

Minakami Municipal Niiharu Elementary School – Let's discover the attractions of Niiharu

Situated within the Minakami Biosphere Reserve, Niiharu Elementary School promotes learning focused on local nature and biodiversity. This year's fifth-grade presentation showcased activities centered on the conservation of golden eagles in Akaya Forest, located on the border between Gunma and Niigata prefectures. Students also explored how to utilize golden eagle timber, which is harvested through forest thinning to create open hunting grounds necessary for golden eagles' survival. This process not only supports the ecosystem by maintaining suitable habitats but also generates a valuable resource that can be repurposed for various community uses.

Learning about the Attractions of the Region: Rediscovering Natural and Cultural Resources

Students investigated local tourist spots and specialties to share their appeal. They explored regional treasures such as hot springs, Takumi-no-Sato (Craftsmen's Village), and Akaya Lake, gaining insights into how the natural environment supports tourism and daily life. These activities helped students rediscover the unique value of Niiharu's natural and cultural heritage.

Learning in Akaya Forest: Biodiversity and Conservation

With the support of the Akaya Project, students delved into the significance of biodiversity. They learned about species such as golden eagles and serows and expressed a strong desire to deepen their understanding of Akaya Forest. On their field trip, they received hands-on explanations about local flora and fauna, including mushrooms, the Tago frog, and golden eagles. They also studied efforts to restore artificial forests into natural habitats. This immersive experience enabled students to appreciate Akaya Forest's ecological richness and the importance of conserving its biodiversity. Additionally, they gained an understanding of the conservation and restoration efforts of the Akaya Project.

Utilizing Golden Eagle Timber: Forest Resources and Community Contribution

The Akaya Project highlights the golden eagle as an umbrella species to advance biodiversity restoration and sustainable regional development. To support golden eagle habitats, open hunting grounds are created by thinning artificial forests. Students examined ways to utilize the resulting timber, proposing creative ideas such as producing traditional Japanese paper, drawing paper, and desks. Through discussions, they explored how this timber could benefit the community. These activities taught students about the potential of sustainable resource use to foster societal development and deepened their understanding of the broader impact of the Akaya Project.

Future Prospects

Niiharu Elementary School leverages these educational experiences to continue preserving local

nature and promoting its value. By aligning with Goal 15 (Life on Land) and Goal 13 (Climate Action) of the SDGs, the school aspires to contribute to building a sustainable local society.