

A review on Nomination of
Amami-Oshima Island, Tokunoshima Island, the northern part of Okinawa Island and
Iriomote Island
for inscription on the World Heritage List

Emerging Problems Tarnish the Modest Progress on Protecting OUV of Iriomote Island



October, 2019

Japan Tiger and Elephant Fund / Yamaneko Patrol



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Background

In May, 2018, the technical evaluation mission of IUCN submitted the technical evaluation report of natural and mixed properties including “AMAMI-OSHIMA ISLAND, TOKUNOSHIMA ISLAND, THE NORTHERN PART OF OKINAWA ISLAND, AND IRIOMOTE ISLAND” nominated for inclusion on the World Heritage List. IUCN showed its concerns related Iriomote Island in the report as follows.

4.2 Boundaries

“Nevertheless, its ‘wholeness’ will not be fully satisfactory without the inclusion of [...] possibly some smaller extensions to include more of the important river valleys in north/northwest Iriomote” (P. 43)

4.5 Threat

“[...] disturbance and other impacts from tourism, and associated facilities and activities, are a major future threat (and an important current threat on Iriomote) that needs to be carefully managed. Both Iriomote and northern Okinawa already receive substantial visitor numbers, and Iriomote has seen a dramatic increase in recent years, raising concerns among local communities and stakeholders.

Despite various ongoing and encouraging initiatives (tourism planning, tourism guidelines, tour guide training and certification, etc.), there is an urgent need to take a more holistic approach and to proactively plan any future tourism development on the nominated islands, which should address questions such as: how to establish, monitor and enforce island and area specific carrying capacities; how to regulate, minimize, or mitigate impacts from present and planned tourism facilities and activities; and how to protect particularly sensitive areas from any adverse effects of tourism development. ” (P.45)

The Government of Japan, in response to the concerns and recommendation including the ones related to Iriomote Island by IUCN, withdrew the nomination, reconsider the boundaries of the properties to be nominated and submit the revised nomination. The problem is whether the revised nomination would have correctly responded to and certainly dispelled the concerns related to Iriomote Island shown by IUCN in 2018. This report will discuss this point through reporting the related actual situation on the ground of Iriomote Island and evaluating the efforts for improvement made by the responsible management authorities.

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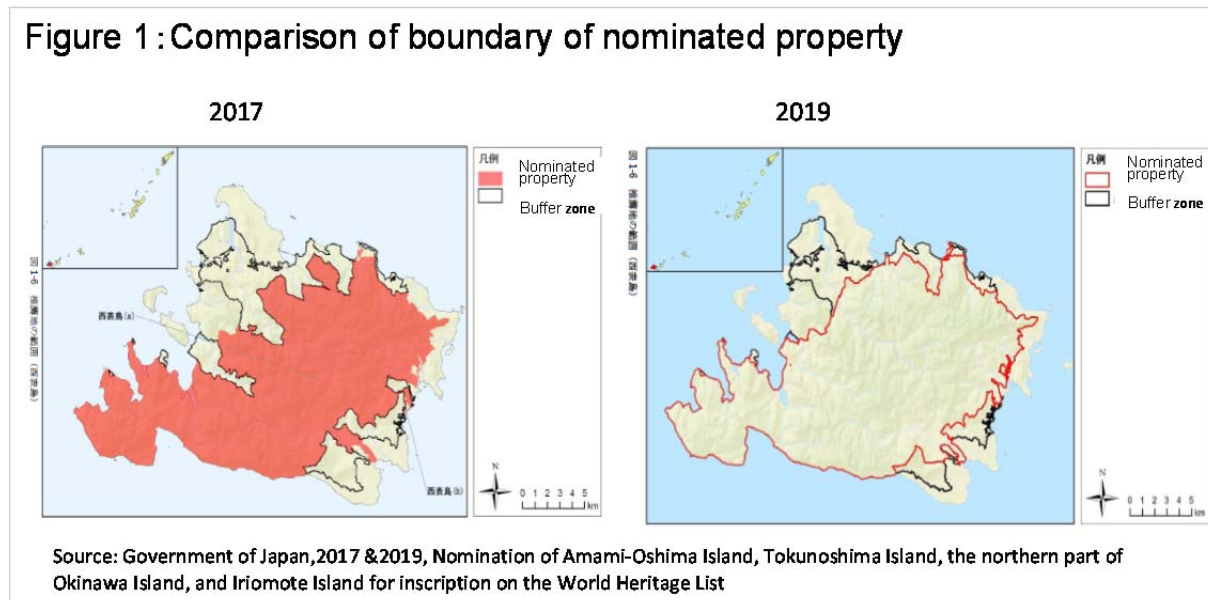
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1. Extension of the nominated property

