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The Candle Night Newsletter #31

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Candle Night Committee

2009 Summer Candle Night week is just around the corner. On June 21 and July 7, major facilities and businesses all over Japan will turn their lights off from 8 to 10 p.m. We encourage people to enjoy Candle Night during the week--some nights with your family, some with your friends. Attending Candle Night events would be fun, too.

In this issue of the Candle Night Newsletter, we will present readers with stories related to the "subtleness of lights".

Topics

- *Beautiful fireflies glowing in the dark
- * Enjoy the Starlight--The International Year of Astronomy 2009

Candle Night Summer Solstice 2009.

*Visit Candle Night website to find something new!

<http://www.candle-night.org>

<http://www.candle-night.org/english>

*Over 620 events will be held both in Japan and the world, including

Tokyo Happyaku Yatou

June 21, 2009 17:30-21:00

Zenryoji Temple, Minato Ward, Tokyo

Geshi Fes

June 21, 14:00-21:00

Yoyogi Park, Shibuya Ward, Tokyo

On the evening of the summer solstice, June 21, from 8 to 10 pm, a lights-out event called "Dim It" will be held in Hong Kong. The event is organized by the Friends of the Earth Hong Kong, and the International Year of Astronomy 2009 Hong Kong (IYA2009 HK) League. For more information, please visit <http://www.foe.org.hk/welcome/geten.asp>

Beautiful fireflies glowing in the dark
--the city of spring water from Mt. Fuji, Mishima, Shizuoka

Stories related to candles, fire, lights and darkness

Fireflies glow softly in the dark on summer nights. A stream of light appears in the dark when fireflies are in the air. It is a work of art in lights drawn by "little shooting stars." In Japan, fireflies are harbingers of summer, and have been lovingly referred to in poetry from ancient times. We can find fireflies in novels and poems of the Nara and Heian Period, more than 1,000 years ago.

For the past 40 years, however, fireflies have been decreasing in Japan because of changes in the environment--water pollution, drastic use of chemical fertilizers, and using concrete on waterways at farms.

Mishima City in Shizuoka Prefecture is one rare place we can watch fireflies. The city, with a population of 110,000, is located near Tokyo, a one hour ride on the bullet train. It has been called the "city of water" because it has many springs streaming from Mt. Fuji, where rain and snow are filtered through underground lava. Fireflies here are called "genjibotaru" and can be seen as early as the first week of May, one of the earliest times in Japan.

Fireflies once disappeared from Mishima around 1970 because of rapid environmental changes. The plentiful spring water it once had gradually decreased. Kohama Pond and Gempe River located downtown dried up.

This was due to the change of people's lifestyles during rapid economic growth at that time. Large factories were built in the city to pump underground water. Rivers in the city were polluted and used as dumpsites.

Then, citizens of Mishima started to take action. In cooperation with the municipal government, they cleaned up the rivers. In 1992, clean used water from a nearby textile mill was released into the Gempe River. "Mishima Hotaru no Kai," a non-profit organization to preserve fireflies and their environment, released fireflies near the river. They used marsh snails for baits into the river.

Hajime Shimura, president of the organization said, "The Gempe River flows downtown, only a five-minute walk from Mishima Station. The surroundings are not always good for fireflies--some places need to continue to release larvae every year. When we clean the river in early May with our neighbors, we are careful not to step on the chambers for larvae formed in the soil." They have worked for the preservation of

fireflies and their surroundings for a long time.

They have been successful in providing beautiful fireflies with what they need to survive. Every summer, we can see fireflies in Mishima City.

Depending on the weather, spring water from Mt. Fuji may suddenly gush from the surface. The water level and water quality of rivers differs every day and every year. Fireflies are indicators of rivers' water quality.

Fireflies only live a week to 10 days after emergence. People have long cherished the beauty of fireflies in the dark.

(Taeko Ohno)

Enjoy the Starlight--The International Year of Astronomy 2009

The year 2009 marks the 400th anniversary of the first astronomical observation by Galileo Galilei, an Italian scientist. Celebrating this occasion, the United Nations, UNESCO and the International Astronomical Union have determined this year to be the International Year of Astronomy 2009 (IYA2009).

The aim of the IYA2009 is to encourage people around the world to look up at the night-time sky and think of Earth as one planet in the universe. Think about the humans who live here and discover something new to them. Starlight tends to be obscured by artificial lighting. How about watching the starry sky on this special occasion of the IYA2009 during Candle Night week?

Take this opportunity to check out some of the many IYA2009 events held around the world.

For more information, please check the IYA2009 Japan Committee website

The Portal to the Universe / Astronomy 2009

<http://www.astronomy2009.org/globalprojects/cornerstones/portaltotheuniverse/>

(English)

A total solar eclipse will be observed in Japan on July 22, 2009, the first time in 46 years. The sun will be gradually covered by the new moon and replaced by the dark silhouette of the moon. Akusekijima, a small island in the Tokara Islands, south of Kyushu, will be the best spot in Japan to observe the solar eclipse. Many enthusiasts are expected to gather on this small island for the day.

Even if you can't get to Kagoshima in southern Kyushu, the solar eclipse will be observed throughout Japan to some degree. In Japan, the solar eclipse begins around 10 am and fully eclipses around 11 am. Times and phases of the eclipse vary depending on the region, so please check the website shown below for details. When observing the solar eclipse, please remember not to look at the sun directly.

Details are available from the Local Prediction of the Solar Eclipse on the National Astronomical Observatory of Japan website.

http://www.nao.ac.jp/koyomi/koyomix/eclipsex_s.html.en

(English)

(Yuko Kishikami)

Editor's Note

I attended the C40 Large Cities Climate Summit Seoul 2009. The city of Seoul, Korea, has been rapidly changing toward green development. Cities around the world have started taking steps to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and to adopt climate change, according to their own situations. They are exchanging information through the C40 network, making efforts to increase the effect. (YK)

We also invite your local stories, festivals and events related to candles and fires. Please send emails to: eninfo@candle-night.org

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We welcome your comments. Please send them to: eninfo@candle-night.org

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