

## Yonaha-wan

## Neritic Region, Inter Tidal Zone, Tidal Flat

Geographical Coordinates: 24°45'N, 125°16'E / Altitude: 0 m / Area: 704ha / Major Type of Wetland: Neritic region, inter tidal zone, tidal flat / Designation: Special Protection Area of National Wildlife Protection Area / Municipalities Involved: Miyakojima City, Okinawa Prefecture / Ramsar Designation: July 2012 / Ramsar Criteria: 1, 2, 6



An extensive tidal flat (Photo by K. Nakachi)

Gull-billed Tern (Photo by K. Nakachi)

### General Overview:

The Miyako Island is located 287km southwest of the Okinawa Island. It is an island of subtropical oceanic climate with high temperature and humidity. The island has a coastline of 131km and an area of 15,900ha. The Ramsar Site, Yonaha-wan is a bay found in the southwestern part of this island. The tidal flat in this bay is the largest on the island, with a maximum water depth of 200cm and a maximum tidal variation of 205cm at high tide. It has a diverse natural environment. The coastal area is covered by mangrove forests of *Kandelia obovata* and the land area is covered by the communities of *Pandanus odoratissimus* and Coast Cottonwood. An extensive seagrass (Eelgrass) beds developed around the outlet of the bay consist mainly of endangered sea grass species, such as *Thalassia hemprichii*, *Cymodocea rotundata* and *Syringodium isoetifolium*.

### An Important Staging Site for Migratory Birds:

Rich in benthos, fries and crustaceans, this site is an indispensable staging and feeding site for migratory shorebirds such as plovers, sandpipers, herons and egrets. Approximately 200 to 300 Lesser Sandplover are found here every year. This site is also visited by some endangered bird species including Black-faced Spoonbill, Common Shelduck, Black-winged Stilt and Common Redshank. In addition, it is an important breeding site for Pacific Reef-egret and Black-naped Tern, both of which breed on the reefs near the outlet of the bay, and

also for Grey-capped Emerald Dove that breeds in the coastal forest. Most notably, the Miyako Islands are one of the largest stopover sites for the vulnerable migratory hawk, Grey-faced Buzzard, many of which visit Yonaha-wan.

### An Island of Endemic Reptiles:

The Miyako Island has some endemic species. The endemic reptiles are found around Yonaha-wan as well, including *Takydromus toyamai*, *Calamaria pfefferi* and *Hebius concoloratus*. The sea around the outlet of the bay is a good habitat for endangered turtles such as Hawksbill Turtle, Loggerhead Turtle and Green Turtle. Yonaha-wan is a tidal flat that supports a rich biodiversity.

Furthermore, Yonaha-wan is a good fishing ground for fish and sea grasses. The aquaculture of *Caulerpa lentillifera* is thriving and natural ones can be harvested as well. Coconut Crab, locally known as "Makugan", has been used for foods and ornaments by local people since ancient time, but the population is decreasing these days. Although the "Miyako-jima City Coconut Crab Conservation Act" enforced in January 2012 was effective in stopping overhunting, there is a pressing need to improve its habitat, including mitigation of water degradation caused by red soil inflow.

### Traditional Event at Yonaha-wan:

March 3 in the lunar calendar is a special day called "Sanitsu" in this island. People celebrate the day with an event called

"Hamauri". Women clean their bodies with seawater and enjoy clam gathering on the seashore to celebrate the coming season. In addition to this, people enjoy special activities on the shore of the Yonaha-bay every year, including "Miyako-uma", a horse race with native horses, and "Miyako-zumo" a traditional local sport of sumo wrestling. Yonaha-wan is a place for local culture and tradition to be passed down to many generations. There are many sacred places called "Utaki" on the coast of Yonaha-wan as well as many Shinto shrines. The Utaki, a place for local religion, and the shrine have been venerated by the community as a place for worship and ritual from ancient days.

### Contact Information:

Miyakojima City Office

<http://www.city.miyakojima.lg.jp/>