1-1 Outline of extension of the nominated property proposed by Japan

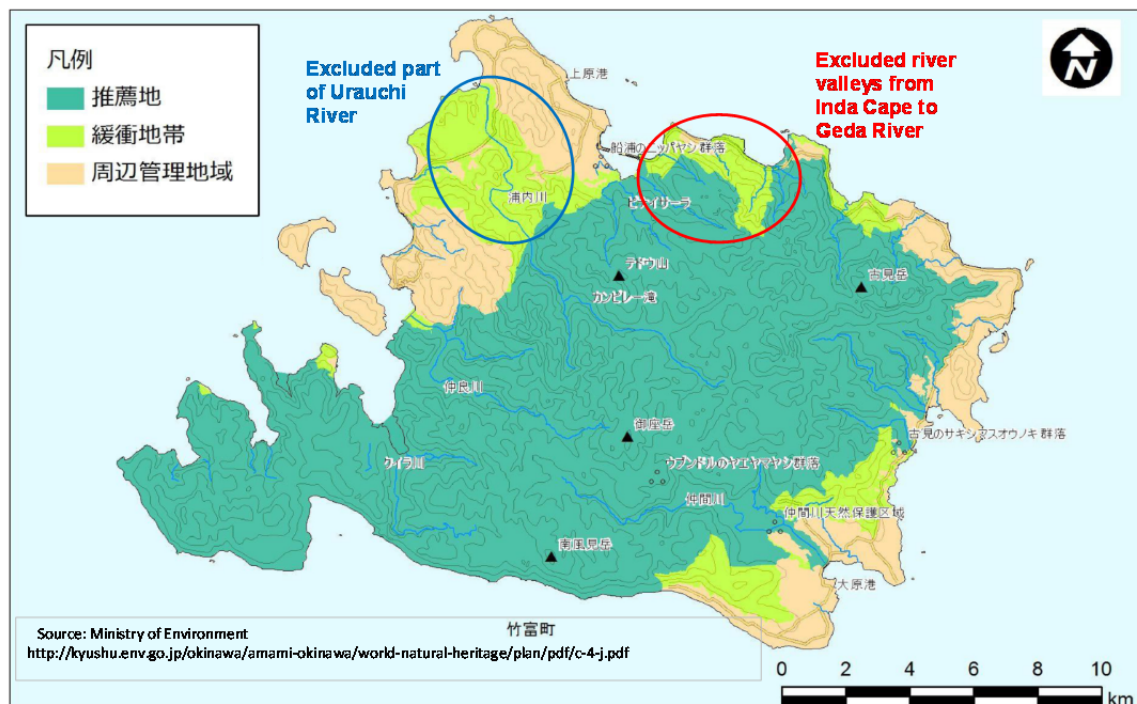
As aforementioned, in response to the IUCN report submitted to UNESCO in May, 2018, the nominated property in Iriomote Island was extended to include more area in the revised nomination made in January, 2019, compared to the one proposed in 2017 (Figure 1).

Figure 1 : Comparison of boundary of nominated property



The major change is the inclusion of river valleys flowing in Funaura Bay including Hinai River and Nishida River, Urauchi River basin between Kampire Falls and Gunkan-iwa Rock, and Nakara River which had been designated as buffer zone in 2017 nomination.

Figure 2: The river valleys in the west edge of north coast area from Inda Cape to Geda River, and the Urauchi River from its river mouth to Gunkan-iwa Rock excluded from the nominated property



However, the river valleys in north coast area from Inda Cape to Geda River, and the Urauchi River from its river mouth to Gunkan-iwa Rock are still left as buffer zones (Figure 2).

The river valleys in north coast area from Inda Cape to Geda River are one of the most important habitats for resident individuals of Iriomote cats (*Prionailurus bengalensis iriomotensis*). It is located at the western edge of north coast area of Iriomote Island, that is characterized as a critical area for securing their gene flow between the west part and southeast part of the lowland¹.

Urauchi River which is the home of 246 inland water fish species² is known for the largest number of fish species among all of the properties included in the nomination. Furthermore, there are only 5 species of pure freshwater fish while there are 48 species of diadromous fish, 120 species of brackish water fish, 73 species of peripheral freshwater fish³ and 23 undesignated species⁴. Therefore, the river mouth and brackish waters area are characterized as particularly important part of Urauchi River in terms of fish species diversity and conservation needs for “inland fish species in 4 islands including nominated properties”⁵.

1-2 Summary

The nominated property still excludes the following areas in north and north western part of Iriomote Island which constitute the OUV of this property. Therefore, the proposed boundary does not ensure the ‘wholeness’ of the property.

- The river valleys in the western edge of north coast area from Inda Cape to Geda River, which are critical for dispersal of Iriomote cats distributing in lowland.
- The most part of river mouth and brackish waters area of Urauchi River

2. Emerging problems in the nominated properties and buffer zones

2-1 Increase of road collision of Iriomote cats

2-1-1 Increase of collision in the area where no road structure for preventing it is equipped

The road collision of Iriomote cats on the Prefectural Highway 215 has increased for 40 years, and 2018 hit all-time highs of 9 cases (Figure 3). In the year, since the first collision had been identified in January, the incidents continually occurred at the highest rate as ever. In October, the number reached to the record-tying of 7 cases identified in 2016. Though the Ministry of Environment called for drivers to secure responsible driving as a matter of urgency on November 28th⁶, additional collisions occurred in December 5th and 7th, so the total number in that year surpassed the past record by 2 cases. In 2019, one case was identified on July 21st at the time of the end of September.

¹ JTEF and Yamaneko Patrol, 2017.a

<https://www.jtef.jp/en/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/20170925-WNH-Iriomote-JTEF.pdf>

² GoJ, 2019,

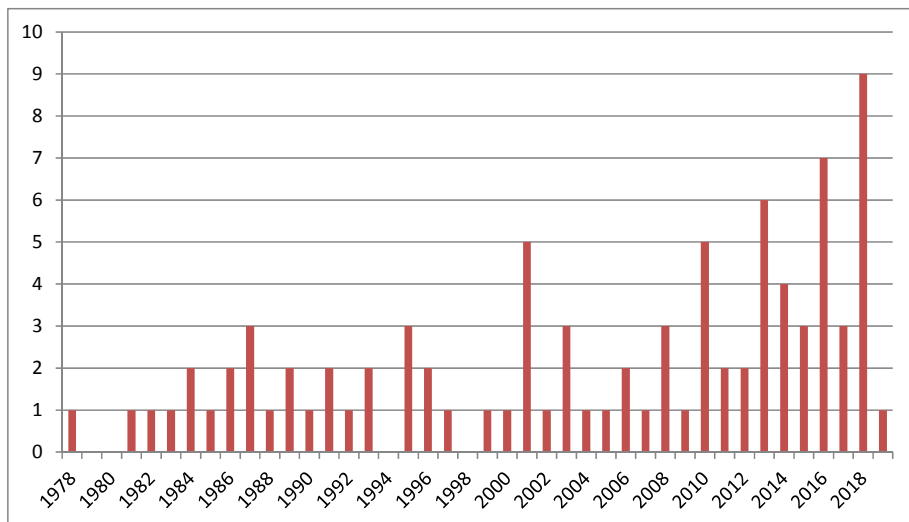
³ Ibid.

