative symposium "Mt. Ishizuchi, Our Local Treasure to Hand Over to Future Generations" was held at the prefecture's Life-Long Center.

Those events were to recognize the great nature of Mt. Ishizuchi and hand them to future generations.

NPO Ishizuchi Morinogakko made a new web page "Mt. Ishizuchi's Restroom" on their website to show how to use the new facilities. Click <http://ishizuchi.net/restroom/>

4. Hosting the Summer Challenge at Aratama Primary School. Matsuyama city, Ehime Prefecture. July 23, 2015.

The so-called “Summer Challenge” was held at Aratama Community Center on July 23. Some 90 Aratama primary school students and foreign and local residents in Ehime Prefecture learned about current social issues in four topic groups -- food, career education, international understanding, and the environment.

One of the workshops was a so-called “trade game,” conducted in the “international understanding” topic group. Each group had tools (scissors, pencils) and resources (clothe) and made specifically-required products (shaped clothe patches). They chose group members as the prime minister, foreign minister, and environment minister. In a group they had to play their roles. For example, the foreign minister was the only one allowed to leave the group to sell their products to the “World Bank.” The environment minister attended conferences to discuss environmental issues, and the prime minister played the role of compiling the group member’s opinions.

Each group had different preconditions. For example, some groups had many scissors and some had only a few. Or some had loans and others did not. The World Bank also showed different attitudes toward each group, for example buying one group’s products unreasonably cheap but buying another group’s obviously poor-quality product.

Children soon started work together by exchanging what they needed with other groups, or changed their methods of making their products. Sometimes they faced other challenges caused by a sharp price drop or discovery of a new resource. The students realized the importance of assuming a country’s responsibility, and also realized that they did not always have equal opportunities because of their “birthplace” in the game.

Some exchange students said that it was a great opportunity to learn “the way of thinking , the way of interacting when needed, and a good way to teach children”. And they wanted to bring the idea back to their home countries to teach to their children. Another student noted the importance of education as each of us makes our country.

Shikoku EPO will continue to support such educational activities for young people so that the concept of ESD (Education for Sustainable Development) will spread.

5. Organizing a quasi-community “Tosakko Town” by children. Kochi City, Kochi Prefecture. August 31, 2015

Tosa is the old name of Kochi. “Tosakko Town” is a place to mingle with children of different ages and to offer the opportunity to have a pride in their own community. The activity started in 2009, and a two-day

event is held during summer vacation.

The organizers, called the Tosakko Town Executive Committee, are run by actual high school and university students and adults. They try to stay at the back stage and let the participants do their jobs. Four hundred students (elementary school 4th graders to 3rd year junior high school students) actively learned together.

In the quasi-town, children learn the rules of the community, select their jobs at the job placement office, earn money and pay taxes. They have their own currency called "Tos". They work at various jobs -- the tax office, bank, newspaper office and as a florist. They can start their own business. They can be the mayor or assemblyperson to change the rules of the town. They take on responsibilities. When things go wrong, they discuss solutions. Through these activities, they learn to think for themselves and be aware of their responsibility.

6. Revitalizing the Shikoku Region; Creating a Project of Generating/Consuming Locally Available Energy Resources. September 30, 2015

"Renewable energy" has become a buzzword. Solar power energy is relatively common for the Shikoku region, but we also have other renewable energy sources including wind and water. But few people have actually seen them.

This time Shikoku EPO visited Okushionoe Momono Plaza in Shionoe, Takamatsu city in Kagawa Prefecture. This is an experimental space using locally available energy by NPO Environment Tokushima Network under the subsidy of Japan Fund for Global Environment. They set small-scale generators by solar power (100-200watt), wind (400watt) and water (2.4watt/6V) and connect them to an independent power source sine wave inverter to measure the generated power.

Selecting the most suitable energy source depends on various factors including geological formations and the weather -- any of which can impede renewable power generation. At the Takamatsu facility, several renewable power generators were used together, showing how electricity can be a hybrid. This experimental activity can lead to "local production and local consumption" of energy in hills and mountainous areas. This can also help revitalize the areas.

