

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-jima Island is located 287km southwest of the Okinawa Island. It is an island of subtropical oceanic climate with high temperature and humidity. It has a coastline of 131km and an area of 159 km². 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 in the island, with a maximum water depth of 200cm and maximum tidal variation of 205cm at high tide. It has a diverse natural environment. The coastal area is covered by a mangrove forest of *Kandelia obovata* and the land area is covered by the communities of *Pandanus odoratissimus* and Beach Hibiscus. An extensive seagrass (Eelgrass) bed developed around the outlet of the bay consisting 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 Sand Plovers 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. It also is an important breeding site for Eastern Reef Heron and Black-naped Tern, both of which breed on

the reefs near the outlet of the bay, and for the Emerald Dove that breeds in the coastal forest. The Miyako islands are also one of the largest stop-over sites for the vulnerable migratory hawk, the Grey-faced Buzzard, many of which visit Yonaha-wan.

An Island of Endemic Reptiles:

The Miyako-jima Island has some endemic species. The endemic reptiles are found around Yonaha-wan as well, including *Takydromus toyamai*, *Calamaria pfefferi* and *Amphiesma concolorum*. 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.

Moreover, Yonaha-wan is a good fishing ground for fish and sea grasses. The aquaculture of Sea Grapes is thriving and natural Sea Grapes can be harvested as well. The Coconut Crabs with the local name "Makugan" have been used for foods and ornaments by local people since ancient time, but the population is decreasing these days. Although the "Miyako Island Coconut Crab Conservation Act" enforced in January 2012 was effective to stop 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 at the shore of the Yonaha-bay every year, including "Miyako-uma", a horse race using native horses, and "Miyako-zumo" a traditional local sumo wrestling. Yonaha-wan is a place for local culture and tradition to be passed on for 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:

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