⁴ Suzuki, 2017,

⁵ Nomination, 2.A.2.2.5 (GoJ, 2019)

⁶ Yaeyama Mainichi Shimbun, 2018.a

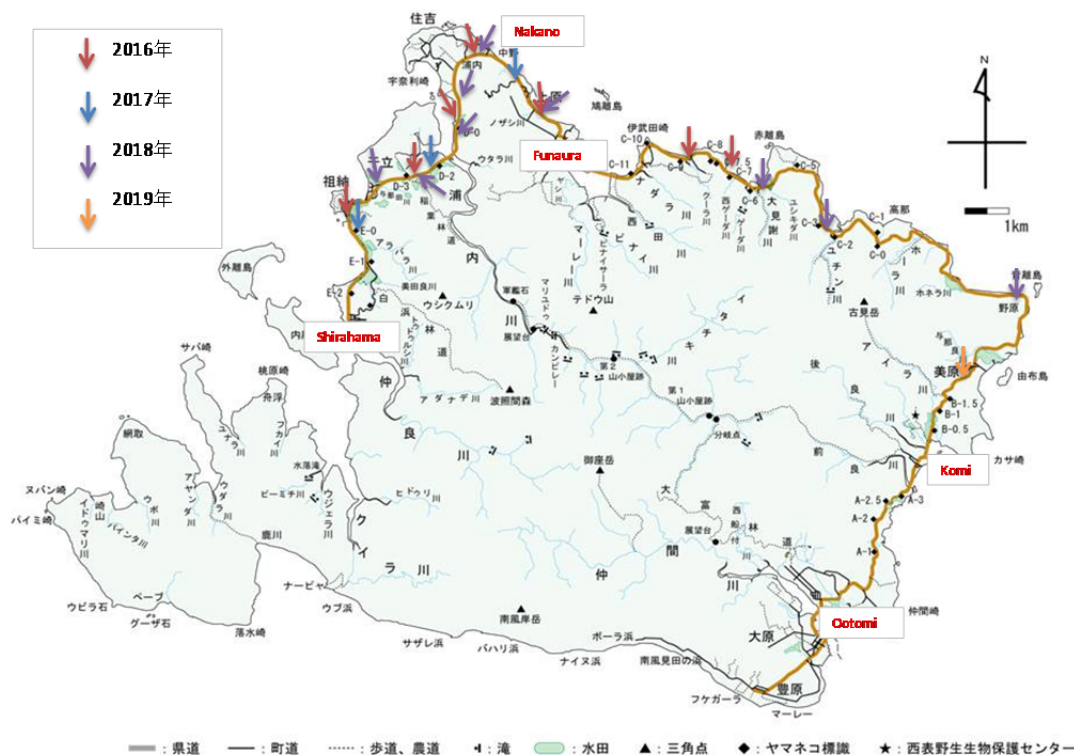
Figure 3: Number of road collision of Iriomote cats



Ministry of Environment, Sub-committee on the Plan for Protection and Recovery Program of Iriomote Cat, the Committee on Reviewing the Measures for Conservation of Wildlife and press articles

Since 2016 around, the collisions have been concentrating on a limited road section in west side of the island (from Funaura to Shirahama). In fact, 14 cases out of 20 cases occurred between January 2016 and September 2019 are identified in this section⁷ as shown in Figure 4.

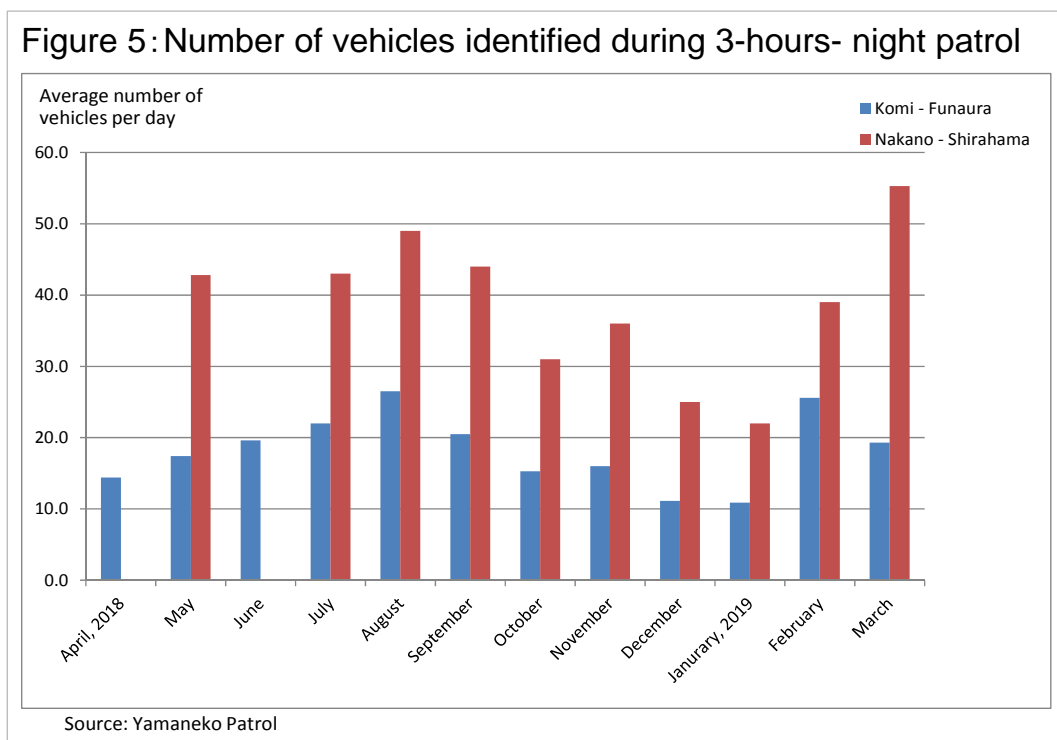
Figure 4: Distribution of the road collision spots of Iriomote cats in 2016 -2019



