

The Precious Islands of Ishigaki City

The Senkaku Islands



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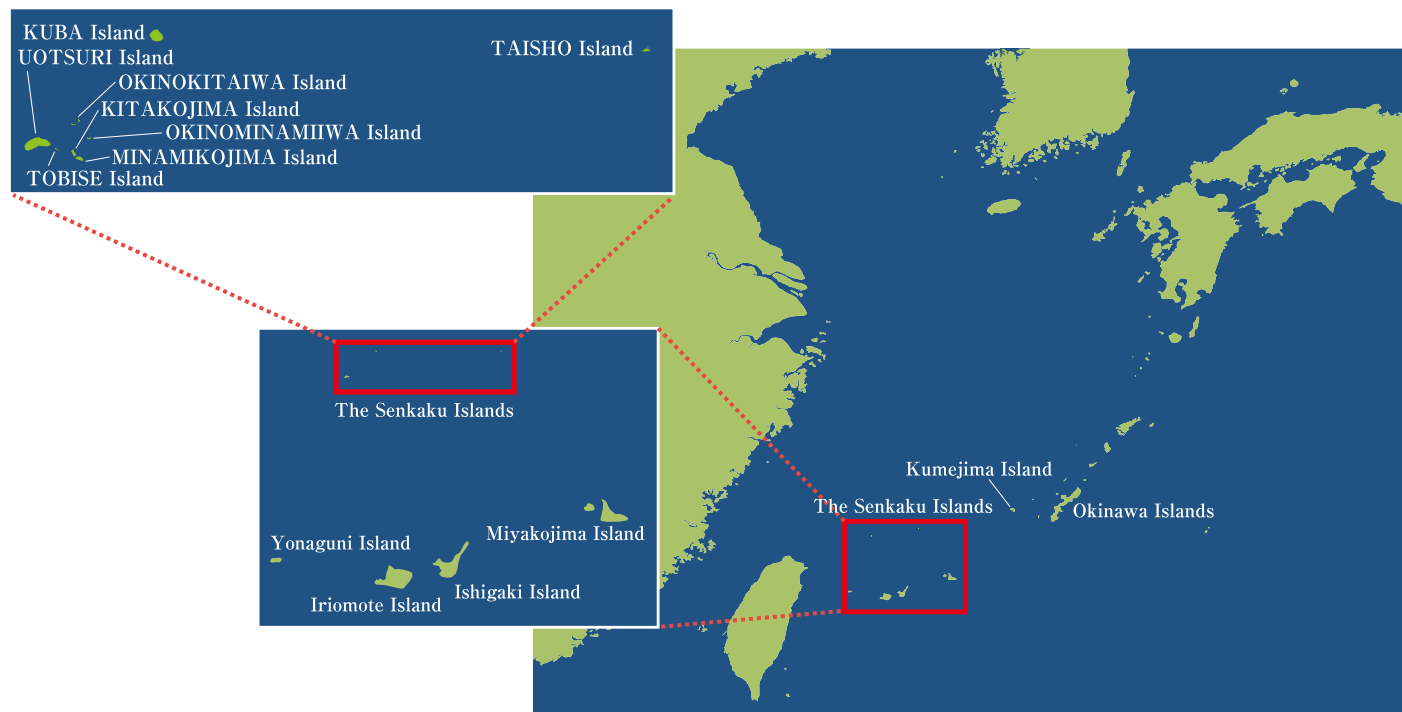
Cover photograph: Uotsuri Island (Photo by Tokyo Metropolitan Government)
Back-cover photograph: Minamikojima Island (Photo by Ishigaki City)

1 About the Senkaku Islands

The Senkaku Islands are the uninhabited archipelago scattered in the East China Sea, and are the collective name for a group of islands consisting of Uotsurijima Island, Minamikojima Island, Kitakojima Island, Kubajima Island, Taishoto Island, Okinokitaiwa, Okinominamiwa, Tobise, and others. The administrative district of the Senkaku Islands belongs to Ishigaki City, Okinawa Prefecture and the biggest Uotsuri Island is located about 170 km northwest of Ishigaki Island. The Senkaku Islands have been called “Igun Kubajima” from ancient times in the Yaeyama district, and the surrounding ocean area has been known by fishermen as favorable fisheries, while businesses such as feathers collection and production of dried bonito were actively performed in the early stages of Meiji to Showa Era, and many people were living there.

