

Streams in Kume-jima

Permanent and Seasonal Streams

Geographical Coordinates: 26°22' N, 126°46' E / Altitude: 120-280m / Area: 255ha / Major type of wetland: Permanent and seasonal streams / Designation: Natural Habitat Conservation Area under the Species Conservation Law / Municipalities involved: Kumejima Town, Okinawa Prefecture / Ramsar designation: October 2008



Middle reach of Shirase River

View of the designated area (right hand side) from Uegusukudake



Principal Features:

Kume-jima is an island located approx. 100km west of the main island of Okinawa. The area of the island is approx. 5900ha, with the circumference of approx. 48km. In the northern area of the island, the ridge of hills including Otake (230m) and Uegusuku-dake (309m) runs from west to east in an arching line. In the southeast, a gently sloping terrain extends, through which run Uraji River and Shirase River. In the north area, steep slopes face the sea.

With the mean annual temperature 22.4°C and the annual precipitation approx. 2200mm, the hills in such subtropical climate are covered with dense forest dominated by Okinawa *Castanopsis sieboldii* ssp. *lutchuensis* and Ryukyu Pine Tree *Pinus luchuensis*. From the hills, good pure water is leaking incessantly through the cracks of the rocks.

Rich in biodiversity:

With hills including Otake and Uegusuku-dake as their heads, Kume-jima has small streams running all the directions and the surrounding wetland ecosystem.

In the ecosystem, clear streams that sometimes flow underground contain a large volume of dissolved oxygen and maintain humid and favorable environment, and many endangered species endemic to Kume-jima such as Kikuzato's Stream Snake, Kumejima Firefly, and Kumejima Minami Freshwater Crab live there. It is an ecosystem unique to Kume-jima, and valuable in terms of scientific research as well.

Under the "Law for the Conservation of Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora", the area is designated as the "Management Area of the of Kikuzato's

Stream Snake Nature Habitat Conservation Area". For conservation, management, and awareness-raising activities, Kumejima Natural Cultural Center and "Kumejima Hotaru-kan" (museum) are prepared.

[Kikuzato's Stream Snake *Opisthotropis kikuzatoi*] Kikuzato's Stream Snake is approx. 60cm long, having dark brown body with yellow dots on the back. The snake inhabits the streams of Kume-jima only. Because it lives in a stream, the nostrils open on the upper side of the head. The snake is innocuous, and eats freshwater crabs and so on. Detailed information is still unknown because very small number of the snakes have been found and identified.

[Kumejima Firefly *Luciola owadai*]

The Kumejima Firefly is approx. 1.5 – 1.8cm long. The appearance is very similar to the Japanese Firefly *Luciola cruciata*. This firefly was found in 1993 to be an endemic species of Kume-jima. The larvae live in the stream and eat snails *Semisulcospira libertina*. From April through the beginning of May, they emerge as adults. They synchronize their flashes among large groups.

[Ryukyu Black-Breasted Leaf Turtle *Geoemyda japonica*] A species of land turtle endemic to Okinawa islands, with the shell of 13 -15cm long. The edge of



Kumejima Fireflies flashing in unison
Upper reach of Shirase River



the shell is jagged like a saw. They live in wet areas in the mountain forest.

[Other rare species] Reptile: Yamashina's Ground Gecko *Goniurosaurus kuroiwae yamashinae*, Kumejimahi *Sinomicrurus japonicus takarai* / Amphibia: Ryukyu Brown Frog *Rana okinavana* / Birds: Japanese Wood Pigeon *Columba janthina* / Crustacea: Kumejima Minami Freshwater Crab *Candidiopotamon kumejimense* Kumejima Great Freshwater Crab *Geothelphusa kumejima* / Insects: Kumejima Beetle *Allomyrina dichotoma inachina*, Kumejima Prosopocoilus *Prosopocoilus dissimilis kumejimaensis* / Shells: Kumejima Snail *Satsuma mercatoria kumejimaensis*,

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