

Foreword



The sea that surrounds the islands of Japan, an archipelago of some 3,000 kilometers along the eastern edge of the Eurasian continent, encompasses a tremendous range of conditions, with sea ice in its northernmost regions and one of the world's most famous warm currents, the Kuroshio, running through its southern end. The Kuroshio Current is what makes possible coral in these waters. Despite being the northernmost range of coral in the world, the coral reefs which extend south from the Tokara archipelago in the southern part of Japan are particularly renowned for their great diversity in coral species as well as for their beauty.

Coral reefs attract a variety of living creatures, including coral, fish, and benthic organisms, among others. Their workings create a veritable tapestry of complex and rich ecosystems that rival those of rainforests. People living on waters with coral reefs have used the rich resources of the ocean wisely for generations and generations.

In recent years, the number of people taking part in diving has increased, making coral reefs things of interest to many people. Yet at the same time, coral reefs are endangered by landfills, soil flows from the nearby continent, and extraordinary explosions in the populations of crown-of-thorns starfish, among other threats.

In order to preserve the coral reefs, the Ministry of the Environment established in 1970 a marine park system within the national park system and has been working to capture crown-of-thorns starfish for many years. In addition, in 1994, in conjunction with other relevant nations, Japan helped to establish the International Coral Reef Initiative (ICRI), and Japan has been advancing its efforts actively both domestically and abroad with regard to coral reef monitoring and restoration, public awareness, and capacity building.

“Coral Reefs of Japan” has been published on the occasion of the 10th International Coral Reef Symposium through the cooperative efforts of researchers from the Japanese Coral Reef Society and others. It introduces to people both in Japan and around the world the coral reefs of Japan and the current state of Japan's efforts to protect them.

I extend my personal thanks to the many people who worked to make this publication possible.

I very much hope that this book provides insights to the many people around the world who are interested in the protection of coral reefs and hope that it assists in promoting the protection of coral reefs and their sustainable use.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Yuriko Koike'.

Yuriko Koike
Minister of the Environment