The name of the Senkaku Islands was given by Hisashi Kuroiwa who was a teacher of natural history agriculture at Okinawa Normal School. The name is originated from that the shape of the islands of Uotsuri Island including Kitakojima Island and Minamikojima Island is sharp. In 1900, Hisashi Kuroiwa landed on Uotsuri Island, etc., and he draw and left a geologic map describing that it is a volcanic island with naked base rocks.

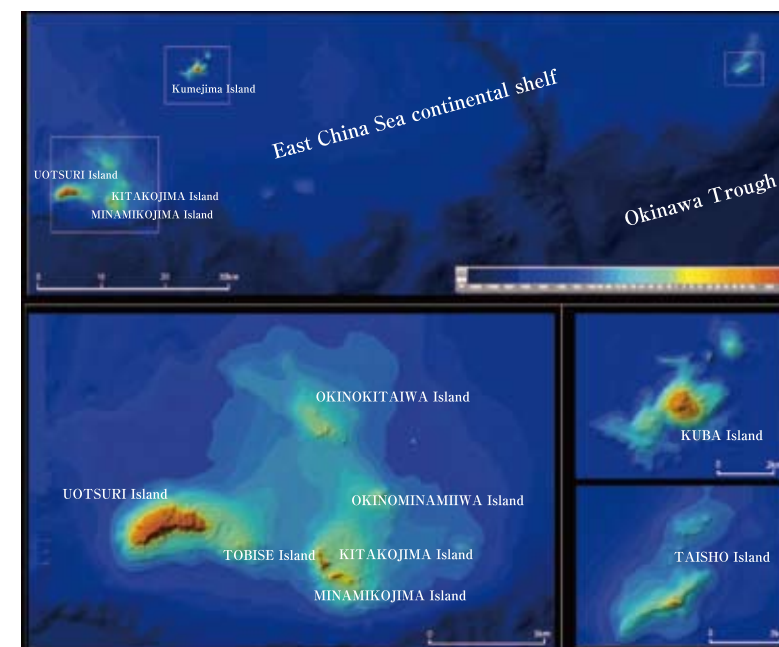
2 The Location of the Senkaku Islands



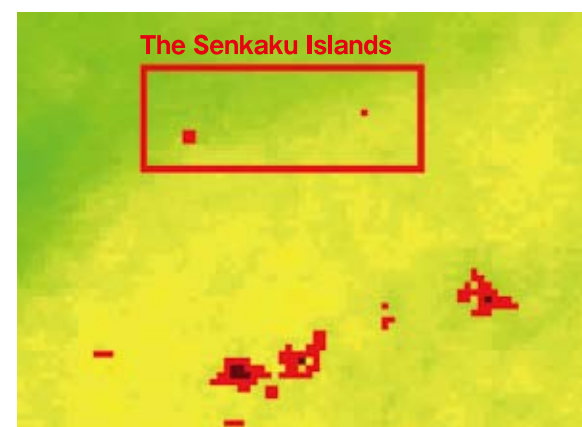
3 Ocean Area Surrounding the Senkaku Islands

The Senkaku Islands are located in the outer edge of continental shelf of the East China Sea. On the south of Minamikojima Island at the southernmost end, a steep submarine slope runs down into the Okinawa Trough. The existence of potential oil reserves at the sea bottom of this East China Sea was reported by United Nations Economic Commission for Asia and the Far East in 1968. After this announcement, China and Taiwan have come to claim the sovereignty over the islands for the first time.

The ocean area surrounding Senkaku Islands is in the junction between two currents (current rip) where the warm Japan current (Kuroshio current) and cool water with rich nutriment from the continent come across and more fish flock relatively to other ambient areas. Those well known fisheries attract many fishing boats not only from Yaeyama but Miyakojima and Okinawa main island to catch mainly bonito, tuna, swordfish and snapper.



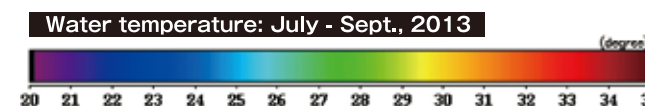
column Satellite Image of the Senkaku Islands.



