

<https://www.env.go.jp/nature/nationalparks/list/setonaikai/>



Ministry of the Environment
2025.3

Tied to the Setonaikai National Park



The Kasaoka Islands
Yorishima

Introduction

What do you think of when you hear the word “national park”?

You may have an image of an expanse of virgin forest, inhabited by wild animals.

National parks, which are designated by the Japanese government as one of Japan’s representative natural landscapes, are characterized by the diversity of their environments, including forests, farmlands, and villages.

While there are places where nature remains almost untouched, you can also experience the history and culture of the region, which are interwoven with nature, people, and life.

The Seto Inland Sea (Setonaikai) is a scenic area, with a blue sea for as far as the eye can see. This beautiful scenery of countless islands of various sizes has been praised by many geographers as “the most fascinating place in the world.” No wonder it was designated as the first “National Park” of Japan.

The islands and port towns of the Seto Inland Sea, which have prospered since ancient times as a domestic and international shipping route, are a place where nature and human life coexist. The scenery gives a sense of nostalgia. Even though the landscape has changed over time, it is still loved today.

In *the Setouchi Story* you will discover new charms of the Setonaikai National Park that you may not have noticed yet, by getting in touch with the thoughts of the people who live and work there. The magnificent landscapes in which “nature and people coexist” are the starting point of this national park. The words of people who are fascinated by this region will give you a chance to think anew about your hometown. The sights that should be familiar to you may strike a chord with you.

Each person’s story is filled with love for the Setouchi area.

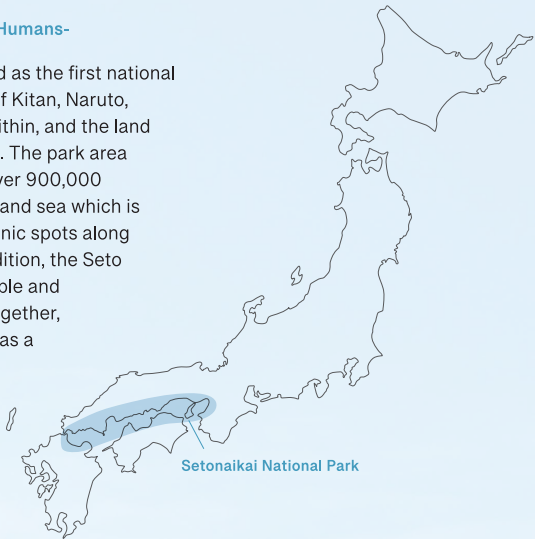
Through *the Setouchi Story*, may your life be enriched!

Setonaikai National Park

Islands and the Sea That Keep Shining
- An Inland Sea Archipelago Landscape with a Harmony between Nature and Humans-

Setonaikai National Park together with Unzen and Kirishima were designated as the first national parks of Japan in 1934. The vast area of the sea surrounded by five straits of Kitan, Naruto, Kanmon, Akashi, and Hoyo, with Bisanseto Strait at the center, the islands within, and the land area overlooking such sea and islands have been assigned as the park areas. The park area extends over 11 prefectures and is the largest national park in Japan with over 900,000 hectares including the sea area. It features archipelago landscapes of the inland sea which is comprised of a large number of islands of various sizes. There are many scenic spots along the coastline where these extraordinary landscapes can be observed. In addition, the Seto Inland Sea is a region where cultures have prospered from early on, and people and nature have coexisted. An amiable scenery of nature and people dwelling together, such as terraced fields on the islands and port towns which were developed as a place for people engaged in the fishery to wait for the tide to turn, is one of the biggest charms of this place.

[Date of Designation]	March 16,1934
[Area]	67,280ha (Land area) 837,541 ha (Sea area)
[Relative Prefectures]	Osaka Pref., Hyogo Pref., Wakayama Pref., Okayama Pref., Hiroshima Pref., Yamaguchi Pref., Tokushima Pref., Kagawa Pref., Ehime Pref., Fukuoka Pref., Oita Pref.