7. Hosting Cog-way Shikoku, Bike Tour around Shikoku. October 31, 2015

"Cog-Way Shikoku" is a bike tour around Shikoku conducted every few years. "Cog" is pronounced "Kogu", which means "riding (a bike/boat etc.)" in Japanese.

On Oct. 14, a group of cyclists came to Takamatsu, Kagawa Prefecture, where they started the tour. They cycled 40~50km a day, but each cyclist can choose roads based on their abilities. When they

finished the day's course, they moved to Tokushima Prefecture by cycle train. Local cyclists helped guiding the towns and showed some tourists spots and local food.

40~50 participants of different ages and nationalities participated this year. Among them was a lady with her baby in the sidecar, a postman, and others from eight countries including Taiwan, Singapore, Germany, and Italy. It was an international eco event to enjoy scenery in Shikoku.

8. Spreading "Children's Town" throughout Shikoku -- efforts from Kochi, Tokushima and Ehime.
November 30, 2015

Quasi-community for children is spreading throughout Shikoku Region to let children learn how the system of community works. The concept began as mini-Munich in Germany and it has developed in unique ways in many different places. The following explains the events in Ehime, Tokushima and Kochi prefectures.

8a. Ehime Prefecture: Children's Town in Himeyama Primary School

"Children's Town in Himeyama Primary School" was held on Nov. 23 hosted by the Children's Town Project Executive Committee, which was started through collaboration of Next Connection and Community Chamber of Shimizu town. Mr. Ochi, founder of Next Connection, hoped this activity would lead to create a place for children of different ages to learn and grow together, and that the bond with local schools should be the core of such activities.

Some hundred participants were mainly lower graders from Himeyama Primary School. Then they selected a job at the job placement office and worked for a few hours. For example, at the newspaper company they interviewed people for articles and published a newspaper. At the hair salon, they did customer's hair for a party. At the theater, a play was performed by the Theater "Neko". After finishing their job, they got the "IT" (ITTO) currency from the bank. Each received 10 IT per hour, and they paid tax out of their salary. They then played games, had meals, and put their "money" in the bank. The activities were supported by professional adults. Their parents also visited. Here, the children worked to increase the actual experiences but the parents shared the concept and purpose of the project.

We hope that this experience will be a momentum for children to think for themselves, express what they think and connect to others.

8b. Tokushima Prefecture: Uzukko Town July 20, 2015

"Uzu" is eddy. Eddy currently is one of the specialties of Tokushima. This was the first trial by the collaboration of Tokushima Residents Activity Plaza, Social Welfare Council, and Tokushima Citizens Vitalization Development Center for children from elementary 3rd grade to 3rd year junior high school. It

was held at the local shopping center.

This was not just a working experience but the social contribution supported by NPOs. Among 14 activities included the singing of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony in German, cooking and selling food after learning food sanitation, and separating garbage. Children chose the menu and registered in advance. When they finished working, they got paid by "Plala"(Plala), a local currency, and they could use the money within the quasi-town. This was the trial to use the characters and advantages of NPOs and 50 children participated.

8c. Kochi Prefecture: Tosakko Town

"Tosa" is the old name of Kochi. "Tosakko Town" was held for two days on the third weekend in August every year, and this was the eighth trial. The event is held by the collaboration with the Tosakko Town Executive Committee, Kochi Citizens' Activity Support Center, and the NPO Kochi Citizen's Council. Some 100 high school and university students got together to form an executive committee under the slogan "Believing the power of children", and they work to recruit supporters, design the town, and to organize the quasi-town throughout the year. It drew attention, as they have established the mechanism for young people to learn from each other.

Four hundred children participated throughout the prefecture, mainly from 4th graders to 3rd year junior high schoolers, at the Kochi Cultural Plaza. Each participant chose one of 40 job options, including mayor or assemblyperson, to discuss the community administration of the town. They earn "money" called "Tos"(TOSU) and later they used it in the shopping mall. Parents were not allowed to attend, but they could see the activities through photos and movies.

This activity helped children realize the mechanism of society and the rights and responsibilities as citizens while experiencing their job and helping operate the town. They also met and collaborated with children of other age groups.

As you see, each "children's town" is different in terms of the targeted age and location, but they share the same purpose: to grow the children's ability to improve the communication skills and live their life through the experience. At the same time, the "children's town" is also the place for the grown-ups to test their ability to interact and let the other grow. We hope such activities will spread further.