Satellites can supply satellite images as well as environmental parameters such as sea surface temperature (seawater temperature) and water quality. These figures shows the sea surface temperature and the chlorophyll value covering from the Ishigaki Island to ambient Senkaku Islands in summer. The figure shows daily data from July to September, 2013 as well as its average.

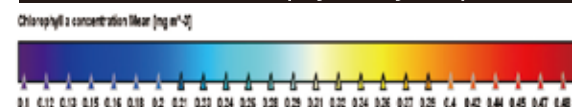
Although the average seawater temperature rises to about 29 °C at Yaeyama Islands where the Japan Current (Kuroshio Current) flows in summer, it is observed that water temperature on the north side of the Senkaku Islands is a little lower.

This may be caused by the low temperature water from the continent.



Chlorophyll is a photosynthetic pigment which phytoplankton has. If there is a large value of chlorophyll, it turns out that many phytoplankton have come into existence, i.e., nutrients are abundant. Concerning the value of chlorophyll in the surrounding ocean area of the Senkaku Islands, a higher value is observed around the Senkaku Islands in summer compared with the outskirts of Yaeyama Islands. It seems that a nutrients from the continental river water causes this symptom as well. This also shows that the ocean area around the Senkaku Islands is favorable fisheries.

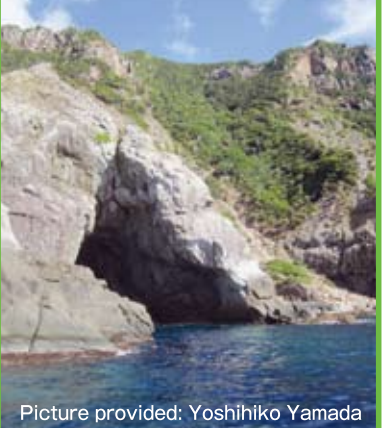
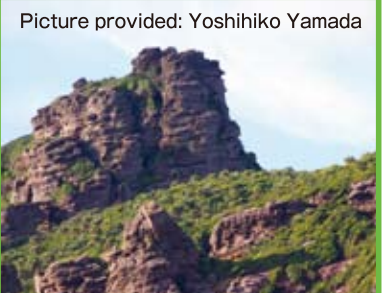
The amount of chlorophyll: July - Sept. 2013



4 Basic Data Relevant to the Senkaku Islands

UOTSURI Island

Area 3.81km²
Location Latitude 25°44'N, Longitude 123°28'E
 170 km northwest of Ishigaki Island (westernmost end of the Senkaku Islands)
 2392, Tonoshiro-Senkaku, Ishigaki City, Okinawa Prefecture
Altitude 362m
Summary In the archipelago, this is the largest island with a long oval shape extending east to west. On the north side of the island a comparatively moderate slope is stretching out from the seashore to the summit of the mountain, while on the south side, there is a steep cliff.



KUBA Island

Geographical Research Institute 1978/11/30

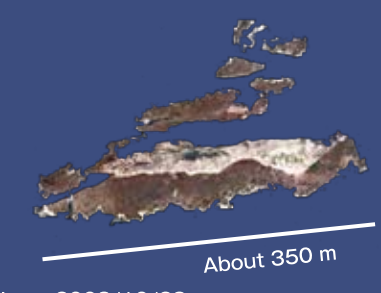
Area 0.91km²
Location Latitude 25°55'N, Longitude 123°40'E
 182 km north of Ishigaki Island, 22 km northeast of Uotsuri Island
 2392, Tonoshiro-Senkaku, Ishigaki City, Okinawa Prefecture
Altitude 117m
Summary Also known as Kobisho It is an almost circular volcanic island with several craters in the central part of the island. Although the geographical features represent gentle configuration from the center of the island to the seashore, the coast is surrounded with cliffs.



※ Latitude, longitude, altitude and Area : Refer to The Geospatial Information Authority of Japan.

TAISHO Island

Area 0.06km²
Location Latitude 25°55'N, Longitude 124°33'E
 180 km northeast of Ishigaki Island and 103 km east of Uotsuri Island (the eastern end of the Senkaku Islands)
 2392, Tonoshiro-Senkaku, Ishigaki City, Okinawa Prefecture
Altitude 75m
Summary Also known as 'Sekibisho', which is located at the eastern end of the continental shelf and consists of the thin main cliff that stands straight in the direction of east and west, and several cliffs with low altitude.

