

Remembering Small Lives Lost in the Great East Japan Earthquake and Tsunami

**Pictures connecting the
souls of animals and humans,
and essays remembering
these small lives**



Iwate Prefecture

Dedication

**This book is for the animal companions
who showed us such unconditional love,
and the precious memories you gave us.**

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(Cover Illustration “The Night We Saw the Same Starry Sky” by Usa)

Forward

Osamu Fujio
Director General of the Department of Health, Welfare and
Environment, Coastal Region Development Bureau



As we approached the publication of this book, I remembered how moved I was by the words of Usa, the director of the Small Lives Lost in the Disaster Exhibition.

“Many people are suffering because they lost their pets to the Great East Japan Earthquake and Tsunami. To them, their pets were members of their family.

“Some of them died because, as animals, they weren’t deemed worthy of shelter and refuge.

“To the people who cherished these pets, the lives of the pets lost to the tsunami are just as precious as any human’s.

“I created this exhibition so that these pictures would link the souls of the pets with their owners, but I also want to convey to people that all lives are equally important - that there are many lives that can be saved if every person puts their mind to it.”

With the full cooperation of the domestic and international artists who created these illustrations for the exhibition, we hope to spread the ideas of the artists and the pet owners with this book. Under the supervision of the Department of Health, Welfare and Environment of Iwate Prefecture, this book was created to remind people that animals are fellow living creatures. Hopefully this will lead to a greater harmony between humans and animals, and a society where we can forge better connections between human and animals.

Animals make us feel deep emotion, tenderness, comfort, and peace.

This may be because animals show us that they feel happiness and sadness just like we do.

We must respect the lives of animals that cannot speak for themselves, and live in harmony with all creatures. In order to do that, we must imagine what it must be like for the animals in our lives.

I think that it would be a good idea to come together to think about how to improve the quality of life for animals.

If we can do that, then perhaps we as humans will develop a kind, sympathetic heart as well.

With your understanding and support, I hope to create a humane association for the coastal region, Iwate Prefecture, and all of Japan. Thank you for your cooperation.

**“Humans and animals are the same;
they are all precious lives with only
one chance on this earth.”**

Usa
Director,
Small Lives Lost in the Disaster Exhibition



The Great East Japan Earthquake and Tsunami struck on March 11, 2011.

I wondered if there was something I could do to help, so I traveled to the region that was most greatly affected.

There I helped with the delivery of rescue supplies, and saw firsthand the sadness and suffering of the survivors.

I also learned that many pets had been among the lives that had been lost. I met people who were suffering because they were forced to say goodbye to a pet who had been one of their family. Even pets that had been saved from the frightening tsunami were not allowed into shelters just because they were animals, leading some of them to die from abandonment.

I count my pet as a member of my own beloved family, so I was simply devastated to hear these stories.

These deceased pets must surely be worrying about their masters, who are suffering on their account.

I thought that myself and some other artists could create some illustrations that would reconnect the spirits of the pets with their owners. That is how I created the Small Lives Lost in the Disaster Exhibition.

With this exhibition, I wanted to convey the message that humans and animals are the same; they are all precious lives with only one chance on this earth.

What's important is the spirit of every single person...and their thoughts about life.

If you ever find yourself in the position of deciding the fate of an animal that is before you, and you have to judge what happens to them next, I hope that you remember what you learned from this exhibit.

I wish for a world where everyone understands that the lives of humans and animals are equally precious.

**With the publication of
“Remembering Small Lives
Lost in the Great East Japan
Earthquake and Tsunami”**

Yoetsu Tada
President
Iwate Veterinary Medical Association



The Great East Japan Earthquake and Tsunami was a disaster of a scale that only happens once every millennium. Almost 6,000 people lost their lives to the disaster in Iwate, and we think that thousands of animals also died in the tsunami.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all involved with the publication of this essay collection: the families of animals lost in the disaster who wrote their thoughts down, and the artists who created paintings to accompany them.

Owners lived happily with their pets and considered them members of the family, yet they lost their loved one in a single instant, leaving them with a scar in their hearts that they could not describe. Unable to talk about the suffering they faced from the loss of their pets, they still have not been able to heal their aching hearts.

Something I strongly felt following the disaster was that we must never forget the animals that died in the earthquake and tsunami. Even though the path to reconstruction and the rebirth of our homeland Iwate will take a long time, we members of the Veterinary Medical Association are dedicated to helping people who lost pets to once again open their hearts to a new small life.

Pets... you are members of our families who we share happy memories with, friends, buddies, and irreplaceable companions who give peace and meanings to our lives.

