

# Foundation to pay fees in animal rights

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KYOTO — Environmental activists have established a foundation to raise money to pay legal fees in court cases being fought in the name of endangered species and other animals, creating the first such foundation in the country.

The proposal to create the Fund for the Rights of Nature came from Kyoto lawyer Takaaki Kagohashi, 39, who is currently arguing a case in Kagoshima Prefecture in the name of the Amami rabbit, a specially designated species. The rabbit's habitat is in a special nature preserve that is being targeted for

golf course development.

"The view that people have of plants and animals might change if the number of cases in which an animal has been named as the plaintiff increase," said Kagohashi. "Donations to the foundation will provide support to lawyers and these plaintiffs in their court fights, so we hope people will help."

The money that is generated will be used to help cover legal fees in court cases, including the case in which Kagohashi is involved and another that is being argued in Ibaraki Prefecture.

The foundation is also considering providing support to a case that is to be fought in Kyushu over a rare mudskipper found near the Ariake Sea.

The foundation was established in April, and its seven-man board of directors is composed of researchers in the fields of forestry and zoology.

Those who wish to join the foundation are asked to pay a 3,000 yen membership fee. The foundation has already raised more than 300,000 yen through membership fees and donations.

The group's goal is to enroll 1,000

members and raise 3 million yen by the end of the fiscal year.

Okimasa Murakami, an expert at Kyoto University, hopes people will understand that animals have value in involving animal protection. He hopes it will establish rights of the environment. Nature is something everyone, man or beast, has a right to.

For further information, contact Kyoto Horitsu Jimusho (075) 256-1881.