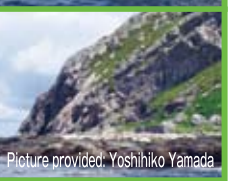
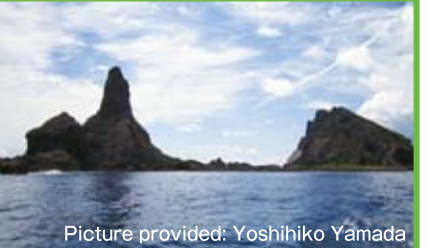


KITAKOJIMA Island



Area 0.31km²
Location Latitude 25°43'N, Longitude 123°32'E
 166 km northwest of Ishigaki Island, 160 km north of Iriomote Island
 2392, Tonoshiro-Senkaku, Ishigaki City, Okinawa Prefecture
Altitude 125m
Summary It is a rectangular island with four corners protruding. The sharpened northern part of the island consists of rocks and the southern part is composed of a terrace-like rocky mountain, and the coast is surrounded by elevated coral reefs.

MINAMIKOJIMA Island



Area 0.40km²
Location Latitude 25°43'N, Longitude 123°33'E
 165 km northwest Ishigaki Island, 160 km north of Iriomote Island
 2392, Tonoshiro-Senkaku, Ishigaki City, Okinawa Prefecture
Altitude 139m
Summary It consists of two places of sharp pointed rocks and a flat ground of elevated coral reefs spreading between them, and the whole island is presenting an oval figure.

OKINOKITAIWA Island



Area 0.03km²
Location Latitude 25°46'N, Longitude 123°32'E
 170 km north of Ishigaki Island
Altitude 28m

OKINOMINAMIWA Island



Area 0.01km²
Location Latitude 25°45'N, Longitude 123°34'E
 167 km north of Ishigaki Island
Altitude 10m








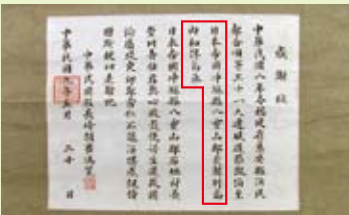
TOBISE Island



Area 0.002km²
Location Latitude 25°44'N, Longitude 123°30'E
 167 km northwest of Ishigaki Island
Altitude 2m

5 The History of the Senkaku Islands

It was in 1895 that the Senkaku Islands were officially incorporated in the territory of Japan under the jurisdiction of the Okinawa Prefecture. The following shows the history of the Senkaku Islands in chronological order.

Year	Summary
1891	The Senkaku Islands were incorporated into the temporary jurisdiction of the Yaeyama Police Station.
1895	The Senkaku Islands were incorporated in the territory of Japan on January 14 and it was the cabinet decision that its jurisdiction should belong to the Okinawa Prefecture.  <p>Cabinet decision for the jurisdiction of Okinawa (Data: National Archives)</p>
1896	<p>Initiation of business by Tatsushiro Koga</p> <p>Having obtained the exploitation permission of the Senkaku Islands from Okinawa-ken, Tatsushiro Koga launched the exploitation of the Senkaku Islands and developed business including feathers collection of albatross.</p>   <p>Waheizan Office A cove configured in Uotsuri Island</p>
1902	It was incorporated into Tonoshiro Village, Ohamagiri, Yaeyama County and the lot number was determined.   <p>Koga-mura of Uotsuri Island The marking stake showing the lot number of Tonoshiro, Ishigaki-shi</p>
1909	The villages of Uotsurijima Island, Kubajima Island and Minamikojima Islands were commonly called "Koga Village" after the pioneer Shiro Koga, and prospered. 99 houses and 248 people lived there at the peak of the project, and it is recorded that they were engaged in fishing, dried bonito production, stuffed animal processing of seabirds, etc.   <p>The building layout drawing of the Uotsuri Island Business Office (1907's, the Meiji 40s) (source: "Quarterly Issue Okinawa" No. 63)</p> <p>"Kobijimanozu" (Drawing of Kibi Island) made by Mikinosuke Miyajima in 1900 (source: "Chigaku Zasshi" (Geoscience Magazine) the 12th collection)</p>
1920	The consul of China, the Republic of China residing in Nagasaki in those days sent a letter of appreciation to the related parties including the Ishigaki village mayor for having rescued Chinese victims near Senkaku. In that letter "Senkaku Islands, Yaeyama-gun, Okinawa Prefecture, Japanese Empire" was clearly described.  <p>The letter of appreciation sent from the Republic of China to Zensa Toyokawa, village mayor of Ishigaki-mura in those days</p>

