

## Mini Column

### Today's Japan ～ Bear Sightings ～

This past October saw a rash of incidents where people have been attacked and seriously injured by bears that have appeared in residential areas. They were first reported in Yamagata and Fukui Prefectures, but have also been reported in Kyoto and Niigata Prefectures thereafter. As winter deepens, such incidents have been occurring even more frequently in many parts of Japan.

Bears normally live in the mountains and forests feeding on nuts and berries, but it is said that the poor acorn crop caused by the record hot summer this year is driving bears to wander into towns in search of food.

However, the surge in bear sightings during the past few years is also being attributed to a number of other factors. For example, some say that the bear population has increased as a result of global warming, which is bringing less snowfall and milder winters. There are also some who say that bears are coming down from the mountains, because the ageing rural population is becoming unable to take care of the mountains and forests that have long served as a buffer between their villages and the bears' habitat.

Wearing a bell when entering the mountains is an old and well-known practice to warn away bears. Indeed, making noise has proven to be an effective way of alerting bears of one's presence. Bear bells, whistles, and other survival goods are enjoying brisk sales this winter, so much that their production can hardly keep up with demand.

### Communicating Feelings in Japanese ～ Words of Reply ～

It is important to respond when someone calls your name. In Japanese, you would reply by saying, "Hai." It can be said that communication, which is essential to living in society, begins with this word of reply.

Un is also a word of reply, but one that is more fit to be used by small children or among close friends. As a member of society, it is more proper for technical intern trainees to use *hai*. When you receive an instruction from your superior, it would be wise always respond with *hai*, and never with *un*.

In Japan, children are repeatedly taught to say "Hai" when their name is called, in their first year of elementary school, as soon as they begin compulsory education. For some reason, however, many young people today barely respond when called on.

Remember to always respond with a *hai*, and cheerfully at that, because the *hai* response is even said to reflect the speaker's age and state of mind.

## ミニ情報

### 日本のいま ～ クマ出没 ～

昨年2010年10月、人里に出没したクマに人が襲われ大けがをするという被害が山形県や福井県で相次いで発生しました。その後も山形県や京都府、新潟県などで人がクマに襲われる被害が起き、冬の深まりと共にその被害は全国各地で頻発しています。

本来クマは山や森の中で植物の実を食べて生息していますが、2010年の夏の記録的な猛暑でドングリなどが不作となり、餌を求めて人里に来るクマが増えたようです。

しかしここ数年、クマが人里に出没するケースは増加傾向があり、それは温暖化で積雪量が減り冬を過ごし易くなったクマの個体数が増えたからとか、農村の高齢化が進み山や森の樹木を手入れする人が減り荒廃してきたからとか、色々な原因が言われています。

昔から、山に入る時にクマと遭遇しないように鈴を身に付ける方法がありますが、人がいることをクマに知らせるように音を出すことは実際に効果があるそうです。この冬は全国各地で鈴や笛などのクマよけグッズがよく売れ、生産が追いつかないほどとなっています。

### 心を伝える日本語 ～ 返事の日本語 ～

名前を呼ばれたら「はい」と返事することは大切です。社会生活を営むうえで意思疎通は欠かせないものですが、その第一歩は「はい」の返事からです。

「ウン」という返事もありますが、幼い子や友達同士では許されても、社会人である技能実習生の皆さんは、やはり「はい」と返事をします。上司から指示を受けたとき、「ウン」ではなく、「はい」が基本でしょう。

日本では、義務教育が開始される小学一年では、名前を呼ばれたら「はい」と返事をしましょうという教育が、しっかり行われますが、昨今なぜか、返事をしない若者が多く見受けられます。

「はい」と返事することを心掛けること、さらに、「はい」の一言で、その人の年齢や心理状態まで想像できると言われるくらいですので、快活に返事をするをお勧めします。