

# Mizuumi TIMES

The six members of Group 1 visited Inawashiro Water Environment Center of the Fukushima Prefectural Center for Environmental Creation in Inawashiro Town. There, we interviewed Mr. Ken Kitami (72) and Mr. Sadanobu Igarashi (72), representative and vice-representative, of the Nature Conservation Association of Lake Inawashiro. They talked to us about various aspects of the lake, such as its current environmental conditions, issues and interaction with surrounding areas. During our visit, we learned about the importance of protecting our natural environment and gained a greater appreciation of what Fukushima meant to each of us.

## Timeless Emerald Green Lake!

### The culprit is the water caltrops Bringing the collapsed ecosystem back in balance

Although Lake Inawashiro is familiar to most people for its beautiful sky-blue color, Mr. Kitami said this is a mistake. The sky-blue color is not the lake's natural color but results from pollution due to municipal and other drains flowing into the lake. According to Mr. Kitami, the natural color of the lake is the beautiful emerald green seen in early spring. The lake has maintained clear

waters over the years because of the Nagase River, which supplies the lake with 1 billion tons of water annually and accounts for 60 percent of the lake's inflow. The highly acidic, clear currents of the river help clean the lake by precipitating phosphorus and other toxic substances.

However, in recent years, besides the increase in the volume of municipal and

drain water flowing into the lake, the rapid propagation of water caltrops has upsetted the ecological balance of the lake. With the greater availability of a variety of vegetables nowadays, there has been a decline in the use of water caltrops as a food resource. This results in rapid growth of the aquatic plant, which now cover large areas of the lake, causing the buildup of slime in the lake. (Miyu)



Mr. Igarashi (extreme right) explaining how lake Inawashiro has changed over time.

### Preserving the "Heavenly Mirror Lake"



Water caltrops leaf taken from the lake on the morning of our visit.

The Nature Conservation Association of Lake Inawashiro, which uses the Fukushima Prefectural Center for Environmental Creation as one of the bases for its activities, was established in April 2017 to preserve the natural environment of Lake Inawashiro, also known as the Heavenly Mirror Lake, and its river system.

In addition to its cleanup efforts, the association also engages in a variety of related activities such as the study of swans, organizing workshops where participants can learn about and work with sedge and activities for the preservation of *Nymphoides Peltata*, conducted jointly with local elementary school students. In the sedge-related workshop, participants receive easy-to-follow instructions and get hands-on experience of weaving mats using sedge, bamboo and other material. (Yura, Hinako)

#### Lake Inawashiro

### The fourth largest lake in Japan

Lake Inawashiro is the fourth largest lake in Japan. The lake has a circumference of 55.32 km, which is over 20km longer than the total length of the Yamanote Line (34.5km) in Tokyo. In terms of volume, the lake is the fifth largest in Japan.

77.3% of the water of Lake Inawashiro is used for hydro-electric generation, 20.3% for agricultural purposes and the remaining 2.4% for the public water supply. The residents of two cities, Koriyama City and Aizuwakamatsu City, each receive 60% of their water from Lake Inawashiro.

Lake Inawashiro is also famous for the white swans. Mirages, which usually appear in summer, are seen on Lake Inawashiro more often in winter when the temperature difference is greater. Okinajima, the island on the lake, is thought to have been connected to land in early days, as evidenced by the presence of a stone Buddha and other artifacts on the island.

(Keigo, Sho)

### Persistent rumors about the nuclear accident

Although there was little direct damage in areas surrounding Lake Inawashiro caused by the accident at Tokyo Electric Power Company Fukushima No.1 nuclear power station, the negative rumors after the accident remain strong.

There was a time after the accident when no

student groups or tourist buses would visit the lake. Fukushima rice, which is known for its superior taste, has experienced falling sales, although regular tests have proven its safety. It is important that accurate information is disseminated and that people are not misled by baseless rumors. (Yura, Hinako)

### The importance of knowing your hometown



Mr. Kitami talked about the importance of the place we call home.

Mr. Kitami exhorted us to learn all we can about our hometown and to discover the charms of our hometown.

Looking back at how the lake has changed over time, Mr. Kitami said that pollution has been advancing slowly without anybody really noticing it. "It's hard to imagine the Inawashiro region without its abundant nature. It's therefore my hope

that more people will join us in our efforts to preserve this rich natural environment," he said, hoping that more people will join the volunteer activities. (Taiyo)



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