1940	After Tatsushiro Koga, the business was taken over by Zenjiro Koga. However, he closed the plant since the feather collecting business of albatrosses was no longer viable, while he had also difficulty in securing fuel for dried bonito production due to the ration system. As a result, people living there moved out and the islands became uninhabited again.  <p>Uotsuri Island around 1940</p>
1945	An incident called "Senkaku Islands war-time suffering" took place. An evacuation ship bound for Taiwan with the village people received an attack of the US Forces and drifted to the Uotsuri Island at the last stage of the Pacific War. Many people also died in Uotsuri Island.   <p>"Memorial monument for war victims deceased in the Senkaku Islands" built in Arakawa, Ishigaki City</p>
1952	<p>After World War II</p> <p>The San Francisco Peace Treaty set the Senkaku Islands under the administrative rights of the U.S. Forces as a part of Okinawa Prefecture.</p>   <p>Signing of the San Francisco Peace Treaty Thee range chart of the U.S. Forces administrative rights (Photo by U.S. Civil Administration)</p>
1969	ECAFE (United Nations Economic Commission for Asia and the Far East) reported on the possibility of oil reserves in the East China Sea. Taking this opportunity, China and Taiwan suddenly began to claim territorial rights.  <p>Memorial monument of the victims for Taiwan evacuation town people of Ishigaki in "Uotsuri Island".</p>
1971	According to the "Agreement between Japan and the United States of America concerning the Ryukyu Islands and the Daito Islands", the Senkaku Islands were also returned to Japan in the following year.  <p>The lighthouse set up in Uotsuri Island (Photo by Yoshiniko Yamada)</p>
1978	A private political organization sets up a beacon and a lighthouse in "Uotsurishima Island". Moreover, a pair of goats were brought in as a source of food.
2010	<p>September 7</p> <p>An incident of the crash between a Chinese fishing boat and two patrol vessels of Japan Coast Guard occurred when regulating illegal operations near the Senkaku Islands.</p>
2012	<p>Since the three islands of Uotsurijima, Kitakojima, and Minamikojima were privately owned, the Tokyo Metropolitan Government announced their purchase. A field survey was conducted on September 2.</p>   <p>Spring water found in Uotsuri Island (Photo by Haruo Ogi)</p> <p>The research situation by Tokyo Metropolitan Government (Picture provided: Tokyo Metropolitan Government)</p> <p>The Japanese government purchased three islands from the holder, and completed the registration of ownership transfer to Japan on September 11.</p>

6 Academic Research in the Senkaku Islands

After the business withdrawal by Koga, the solitary island far off in the sea “Senkaku Islands” were extremely difficult for landing research hampered by remoteness and raging waves. However, an energetic research was conducted by the research group including University of the Ryukyus, and a part of the nature and environment has been clarified. Here, we introduce the academic research conducted until now as well as a part of very rare flora and fauna that was identified there.

