

Emperor Akihito's Interest in the Natural Sciences

In 1996, Emperor Akihito (reigned 1989–2019) requested that accurate records be made of the flora and fauna in the extensive forests on the Nasu Imperial Villa estate. He also asked that changes in the environment be monitored. The resulting research project conducted by the Tochigi Prefectural Museum between 1997 and 2001 identified 3,492 species of wildlife, some of which are considered Vulnerable (VU) or Near Threatened (NT) on the Ministry of Environment's lists for species conservation. The Emperor and Empress participated in the survey with the researchers whenever their schedules allowed.

Emperor Akihito has published over 30 treatises on the classification of fish in the goby family, which he has studied for many years. The Emperor collaborated in the publication of papers in 2008 and 2016 on the behavior of raccoon dogs (*tanuki*) on the grounds of the imperial palace in Tokyo. From 2007 until his retirement in 2019, Emperor Akihito regularly held a nature observation event in the Fukiage Palace Garden. The event continues under the direction of his son, Emperor Naruhito (b. 1960).