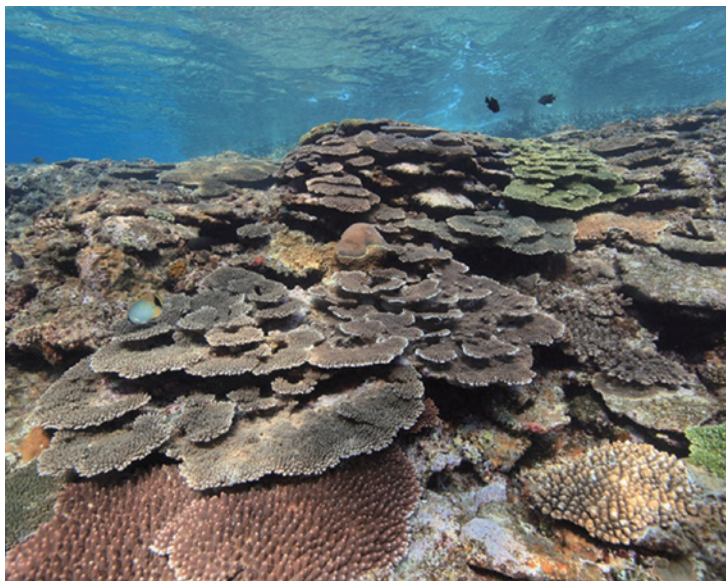


## Keramashoto Coral Reef

## Coral Reef

Geographical Coordinates: 26°12'N, 127°21' E / Altitude: 0m / Area: 8,290ha / Major Type of Wetland: Coral reef / Designation: Marine Park Area of National Park / Municipalities Involved: Zamami Village and Tokashiki Village, Okinawa Prefecture / Ramsar Designation: November 2005 / Ramsar Criteria: 1, 2, 3, 8



A high density of reef-building coral colonies



North coast of Geruma Island



Coral reefs are diverse ecosystems like tropical forests

### General Overview:

The Keramashoto Islands consist of approximately 30 islands, which include Tokashiki Island, Zamami Island, Aka Island and Geruma Island and are situated 20–40km west of the Okinawa Island, the main island of Okinawa, the southernmost prefecture in Japan. Tokashiki Island, the largest of the Keramashoto Islands, has an area of 1,500ha. The population of the two villages, Tokashiki and Zamami, is a little less than 1,600. It is one of the most beautiful and pristine marine areas in Japan.

The 353ha marine area, which is 120ha along the west coast of Tokashiki Island and 233ha between Zamami Island and Aka Island, was designated as a Ramsar site in 2005. After the area was designated as Keramashoto National Park in 2014, the area of the Ramsar Site was expanded to cover the entire marine park area (8,290ha) of the national park.

### The Coral Reef:

In the Keramashoto Coral Reef, a high density of reef-building coral colonies are found in various shapes like tables,

branches, antlers and blocks and more than 248 species of corals have been identified here. Along the western coast of Tokashiki Island, in particular, large populations

of *Acropora* corals in table or branch shapes are found, and, in some places, more than 90% of the area is covered with corals.

Keramashoto Coral Reef supplies coral larvae to the surrounding waters. It is an important sea not only for its beautiful scenery but also for its scientific value. Coral reefs are biologically diverse ecosystems, similar to tropical forests, with a variety of colorful fish typical of coral reefs such as damselfish and butterfly fish.

### Eco-tourism:

With an average monthly temperature of 20 degrees C and clear and warm water, Keramashoto Coral Reef is an ideal place for scuba diving with many divers visiting annually. Since the area was almost completely destroyed by Crown-of-thorns starfish, local people have been engaged in an active eradication of the starfish to protect the coral

reef. People can enjoy whale watching in winter as well.

**[Reef-building Corals]** Some of the coral species form coral reefs and some do not. Reef-building corals maintain symbiotic relationships with the algae *Zooxanthellae* that live in the coral polyp. The photosynthesis of these algae promotes the secretion of calcium carbonate by corals to build coral reefs. The common reef-building coral in genus *Acropora* develops into various shapes such as tables, branches, and blocks.

### Contact Information:

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