

## The Japanese Crane

The *tancho*, or Japanese crane (*Grus japonensis*)—also known as the red-crowned or red-crested crane—is the only resident crane species that breeds in Japan. The cranes in eastern Hokkaido dwell in the region all year, while those on the Eurasian continent are migratory. The Japanese crane has a distinctive patch of bare red skin on its crown. It is a common motif in traditional Japanese art and a symbol of long life and happiness.

During the Edo period (1603–1867) the Japanese crane was found throughout eastern Japan, but hunting and loss of habitat reduced its population over time. By the early twentieth century, Japan's resident crane population was thought to be extinct. In 1924, however, a group of some 10 Japanese cranes was found living in the Kushiro Wetlands. Through winter feeding and conservation programs, the population has increased to around 1,800. The Japanese crane is protected as a Special Natural Monument. The displays at the museum show the life-cycle of the crane through the seasons, including its elaborate winter courtship dance.