

The following is a translation of the Henshu Techo column in The Yomiuri Shimbun.

* * *

The late Godo Nakanishi used to let birds free inside his home. The term "yacho" (wild bird) was coined by him from "ya" (field) and "cho" (bird). The late Yonekichi Hiraiwa once took a wolf to a department store in Tokyo's Ginza.

Hiraiwa was very fond of "beasts." He was born to a bamboo dealer in Tokyo's Kameido in 1898. The "well-bred boy" set up the dog family ecological research institute in 1937 and the animal psychology study society in 1941. He spent his life obsessed with dogs until his death at 88.

His grandfather loved birds and his father went for fish. Animal lovers' blood ran in his veins. But Hiraiwa's preoccupation with dogs far exceeded that of his ancestors for animals. It was reputed that a glance at a dog was enough for him to immediately judge if it was male or female, how old it was and what disposition it had.

Development of his passion for dogs led him to buy a house to keep wolves having the same ancestors as dogs in 1929 in Tokyo's Meguro-ku, which was a rural area at that time. There were as many as nine wolves imported from China and Korea.

He became so immersed in the study of wolves that he used to say he wished had been born a wolf. He spent half a century on a series of studies on wolves by digging up documentary records and other material and visiting people familiar with wolves. His studies proved that the Japanese species of wolves became extinct when the last one was shot in 1905.

He also kept several hundreds of raccoon dogs and jackals and some other canine species and also studied cats for more than 30 years. He explained his behavior as inevitable to know fully about dogs. Last year he published a book, "History and Episodes of Cats" based on his study of cats.

It was also Hiraiwa who introduced Earnest Seton's "Wild Animals I Have Known" in Japan for the first time. Many species of animals have disappeared from the earth. In this respect he warned "human beings must know the terrible consequences of destroying nature's balance."

(From June 29 issue)