

## **Welcome Address and Introduction to Okazaki Biology Conferences**

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First, on behalf of Dr. Motoya Katsuki, the Director-General of National Institute for Basic Biology, I wish to extend a hearty welcome to the participants from the various countries, who have come all the way to Okazaki to attend the first Okazaki Biology Conference (OBC).

At the National Institute for Basic Biology, the senior faculty initiated a discussion in 2002 about the needs, in Japan, for a series of international conferences, at which leading scientists would come together to intensively discuss the most recent advances in specified fields of research. No such conferences are currently held on a regular basis in Japan and Asia. We decided that the National Institute for Basic Biology should sponsor a series of such conferences. This proposal was forwarded to a number of Japanese societies of biological science and they strongly supported our suggestion that the National Institute for Basic Biology should organize and host the conferences. Today, thanks to enormous effort of the organizers, Dr. Yoh Iwasa (Professor at Kyushu University, Japan) and Dr. Stewart Pimm (Professor at Duke University, USA), the first conference of the OBC begins signaling the initiation of the OBC series.

We would like to help establish an international scientific network in promising frontier fields of biology. The completion of genome analyses in several model organisms has given a solid foundation on which we can build to solve problems of deep biological significance. A major objective of OBC is to build interdisciplinary networks to contribute to the solution of major biological problems. This is the reason why we host the first OBC.

The OBC Committee, which is constituted of several professors in the National Institute for Basic Biology, had intensive discussion, and chose several problems for conference themes. The title of this conference, "The Biology of Extinction" was one of them. We are planning to organize an international advisory board, under whose supervision many more promising subjects will be examined and selected.

To establish close and active networks of researchers, it is crucially important that every participant at the conference can present unpublished results and discuss his/her newest ideas without hesitation. We, therefore, ask every participant at the Okazaki Biology Conference to adhere to a few simple rules. Firstly, please refrain from referring to the presentations at this conference in any publication.

Secondly, please do not make any audio or video recordings of the presentations. Thirdly, please do not take any photographs of projected or poster material. These rules were indicated in the on-line registration web page for our conference, and every registrant is considered to have agreed to them. I thank you for your co-operation.

We hope you have an enjoyable meeting. Please give us feedback on the meeting and suggestions for improvement either at the meeting or after you return home.

I would like to conclude my talk with a brief introduction to the National Institute for Basic Biology (NIBB). NIBB is located about ten minutes walk from this conference center. It is one of the three national institutes in the campus, which constitute Okazaki National Research Institutes. Besides conducting its own research, NIBB hosts many researchers from domestic and foreign universities for cooperative research activities. NIBB was founded in 1977 and made up of nearly 20 laboratories with more than 200 research staff, postdoctoral fellows, and technical staff. NIBB also has an education program for graduate students.

I would like to conclude my talk with cordial thanks to the organizers of the first conference for their efforts. I hope every participant makes the most of this opportunity and contributes in raising an active and close world-wide network in the field of "The Biology of Extinction".

