

Environmental greenification and education program in the forest of Toyota

Authors: Hiromi Ikegami

TOYOTA MOTOR CORPORATION, Aichi, Japan

Toyota Foresta Hills model forest is located in the loop-shaped greenbelt area surrounding the city of Toyota, called the “green orbit” or so positioned under the city’s Master Plan For Parks And Open Spaces . It aims to propose and advocate “a sustainable recycle-based society centering on forests” with concrete execution plans. In 1997, Toyota launched an environmental improvement project over 15ha of its vast 75ha company premises in the aim of regenerating Satoyama woodland and opened it to public. (Satoyama: Japanese coppice forests until approximately 1960s. Properly maintained Satoyama exhibits “co-existence of human activity and bio-diversity”) Geographically, its vast site is segmented into 3 zones comprised of a forestry zone, conservation zone and utilization zone showcasing such institutions as a hygrophyte observation garden (restored biotope), natural ecosystem observation garden (constructed biotope), and conservation district for species around the Ise Bay (rare living being observation garden) as well as approximately 15 test areas including the Satoyama Learning Institute named “Eco-no-Mori House”. As the social demand has heightened for such facilities since then, Toyota expanded its project area into 40ha.

While Toyota Foresta Hills model forest, continuously rolls out activities to conserve and energize healthy Satoyama or coppice forests, it also regularly monitors the local ecosystem to attain deeper understanding of the environment where Satoyama conservation activities are taking place and influences of such activities over the diversification of living things by accumulating data and identifying proper ways to conserve Satoyama. At the same time, these activities and findings are made available to the general public. Also, there are learning programs on the natural environment and programs to introduce the forests via man&nature interpreters.

In 2005, Toyota Foresta Hills model forest received an honor of Excellent Stage 3 from the 1st Social and Environmental Green Evaluation System (SEGES). This indeed gave deeper confidence and courage for our commitment and an opportunity to once again confirm the importance of this mission to maintain, conserve, and manage natural and environmental resources in the local area and the meaning of passing the precious resources to the future generations. In 2009, a new social contribution project, “Toyomori project” an initiative to develop experts who supports the local recycle-based society, was started in collaboration with the municipal (City of Toyota), NPO (Support center for sustainable regional design) from the perspective of “external communication,” one of KPIs for SEGES. In detail, its basic concept is to leverage expertise, know-how, and human resource of the municipal, NPO, and a company so as to realize a sustainable recycle-based society centering on the ecosystem of forests and to connect people in cities and local villages.

However, realizing that there is a limit to what one single company can bring in conserving local ecosystem, the “Fukuro (owl) Project” just commenced in 2008 with a partner, Sony EMCS Corporation Tokai Tec Kohda Site, as an initiative that overcomes corporate walls. In detail, this intends to conserve habitation of owls defining owls as one benchmark with collaboration between the Forest of Toyota and the Forest of Sony. That is, this is a challenge to promote both collaboration for habitat conservation and collaboration for social/environmental contribution programs.

For the future, Toyota will continue to determine the relevant needs for environment and greenery, and promotes sharing know-how with our related facilities the Shirakawa-Go Eco-Institute and the Shimoyama project (under contemplation), as well as to promote construction and practical use of demonstration forests.