Source: Ministry of Environment, Sub-committee on the Plan for Protection and Recovery Program of Iriomote Cat, the Committee on Reviewing the Measures for Conservation of Wildlife / Yamaneko Patrol

⁷ MoE, 2017 - 2019,

One of the reasons for the increase is lack of specific road structures for preventing the collision including a flyover, an underpass and a fence to steer the cats to underpasses in the section between Funaura and Shirahama. The road management authority or Okinawa Prefecture has avoided constructing those structures to be costly in the flat terrain seen in the section while it equipped the eastern section between Funaura and Ootomi with 123 underpasses and 7 bridges⁸. In the consequence, Iriomote cats have no option without passing by the highway for movement between the mountain side and sea side. There is no plan to construct such a road structure in the near future⁹. Nevertheless, the residents between Funaura and Shirahama would drive intensively because seven villages scattered along the road in the section. Furthermore, there are many bases of tour guide companies, hotels/inns and restaurants because the area is close to popular tourist sites including Pinaisara Falls and Baras Island, so that the traffic is heavy. Yamaneko Patrol made a traffic survey from 19:30 to 22:30 through the year (April 2018 – March 2019)¹⁰ and find out how busy is the traffic in the section, particularly between Nakano and Shirahama where Iriomoe cats have been hit by a car frequently in the previous year. It is so obvious that the traffic was much heavier in the section (red bar) than one between Funaura and Komi (blue bar) (Figure 5).



Therefore, the lack of specific road structures for preventing cats' collision may force them to cross the highway in the section with more traffic and cause the increase of collision. It is estimated that the entry of visitors could increase by 1.8 times in 3 years after inclusion of Iriomote Island on WHL¹¹. It is a grave concern that this situation in the section would get worse due to increase in traffic caused by booming tourism economy stimulated by inscription of the island on the WHL.

⁸ Okinawa Prefecture & Nansei Environmental Laboratory, 2018

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ JTEF and Yamaneko Patrol, 2019.a

¹¹ Okinawa Prefecture, 2016

2-1-2 Acclimation of Iriomote cats to human being

The increase of road collision of Iriomote cats may also be accelerated by “acclimation to human being” which may contribute to increase of the animals’ occurrence on the highway with less caution of cars. Lack of regulation on viewing/filming, which may cause acclimation of the cats is a serious problem in this regard¹².

The Ministry of Environment announced “5 requests” targetting general public through a handout and on the Internet, which include “don’t feed”, “don’t chase”, “don’t approach to a kitten”, “don’t flash a strong light” and “don’t disturb any behavior”¹³. Nevertheless, such requests are not legally bound and the messages have been delivered only in Japanese.

Then, Taketomi Town announced that it is planning to establish an ordinance for preventing road collision of Iriomote cats, which may include regulation of viewing/filming them in December, 2018¹⁴, however, the preparation has yet been substantiated.

2-1-3 Summary

At present, there isn’t existing or planned specific road structure at all for preventing road collision of Iriomote cats in the highway section where such incidents have occurred intensively in recent years. Additionally, there is no regulation on viewing/filming the cats for preventing their acclimation to human being, that is contributing to their frequent occurrence on the road.

Under those situations, it is seriously concerned adverse effects to Iriomote cats, the core of OUV of the property in this island, cannot be prevented if traffic and irresponsible driving would further increase due to growing tourism pressure inspired by inscription of Iriomote Island on the WHL.

2-2 Reconstruction plan of Urauchi Bridge

2-2-1 Outline of the reconstruction plan

The bridge for the Prefectural highway 215 to cross Urauchi River is called Urauchi Bridge. The location is included in the buffer zone in 2019 nomination. At present, Okinawa Prefecture is planning to reconstruct this bridge due to aging. The reconstruction was supposed to launch by the end of March, 2019 initially, and continue for 12 years¹⁵. This plan intends to construct a makeshift bridge by filling large-scale mounds with 6.69 m in height, more than 15.5 m in width and 245.7 m in length¹⁶ (see the part shown by an arrowed line in orange color, Figure 6). The makeshift bridge and mounds are supposed to be removed when the construction of the new bridge is completed.

