

The role of conservation medicine in Japanese wildlife management practices- A case study in Hokkaido

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1. INTRODUCTION AND OBJECTIVES OF STUDY

Conservation medicine is an emerging, interdisciplinary field that actively incorporates the work of veterinary medical practices (such as wildlife rehabilitation) into effective wildlife management plans. It is tailored for a specific geographic location and circumstances to prevent harm to individual animals, wildlife populations, human health and the environment. The objectives of this research are to evaluate the practices and outcomes of a wildlife rescue and rehabilitation center and to understand the perspectives about the role of conservation medicine from those working in the field of wildlife conservation. My research will highlight a case study in northeastern Hokkaido where rescue, rehabilitation and reintroduction to the wild, are used to help conserve and manage a viable population for three endangered raptor species- Blakiston's Fish Owl (*Ketupa blakistoni*), Steller's Sea Eagles (*Haliaeetus pelagicus*) and White Tailed Eagles (*H. albicilla*).

2. METHODOLOGY

The design of this research is based on a case study and a questionnaire. The case study examines the work of the Institute of Raptor Biomedicine Japan (IRBJ) at the Kushiro Wildlife Conservation Center, located in Kushiro city, Hokkaido. Direct observational research was conducted at the Kushiro Wildlife Conservation Center in the spring of 2012. The second part of this research is a questionnaire about the current practices and future application of conservation medicine in Japanese wildlife management practices. The sources for my data were members of the Japanese Ministry of the Environment who are employed in various wildlife conservation departments, as well as conservationists employed by local governments and non-governmental organizations in Hokkaido.

3. CONCLUSION

This research suggests that the Ministry of the Environment, local government officials in Hokkaido and those in the field of veterinary medicine are supportive of and see importance in the practices of conservation medicine as a preventative measure specific to relating 'good ecological health' and the well being of terrestrial wildlife. They believe that there are more opportunities for collaboration and communication between the government, the public, and specialty fields to further conservation medicine in Japan.