

SynthesAizu

October 2025
Volume 5 Issue 10

Association News

AWIA Office Closed:

Our office will be CLOSED all day on Oct 4th (Sat) due to our Bus Tour Event.

Newsletter Mail/E-mail: Some members are not receiving their newsletters. Let us know if the letter mail or email has not reached you! The post has also been a little late due to a variety of factors out of our control, so we ask for your understanding.

Monitor Tour

Gokujo no Aizu Certified Guides 10/13 (Mon) 9:00-16:00

Learn about Aizu from a Certified Aizu Tour Guide on this Monitor Tour. You'll be paired with a guide (as possible) on this tour as it serves as practice for them. Learn about Aizu history, including a tour of a sake brewery!

Open to: Non-Japanese residents

Limit: Up to 10 people
(first come, first served)

Route: Ouchijuku (including lunch time) → Sazaedo Temple
→ Kitakata Yamatogawa Sake Brewery

Cost: Free Entry (lunch cost not included. It will be Negisoba. (Should be no more than ~¥1500))

Meeting Place: In front of the City Learning Centre (Keikodo)

Sign-up Deadline: Oct 9th (Thu)

****First come, first served****

Sign-up: email us at aizukokusai@awia.jp

Enjoy 'Negi-soba' at Ouchijuku



MEET English Convo. Club

Come MEET and speak English with people from all walks of life! Everyone is welcome, no matter your English level. Join us for activities and free talk!

SPECIAL EDITION: Cereal Treat Making!

Make a sweet treat using marshmallows and cereal, and decorate it for Halloween! ****SIGN-UP REQUIRED****

When	Saturday, October 18th 10:00~12:00
Place	City Learning Centre (Keikodo) 1F Cooking Studio
Limit	28 people, first come, first served 
Cost	Members: ¥100 Non-Members: ¥300
Bring	Apron, handkerchief, etc. 
Sign Up	Contact aizukokusai@awia.jp by Tuesday, Oct 14th **REQUIRED**

AtsuHana Japanese Convo. Club.

AtsuHana: Atsumatte, Hanasou! Come together and chat! Speak Japanese casually with a variety of people. Join us for an activity, followed by free talk time.

Check out November's Newsletter for more information!

When	Saturday, November 8th 10:00-11:30
Place	City Learning Centre (Keikodo) 3F Rm 1
Sign-up	Contact aizukokusai@awia.jp by November 7th (Fri)



ChAT吧 (ChAT-ba) Chinese Convo. Club. Season 2

Have a fun time using Chinese. Talk about Shopping!

****Conversational level Chinese is recommended****

When	Saturday, Nov 1st 10:00-11:30
Place	AWIA Office (Sakaemachi 2-14)
Sign Up	Contact aizukokusai@awia.jp by Friday, Oct 31st



会津若松市国際交流協会

AIZU WAKAMATSU INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION

TEL (0242) 27-3703

EMAIL: aizukokusai@awia.jp

This Month in Aizu

Aizu-kata Pattern Week

10/3 (Fri) - 10/13 (Mon)

9:00-17:00 (Last entry 16:30)

Come see the displays of different cloth/kimono dying stencils used in Aizu. The patterns themselves are designated as a Prefectural Designated Cultural Property, and are free to use in different designs. Enjoy displays, workshops, talk events and more!



Place: Kitakata Kura no Sato and the Kitakata Art Museum (Kitakata, Oshikiri 2-chome-109)

Entry: Adult: ¥400 18 and under: ¥200

More info: <https://www.tif.ne.jp/jp/entry/article.html?event=6765>

Examples of Aizu-kata Patterns



Fall leaves



Hydrangeas



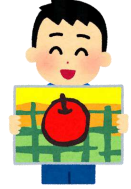
Bamboo

NishiAizu International Art Village

2025 Public Art Exhibition

10/4 (Sat) - 10/31 (Fri)

Enjoy art of amateur artists from around the country! Submissions displayed from a wide array of artists, including a category of 15 and under. You'll get to enjoy not only the art, but the beautiful building, which is a decommissioned elementary school. Take in the art and cool atmosphere!



Award Ceremony: Oct 11th (Sat) 11:30~

Place: NishiAizu International Art Village.

(Kaminoharamichiue-5752 Shingo Oaza Sasagawa, Nishiaizu, Yama District)

Open: 10:00-17:00

Closed: Mondays, Tuesdays. Open Holidays

Entry: Adult: ¥300 JHS+under: ¥100 (toddlers/babies free)

More info:

https://nishiaizu-artvillage.com/20kouboten_announcement2025/

The Art of Kyogen + Performance

10/11 (Sat) 14:00-15:40

(doors open at 13:30)

Hear a talk and enjoy a performance of the traditional play style, 'Kyogen' by members of the Izumi Troupe, one of the famous performing families.

'Kyogen' and 'Noh' are two styles of theatre that are closely tied together. 'Kyogen' is a comedic style that was 'developed alongside *Noh*, was performed [...] as an intermission of sorts [...] on the same stage, and retains close links to *Noh*' (Wikipedia)



Place: Enichiji Temple

(Motoderakami-4950 Bandai, Yama District)

Cost: ¥3000 (buy at Lawson, or Bandai MichinoEki)

More Info:

<https://www.tif.ne.jp/jp/entry/article.html?event=7484>

Aizu Shiokawa Balloon Fest

10/18 (Sat) + 10/19 (Sun)

See hot air balloons up close and personal!

