

Satoyama -Living in Harmony with Nature-

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What does home mean to you? To me, it's a comfortable place essential to a good life. Having a place to live is really important. But what would you do if you lost your home? I can't imagine such a horrible thing, but it's happening right now. Many creatures are losing their home. The name of their home is Satoyama.

Satoyama is a Japanese term to describe the borderland between human habitation and nature. It consists of rice paddies, fields, forests, streams, and other things related to human lives. Surprisingly, it covers about 40% of Japan's land! And it also has a long history. The relationship between Satoyama and Japanese people started about 3000 years ago in the Yayoi period in Japan. The important thing about Satoyama is that people have influenced the woodland and wildlife there in a good way. It is a place where we humans can live in harmony with creatures.

I am a member of a volunteer group, Yamaguri, that works to preserve the natural environment of Satoyama. We do many activities such as farm works and weeding. By taking care of the fields and the rice paddies, I'm helping to preserve the home of many creatures living there. Since my parents quite often took me to go camping and birdwatching, it was natural for me to come to love nature. However, when I was in my elementary school, I learned that nature is being destroyed by us humans. Shocked and saddened, I decided to join a volunteering activity in my town. That was Yamaguri.

Through the activities there, I learned how Satoyama is important to both humans and creatures. For humans, it's a place to relax. It's a place to be healed and it's a place to feel the blessings of nature. It's the nearest nature for us. For creatures, it's a home to live. It's a safe paradise to breed. And it's the last habitat for many endangered species, such as Japanese killifish "Medaka" and Northern Goshawk "Ootaka" to live. It's a fact that many endangered species prefer the environment of Satoyama to the environment of untouched nature.

Now you know that Satoyama is valuable for both humans and animals. However, Satoyama, 40% of our land, is in danger now because most land of this kind isn't being maintained well. These days the population around the place is getting smaller and rapidly aging. Therefore, there are fewer people to take care of Satoyama. As a result,

many common creatures are in danger of extinction. According to research by The Nature Conservation Society of Japan, the number of fireflies, crows and wild rabbits are decreasing there. The situation is really serious.

If we don't do anything, this amazing place will disappear. Many creatures will lose their home and won't be able to survive. We have to stop this. There are a lot of things we can do to save the place. In fact, the Ministry of the Environment is working on a project named "Satoyama Initiative" to enable humans to live in harmony with nature. Also, there are many organizations and volunteer groups like "Yamaguri," working to preserve this precious place. What can we do as individuals? To know about Satoyama is the first step. Then join those volunteer groups. It's good for you, too. You can have a refreshing time without worrying about the risk of coronavirus. Just one day is okay. Let's save this home and live together with nature.