Year	Summary	The main outcome
1885	Eiho Oshiro of Sanri Magiri, Okinawa Prefecture submitted a Uotsuri Island observation report to Okinawa Prefecture. He reported the vegetation and the birds.	
1900	Senkaku Islands research by Tatsushiro Koga's investigating commission	"Exploration Stories of Uninhabited Islands within Okinawa Prefecture" "Exploration Report of the Senkaku Islands"
1910	Noritaka Tsuneto's inspection research of Kuba Island, Uotsuri Island, Kitakojima Island and Minamikojima Island	"Wealth Resources of South Japan" "Exploration of Mineral Phosphate"
1939	Research of Senkaku 5 Islands by the Southwest Islands Mineral-resources Investigating Commission of Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry	"Explore the Senkaku Islands."
1948~50	Fishery research of the ocean area by the training vessel, Shin Ushio Maru of Kagoshima University	"About the Relation between the Swordfish Fishing Condition and Water Temperature in the Coastal Waters of Uotsuri Island " "About the Bottom Long Line Fishing in the Coastal Waters of Uotsuri Island"
1950	Organism research of Uotsuri Island by Tetsuo Takara, former President of University of the Ryukyus and others.	"About the Flora of the Senkaku Islands"
1952	The joint research by University of the Ryukyus and the Resources Bureau of Ryukyu Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry	"About the Fauna of the Senkaku Islands"
1953	Organism research and outdoor training by the University of the Ryukyus	"A story that a Fish ate a Bird - the Animals of the Senkaku Islands/ Minamikojima Island"
1963	Research of Albatross by the Cultural Properties Protection Committee of the Ryukyu Government	"The Senkaku Islands Marine research Report" "Albatross of the Senkaku Islands is Explored." "Vegetation of the Senkaku Islands"
1968	Preliminary research of mineral resources of the Senkaku Islands by the Prime Minister's Office	"Oceanographic view of the Senkaku Islands " "Water Quality of the Senkaku Islands " "About the Sea Birds of the Senkaku Islands " "About the Academic Research of the Whole Senkaku Islands "
1970	Joint academic research of the Senkaku Islands by Kyushu University and Nagasaki University	"The Valley of the East China Sea: the Senkaku Islands " "Geology of Uotsuri Island, Kitakojima Island and Minamikojima Island of the Senkaku Islands "
1970~71	Marine geological survey around the Senkaku Islands by Tokai University	"Marine geological survey around the Senkaku Islands"
1971	Comprehensive academic research of the Senkaku Islands by University of the Ryukyus	"Senkaku Islands Academic Research Report"
1974	Fauna research of Minamikojima Island by University of the Ryukyus	"Visiting the Senkaku Islands and Minamikojima Island."
1975	Research on the vegetation and useful plants of Uotsurishima Island by University of the Ryukyus	"Vegetable geography of Uotsurishima Island"
1979	Comprehensive research of the Senkaku Islands by the Okinawa Development Agency (Academic research, feasibility study for utilization development)	"Senkaku Islands Investigation Report (Academic Research Edition)" "Senkaku Islands Investigation Report (Utilization Development Feasibility Study Edition)"
1979	Uotsuri Island organism research by University of the Ryukyus (Research accompanied by NHK group of reporters)	NHK "Science Document"
1980	Biological research of Kobisho by University of the Ryukyus (Research accompanied by NHK group of reporters)	
1981	The Senkaku Islands fishery research by Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries Department, Okinawa Prefecture	"Fishery Research Report around the Senkaku Islands"
1988	The verification of Albatross in Minamikojima Island by Hiroshi Hasegawa, Toho University (From the airplane of Asahi Shimbun)	
1991	The vegetation research of Uotsuri Island by University of the Ryukyus (Accompanied by NHK group of reporters)	
1991	Minamikojima Island landing research by Hiroshi Hasegawa, Toho University (Accompanied by Fuji Television group of reporters)	
1992	Minamikojima Island landing research by Hiroshi Hasegawa, Toho University (Accompanied by Asahi Shimbun group of reporters)	
1995	Sea bird observation of Kitakojima Island, and photography event by Okinawa Association of Photographic Societies	"Trajectory of Albatross Revival"
2001	Interview and research by Okinawa Television	
2002	Research of Kitakojima Island and Minamikojima Island by Hiroshi Hasegawa, (Accompanied by the Okinawa television coverage group)	
2012	The Senkaku Islands field research by Tokyo Metropolitan Government	"Report on the Senkaku Islands field research by Tokyo Metropolitan Government"



