

P7

Environmental education in the activities to conserve wild Japanese squirrels

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1. Concept

MWSCS (Moriyama Wild Japanese Squirrel Conservation Society) prepared educational programs to provide hands-on training through in-situ conservation activities so that children and their parents experience the restoration of habitat around Mt. Togoku., not to do just bird and forest tours.

2. Activities and Method

In an effort to conserve the Japanese squirrels *Sciurus lis* at Mt. Togoku, MWSCS established many action programs for children including; (1) feeding squirrels with Japanese walnuts in the forests and recording the number of walnuts consumed by squirrels, (2) planting red pine and Japanese walnut for the squirrel diet, (3) weighing by spring scale, determining male or female, and supporting placement of transmitters on the neck of captured squirrel, (4) tracking the tone from transmitters to nest as telemetry search, (5) providing skills on how to use saws and hammers to fabricate feeding stations and nest boxes, (6) replacing SD cards at many heat sensing digital cameras in the forest, and (7) observing the timing and amount of gnawing for the bone fixed at the stations.

To estimate the habitat trend to the 100 years ahead, children were trained to (8) read and record the diameter at breast height of dendro-meters that were put around the selected trees over 4 years, (9) measure the amount of water from the spring at Mt Togoku whether the mountain is drying or not, (10) study the soil and the soil animals in different forest floors by using Tullgren funnel and stereomicroscope, (11) learn how to use the slide calliper to measure the diameters of the nuts and acorns,(12) find out the dying oaks by bark beetle infestation and (13)support to prevent from expanding the infestation.

3. Results

Through such 20 years of program activities, children learned and experienced the significance (1) to keep recording, (2) to have data stand alone, particularly condition change, and (3) to restore the habitat for conserving mammals.

4. Future task

In Japan, junior high school students tend to go prep private secondary schools for high school, then do not join the MWSCS activities, even if they understand its significance. Collaboration with school itself will be necessary to keep conservation activities.