



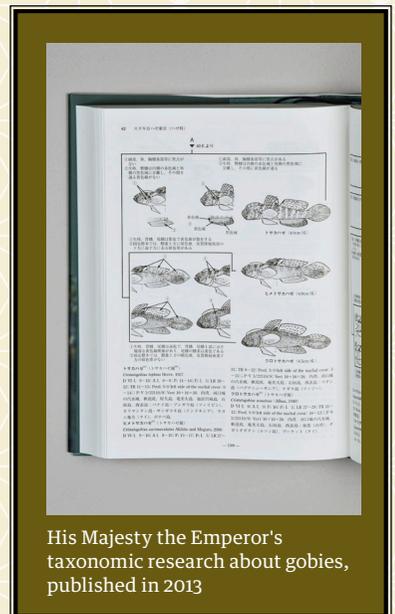
The Imperial Family celebrating the New Year in 2019

## The Importance of Tradition, Research and Family

A highly valued tradition in the Imperial Family is *waka*, a form of Japanese poetry, and Their Majesties the Emperor and Empress compose *waka* poems on various occasions. Every year in January, *Utakai Hajime*, the Imperial New Year's Poetry Reading Ceremony, a ceremony said to date back to the mid-Kamakura Period (1185-1333), takes place at the Imperial Palace. Ten *waka* poems selected from across Japan are presented on that occasion, along with the *waka* poems composed by Their Majesties and other members of the Imperial Family.

Since the cultivation of rice is central to the agriculture culture of Japan, His Majesty the Emperor has continued the practice of rice cultivation passed on from Emperor Showa. He sows the seeds, plants the seedlings and harvests the crops Himself. Her Majesty the Empress carries on the sericulture tradition passed down from Empress Dowager Shoken by raising silkworms, which She feeds with mulberry leaves, at the Sericulture Center on the Imperial Palace Grounds.

His Majesty the Emperor has engaged in taxonomic research about gobiid fishes for many years. He has discovered eight new species of



His Majesty the Emperor's taxonomic research about gobiid fishes, published in 2013



Enjoying the daily lilies blooming in the gardens of the Imperial Residence in 2013



Their Majesties the Emperor and Empress playing tennis in November 2013



Utakai Hajime, the Imperial New Year's Poetry Reading Ceremony

gobies and published more than thirty papers for academic journals as a member of the Ichthyological Society of Japan. Based on these achievements, He was elected as one of the foreign members, limited to fifty, of the Linnean Society of London in 1980, and was later elected as an honorary member of the Society in 1986. His Majesty is also a research associate of the Australian Museum, as well as an honorary member of the Zoological Society of London and a lifetime honorary member of the Research Institute for Natural Science of Argentina. In 1998, He became the first recipient of the King Charles the Second Medal from the Royal Society of London, an award established to honor those heads of state who have made outstanding contributions to the advancement of science.

Her Majesty the Empress finds time in between Her official duties to enjoy literature and music. She has written the text for *My First Mountain*, a children's picture book that has been published in Japanese and several other languages. She also translated eighty poems by Michio Mado into English, which led to the poet receiving the Hans Christian Andersen Author's Award in 1994. Her Majesty also plays the piano, sometimes performing in ensembles with world-class artists.

Their Majesties also play tennis in addition to taking early morning walks around the palace grounds to enjoy the changes of the seasons.

Their Majesties value family bonds deeply and raised Their three children close to Them at home. His Imperial Highness the Crown Prince married Masako Owada in 1993 and welcomed the arrival of Princess Aiko in 2001. Prince Fumihito married Kiko Kawashima in 1990 and they have three children, Princess Mako, Princess Kako, and Prince Hisahito. Princess Sayako married Yoshiki Kuroda in 2005 and left the Imperial Family.

As of April 2019, Their Majesties will have been married for sixty years.