You have senses more heightened than that of humans, so the roar of the earth shaking and the crash of the tsunami must have caused you more fear than we can imagine. Almost two years have passed since that day, but once again we want to tell you how grateful we are to you.

This we vow. We will never forget you. We will meet new animals and show them all the love we have in our souls. We will never forget our time with you, and will carry a requiem for your soul in our heart as we keep moving forward. We pray that you are living a happier life in the world beyond.

Last, I hope that this book is a gentle support to the many survivors of the disaster as a requiem to their lost pets. I want to give my thanks to all who made this publication possible.

**We will never forget the disaster,
for the animals who can't speak for
themselves**

Tomiko Shimotsukue
Representative
Animal Lives Association of Iwate



Two years ago, we faced the horrors of the Great East Japan Earthquake and Tsunami, where all we could do was stand motionlessly and watch. Even though it was something we all knew might happen eventually, it is heart wrenching to think of just how unprepared we were for the crisis.

Then, we realized that many of the lives lost in the disaster were those of pets.

Thinking back on these small lives that gave happiness, courage, and hope, we were filled with a sense of regret and mourning. Why didn't we do anything to save them, we cried. We met many families who felt as if time had stopped still. We tried to figure out what those of us left should and could do, and many people throughout the nation reached out to help. There was a Small Lives Lost in the Disaster Exhibition held with art that depicted the souls of humans and animals, to acknowledge the feelings of the surviving pet owners. Every piece was cheery and full of love, remembering the happy times spent between man and best friend.

Those artworks gave courage and gratitude to those surviving families.

This project was made possible by many illustrators, artists, and picture book creators who believed in its mission, and the exhibition will be held throughout the nation. This is so we don't forget what happened during that horrible day, and so that we can think about how to save animals during a crisis when they can't speak for themselves. For this I am grateful.

As an animal rights protection group, we are an organization under the Iwate Prefecture Animal Emergency Manual that provides logistics support for animal protection, and we are dedicated to protecting the surviving animals. The coastal areas have not recovered yet. There are many small lives yet to be saved.

Through the exhibition and this book, I hope we can communicate the preciousness of life and protection for all animals.

Illustrations and Messages from the Owners



Chobi and Momo

(Illustration by: Yuko Kitazawa)



Message from the Owner

Taeko Senzaki (Miyako City)

I had no idea that that day, that moment...would be our final goodbye. Once the tsunami had receded back into the ocean, I wanted to tell someone how scared I was, but both my mother and Chobi were no longer there to hear me. The way that I felt at that moment...It's too hard for me to think about.

I sometimes think about it when I'm driving. About how my mother and Chobi would always sit in the passenger seat when we went out. I can recall so much. About how we would take walks together, play together, go on trips together. About the time I got sick and had to get an operation; when Chobi would always sleep with me in my futon, so I could feel the soft warmth of his fur. I just assumed that my mother and Chobi would always be here. While those days are gone, they are always here in my heart.

And Momo. Momo was able to escape the tsunami, but I had to say goodbye to soon to her as well. She was killed in a car accident right by the vacant lot of my family home in Taro... Maybe Momo wanted to go off to see Chobi and my mother.

Chobi, Momo, Mom... Thank you for everything. I know I'll see you again.

