

# New Cat Stationmaster Charms Visitors on Chiba's Local Railway

千葉県銚子電鉄に誕生した猫駅長が、アイドル級の人気を集めています。小さな待合室が「癒やしの空間」として多くの人を引きつける様子は、地域ならではの魅力を感じさせます。駅は単に列車に乗るための場所ではなく、人々が笑顔になれる場所にもなるのかもしれませんが。あなたなら、どのような工夫があれば、その土地を訪れてみたいと思いますか。



## 1. Article

Read the following article aloud.

A cat stationmaster appointed in May at Nakanochō Station on the Choshi Electric Railway in Chiba Prefecture has been attracting visitors with her charm. The cat, tentatively named Nakano-san after the station, is an approximately 11-month-old female. She **promotes** the railway by bringing comfort and joy to visitors through duties such as "checking safety" around the station, seeing off departing trains, and **interacting** with fans.

Just after noon on May 23, more than a dozen fans had gathered in the small waiting room at Nakanochō Station, which also serves as the ticket office, to see the feline stationmaster. Each time she meowed, smartphone shutters clicked and voices rang out with exclamations of "kawaii!" ("so cute!")

Fans bring more than just treats and stuffed toys. Some even present photo books as gifts, giving Nakano-san the kind of popularity usually reserved for an idol.

Continued on next page.

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# 1. Article

Nakano-san first appeared at Nakanochō Station on October 14 last year, when station staff found her near a vending machine outside and took her in. She later went to live with a member of Choshi City's [regional revitalization](#) team. Since the railway company's president, Katsunori Takemoto, is known for his love of cats, she began "coming to work" as a trainee employee in January this year.

Her appointment was also inspired by the long-running success of the famous cat stationmasters at Kishi Station on the Wakayama Electric Railway Kishigawa Line in Kinokawa, who have attracted tourists to the area for years.

Recognized for her hard work, Nakano-san was promoted to cat stationmaster on May 6 in an exceptionally rapid rise through the ranks. She mainly works on weekends for about two hours a day, usually watching over passengers from the top shelf of a bookcase in the waiting room, which serves as her "stationmaster's office."

Apparently, this is her favorite spot, as she rarely uses the cardboard "company housing" set up for her in the same room.

"She seems scared of the loud noise of the trains. But in terms of hospitality, she's doing more than enough," said Remi Magami, the conductor responsible for the cat stationmaster. Magami added that the way Nakano-san constantly meows, as if chatting with people, is especially adorable.

The cat stationmaster has had a remarkable effect on visitor numbers. According to Magami, Choshi Electric Railway traditionally attracted railway enthusiasts, but many more people are now visiting specifically to see Nakano-san. Sales of [merchandise](#) featuring the cat, such as keychains, have also been strong, and the railway recently began selling baked sweets as well.

Like many rural railways in Japan, Choshi Electric Railway has repeatedly faced the threat of closure due to population decline along its routes.

Even so, the company has managed to survive through creative products such as its famous soft rice crackers and the novelty snack "Mazui-bo" ("Bad-Tasting Stick"), a parody of the popular Japanese snack Umaibo ("Delicious Stick").

Last year, the railway rebranded itself as the "Inubozaki Cliffhanger Line," referencing both the nearby cliffs and the company's finances being "on the brink," another publicity stunt that drew national attention.

Still, depopulation in rural areas continues, and the future of local railways remains uncertain.

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"Nakano-san carries the company's future on her shoulders," Magami said. "We want to escape this cliff-edge situation, even if we have to rely on the power of cats."



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## 2. Key phrases and vocabulary

First repeat after your tutor and then read aloud by yourself.

**1. promote** 促進する

The city designed a campaign to **promote** local businesses.

**2. interact** 交流する

Students at the university **interact** online with people from many countries.

**3. regional** 地域の

The festival celebrates **regional** food and culture.

