

Yakushima Nagata-hama

Sand Beach

Geographical Coordinates: 30°24'N, 130°25'E / Altitude: below 10m / Area: 10ha / Major Type of Wetland: Sand beach/ Designation: Special protection Zone and Special Zone of National Park / Municipalities Involved: Yakushima Town, Kagoshima Prefecture / Ramsar Designation: November 2005 / Ramsar Criteria: 4



Yakushima Nagata-hama viewed from the south

General Overview:

Yakushima is an island with a circumference of 132km and an area of 50,000ha situated 60km south of the southern end of Kyushu island. Yakushima Nagata-hama is a collective term for three beaches, approximately 1km long Maehama Beach and Inakahama Beach, and approximately 0.2km long Yotsuse-hama Beach, situated on the northwest side of the island. These beaches are made of coarse sand of weathered granite and have the width of 30m. Yakushima Nagata-hama is one of the few sand beaches in this island and is designated as a part of National Park. Every year, Loggerhead Sea Turtles come to nest on this tiny stretch. As this beach has the highest number of nestings in the north Pacific region, it is a crucial habitat in the lifecycle of the turtle.

Nesting of the Loggerhead Sea Turtle:

During the nesting season from May to August, Loggerhead Sea Turtles arrive on the beach at approximately nine o'clock in the evening. Within a period of roughly 40 minutes, a female turtle lays 100 to 140 eggs in the sand. Young turtles hatch approximately 2 to 3 months later and start the life in the sea.

Conservation Efforts:

Local people set up two conservation groups for the Loggerhead Sea Turtle in 1985 and in 1996. The former has become an NPO called "Yakushima Umigame-kan", and both of them are engaged in efforts such as monitoring, beach cleanup, nest-

ing patrol and raising public awareness. In this way, local people are leading the conservation work for the sea turtle in collaboration with government agencies to promote the protection and wise use of the nesting habitat.

An Island of World Natural Heritage:

With its subtropical climate, Yakushima experiences an annual precipitation exceeding 4000mm and an average temperature around 20 degrees C in lowland area.

This island has some unique features such as the pristine natural environment with the "Yaku-sugi" cedar which is estimated to be more than 1000 years old, and the diverse vertical distribution of flora that changes in accordance with the altitude from the sea level to the mountain top. This unique natural environment was designated as a World Natural Heritage Site in 1993. Today, the island with a population of 14,000 attracts 300,000 visitors annually.

[Loggerhead Sea Turtle *Caretta caretta*]

It is a large species of sea turtle with a body length spanning 70-100cm and the weight of big one reach as much as 180kg. It is reddish to yellow-brown in color with a large and stout head. It feeds on shellfish. It inhabits tropical to temperate waters, and it has the northernmost nesting grounds among all sea turtle species. With exception of nesting, the Loggerhead Sea Turtle leads a completely aquatic life, but its actual habitat range remains unknown.

Footprints of Loggerhead Sea Turtle



Signboard of caution

Contact Information:

Yakushima Town Office
<http://www.yakushima-town.jp/>