¹² JTEF and Yamaneko Patrol, 2017.b

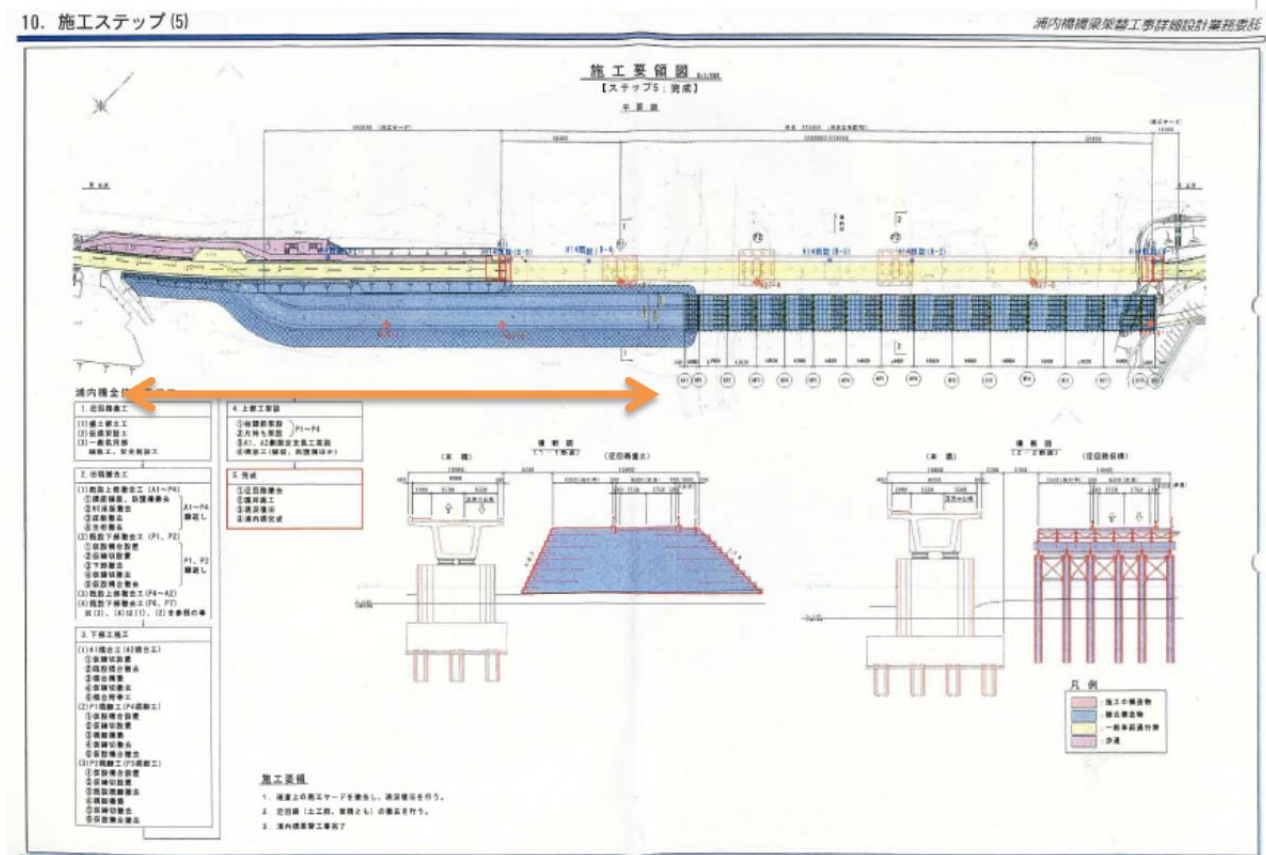
¹³ “Attention in case you would encounter Iriomote cats” <https://iwcc.jp/pop/>

¹⁴ Yaeyama Mainichi Shimbun, 2018.b

¹⁵ Yaeyama Mainichi Shimbun, 2019

¹⁶ Yaeyama Civil Engineering Office of Okinawa Prefecture, 2019

Figure 6: Reconstruction of Urauchi River



Source: Yaeyama Civil Engineering Office of Okinawa Prefecture, 2019, The guidance map of the detailed design of reconstruction of Urauchi Bridge

2-2-2 Impact of filling mounds to mangrove, aquatic organism and Iriomote cats

The planned filling mounds would pose not only the impact of landfill itself, but also serious change in flow channel and tidally influenced flow velocity, which would cause entrenching the bottom of the river or new deposition extensively, so that mangrove forests around and aquatic organism depending on them could be damaged.

Iriomote cats would be impacted directly, also. The mounds would block the move of them through the west-side river bed close to the shore under the bridge at low tide¹⁷. Even if a marginal area for the move could be secured when the range of tide would get significantly wide, the tidal stream generated by the mounds may probably remove it quickly.

Furthermore, the mounds could steer the cats which would tend to move along a barrier to the highway at the west side of the bridge, so that the risk of collision would increase.

2-2-3 Impact of construction traffic

It is planned that construction materials will be unloaded at Shirahama Port. So, the construction

¹⁷ While it is reported that Iriomote cats can move in both direction if the angle of slope is within 45 degree (Okinawa Prefecture, 2018), the angle of the mounds is planned to be 43 degree. Even if the cats could climb up the mounds, they would be steered on the makeshift bridge or road inevitably. Anyway, the mounds will cause serious impact to Iriomote cats.

vehicles are supposed to move mainly between Shirahama and Urauchi Bridge. But, as mentioned in section 2-1-1, there is no specific road structure for preventing road collision and a lot of collision have actually occurred in the area¹⁸. Though the density of construction traffic is unknown because Okinawa Prefecture has not predicted/assessed the impact of construction traffic¹⁹, considerably intense traffic will increase the risk of collision. Moreover, if the collision would occur, the heavy weight of construction vehicles must cause high fatality.

2-2-4 Impact of ancillary work including land development for securing construction materials storage site

The construction material storage sites are planned to be developed at the car parking space managed by a tourism company and at an open space located in Serchi, Urauchi at the first stage of construction. However, those storage sites could be expanded or other sites could be newly developed, depending on the future needs.

Furthermore, it is predicted that they would set up some heavy machine including crane and develop some parking space for construction vehicles elsewhere than the filling sites. Those developments could lead to deforesting mangrove and reclaiming wetlands in the vicinity of the river.

Such ancillary work would also impact endangered species including some locally protected aquatic species and *Acrostichum aureum* designated as “Endangered” in MoE Red List, which forms only one large-scale community here in this island.

2-2-5 Summary

Considering the considerable scale and length of construction period of 12 years, and lack of cautious environmental impact assessment with regard to mangrove, aquatic organism and Iriomote cats, the impact of this construction plan should be a serious matter of concern²⁰ for protecting critical components of the OUV of the property in Iriomote Island.

