PROJECT SUNRISE

Kumamoto Case Study — What the Yomiuri Shimbun Reported

Source / 出典: Nakamura, Y. (2026, March 29). 目には目を、カラスにはカラスで対策…繁華街でカラスの鳴き声を流して「ふん害」阻止 [Fighting fire with fire: Playing crow call recordings in the city centre to prevent droppings damage]. *Yomiuri Shimbun*. https://www.yomiuri.co.jp/national/20260328-GYT1T00295/

1. Background (from approximately 2018) / 背景（2018 年頃から）

According to Kumamoto City's Wildlife Control Office (鳥獣対策室), Rooks (*Corvus frugilegus*; ミヤマガラス) breed on the East Asian continent and migrate to Kumamoto Prefecture to overwinter. While they had traditionally roosted in suburban woodlands, from around 2018 they began appearing frequently in the city centre, perched on street trees, utility poles, and power lines (Nakamura, 2026).

The city's Wildlife Control Office offered the following explanation for why the urban environment attracts Rooks:

> 「程よい明るさで建物が風よけになり、天敵もいないことから、過ごしやすい環境になっているのではないか」
>
> *"The moderate light levels, combined with buildings providing shelter from the wind and the absence of natural predators, may create a comfortable environment for them."*
>
> *Kumamoto City Wildlife Control Office, as reported in Nakamura (2026). Translation: S. A. Houghton. [「と推測する」 = the city speculates rather than asserts. Epistemic caution preserved in English with "may".]*

Note: The problem is droppings damage (「ふん害」) generating citizen complaints — urban environmental damage, not agricultural damage. This distinction matters when comparing with Saga City's agricultural damage justification for its lethal trapping programme.

2. Saga University Survey Phase, FY2019–2022 / 佐賀大学調査期間（2019〜2022 年度）

Commissioned by Kumamoto City, the Faculty of Agriculture at Saga University (佐賀大農学部) conducted surveys from FY2019 to FY2022, confirming that roosting sites expanded from November onwards as overwintering populations increased. No specific population figures were reported for this phase (Nakamura, 2026).

3. FY2024 Result / 令和 6 年度 結果

The city worked with an unnamed specialist crow management consultancy [会社名非公表] and, after finding light-based deterrence ineffective, adopted acoustic deterrence as the primary method (Nakamura, 2026).

> 「24 年度の対策初期と約 40 日後を比較したところ、１万 567 羽のミヤマガラスが 3882 羽にまで減少した。」
>
> *“A comparison between the start of the FY2024 measures and approximately 40 days later showed that the number of Rooks had fallen from 10,567 to 3,882.”*
>
> *Nakamura (2026). Translation: S. A. Houghton. [The article presents these as Rook (ミヤマガラス) counts. Whether other corvid species are included is not addressed — see Further Reading.]*

Arithmetic / 計算: 10,567 − 3,882 = 6,685 birds dispersed. 6,685 ÷ 10,567 = 63.27% ≈ 63%. Note: 63% × 10,567 = 6,657 (not 6,685) because 63% is rounded; precise reduction is 6,685 birds.

4. FY2025 Result / 令和 7 年度 結果

In FY2025, measures began two weeks earlier than usual (late November rather than December), with staff surveying roosting sites fortnightly and concentrating resources on highest-density locations (Nakamura, 2026).

> 「結果は対策初期が 9004 羽、約 40 日後が 6440 羽で、減少率は 28％にとどまった。音声に慣れたカラスには効果が薄いことが原因と考えられるという。」
>
> *“The results showed 9,004 birds at the start of the measures and 6,440 approximately 40 days later, with the reduction rate remaining at just 28 per cent. It is believed that the measures were less effective because the crows had become accustomed to the sounds.”*
>
> *Nakamura (2026). Translation: S. A. Houghton. [「にとどまった」 = "remained at only" — implies falling short of expectation. 「考えられるという」 = city's interpretation, not established fact.]*

Arithmetic / 計算: 9,004 − 6,440 = 2,564 birds dispersed. 2,564 ÷ 9,004 = 28.48% ≈ 28%.

The city reports that it is continuing to refine its acoustic deterrence methods in response to the habituation challenge (Nakamura, 2026).

Note on Japanese fiscal years / 年度について: In Japan, the fiscal year (年度, nendo) runs from 1 April to 31 March. FY2024 (令和 6 年度) = 1 April 2024 – 31 March 2025. FY2025 (令和 7 年度) = 1 April 2025 – 31 March 2026.