Mt. Washu (Kurashiki City, Okayama Prefecture)



Naruto Whirlpools (Tokushima Prefecture)



Mt. Shiude (Kagawa Prefecture)



Hoogahara (Ehime Prefecture)

Kasaoka Islands in the Peaceful Seto Inland Sea
To Yorishima, a scenic spot where living and nature merge

The Kasaoka Islands consist of approximately 30 islands, both large and small. Their beautiful archipelago attracts many visitors. This time, we visited Shiraishijima Island, known as the site of the mysterious Shiraishi-odori Dance performed on the sandy beach and also known as a beautiful natural landscape of exposed granite. Then, we will introduce an attractive museum adjacent to the horseshoe crab breeding grounds in Kasaoka Bay to learn about its preservation activities. To the east of the museum, the Genkodai overlooks the archipelago of the Seto Inland Sea. Visitors can also enjoy the spectacular view from Mt. Osayama and Yorishima Picnic Site. We met people involved in various ways in passing on culture and preserving the sea and the national park and listened to their thoughts and feelings. This is a special place where you can experience the charm of the Seto Inland Sea, where culture and nature are interwoven. Please come and experience its profound charm.





Mr. AMANO, Tadashi

Director of the Association for Shiraishi-odori

Dances fostered by the history
and climate of the Seto Inland Sea
Wishing to pass it down
to the next generation along with
the island's nature and culture

— Mr. AMANO, Tadashi is engaged in preserving the “Shiraishi-odori” dance on an island rich in history and natural enchantment. He is passing down the dance, which is inscribed on the UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage List and is also valuable from a folkloric point of view to the next generation.

Dances passed down through generations on an island harmonized with human life and nature

Shiraishijima Island, the second largest of the Kasaoka Islands, prospered as a stopover for the coastal route. A medical doctor named Kaempfer from the Dutch Trading Post stopped on his way to seek an audience with the shogun and wrote in his diary, “Shiraishi Port is an incomparable anchorage for ships.” Therefore, it was a good port for waiting for the tide and wind. From the past to the present, people's activities and nature have been in harmony, and in this respect, I think the island is a suitable place for a national park. “Shiraishi-odori” has been handed down in such a climate. It is

well known that Shiraishi-odori originated in the late Heian period (794-1185) to mourn soldiers who lost their lives in the Genpei Battle of Mizushima. Despite that, I believe that the *Nenbutsu-odori* (“Buddhist prayer dance”) of the Shiwaku Islands was introduced to this island. This area has long been a popular place for exchange via the sea. If you read texts from the Edo period, you will see that various writers and artists have stopped by. I believe that the major attraction of the Setonaikai National Park is that people interact with each other and pass on their culture through the sea.

profile

Born in Shiraishijima Island, Kasaoka City, Okayama Prefecture in 1945. After working for a paper manufacturing company in the Kinki region for two years, he returned to his hometown at the age of 21 to engage in the shipping business that had been handed down from his grandfather's generation. As an agent for Sanyo Kisen Co., which connects the mainland with the Kasaoka Islands, he was responsible for selling tickets to passengers and loading and unloading goods until 2013. He has been active in preserving Shiraishi-odori dance and has served as the director of the Shiraishi Community Center for more than 20 years, making efforts to revitalize the local community.

Various choreographies are performed to a single *ondo* (a dancing song).