Place: Nippashi River Green Belt Park

(Biwanago Shiokawamachi Tota, Kitakata)

Balloon Flight: 6:30-9:00am

Balloon Prep Experience:

Reservation Required 7:00am-9:00am

Cost: 18 and up: ¥2500

Balloon Rides: Reservation required: 7:00am-9:00am

Cost: Elem. aged and under: ¥1000

Junior High aged and up: ¥2000

Night Glow (light up): Oct 18th 17:30-17:50

(Event subject to weather: May be cancelled)

More Info and ways to reserve your flight!

<https://www.city.kitakata.fukushima.jp/soshiki/sangyo-s/57896.html>



33rd Anniv. Rinkaku Reconstruction

10/19 (Sun) 10:00-15:00

Celebrate the 33rd anniversary of the Rinkaku Tea House being rebuilt! Originally built by Aizu Lord GAMO Ujisato for SEN Shoan after his family fled Kyoto. The SEN family had a part in creating the tea ceremony styles that are still around today. Check out and celebrate the reconstruction of this historically important tea house!

This is also Aizu's largest Tea Ceremony gathering.

Place: Tsuruga-jo Honmaru / Rinkaku Tea House

Cost: ¥700/person for tea

More Info: <https://www.aizukanko.com/event/1070>



Misato Wine Fest

10/25 (Sat) 10:00-16:00

10/26 (Sun) 10:00-15:00

Try a collection of wine from local wineries in Aizu, Fukushima and Tohoku! There will be performances and food stalls, so enjoy what the area has to offer.

Place: Misato City Hall Niitsuru Branch Parking Lot

(Hiromachi-740 Tsurunobe, Aizumisato, Onuma District)

Access: • Parking Available • via Tadami Line Niitsuru Stn.

• Shuttle Bus: ¥500

Departs Wakamatsu Stn. → Venue:

10:10, 11:30, 13:15, 14:30, (Sat only: 16:15)

Departs Venue → Wakamatsu Stn.: 12:00, 13:45, 15:00

More Info: <https://www.aizumisato-wine-fest.com/>



Catherine Lempke



Bear lover and nature enthusiast, Catherine Lempke has lived in Aizu for 2 years. When she lived in Canada, she was a nature guide and since coming to Japan, she's wanted an opportunity to learn more about Japanese bears, and use her skills. This summer, she had the chance to go to Karuizawa to volunteer with some bear research. Since this year has had a record number of bear sightings, bear safety is on everyone's minds. Let's hear what Catherine has to say about bears in Japan and Canada.



~ Bear, Bear, Everywhere ~

Hello everyone! My name is Catherine Lempke and I am an English instructor here in Aizuwakamatsu, and this article is going to be about my experiences with BEARS, both in Canada and Japan. But first let me properly introduce myself:

I have been living and working in Aizu for nearly 2 years, but before I came to Japan I worked as a nature guide on the Pacific coast of Canada. I also volunteered at a wildlife rehabilitation center in Ontario, and at the Calgary Zoo as a Docent, and have lived most of my life in what Canadians call "Bear Country". I have my Commercial Bear Viewing Guide certification and have been formally trained to understand bear body language, habits, and behaviours.



Canadians unbothered by bear

When I arrived in Japan, I looked for opportunities to get close to Japanese wildlife. After some research, I contacted the Picchio Wildlife Research Centre in the city of Karuizawa, Nagano prefecture; in June of 2025 I volunteered with their bear conservation team for 4 weeks. During that time, I learned about the species of bears that live in Japan, as well as about some of the problems that are happening between bears and people here.



One of the bears sedated before relocation during her volunteering with Picchio

First, let me generally explain the situation in Canada. There are 3 kinds of bears in Canada, and each one likes to live in its own area and has a diet and temperament that is different from the others. In this article I will only talk about one of them: *Ursus americanus*, commonly known as the American black bear. This bear is the smallest of the 3 kinds of bears, averaging between 60 and 150kg, with some older males getting even heavier. There are roughly 400,000 black Bears in Canada; they are present in every province and territory except Prince Edward Island on the Atlantic Coast.

American black bears are omnivores, and will eat almost anything, including human garbage. Although the American black bear rarely attacks humans and attacks are rarely fatal (at most 60 fatalities, in all of North America, between 1900

and 2024 – there is no data for non-fatal attacks), there used to be problems with bear attacks in areas where bears were eating human food. To reduce this danger, laws were changed to make it a crime to give food to bears, or to leave food where bears can easily get it; special garbage cans were installed in the areas with a high bear population; and garbage disposal areas were updated so that bears could not access them. Bear attacks decreased significantly.