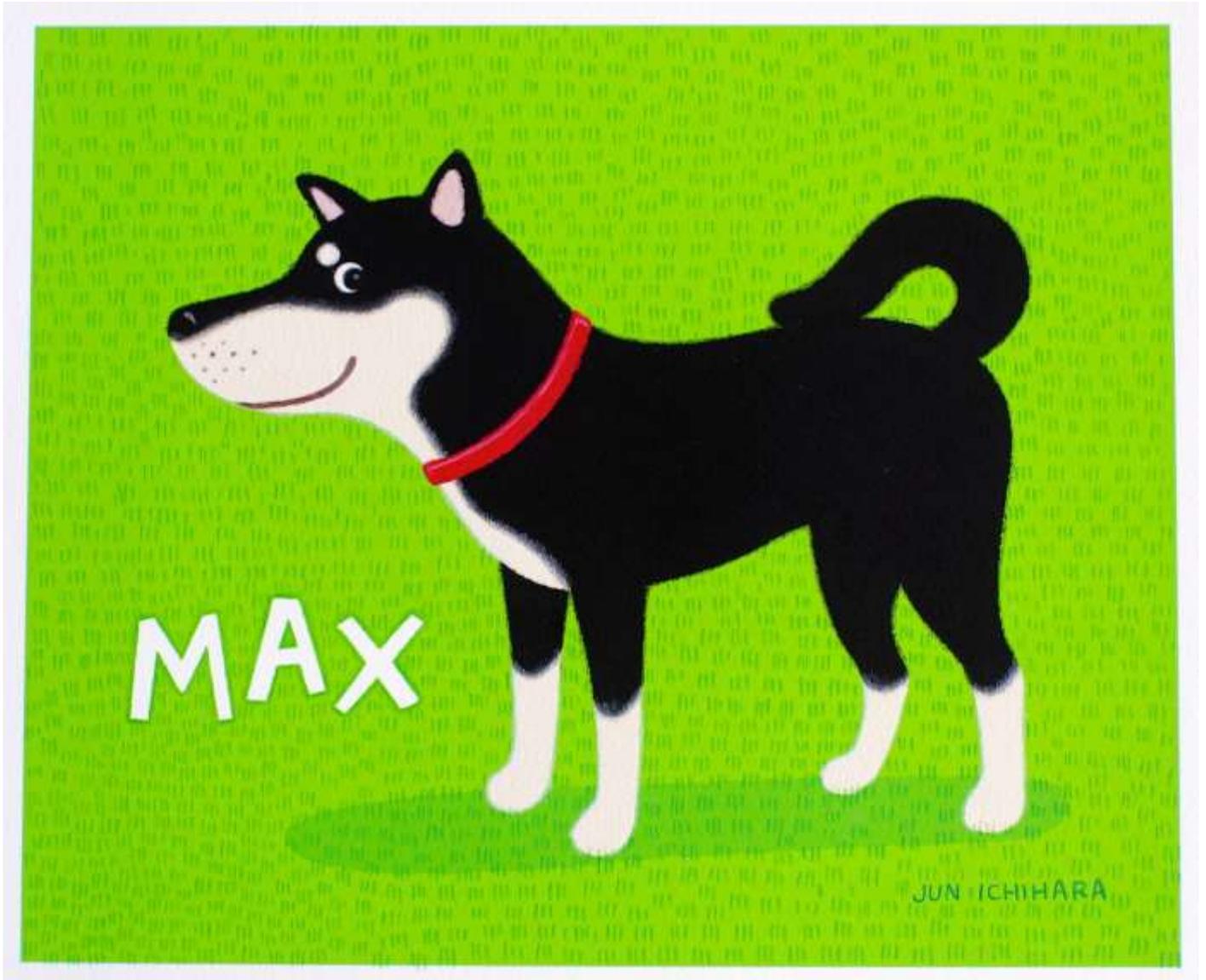
I felt comforted when I saw this picture of Chobi, Mom, and my mother. The three of them are surely spending their time peacefully up in heaven now, just like the picture. I smiled because I was so happy to have that image in my mind.

I am so grateful to Usa for designing and organizing the exhibition, and for taking my request. I'm also grateful to Ms. Kitazawa for drawing this illustration and to all of the people involved with the exhibit. Thank you so much.

I will never forget the small lives lost in the disaster.

Max

(Illustration by Jun Ichihara)



Message from the Owner

Shizuko Yamamoto (Miyako City)

Max was able to survive the tsunami itself, but afterwards we had to move to three different evacuation shelters. We lived this way for the first month, and though I thought it was very cold outside, for Max, it mustn't have been too bad because everyone was nice to him and he was never lonely. Once we moved to the second shelter, he had to spend the whole time in the car, with each passing day growing more and more difficult. The stress and dehydration took its toll on him.

My dear Max, I bet you'd still be alive now if you had been able to stay in your own home and just enjoy yourself.

When we first got to the evacuation shelter, he ate the same food as we humans did.

But he gradually stopped eating.

At the third shelter, he spent most of his time in the car. With about 15 or 16 days left until we could enter our temporary housing, I was getting close to being able to live with Max again.

I told Max to hang in there, and he told me too, in his own way.

In May, when he died, it was very hot and muggy in the car, even when I opened the windows. I would say, "This must be so tough on you," to him, and it became very painful just to be there.

One morning he looked very ill, so I spent that whole day looking after him.

Max lay on his side; his breathing labored and difficult. He might have died in pain like that if I hadn't noticed, which would have filled me with such an intense regret that I would never be able to stop crying.

In the evening his pain grew worse.

It was fortunate that a few of us got together and quickly noticed how much pain Max was in.

Max, Max, don't die, don't die, I said to him, giving him water, and he relaxed a little.

His body relaxed and his face took on a peaceful expression, and I thought about how if no one was there for him he would have suffered a lot. This thought made me want to weep.

