

Red-crowned Cranes and the Crane Aviary

Okayama Korakuen has been home to a diverse range of crane species since the Edo period (1603–1867) including red-crowned, white-naped, and hooded cranes. These birds were kept in captivity but were able to roam the garden during the day. The cranes disappeared from Korakuen at the end of World War II, but two new red-crowned cranes were donated to the garden in 1956 by Guo Moruo, a Chinese poet, archaeologist, and politician who had spent his high school years studying in Okayama before the war. A poem by Guo can be found inscribed next to the aviary that conveys his reasons for the gift.

The two cranes Korakuen received were both female, but the city of Kushiro in Hokkaido—which is active in the preservation of red-crowned cranes—was able to help the birds successfully breed by introducing them to male cranes. Thanks to breeding efforts in partnership with Kushiro, Okayama is now home to the largest number of red-crowned cranes bred in captivity in all of Japan.

The Crane Aviary can be found at the north side of the garden near the Main Gate. There are currently eight red-crowned cranes, six of which can be observed in the open-air aviary. Between September and February, the cranes are released on selected days and are free to roam and fly around the garden. They are also released during a celebratory event on New Year's Day as a sign of good luck. While strolling the garden grounds, it is not uncommon to hear the occasional call of one of the cranes.