Figure 1 / 図 1

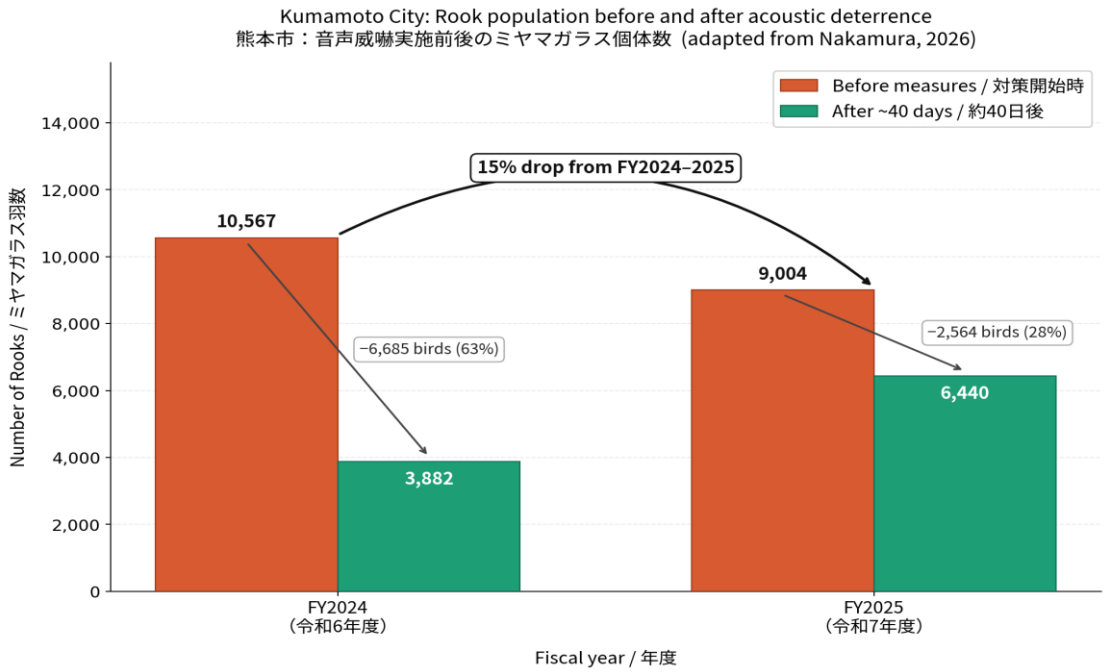

Figure 1 / 図 1. Rook roosting population before and after acoustic deterrence, Kumamoto City centre, FY2024–FY2025. Data: Nakamura (2026). Chart: S. A. Houghton & Claude Sonnet 4.6 (Anthropic).

5. Year-on-Year Trend / 年度間比較

Comparing the starting peak counts between the two seasons reveals the cumulative programme effect:

FY2024 peak / 令和 6 年度ピーク: 10,567 birds / 羽

FY2025 peak / 令和 7 年度ピーク: 9,004 birds / 羽

Year-on-year reduction / 年度間減少: 1,563 birds ÷ 10,567 = 14.79% ≈ 15%

Two Possible Interpretations — For Student Discussion

2 つの解釈の可能性 — 学生討論用

Interpretation A: The 63% figure (within-season, FY2024)

Acoustic deterrence reduced the Rook roosting flock by nearly two-thirds within approximately 40 days. This is a dramatic and compelling result that demonstrates the method works under favourable conditions.

Caveat: This figure measures a single season's dispersal effect. Birds return the following winter. It does not measure whether the programme is reducing long-term roosting pressure.

Interpretation B: The 15% figure (year-on-year peak comparison)

The peak number of Rooks choosing to roost in Kumamoto city centre fell by approximately 15% between FY2024 and FY2025. This is the most meaningful long-term indicator — it measures whether cumulative programme effects are discouraging birds from returning at all.

Caveat: A 15% reduction over one year is modest. The habituation problem (63% down to 28%) raises questions about whether effectiveness will continue to decline.

Student question: Which figure would you cite if you were (a) advocating for the programme; (b) evaluating it critically; (c) advising a neighbouring city? What does the choice of figure tell us about how evidence is used in public policy?
学生への問い：（a）推進立場（b）批判的評価（c）隣市助言—それぞれどの数値を引用しますか？

Further Reading — Primary Sources for Independent Verification

The figures above are drawn from a journalist's account based on data provided by Kumamoto City. The following primary sources allow independent verification and critical analysis:

1. Kumamoto City. (2026). 令和 7 年度市街地におけるミヤマガラス被害軽減対策について [FY2025 measures for reducing Rook damage in urban areas]. https://www.city.kumamoto.jp/kiji00367626/index.html
2. Wild Bird Society of Japan, Kumamoto Branch [日本野鳥の会熊本県支部]. (2026, March). 「市街地におけるミヤマガラスの飛来数調査」調査報告書 [Survey report: Count survey of Rooks in the urban area]. https://www.city.kumamoto.jp/kiji00367626/3_67626_492857_up_1cng6pxb.pdf
3. Nakamura, Y. (2026, March 29). 目には目を、カラスにはカラスで対策…繁華街でカラスの鳴き声を流して「ふん害」阻止 [Fighting fire with fire: Playing crow call recordings in the city centre to prevent droppings damage]. Yomiuri Shimbun. https://www.yomiuri.co.jp/national/20260328-GYT1T00295/

Student analysis prompt: How do these primary sources compare with the Yomiuri Shimbun's presentation? What questions do they raise about methodology, species identification, and the percentage figures?
学生向け分析課題：一次資料と報道の比較。方法論・種の同定・パーセンテージの根拠についての疑問を検討してください。

This text was generated through collaboration between Stephanie Ann Houghton and Claude Sonnet 4.6 by Anthropic. Full responsibility lies with Stephanie Ann Houghton.