

## Weather in Japan ～ Tsuyu (Rainy Season) ～

Summer is at hand. The period from the middle of May to *tsuyu-iri*, or the beginning of the rainy season, is called *shoka* (early summer). Sodo, an Edo-period poet, wrote a poem that captures the essence of this season, which goes like this: 目には青葉 山ほととぎす 初鯉 (I see a view of greenery, a wild cuckoo and the first bonito of the season). It depicts how when the leaves of trees begin to grow thick, the first bonito of the season that arrive on the warm Kuroshio current are caught in batches in the Kamakura and Odawara areas and prized by the people of Edo. Still today, bonito are caught in Tokyo Bay.

The period from mid-June to mid-July is called *tsuyu*, designating when the entire Japanese archipelago, excluding Hokkaido and a part of Tohoku, is visited by rainfall for days on end. Humidity soars and brings sultry weather, mold and bacteria proliferate and spoil foods, and food poisoning becomes a frequent concern. *Tsuyu-zora*, or the cloudy skies of the rainy season, bring high discomfort and dreary days.

At times, the continuous rain also causes natural disasters in the form of swollen rivers and landslides. However, *tsuyu* is indispensable to our lives, as abundant rainfall is pooled in dams during the rainy season to provide drinking water during the hot and dry summer months, and it also supplies the water that is needed for rice-planting, which begins during this season.

## にほん きしやう 日本の気象 つゆ ～ 『梅雨 (つゆ)』 ～

いよいよ夏になります。5月中旬から『梅雨入り』までを『初夏』といいます。江戸時代の俳人素堂(そどう)がよんだ俳句「目には青葉 山ほととぎす 初鯉」からは、木々の緑も濃くなり、海では黒潮ののってきた走りの鯉が、鎌倉や小田原あたりで沢山とれ、江戸の庶民に珍重されたようすが伺われます。今でも東京湾で鯉は揚がっているそうです。

6月中旬頃から7月中旬頃にかけては、『梅雨』といって、北海道と東北の一部を除く日本全土において、雨の日が続きます。湿度が高く、蒸し暑く、カビの発生や腐敗菌の繁殖が盛んで食物が腐り、食中毒も発生しやすくなります。『梅雨空』は不快指数も高くなり、うっとうしくてなりません。

毎日続く雨で河川の増水や、がけ崩れなどによる『自然災害』も発生します。しかし、梅雨の時期の多雨はダムに貯められて、日照りの続く盛夏の私たちの飲料水になります。また、稲作の田植え時期にもあたり、欠かせない雨でもあります。