**4. revitalization** 活性化

The town began a **revitalization** project in the downtown area to attract more visitors.

**5. merchandise** 商品

Fans bought **merchandise**—especially T-shirts—after the concert ended.

## 3. Questions

Read the questions aloud and answer them.

1. When did Nakano-san first appear at the station?
2. How has Nakano-san affected visitor numbers?
3. Why has Choshi Electric Railway faced financial difficulties?
4. What other ideas could local railways use to bring in more visitors?
5. Have you ever visited a place to see a famous animal? Describe your experience.

## 4. 千葉・銚子電鉄に猫駅長が誕生 アイドル級の人気、待合室は「癒やしの空間」に

千葉県銚子市内を走るローカル鉄道「銚子電鉄」（銚電）の仲ノ町駅に猫駅長が5月に就任し、人気を集めている。その名は駅名にちなんだ「なかのさん（仮）」。生後11カ月（推定）の雌猫だ。駅構内の安全確認、列車の見送り、ファンとの交流...などをこなし、銚電の魅力発信と癒やしに貢献している。

23日正午すぎ、切符売り場を兼ねた仲ノ町駅の小さな待合室は「癒やしの空間」になっていた。駆けつけた十数人のファンの目当ては猫駅長。「ミャー」「ニャオー」と鳴くたびに、スマートフォンのシャッター音とともに「かわいい」といった声が漏れる。

差し入れは、おやつやぬいぐるみにとどまらない。写真集をプレゼントするファンもいるほどで、アイドル級の人気だ。

なかのさん（仮）が仲ノ町駅に姿を現したのは昨年10月14日。駅前の自動販売機近くにいたところを駅員に保護された。その後、銚子市の地域おこし協力隊の自宅で暮らすようになったが、銚電の竹本勝紀社長が猫好きということもあり、今年1月から「見習社員」として出勤するようになった。

姉妹鉄道として連携する和歌山電鉄貴志川線・貴志駅（和歌山県紀の川市）の猫駅長が集客に一役買っている先例も後押しした。

働きぶりが評価された、なかのさん（仮）は5月6日、猫駅長に昇進した。異例のスピード出世を果たし、週末を中心に出勤。1日2時間ほど働くが、待合室にある本棚の最上段、いわば“猫駅長室、”から利用客を見守ることが多い。ここがお気に入りの場所らしく、待合室にある段ボールの専用社宅にはめったに寄りつかないという。

「電車の大きな音が怖いみたい。でも、おもてなしや癒やしという面でいえば、十分に働いてくれている」。猫駅長担当で普段は車掌の馬上レミさんは、猫駅長の仕事ぶりをこう評価し、「よく鳴いておしゃべりしているような様子がかわいい」という。

次頁に続く

出典：千葉・銚子電鉄に猫駅長が誕生 アイドル級の人気、待合室は「癒やしの空間」に  
[Japan Forward](#)

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猫駅長による集客効果は抜群だ。馬上さんによると、銚電にはこれまで鉄道好きのファンが多かったが、「なかのさん（仮）がいるから訪れる人がかなり増えた」という。キーホルダーなど関連グッズの売れ行きも好調で、最近は焼き菓子の販売を始めた。

銚電はこれまで沿線住民の減少で、何度も廃線の危機に直面してきた。それでも「ぬれ煎餅」やスナック菓子の「まずい棒」など人気商品を考案し、鉄路を支えた。去年は、沿線近くにある断崖絶壁の名所「屏風ヶ浦」にちなんで銚電を「犬吠崖っぷちライン」と名付け、経営危機を逆手にとった得意の自虐ネタでPRするユニークな取り組みで話題を呼んだ。

もっとも、地方の人口減少には歯止めがかからず、銚電を含めたローカル鉄道の未来は決して明るくない。馬上さんは「なかのさん（仮）には社運がかかっている。猫の力を借りてでも崖っぷちから脱したい」と、猫駅長の手腕に期待する。

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