9. Hosting 5th Biodiversity Convention in Shikoku; "Walk in Nature in Saijo." December 28, 2015

The Network for Conservation of Biological Diversity* in Shikoku hosts a conference every year. This year it was held in Saijo, Ehime Prefecture on December 5. On the next day, they planned to have an excursion, too.

*Network for Conservation of Biological Diversity in Shikoku is to promote activities to preserve biological diversity within the Shikoku region, preserve a rich natural environment, and restore harmonious society with people and nature.

9a. Spring Water Tour

Tour participants enjoyed the nature while Mr. Takahito Yamamoto and staff at Saijo Nature School explained the subsoil flows and spring water of Mt. Ishizuchi. There are many spring waters in Saijo, and various fish were spotted through the clear water. In Saijo, even people living in the apartment complexes use water from wells, which is a proof of how rich the water is. Springs are kept clean and people are proud of their springs, which should be the starting point of preservation of the local environment. A lot of waterweed was spotted, many of which were alien species. For example, someone might use watercress, and after disposing of it, it takes root and eventually grows there.

9b. Mysterious Eco Tour: Ferns and Mosses

The first stop on this tour was the remains of the village in Tambara in Saijo city. Some 30 families used to live there, but the last family left the village 10 years ago because there was no road. The rocky trail is now covered with various beautiful ferns and mosses -- 80 different types of ferns have identified so far. Some are cross-bred. Mr. Ozawa, vice president of the "NPO Morikaratsuzuku Michi" said that the cross-bred fern is an outcome when people and nature existed in a village. Today wild boars often come down from the mountains for food because there are no people in the mountain village to take care of the forests. The lack of management of the forests and mountains are partly the reasons for the increase in damage by wild animals, according to Mr. Ozawa. As a further reminder of times past when the countryside was more populated, there was a stonewall in the remains with some parts higher than an average person. Thinking back to the days when people heaped up the stones by hand, I took off my hat to our forefathers' wisdom and efforts.

The next spot we visited was the remains of Chihara Mine. We had to walk on slopes and cliffs to reach the destination. In effect, the abandoned mine is a sanctuary for the mosses, some of which world researchers love. In some areas, where moss totally covers the rocks, the sight is magnificent. What else impressed the participants about the remains of the mine was the discoloration of the rocks by copper having seeped through cracks and a type of fern grew. In the old days, people tried to detect copper by looking for these trees. That means nature talked to us from the old days.

The nature of mountain villages were restored because people properly managed the resources that needed care, while at the same time taking care to leave alone the remaining natural environment. It was a great opportunity to think about the bounty of nature further.

10. Visiting Mahara Akari Laboratory. Anan city, Tokushima Prefecture. January 14, 2016

The only research facility of ticks is the Mahara Akari Laboratory in Anan city, Tokushima Prefecture.

“Akari” means ticks in Latin. They study and consult with patients who suffer *rickettsia japonica*, or Japanese spotted fever, and other tick-borne diseases.

A few years ago there was an outbreak of Japanese spotted fever, caused by people getting stung by ticks and exposed to the fungi that causes the fever. This spotted fever was discovered by Dr. Fumihiko Mahara, the director of this laboratory. This discovery was spotlighted not only in Japan but also in international institutions. The treatment of the spotted fever was established based on his long experiences at the clinical treatment and basic research and it is applied in various healthcare fields.

In fact there was a private laboratory for the study of ticks called Ohara Laboratory as part of Ohara General Hospital. But in 2012, after 88 years, it was closed. Dr. Mahara was concerned that their accumulated knowledge and know-how of the experiments would be lost, so he started his own lab. He asked Dr. Hiroki Fujita to be the president. They had worked for the Ohara Lab together for 30 years, and they started their new research activities together. There is a museum for ticks beside the lab.

Ticks are something you always want to avoid. I was one of them, but when I learned about the ticks from Dr. Fujita and took a look into the “Akari” world, it was interesting and worth delving in. The board of education of Anan City recommended primary and secondary schools visit and learn as their unique field of learning.

**Rickettsia* is a general terms of microbe of *rickettsia* genus. They use ticks as media and cause people rickettsial disease.