3. Holistic controls on tourism development

3-1 Establishment of an island carrying capacity and a plan / institution for securing tourism impact within the limits of the capacity

3-1-1 Problems of the process on discussion of a plan for establishing, monitoring and enforcing a carrying capacity of Iriomote Island

¹⁸ Road collisions of Iriomote cats have recently occurred between Shirahama and Urauchi Bridge in 18 January, 2016 (in Sonai), March 28, 2016 (in Fukanta, Urauchi), December 12, 2017 (in Sonai), September 22, 2017 (in Minapishi, Urauchi), December 5, 2018 (in Fukanta, Urauchi) and December 12, 2018 (in Sonai) (MoE, 2017-2019)

¹⁹ E-mail Response dated April 26, 2019 from Yaeyama Civil Engineering Office of Okinawa Prefecture to the inquiry from Yamaneko Patrol

²⁰ Yamaneko Patrol has submitted a report and recommendation to Okinawa Prefecture on this matter (JTEF/Yamaneko Patrol, 2019.b)。

Okinawa Prefecture, one of the management authorities of the nominated properties, established a committee to discuss a “Plan on Management of Visitors for Securing Sustainable Iriomote Island” in March, 2019 in order to respond to the part of the recommendation by IUCN in 2018: “4.5 Threat [...] there is an urgent need to take a more holistic approach and to proactively plan any future tourism development on the nominated islands, which should address questions such as: how to establish, monitor and enforce island [and area specific] carrying capacities”. (The underline and bracket were put by the authors of this report.)

However, the committee was characterized as a forum among local tourism businesses and management authorities (administrations). Local communities and NGO were not only excluded from the list of members but also prohibited to observe the meetings of the committee, so that the process has totally lacked participation of other stake holders than tourism business and transparency.

In addition to that, the member of the secretariat of the committee does not include the tourism promotion section of the Prefecture as one of the responsible authority but the nature conservation section only. So, it is questionable how to secure the monitoring and enforcement of the carrying capacities in the future even if it would be reasonably established.

3-1-2 Problems of outline of the “Plan on Management of Visitors for Securing Sustainable Iriomote Island”

The outline of the “Plan on Management of Visitors for Securing Sustainable Iriomote Island” ²¹ was distributed at the sub-local meeting of Iriomote Island of the Nominated WH Regional Liaison Committee, which Yamaneko Patrol is a member to. However, the 5 policies included in the plan are not specific overall, and seemingly just listed without accessing priority and achievability. Particularly, two policy items which are directly related to the IUCN recommendation above should be discussed in details as follows.

“Policy #1: Studying and establishing a carrying capacity of Iriomote Island

Study and establish a carrying capacity of Iriomote Island in terms of visitors category including leisurely visitors, activity-based visitors, single-day visitors and overnight visitors, season, capacity on disposal of waste, capacity on supply of drinking water, etc.

It is obvious that no one can arrive at a definite number of visitors forming a threshold of the carrying capacity in scientific manner even though the subjects shown above would be investigated and discussed repeatedly. A “maximum number of visitors to be accepted (preliminary value)” should be established first as a rough indication. Then, they should monitor the situation on various subjects including the items shown in the policy, feedback the results, and correct the goal (preliminary value). With respect to establishing the preliminary value as rough indication, the recorded number of visitors entered in the island in 2018 in principle, that is the year IUCN warned the impact of over-tourism and, possibly available information on their journey should be considered.

²¹ Okinawa Prefecture, 2019.a

“Policy#2: Designating a management institution initiated by the tourism industry in Iriomote Island”

Designating an institution to manage and motivate the visitors on their entry to and act in the island. Not the tourism business which would primarily send the visitors to the island but the local tourism business which would take in them must initiate management of entry of visitors. They should control the tourism impact to the environment and life of resident, also.

Considering the reality that the major travel agencies have controlled how much visitors would be supplied to the island, the above policy is not more than a “wish” by local businesses. Instead, Okinawa Prefecture should initiate to form a platform comprising major travel agencies, and let it enact an organizational rule prescribing the protocol for throttling back/stopping the activity for attracting visitors to the island once it is predicted that the supposed number of visitors would exceed a certain carrying capacity established by the platform.

3-1-3 Summary

Though the process of planning visitors’ control have launched, the discussion has reflected just a wish of local tourism businesses of the island and avoided facing the reality on what would determine the number of visitors into the island. Consequently, the proposed policy lacks effectiveness and feasibility, so that it would not produce any definite measures for responding to IUCN’s concerns.

3-2 Establishment of specific areas’ carrying capacity and a plan / institution for securing tourism impact within the limits of the capacity