Max relaxed and stretched out his body, and I thought he might be okay. But then he stopped breathing.

Two or three days before Max passed away, a photo of Max was found in the wreckage, as if to tell me that I hadn't lost everything.

The photo is quite badly damaged, but it now hangs in my room where I talk to it.

Inko

(Illustration by Kawori Takata)



Message from the Owner

Miyoko Sasaki (Kamaishi City)

Inko, you were my family's pet budgie. You were the color of the sea, and your cage hung in the doorway so that you would always see us off and welcome us back when we arrived home. Sometimes you would imitate the sound of the door, and when someone came out of the living room you would beat your wings and chirp happily. That was our mischievous little Inko.

Before my youngest daughter would go to school in the morning, she would always talk to Inko when changing her water or giving her food. So that little budgie liked her the best.

The big earthquake happened while I was at home on March 11th with my daughter. We didn't feel there was much danger of a tsunami because our house was on relatively high ground, but then we heard people fleeing up the mountain calling out to us. My daughter and I escaped up the mountain, just as the tsunami hit.

The first wave washed away many houses, and my house, with Inko in the doorway, was quickly swallowed into the chaos.

After the tsunami passed, we wandered around the mountain of debris, but no matter how hard we searched, we couldn't find our little birdcage.

Whenever I think about how I left Inko there, I feel so sad - as though I had killed her with my own hands.

It was during these painful time that I saw this picture. In the picture Inko is watching over our family with a kind look on her face. Inko, it was as though you had come back from the wreckage to comfort us after we lost you, and when I think of that I can't stop the tears from flowing.

I'm sorry. And, thank you.

Epicure

(Illustration by Naoko Takashima)



Message from the Owner

Keiko Mukushi (Otsuchi Town)

Little Eppy,

It was October ten years ago that an adorable new member of the family came into my life. You were a gentle and friendly shih tzu puppy only two months old. In the beginning I really didn't know what I was doing and it was like I was raising a child. On March 11th started out a normal day like any other – who could have guessed that the Great East Japan Earthquake would strike, its tsunami devastating our town... I took my two babies (my dogs) up to high ground one at a time. When night fell and I was certain the waves had drawn back, I figured there would be people in the small evacuation shelter who didn't like dogs. I braced myself, took Epicure, and, with the moonlight as my guide, went back to my house. We made our way through water that came up to my shoulders dirty with gasoline and kerosene were floating around, but eventually Epicure and I made it. We had no water or electricity and couldn't even take a bath for about twenty days, so I remember when the electricity and water were restored and I was able to give Epicure her first shampoo in weeks. But Eppy, who had always been somewhat prone to illness, must have gotten an infection as a result of going into the tsunami. I did my best to take her to the hospital, but on February 7 of this year (2012) she finally passed on. Rather than feeling sad or lonely, gazing upon Eppy's face filled me with gratitude for everything she had done for me. Thank you. For coming into my life and comforting me, and making each day more pleasant and enjoyable. If you are reincarnated please come back as my dear sweet Epicure. I'll give you a huge hug next time I see you, so please look after Mommy. Thank you so very, very much for everything.

Little Eppy.

Cream & Wakame

(Illustration by Namako Takagi)



Message from the Owner

Wakako Oguni (Otsuchi Town)

Two Important Lives

Wakako Oguni

My cat Cream and my turtle Wakame lived in my home in Unosumai. They both became members of the family ten years ago, and we all loved them... until that day. Cream had been acting strange all day, hardly eating a thing. He set off outside, almost as if he was going to inspect something. And then...

My home was washed away. A few days later, I stood in front of the foundation of the house, which was all that was left standing. I faced the hill out back and called out, but there was no reply. When the situation became clear I learned that my uncle and relatives were missing. Under these awful circumstances, how could I tell anyone my pets were also missing? I put it away in a corner of my mind.

About a year after that day I heard about Usa's work, and went straight to the art exhibition. I told her about my story and how I felt, so I was able to have an illustration produced. I was so happy.

I saw the work Namako Takagi had created at the Kamaishi exhibition. I was so happy that my eyes began to water before I knew it. Cream and Wakame are happy together in the clouds! They are back to the way they were before the tsunami. I am so very thankful to all the artists who worked to remember the animals who died in the disaster in the form of these illustrations.

I was able to reaffirm that these animals, these members of our families, are important lives as well. The value of their life is the same. We raised them with love, and that makes the bonds between us stronger.

Lastly, I would like once again to thank Usa and all the other artists for organizing the exhibition. I will never forget their kindness in memorializing the pets who died in the disaster, and I hope this kindness will lead to the strength to move forward one step at a time with the reconstruction.