Photo by Yoshima Niiro



Photo by Yoshima Niiro



Photo by Yoshima Niiro

Fauna and flora identified by the academic research of the Senkaku Islands

<p><i>Hypericum senkakuinsulare</i> (Guttiferae)</p> <p>Photo by Yoshima Niiro</p> <p>Critically Endangered IA (CR)-RL Japan Critically Endangered IA (CR)-RDB Okinawa</p>	<p><i>Rhododendron simsii</i> var. <i>tawadae</i> (Ericaceae)</p> <p>Photo by Kazuharu Shinjo</p> <p>Critically Endangered IA (CR)-RL Japan Critically Endangered IA (CR)-RDB Okinawa</p>	<p><i>Limonium senkakuense</i> (Plumbaginaceae)</p> <p>Photo by Yoshima Niiro</p> <p>Critically Endangered IA (CR)-RL Japan Critically Endangered IA (CR)-RDB Okinawa</p>
<p><i>Dischidia nummularia</i> var. <i>rhombofolia</i> (Asclepiadaceae)</p> <p>Photo by Yoshima Niiro</p> <p>Critically Endangered IA (CR)-RL Japan Critically Endangered IA (CR)-RDB Okinawa</p>	<p><i>Abelmoschus moschatus</i> var. <i>betulifolius</i> (Malvaceae)</p> <p>Photo by Yoshima Niiro</p> <p>Critically Endangered IA (CR)-RL Japan Critically Endangered IA (CR)-RDB Okinawa</p>	<p><i>Cirsium japonicum</i> var. <i>australe</i> (Compositae)</p> <p>Photo by Yoshima Niiro</p> <p>Critically Endangered IA (CR)-RL Japan Critically Endangered IA (CR)-RDB Okinawa</p>
<p><i>Trichoglottis ionosma</i> (Orchidaceae)</p> <p>Photo by Yoshima Niiro</p> <p>Endangered IB (EN) -RL Japan Critically Endangered IA (CR)-RDB Okinawa</p>	<p><i>Eria luchuensis</i> (Orchidaceae)</p> <p>Photo by Yoshima Niiro</p> <p>Endangered IB (EN) -RL Japan Vulnerable II (VU) -RDB Okinawa</p>	<p><i>Diomedea albatrus</i> (Diomedidae)</p> <p>Photo by Kunio Mizushima</p> <p>Vulnerable II (VU) -RL Japan Vulnerable II (VU) -RDB Okinawa</p>
<p><i>Sula leucogaster plotus</i> (Sulidae)</p> <p>Photo by Yoshima Niiro</p> <p>(Adult bird) (Young bird) Near threatened (NT) -RDB Okinawa</p>	<p><i>Sterna fuscata nubilosa</i> (Laridae)</p> <p>Photo by Yoshima Niiro</p> <p>Near threatened (NT) -RDB Okinawa</p>	<p><i>Thalasserus bergii cristatus</i> (Laridae)</p> <p>Photo by Yoshima Niiro</p> <p>Vulnerable II (VU) -RL Japan Vulnerable II (VU) -RDB Okinawa</p>
<p><i>Mogera uchidai</i> (Talpidae)</p> <p>Photo by Yasushi Yokohata</p> <p>Critically Endangered IA (CR)-RL Japan Critically Endangered IA (CR)-RDB Okinawa</p>	<p>Red List category</p> <p>Critically Endangered IA (CR) A taxon is Critically Endangered is considered to be facind an extremely high risk of extinction in the wild.</p> <p>Endangered IB (EN) A taxon is Endangered is considered to be facind a very high risk of extinction in the wild.</p> <p>Vulnerable II (VU) A taxon is Vulnerable is considered to be facind a high risk of extinction in the wild.</p> <p>Near threatened (NT) A taxon is Near Threatend when it has been evaluated against the criteria but does not qualify for Critically Endangered, Endangered, Vulnerable now, but is close to qualifying for or is likely to qualify for a threatened category.</p> <p>RL Japan: The 4th version of the Japanese Red List. Published in August, 2012 RDB Okinawa: Threatened Wildlife in Okinawa, 2nd Ed. (Fungi and Plants) Published in March, 2006 (Animals) Published in September, 2005</p> <p>※ The species name and the family name conform to the "Threatened Wildlife in Okinawa"</p>	

7 Environmental Problem in the Senkaku Islands

Transition in Uotsuri Island

In Uotsuri Island, the problem of vegetation destruction due to the increase in goats is currently getting worse. A pair of goat was brought from Yonaguni Island by a Japanese private sector political organization in 1978, and as a result of the increase it is believed that the number has reached 300 or 500 heads now, and "feeding damage is particularly growing along the seashore or the southern slope. The impact results in the decline of precious animals and plants or the change in ecosystem, and it is also a critical problem that may lead to the devastation of the island itself due to landslides or water damages.



