



YOUNG WHITE STORKS will be gradually introduced to life in the wild, in a project that starts next year in Toyooka, Hyogo Prefecture. KYODO PHOTO

HYOGO HABITAT A STEP BACK TO WILD

White stork revival plan hatched

The Cultural Affairs Agency will launch a joint project in fiscal 1995 with the Hyogo Prefectural Government to accustom young white storks to life in the wild.

All white storks living in the wild have become extinct. At present, between 80 to 90 white storks are kept at zoos and similar facilities. The birds are specially protected by the central government.

The Hyogo government keeps 41 white storks.

The project will be carried out at a facility to be constructed in Toyooka, Hyogo Prefecture, where the prefecture's white storks protection and reproduction center is located.

The facility will be called White Storks' Native Land.

Park and the bird's habitat will be set up in a large cage the size of a golf driving range.

Through observation, researchers will decide what kind of environment will be necessary for the birds.

Young white storks will be made to learn how to walk and how to find and get food in the wild. They will sometimes be allowed to venture outside the cage.

The agency hopes to gradually make white storks accustomed to life in the wild, a process that may take about 10 years.

The agency and the prefecture will each appropriate ¥60 million for the first year of the project.

During the Edo Period, white storks, which are mi-

gratory, used to fly to shallows of rivers and marshes at various parts of Japan.

But in and after the Meiji Era, large numbers of white storks were caught for making stuffing. Thus the birds came to be seen only in and around Toyooka.

There were more than 100 white storks in the area. But logging of pine forests where the birds make their nests, and chemical pollutants from farms contributed to their decline.

In 1971, white storks living in the wild became extinct.

The Hyogo Prefectural Government set up the protection and reproduction center in 1965 in Toyooka.

The birds reproduced in captivity there in 1989.