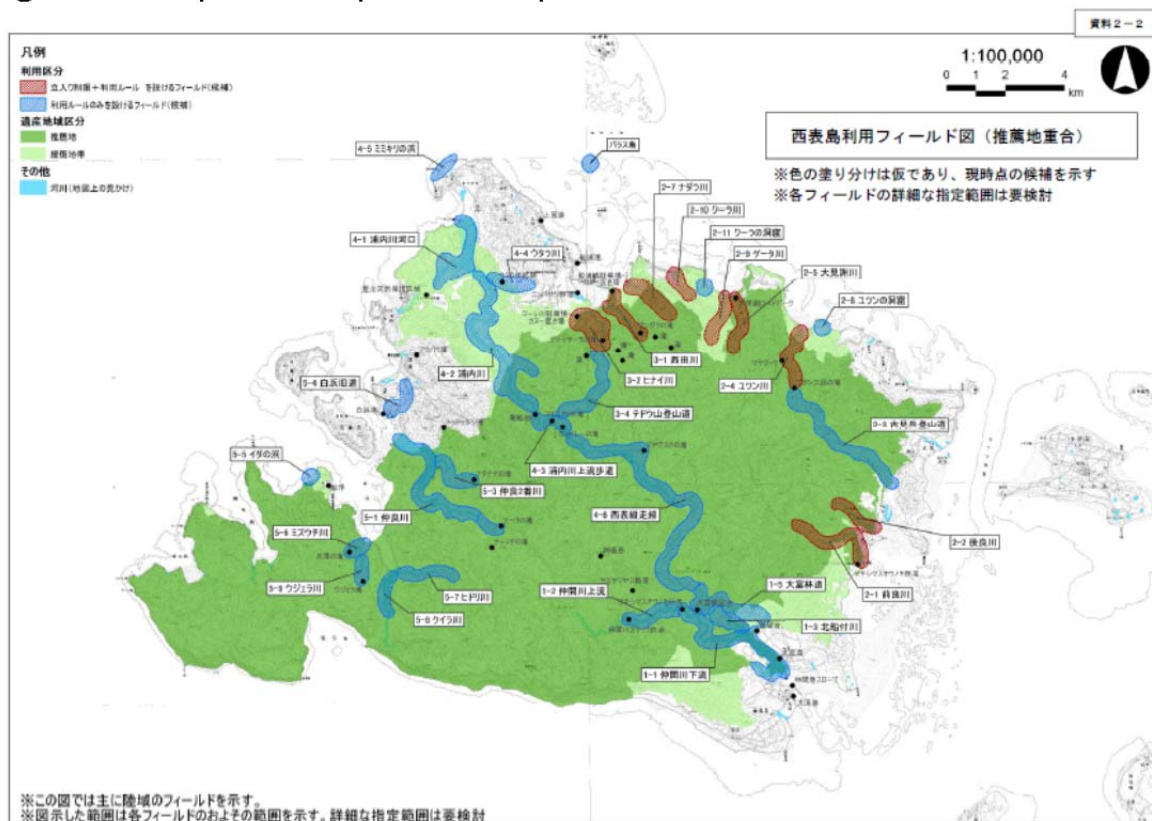
3-2-1 Problems of outline of the “Policy on tourism management in the spots for experiences in nature”

Ministry of Environment and Taketomi Town, the management authorities of the nominated properties, have considered about the response to the part of the recommendation by IUCN in 2018: “4.5 Threat [...] there is an urgent need to take a more holistic approach and to proactively plan any future tourism development on the nominated islands, which should address questions such as: how to establish, monitor and enforce [island and] area specific carrying capacities”. (The underline and bracket were put by the authors of this report.)

As the result, “Policy on tourism management in the spots for experiences in nature²²” and a “Map of the spots for experiences in nature” (Figure 7) were distributed at a meeting targeting the local visitors guides in the island on September 17th, 2019 in the eastern area of the island and on 18th in the western area respectively in accordance with Okinawa Prefecture’s “Project on supporting ecotourism promotion”.

²² Okinawa Prefecture, 2019.b

Figure 7: Map of the spots for experiences in nature



Okinawa Prefecture, 2019.a, Document No.2-2 distributed at the 1st 2019 meeting held on August 28, 2019 of “Iriomote Island Sub-local Meeting FY 2017”, “Regional Liaison Committee on Amami-Oshima Island, Tokunoshima Island, the northern part of Okinawa Island, and Iriomote Island Natural World Heritage Nominated Property”

The policy shown there intends to designate two types of areas in the nominated property and buffer zone. That is, the area to be designated as “specified natural tourism property” (the part shaded in dark red, Figure 7) where regulations on certain acts disturbing natural ecosystem, etc. and entry exceeding the designated number of visitors in some areas are applied, and the other areas where the management is to be left to the existing voluntary rules or non-compulsory agreement between tourism companies (the part shaded in dark blue, Figure 7).

However, such a divided control scheme should be said to confront the “holistic approach” required by IUCN in 2018. Moreover, the problem of the existing non-compulsory rules, which have been criticized for being ineffective will continue.

3-2-2 Summary

For the present, the current discussion on the regulations on certain acts and entry exceeding the designated number of visitors seemingly intend to avoid a holistic approach and take the existing individual approach. That would cause an inconsistency among specific areas on who, on what grounds and how strict would the common tourism activities be regulated. It is essential to persist in a holistic approach and then apply the single legally binding rule based on Taketomi Town ordinance to be enacted in accordance with Ecotourism Promotion Act to each specific area.

4. Active participation of the communities and stakeholders concerned with the property

4-1 Growing disregard by the management authorities of “active participation” to the sustainable protection, conservation and management of the property

As mentioned in “3-1-1”, the discussion on a plan for establishing, monitoring and enforcing a carrying capacity of Iriomote Island has been discussed at a closed committee composing of a part of local tourism businesses and management authorities. The outline of the plan was shown at the sub-local meeting of Iriomote Island of the Nominated WH Regional Liaison Committee, but what was discussed and how the committee arrived at the conclusion has not been disclosed at all. Similarly, the information on reviewing regulations of entry exceeding the designated number of visitors in specific areas has been exclusively shared with local tourism businesses so that the local communities have been just sidelined. But, these were not all. The “Taketomi Town Ordinance on Visitors Guides” which might mandate even some local people who voluntarily and tentatively guide someone be licensed was adopted by the Taketomi Town Assembly on September 20, 2019. The policy and strategy behind the ordinance had been discussed and prepared at a closed committee comprising of a part of local tourism businesses, administrations and an expert unfamiliar with the circumstances of the island. The public hearings on the “outline” of the ordinance were held after the bill had been submitted to the Assembly while the text of the bill has not been disclosed even after the enactment.

The disregards of democracy and the interests of local communities are too much to tolerate. Yamaneko Patrol as a member of the sub-local meeting of Iriomote Island of the Nominated WH Regional Liaison Committee has repeatedly requested the management authorities to open the discussion of those committees / meetings to the public, but the requests were completely dismissed. Incidentally, Okinawa Prefecture explained the reason why the committee should be closed is “to have a frank discussion” on August 28th, 2019 at the sub-local meeting of Iriomote Island.

