

Recitation D

The Fisherman Who Planted Trees

“Oceans and forests are linked by rivers. We have to think of a river and the neighboring sea as part of a single ecosystem. ”

Hatakeyama Shigeatsu cultivates oysters in Kesenuma Bay, Miyagi Prefecture. During a visit to France in 1984, he was astounded by the excellent condition of the oysters being cultivated there. Something else caught his eye as well — there were such a lot of small fish and other tiny creatures. He thought that the conditions there were like those of his home town when he was a child.

He then set out to examine different parts of the Loire River. He saw a number of thick forests surrounding the upper reaches of the river. This made him think that forests and rivers are important in making the sea a rich habitat for different creatures.

Once back in Japan, he decided to plant trees on Mount Murone, the source of the Okawa River that flows into Kesenuma Bay. Although many people laughed at the idea of an oyster fisherman planting trees on a mountain, his enthusiasm moved the fishermen around him.

They have already planted about 50 species of trees like beeches and mizunara oaks — 30,000 trees in all. They have also organized events and invited children and their parents who live in the area to participate, in order to learn about the sea through personal experience.

Hatakeyama explains, “By planting trees in the mountains, where the river begins, we are also planting the idea of environmental conservation in the minds of people. If we don’t do both, we won’t succeed. ”

After the great Tsunami in 2011, the Okawa River and Kesenuma Bay were severely damaged. However, they came back a lot sooner than was first thought. That was because the healthy conditions of the mountain and the river helped to revive the natural environment.

(308 words)