Marine Debris

According to the research conducted in 2012 by Tokyo Metropolitan Government, it was confirmed that there were a lot of marine debris washed ashore and scattered on the beach of Uotsuri Island, Kitakojima Island and Minamikojima Island. Sea birds and sea turtles often eat marine debris in mistake for food, and it is said to be a serious problem from the viewpoint of nature conservation.

The Senkaku Islands are located in the stream of the Japan Current (Kuroshio Current) like the Yaeyama Islands and serve as a route of generated marine litter from neighboring countries. Since marine litter is not only difficult to treat but it may be unlimitedly washed ashore, remote islands are also afflicted by the same problem all over the country, and international commitments are desired to find the solution.



The Conservation of endangered species

The existence of albatross (*Diomedea albatrus*) of the Senkaku Islands was recorded for the first time in 1845 by the Oriental expeditionary party of British exploration survey ship, the Samarang. Subsequently, since it sharply decreased by the development of feathers collection business, it could not be observed in the Senkaku Islands. However, adult birds were found by the research of University of the Ryukyus for the first time in 70 years in the Minami Kojima in 1971, and its increase was also confirmed in 1988.

Albatross is a migratory bird distributed over the North Pacific and spends summer in the Bering Sea or the Gulf of Alaska, heading south to breed in the sea around Japan. Besides the Senkaku Islands, only Torishima in the Izu Islands and the Midway lagoon island off Hawaii are currently identified as breeding grounds, and the risk of endangered species is internationally growing. Thus, the conservation of the breeding environment in the Senkaku Islands is considered to be very important to protect Albatross from extinction. (Due to the sign of increasing volcanic activities in Torishima in 2006, a plan is promoted to move the breeding ground to Mukojima Island of the Ogasawara Islands.)



8 Measures by Ishigaki City

Introduction of Basic Plan on Ocean Policy



Since the life in Ishigaki City is closely related to the sea, "Basic Plan on Ocean Policy of Ishigaki City" was formulated in March 2013 as a work plan to actively protect and utilize the sea from a long-term viewpoint. The objective of this plan is aiming at development as a "Marine City Ishigaki" that represents not only Japan but also Asia through the implementation of various measures.

In this plan, it is suggested to review the integrated management method of coastal area, marine renewable energy, etc., while proposing to consider the maintenance management and safeguarding of the Senkaku Islands.

Measures by Ishigaki City for Senkaku Islands

The following contents are regarded as the measures of the Senkaku Islands in the "Basic Plan on Ocean Policy of Ishigaki City"

1 Nature conservation of the islands

Reality check of the natural environment of the islands and the surrounding ocean area, the protection of rare wildlife, designation of protection forest for navigation sign, promotion of the surveillance study for the establishment of the legal framework towards nature conservation and the feasibility study of base facilities for nature conservation.

2 Management of fishery resources, etc

The arrangement of environment and infrastructures to aim at the promotion of safe and secure fishery activities in the surrounding ocean, research concerning fishing resources, the proposal and fishery resource management that mainly consist of fishing right setup and fishing right management for appropriate and rational fishery planning through Yaeyama fishermen's cooperative association, and research and development of marine resources and marine renewable energy.

3 Establishment of Marine Protected Area

Implementation of surveillance study aiming at the designation of World Natural Heritage Site and promotion to set up Marine Protected Area

In line with these matters, Ishigaki City believes that the following are required.

- Weather and Oceanographic Phenomena Observation Facilities
- Lighthouse
- Radio Facilities
- Fishing Port
- Senkaku Museum

THE SENKAKU ISLANDS 3D MODEL



Ishigaki City has produced a diorama "THE SENKAKU ISLANDS 3D MODEL" so that the citizens of Ishigaki City may be familiar with the Senkaku Islands, which can project various information with a projector.

Ishigaki City Library
1-1, Hamasaki-cho, Ishigaki-shi, Okinawa-ken 907-0013
Tel: +81-980-83-3862

Reference concerning this brochure:
Ishigaki City Planning and Policy Division
14, Misaki-cho, Ishigaki-city, Okinawa-ken 907-8501
Tel: +81-980-82-1350 ,FAX +81-980-83-1427