Mother bear + 3 cubs from a car in Canada

In Japan, there are two kinds of bears, and I will again only talk about the smaller kind, *Ursus thibetanus*, the Asian black bear. There does not seem to be a firm estimate on the population in Japan, but it appears to be somewhere generally around 20,000. It is smaller than its American cousins, averaging about 60-100kg. It is also almost entirely vegetarian. It doesn't usually hunt, but of course will eat anything that it can easily reach. However, if it is surprised, it is more likely to attack than an American black bear is. Japan has more fatalities from bear attacks than Canada does, even though it has fewer bears.



Special garbage can in Karuizawa

In Karuizawa, Picchio worked with the city to introduce updated garbage areas that bears cannot open, and works with hunters and farmers to deter or remove bears that come into farming or residential areas. The number of bear attacks decreased after these measures, just as it did in Canada. Picchio also does education programs, and can provide help to people who are worried about bears in their area.



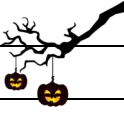


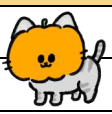
It seems like bears are a big concern in Japan and many people are very worried; but I have rarely seen these bear-proof garbage areas anywhere outside of Karuizawa. In Aizu, I have seen electric fences in the Keizan area where I live, but the garbage areas sometimes only have a curtain to protect them. I wonder if some small changes can help reduce the incentive for bears to come into Japanese towns, especially as rural depopulation leaves the people remaining in the countryside more vulnerable. My hope is that there is a way forward for both bears and people.

More from CIR Erika: Part 2 of Erika's Zimbabwe Trip will appear in the November 2025 edition. Look forward to it!

Beware of Bears: Check the back page for information on protecting yourself from bear encounters.



Events in October

1	WE	
2	TH	18:30 Japanese Conversation Class (PM)
3	FR	10:00 Japanese Conversation Class (AM)
4	SA	8:10 AWIA Bus Tour: Yamagata (OFFICE CLOSED)
5	SU	 Closed
6	MO	 Closed
7	TU	
8	WE	
9	TH	18:30 Japanese Conversation Class (PM)
10	FR	10:00 Japanese Conversation Class (AM)
11	SA	10:00 Kanji-kai Volunteer Meeting
12	SU	Closed
13	MO	9:00 Monitor Tour: Gokujo no Aizu Guides Closed (Sport's Day)
14	TU	
15	WE	
16	TH	18:30 Japanese Conversation Class (PM)
17	FR	10:00 Japanese Conversation Class (AM)
18	SA	10:00 MEET: Halloween 10:00 JICA Desk 15:00 Kodomo Nihongo Hiroba 
19	SU	Closed
20	MO	Closed
21	TU	
22	WE	
23	TH	18:30 Japanese Conversation Class (PM)
24	FR	10:00 Japanese Conversation Class (AM)
25	SA	13:30 Newsletter Preparation
26	SU	Closed
27	MO	Closed
28	TU	
29	WE	
30	TH	18:30 Japanese Conversation Class (PM)
31	FR	10:00 Japanese Conversation Class (AM)

Other Information

Beware of Bears

This year has had a record number of bear sightings/encounters. Protect yourself against a bear attack!

With winter on the way, and a hard year for beech nut and other wild fruits, there is a high chance bears will be coming into town for food. Fukushima Pref.

has announced a Bear Warning to be in place from

Sept 11th (Thu)-Dec 15th (Mon). Doing activities like hiking,

mushroom picking, spending time in mountains or near rivers will increase the risk of a bear encounter. Please take care to protect yourself this fall when you are out in nature.



How to Avoid Encountering Bears, etc.

- Carry items that emit sounds when you head into or near forested areas and do not go alone.
- Avoid walking, hiking, or farming at dawn/dusk when bears are active.
- Check bear activity information online.
- Clean up potential food sources around your home
- Take trash out on the day of collection



Animal Sightings Map

You can get notifications for wildlife sightings (in Japanese) from the Disaster Prevention Alert System 'AIBEAR'

Sign-up for an account here: <https://aibear.jp/>

Satellite JICA Fukushima Desk

JICA Desk will be starting up again! Come speak to the new person in charge of reaching out to people in Aizu about the efforts of JICA (Japan International Cooperation Association) KIDA Maki-san spent some time in Tunisia, a country in the North of Africa that shares a maritime border with Italy. Come say hello if you'd like to learn more about her, JICA, and/or Tunisia.

Here is a message from KIDA-san:

Nice to meet you! My name is KIDA Maki, and I am in charge of the Satellite JICA Fukushima Desk. I taught children piano in Tunisia as a JICA Volunteer until January of this year. I want to work hard while experiencing everyone's passion for cultural exchange and understanding and learn more charms of Aizu.



Call for Newsletter Volunteers!

Come help us fold, stamp, and pack our monthly publications for mailing! No need to sign up, just drop by if you can!

Date: October 25th, Saturday

Time: 13:30~

Place: Aizu Wakamatsu International Association Office



We're on Instagram!

Follow us for photos and news about our upcoming events!



AWIA_PHOTO

<https://facebook.com/awiajp>



Visit our Facebook page for updates in multiple languages!



Use this QR Code to access our email form to sign-up for events

965-0871 Fukushima-ken, Aizu Wakamatsu-shi, Sakae-machi 2-14, Lion D'or Garden 5th Floor

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