

Professor Chiyomatsu Ishikawa and Yubara

Chiyomatsu Ishikawa, then Professor of Zoology at Tokyo Teikoku University (now Tokyo University), visited Yubara (part of the former Mimasaka Region) in 1898, when he was 37, in order to study the Giant Salamanders that lived there.

He arrived at the hard-to-access area in the middle of the mountains having walked the entire way in straw sandals.

According to his “Giant Salamander Report”, he came again the following year, and researched across a large area spanning the former Kantouson Kogawa and Kuginuki, Oonaru, and Futakawa villages in order to learn about the Giant Salamanders’ lives.

The report also details the extensive cooperation he received from Kamesaburo Teshima, the village leader of Kuginukikogawa.

Chiyomatsu published his report in 1901. Alongside making clear the breeding habits of the Giant Salamanders, he made Yubara famous country-wide as the “town of Giant Salamanders.”

The existence of the Giant Salamanders was widely known, and the professor was anxious about the over-hunting for specimens.

Thus, just in case, in 1916 he entrusted his research to Kumahichi Mikamo, whom he also asked to set up a breeding pond for the Giant Salamanders from a hot spring source he had in his back garden.

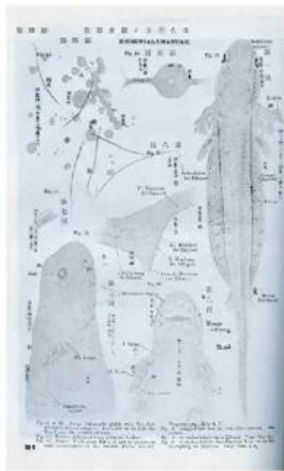
By 1919 the breeding numbers had hit their peak, and around 700 Giant Salamanders resided in the pond.

However, a giant flood in 1934 destroyed the facility.

In 1927, Yubara—along with 3 villages in Hiruzen—was designated a special sanctuary for the protected species, and Professor Chiyomatsu had managed to make his wishes of Giant Salamander protection a reality. Chiyomatsu Ishikawa visited Yubara many times, focusing on his research around the Giant Salamanders.

With a fondness for the Hanzaki Grand Shrine, and having mentioned Hikoshiro Mitsui’s information on “The Extinction of the Hanzaki” in his paper, he spread it to the world.

It has been over 120 years since his visits and achievements have been published and they are still a source of pride for Yubara.



Hanzaki Survey Report



Chiyomatsu Ishikawa



Drawing of a Hanzaki by Chiyomatsu Ishikawa for New Years.



The area around the Hanzaki Grand Shrine during Chiyomatsu Ishikawa's time



The current area around the Hanzaki Grand Shrine