



Toyooka City has been selected as part of the 2021 Top 100 Destination Sustainability Stories!



Since October 5, 2021 Toyooka City's Good Practice Story is officially **one of the Top 100 Destination Sustainability Stories!** Every year, the Top 100 Destination Sustainability Stories competition collects sustainable tourism stories and good practices from destinations all over the world to be shared as inspiring examples to others, from tourism professionals to travelers. By telling their stories, destination management organizations can be acknowledged and recognized for the solutions they have implemented in

response to challenges and problems they have faced. With the tourism sector facing very challenging times in the past years, the resiliency and hard work of these destinations to become more responsible should be celebrated. The Sustainability check is the first step of the Top 100 competition, to ensure that destinations participating are complying with basic guidelines for sustainable tourism. Toyooka City was evaluated on the Core-15 criteria of the Green Destinations Standard and has been recognized for its sustainability efforts by **achieving more than 60% compliance**, with excellent scores in the criteria "Destination Management Policy or Strategy", "Community involvement in planning" and "Health & safety".

The 2021 selection of the Good Practice Stories included Toyooka City, with the story "**How One City Brought Back Storks from Extinction by Restoring a Sustainable Environment**". Toyooka City is located in Japan, up-North Hyogo prefecture, surrounded by the Sea of Japan and mountains. Toyooka City is the last place where the [Oriental White Stork](#) could be spotted in Japan in 1971. Part of the reason they disappeared was due to the pesticides that were heavily used in the farmlands of the nation. Toyooka City felt an enormous sense of guilt and responsibility for the massive ecological loss which had occurred. Determined to right the wrongs of humanity, Toyooka City set out to create a town where both storks and people could live together happily again. Soon, a [breeding and research facility](#) was created to begin breeding and raising them in captivity. After 40 years of fails, challenges

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and efforts, they could finally reintroduced to the wild the storks that could hatched. Nowadays, farmers in the area use an **environmentally-friendly method** for cultivating [organic rice](#), which supports a clean ecology for the storks and other wildlife. Nowadays, this rice is even exported in 8 countries in the world!

The competition where this story was submitted is organized by Green Destinations. It is a non-profit organization for sustainable destination development and recognition, leading a global Partnership of representatives, expert organizations and academic institutions. They support countries all over the world to deliver responsible tourism based upon globally recognized and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The evaluators commented: “This Good Practice Story is a **real success** because it shows the involvement of Toyooka City for a better coexistence between residents, visitors and the local endangered species. The project has been a major turning point for the conversation of stork in the whole country, it has saved the species and encouraged similar projects in other prefectures and cities, but also the quality of life got better for all. This story symbolizes the **key role that sustainability and environmental preservation** play in Toyooka City. Indeed, the whole community participated in the change process and created a space where humans and storks can co-exist peacefully and where economic development and environmental protection are not mutually exclusive.”



Toyooka City wants to spread this story to Japan and to the world. They wish to inspire other cities and organizations and show that it is possible to reintroduce an extinct species. To do so, Toyooka City has organized the “**International Conference of the Oriental White Stork’s future – Keeping in Touch with Life, Community, and Heart**” since 1994. This year it will be held online on October 30th and 31st, and the lectures held on October 30th from 10:30AM (Japan time) will also be translated in English in real time. Since the extent of the reintroduction of this species is increasing, with 260 storks flying again in the sky of Japan, it is important to connect and discuss how people can coexist with nature in the future.





[Kinosaki Onsen](#) is a town of time-honored hot springs dating back 1300 years ago. It is home to seven public bathhouses, all located within walking distance of each other and the train station. Guests are encouraged to wear yukata and geta, stroll through the town, and go onsen-hopping.

[Toyooka](#) is a downtown area home to the Oriental White Stork, a bird that was revived from extinction in this very town. The city's efforts restored the Oriental White Stork population, and now over 260 fly the skies of Japan. Toyooka is also known for the Genbudo Caves.



[Izushi](#) is the resident castle town, popular for its nostalgic atmosphere of Edo-era Japan. It is home to many interesting attractions such as castle ruins, a samurai house, a kabuki theater, and a clock tower. The town's specialty is Izushi Sara Soba, buckwheat noodles served in small portions on small plates.

[Kannabe](#) is a mountainous area with fun activities year-round. In the winter, one can go skiing, snowboarding, snowshoeing, and sledding. In the warm months, one can go camping, paragliding, fishing, tree climbing, and more. Kannabe is the perfect destination for adventurers.



[Takeno](#) is a quaint fisherman town that is a hidden gem among the northern coast of Hyogo Prefecture. The beach has clear, blue waters while the mountains surrounding it offer great hiking opportunities. It is encouraged to stroll through the peaceful town, where one can find small shops and traditional landscapes.

[Tanto](#) is a quiet countryside town with magnificent nature—including a giant field of tulips in the spring and brilliant red-leaved trees in the fall.