4-2 Summary

In Iriomote Island, insufficient consultation with local communities has been a vicious practice. For example, concerns about the responsibility of the local fire-fighting teams in the case of emergency search of missing visitors, and the disadvantages local people could suffer due to the limited capacity of two doctor’s offices in the remote island if the doctors have to respond to emergency healthcare of visitors have been repeatedly appealed. But, nothing has happened.

However, nomination of Iriomote Island might give small hope for improvement because the Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention, paragraph 119 “Sustainable use” prescribes as follows: “Legislations, policies and strategies affecting World Heritage properties should ensure the protection of the Outstanding Universal Value, support the wider conservation of natural and cultural heritage, and promote and encourage the active participation of the communities and stakeholders concerned with the property as necessary conditions to its sustainable protection,

conservation, management and presentation.”

Nevertheless, as aforementioned, all of the discussion on establishing, monitoring and enforcing a carrying capacity of Iriomote Island and specific areas and licensing scheme on visitors guides which might regulate a certain activities related to livelihood of local people have been done behind closed door though all of those subjects are linked to the interests of local people from their nature, and local people have repeatedly requested a transparency and open debate.

IUCN reported in 2018: “perceived shortcomings in the consultation process, noting that some residents and/or other stakeholders believe that they were not consulted enough on the selection and delineation of nominated areas and buffer zones, or the development of the regional action plan. ”However, the problematic trend has got worse and worse in Iriomote Island.

5. Conclusion

Firstly, expansion of nominated property is insufficient.

Secondly, establishment of specific road structures essentially required in the hot spot area of road collusion, the most serious threat to Iriomote cats, has been neglected. The countermeasure against acclimation of cats to human being, that is contributing to frequent occurrence of them on the road has yet started off.

Thirdly, the impact of reconstruction plan of Urauchi Bridge to mangrove, aquatic organism and Iriomote cats have not been accessed enough, so that any counterplan to minimize the impact have yet been considered.

Fourthly, the current discussion on the plan / institution for establishing, monitoring and enforcing a carrying capacity of Iriomote Island has not produced any meaningful policy securing feasibility and effectiveness.

Fifthly, the current discussion on the plan / institution for establishing, monitoring and enforcing a carrying capacity of specific areas is not based on a holistic approach, so that inconsistent and ineffective management schemes are likely to coexist alongside some new compulsory scheme to be applied to some limited areas.

Sixthly, active participation of the communities and stakeholders concerned with the property has got more and more disregarded by the management authorities.

Thus, it is doubtful that a series of measures for controlling the impact particularly from increasing tourism, which include a response to the concern shown by IUCN in 2018 could be implemented in the near future. It should be a matter of great concern that inscription of the nominated properties in Iriomote Island on WHL under the present conditions would rather threaten the OUV of the Island.

6. Recommendation

JTEF / Yamaneko Patrol recommend that IUCN makes the recommendations to the State Party and World Heritage Committee as follows.

To the State Party,

1 Boundary

- Including the river valleys in the west edge of north coast area from Inda Cape to Geda River, and the Urauchi River from its river mouth to Gunkan-iwa Rock in the nominated property.

2 Road collision of Iriomote cats

Based on the advice from experts and consultation to local communities:

- Establishing specific road structures including flyovers, underpasses and fences to steer the cats to underpasses for preventing road collision in the section between Funaura and Shirahama; and
- Enacting a Taketomi Town ordinance mandating the drivers, particularly the ones in the course of business, with specific requirements including proceed with caution, adjustment of speed, report of a collision and education to their employees, and regulating viewing and filming of the cats, that is causing acclimation of the cats and then contributing to their frequent occurrence on the road.

3 Reconstruction plan of Urauchi Bridge

Based on the advice from experts and consultation to local communities:

- Adopting a bridge structure for the west side of the makeshift bridge instead of filling mounds to avoid serious impact to mangrove forests, aquatic organism and Iriomote cats;
- Assessing the impact to mangrove, aquatic organism and Iriomote cats of ancillary work including land development for securing the site for construction materials storage, parking construction vehicles and setting up heavy machines, and minimizing the impact to them;
- Mandating the contractors to secure proceed with caution, adjustment of speed, report of a collision and education to their employees; and
- Deferring the permission based on the Natural Park Act to the construction project until Okinawa Prefecture pledges to compile with all the requirements above.

4 A plan / institution for establishing, monitoring and enforcing a carrying capacity of Iriomote Island

Based on the advice from experts and consultation to local communities:

- Describing a policy in the “Plan on Management of Visitors for Securing Sustainable Iriomote Island”, that is setting a maximum number of visitors to be accepted (preliminary value) based on the recorded number of visitors in 2018 in principle, and possibly, available information on their journey, monitoring the entry and the circumstances, providing feedback, and correcting the preliminary value; and

- Describing a policy in the plan, that is forming a platform comprising major travel agencies, which is having an organizational rule prescribing the protocol for throttling back/stopping the activity for attracting visitors to the island once it is predicted that the supposed number of visitors would exceed a certain carrying capacity established by the platform.

5 A plan / institution for establishing, monitoring and enforcing a carrying capacity of specific areas

Based on the advice from experts and consultation to local communities:

- Persisting in a holistic approach and applying the single legally binding rule based on Taketomi Town ordinance to be enacted in accordance with the Ecotourism Promotion Act to each specific area. The ordinance should prescribe regulations on certain acts disturbing natural ecosystem, etc. and entry exceeding the designated number of visitors.

6 Active participation of the communities and stakeholders concerned with the property

- Holding all formal WH-related meetings, the committee /working group meetings reviewing legislations, policies, strategies and plans in particular, to public in principle, and hearing and reflecting the views of participants on the subject of the meetings.

To the World Heritage Committee,

- Defers the examination of the nomination of Amami-Oshima Island, Tokunoshima Island, the northern part of Okinawa Island, and Iriomote Island (Japan) to the World Heritage List unless it is likely that the State Party will comply with the above recommendations without delay.

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