

Terraced Rice Fields

Terraced rice fields line the mountainsides of Sado, providing beautiful scenery as well as sustenance for both the island's human residents and a wide variety of wildlife. The fields make for picturesque views, whether seen from below or from higher elevations with the ocean in the distance. The fields were constructed on hillsides to provide enough food for the burgeoning population coming to Sado from all over Japan during the gold rush of the early Edo period (1603–1868). Some of these terraced fields are still in use today.

After some of the fields were destroyed by a typhoon in 2008, local farmers chose to shift to organic and traditional farming techniques and stopped using artificial chemicals and pesticides. This was done in part to safeguard the habitat of the crested ibis, a once-extinct bird that was rebred on Sado in 1999. To provide food for these birds year round, the fields are filled with water after the harvest is over so the birds can feed on the insects living in the water. Visitors can tour the terraced fields and learn about the farming practices that benefit both the island's residents and its natural environment. The harmony of the terraced fields and the diverse ecosystem that accommodates the crested ibis led Sado Island to be named a Globally Important Agricultural Heritage System (GIAHS) in 2011.