Maru

(Illustration by Yoshie Kawaura)



Message from the Owner

Nobuko Sukuiso (Miyako City)

That tsunami on March 11, 2011 took many lives, and took from my household a small but important life. This was Maru, a Shiba Inu that came into our lives 15 years ago when he was one month old.

He had a big round body and big round eyes, so we called him Maru (“round”). Maru had been a little rascal since he was a pup, and he always made us laugh. He was our precious treasure.

He loved people, and the sea, and nature, and occasionally pointing his nose up at the sky and smelling the changing of the seasons.

More than food, he loved going for walks, and we’d walk everywhere together.

Even now I’m sure he’s a twinkling star, walking around above the sky with all of his friends.

We were so devastated that we hadn’t been able to save Maru from the tsunami, but picture book illustrators drew for us this illustration of him. The Maru in that picture was smiling happily just like he was when he was still alive.

It was like he was saying to us, “I’m happy and content here up in the sky, and I have lots of friends. I’m also getting in a lot of walks, my favorite pastime. You don’t have to worry about me.”

Maru is gone and we can’t see him anymore, but I know he must be happy and smiling down on us, and as long as we have this picture we can always talk to him and feel him in our hearts.

We learned that even if there were lives we couldn’t save from the tsunami, there are still lives we can save.

When Maru left us we thought we couldn’t bear to own another dog, but God brought us a seven-year-old dog who could no longer live with his former owners because of the tsunami. So now we have taken him into our home. This dog also had many sad, terrified, and lonely memories, so we are making up for not having been able to save Maru by taking our new dog for walks and enjoying the changing seasons. I believe Maru is there walking beside us and wagging his tale alongside his successor.

Ten, Mack, Miiko, Aniki, and Yume

(Illustration by Ayako Nagamori)



Message from the Owner

Yukie Iwama (Otsuchi Town)

In the Great East Japan Earthquake and Tsunami we lost my husband's parents, younger brother, and pets.

I happened to be in Kamaishi by myself that day, so rushing to my children's elementary school and taking them up to Shiroyama was all I could do.

My husband's company was a three-story building with a metal frame, so I was sure my family would be okay, but the tsunami took the whole house and our precious family in it away from us.

Ten was a smart Dachshund who couldn't see very well. Mack was a Shetland puppy who was still young and easily frightened. Yume the budgie was still a baby, and Miiko the parrot was like an old lady who had forgotten the melody of a song she once knew.

There was no way they could have escaped by themselves. When I think of how scary and painful it must have been for them, I am so sorry that I couldn't help them, and even now this feeling remains.

I'm always wondering if there would have been a way to keep everyone safe, or whether I should have been keeping pets at all if I could allow something like this to happen.

Humans can't prevent disasters from happening.

We can't prevent disasters, but we can always be prepared, because these tragedies aren't things that just happen to other people. The most important thing is to always be on the lookout and to prepared in advance.

I decided to have this picture produced so that my children and grandchildren never forget this truth, and so they always remember our lovely pets.

I would like to thank the artist and everyone involved. I will keep this important picture with me always, and pray that all the lives that died in the disaster can rest in peace.

Otsuchi Town, Yukie Iwama

Karen, Chocolat, and the Rest of our Family

(Illustration by Usa)



Message from the Owner

Mami Goto (Otsuchi Town)

When I heard that I could have a picture painted of my little ones who we lost in the tsunami, I had a heavy heart.

It feels very unfair to them for me to feel better just from having a picture painted. When I think of their last moments, of how terrifying and painful it must have been for them, I imagine the fear and pain myself and sadness wells up in my chest.

Not a day goes by that I don't think about them. Karen and the others couldn't speak like we humans do, but they could communicate just fine. They liked eating more than exercise, and for them playing outside meant eating out. The little birds like flying freely, but they would come back whenever we called their names. When the goldfish were moved in with the single minnow, they became fast friends instead of fighting. Our pets were all so cute and friendly, and brought joy and happiness to our lives every day. The photos were saved, but I still really wanted the picture to be drawn; I realized this after talking on the phone directly with Usa. When I first saw the picture, I couldn't stop the tears from flowing. This was truly a picture of our babies.

I thought, "Ah, this is where you were. I was looking for you!" Karen and the others seemed to respond, "Mom, we're all here in heaven together." I'm sorry. I'm so sorry. I promise I will never forget you.

It's like this picture is communicating my little ones' feelings to me. I still think of them. I will always be thinking of them.



**Remembering Small Lives Lost
in the Great East Japan Earthquake and Tsunami**

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