

Yakushima Nagata-hama

Sand shore

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



Yakushima Nagata-hama viewed from the south

Principal Features:

The island of Yakushima, situated 70km off mainland Kyushu, has a circumference of 132km and an area of 50,000ha. The Yakushima Nagata-hama is a beach 3km long and 30m wide on the northwest side of the island and has coarse sand of weathered granite. As the island is predominantly surrounded by steep and weathered sea cliffs, this beach constitutes an important part of the Yakushima coastline. Every year, Loggerhead Sea Turtles arrive to nest on this tiny stretch. Renowned for the highest number of nesting in the north Pacific region, the beach is a crucial stopping point during the lifecycle of these turtles.

Nesting of the Loggerhead Turtle:

During the nesting season spanning May through August, Loggerhead Sea Turtles arrive on the beach at approximately nine o'clock in the evening. Within a time span of roughly 40 minutes, a female turtle lays 60–100 eggs. On some nights, up to 40 turtles nest at once. In 2005, a total of 2799 turtles were observed, of which 1394 nested. Approximately 2–3 months following nesting, hatchlings return to sea.

Conservation Measures:

In 1985, with aims of protecting and conserving both Loggerhead Sea Turtle nesting and the Yakushima's Nagata-hama beach environment, the NGO, "Yakushima Umigame-kan" was estab-

lished. Its volunteer-based activities include Loggerhead Sea Turtle ecosystem assessments, beach cleanups, nesting patrols, protecting the eggs from their laying to hatching, and eco-volunteer training. Thanks to their efforts, Loggerhead Sea Turtles and the offspring are safely protected every year. Yakushima Sea Turtle Aquarium was built near the beach.

A World Natural Heritage Island:

With its subtropical climate, Yakushima experiences an annual precipitation exceeding 4000mm and average temperature around 20°C. Changes in altitude from sea to the mountaintop of 1936m high provide a rare and diverse vertical distribution of pristine flora, the most famous plant being the 1000 year-old "Yaku-sugi" cedar. This unique natural environment was designated a World Natural Heritage Site in 1993. Now the island of which population is 14,000 attracts 300,000 visitors annually.

[Loggerhead Sea Turtle *Caretta caretta*] The Loggerhead is a large species of sea turtle with a body length spanning 70-100cm. They are reddish to yellow-brown in color with heads that are stout and large. They feed on shellfish. The Loggerhead inhabits tropical to temperate waters, and its nesting grounds are the most northerly of all sea turtle species. With exception to nesting, the Loggerhead Sea Turtle leads a completely aquatic life, but its

Hatchlings make way for the sea en masse



The shell of a nesting turtle is measured

actual habitat range remains unknown.

Contact Information:

Yakushima Town Office

<http://www.yakushima-town.jp>

