



carry out research on the Japanese giant salamander, Ôsanshō-uo, which is designated as Japan's Special Natural Monument, and its preservation activities in collaboration with universities, local communities, and municipalities. I am also involved in the Higashi Hiroshima Eco-museum campaign, in which we define Ôsanshō-uo as a regional resource (exhibit) and its overall local habitat as an open-air museum, to sustainably protect Ôsanshō-uo and satoyama (mountain foothill grasslands subjected to moderate human intervention over many years for ideal coexistence between humans and nature).

Ôsanshō-uo is a Special Natural Monument, also called a "living national treasure," meaning that it is an animal species that represents Japan. Yet when you actually go to an area where you can find and study these creatures, you find them in a deplorable situation. Human-made concrete banks have divided clusters of individuals, keeping some individuals from breeding and causing others to thin out and die due to lack of food. Some larvae are flushed out into paddy fields. On a national scale, hybrid populations resulting from the introduction of non-native species have been increasing. This is a major threat. Moreover, the increasing frequency and intensity of rainstorms and flooding in recent years have displaced the majority of Ôsanshō-uo from upstream areas. There is no time to waste to save Ôsanshō-uo.

To protect Ôsanshō-uo, it is essential to build and act on a protection model that covers an entire catchment area. It would involve (1) protecting individuals that have been displaced or are found to be malnourished; (2) checking the status of hybridization, registering individuals while recording their sex, and releasing them in streams that are ideal for breeding; and (3) nurturing larvae. These steps must be followed by (4) constructing slopes along artificial streambanks to enable spontaneous movements by Ôsanshō-uo and (5) verifying the effectiveness of the slopes through studies. For the future, (6) carrying out information-sharing and awareness-raising activities to make the precarious situation of Ôsanshō-uo widely known in society is also important.

All these activities require the understanding and cooperation of local communities. So I am trying to improve society's recognition of the