

International Coral Reef Research and Monitoring Center

Takahiro Okano

— For conservation of coral reefs in Japan and the world —

Viewing Japan's richest coral reef, "Sekisei lagoon", International Coral Reef Research and Monitoring Center is located at Ishigaki Island, in Yaeyama islands area, the south end of Japan (Photo. 1). The center was established in May 2000 as the base station of the Global Coral Reef Monitoring Network (GCRMN) in Japan and in East Asia. The GCRMN is one of the major activities of International Coral Reef Initiative (ICRI) that is a comprehensive international program for coral reef conservation.

The major roles and functions of this center are collecting and providing information concerning coral reefs. The database holds the information about the reference on coral reef related scientific and management studies, related organizations, and coral reef monitoring data in the covered area. The center also offers the information to the public through Internet. The monitoring survey of coral reefs is another major activity of the center. In 1998, Ministry of the Environment of Japan initiated coral reef monitoring in Sekisei lagoon and around Ishigaki Island. Coverage and type of corals, sedimentation level, etc. are investigated by Spot-check method (see Chapter 3-1) each year. In addition to the monitoring, the center vigorously assists coral reef related studies by individual scientists as well as citizens. It is essential for coral reef conservation



Photo. 1. International Coral Reef Research and Monitoring Center.

to have as many people as possible understand the importance of coral reefs. The center gives special exhibitions of coral reefs so that people can know more about the value and importance of coral reefs, as well as the need for their conservation. The center coordinates and conducts some educational programs using the neighboring Iriomote National Park as its field. Through lectures and seminars, Junior Park Ranger activities, and cooperation with the local elementary schools, the center is taking an important role for promoting awareness of the local people (Photo. 2).

The center has a laboratory, a specimen room, a material room, tools and materials for the surveillance study maintained, and they are offered to the researchers. Moreover, a multipurpose room is available for conferences, special exhibitions, and lectures, etc. concerning coral reef conservation.

Implementation of "Monitoring Sites 1000" project (see Chapter 3-1) and promotion of international cooperation for coral reef conservation are also major functions of the center. As the base of coral reef monitoring network in Japan and in East Asia, International Coral Reef Research and Monitoring Center have been playing an important role for the conservation of the coral reefs in the region.



Photo. 2. A educational program for local people at adjacent reef.