The most distinctive feature of Shiraishi-odori is that various types of dances are performed to the beat of a single *taiko* (drum) and *ondo*. There are 13 different choreographies, each with characteristics: the men's dance, *Otoko-odori* is heroic, the women's dance, *Onna-odori* is graceful, and so on. Our seniors used to dance until morning during the season of *Obon*, work without time to sleep, and dance again on the beach when the sun went down. They repeated this for three days and three nights. Unlike today, there was not much to entertain them then, so perhaps it was inevitable that they would let loose at least during the season of *Obon*. A huge crowd gathered to form a double or triple circle when a good *taiko* player or a good *ondo-tori* (singer) went up on the *yagura* stage. The men danced coolly and trained their voices for *ondo*, while the women danced beautifully and tried to stand out. I think it is because dancing was the only place for people to express themselves, and the custom was refined over a long period and still exists on this small island in the Seto Inland Sea. When I was a little boy in the early postwar period, the streets were crowded with stalls, and families who liked dancing had their grandparents teach the children. I remember that some children had their fathers carry them on their shoulders and join the circle with the adults. Everyone remembers the rhythm from an early age, so they can easily get into the dance. I left the island for two years to get a job but returned to the island when I was 21 and joined a local youth group. That is when I became seriously involved in Shiraishi-odori, learning from my seniors how to build *yagura* and decorate for the *Obon* festival. There were many dancers in those days, so during the “golden hour” around 8 p.m., the busiest time of the day, young dancers like us were not allowed to go up on the *yagura* or beat the drums, and it was not until after midnight that we could do so. It was a long time ago, so the hierarchical relationship was very rigid... Sometimes we danced with only the younger members after the date had changed and no one was around. The elders were very discerning and would criticize the dancers in their own way, saying things like, “This girl dances with good hands and arms choreography,” or “The *ondo* singer has good technique, but his voice is hoarse.” I thought I was no match for them, so I followed the dancers I liked and tried my best to imitate them and become good at it.

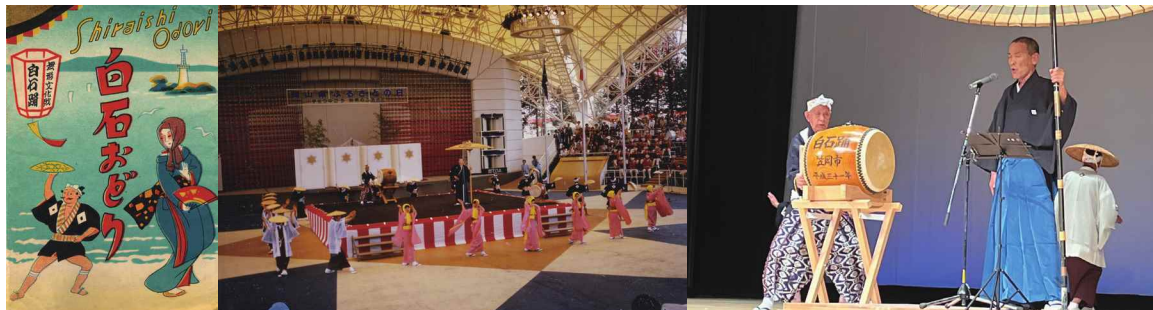
Shiraishi-odori dance. “*Otoko-odori*” dance is masculine and dynamic.*Musume-odori* “*Tsukimi-odori* (moon-viewing dance)” is danced by young women. It is a dance that features feminine gentleness.



Attracting attention from outside the island, the Association has performed at the Osaka Expo and other events.

According to a person who was born in the Meiji era (1868-1912), in the past, Shiraishi-odori did not attract spectators from far away as it does today. It attracted residents of other Kasaoka Islands at the furthest. It was not until the Showa period (1926-1989) that the dance came into the limelight. In 1928, they formed the Shiraishi-odori Eko-dan, the predecessor of the Association for Shiraishi-odori. They participated in the Bon Odori Festival sponsored by a local newspaper that year, performing outside the islands for the first time. There they won first place. The following year, they won again, and from there they began to attract the attention of folklorists and local performing arts specialists. Since the dance, which had been long refined within the island, was suddenly performed outside the island, it must have surprised them to know that such a rare thing still existed.

I have danced at various events up to the present, but the one that left the greatest impression on me was at the 1970 Osaka Expo. About 100 islanders danced in a circle in the festival square at the site. The oldest was in his 80s, and the youngest was about 17. I was 25 years old, and I think I was selected not because I was a good dancer but because I was devoted to youth group activities. Recently, we have participated in the Okayama Folk Performing Arts Festival, Kasaoka City Performing Arts Festival, and Lifelong Learning Festival, etc. The 2024 Okayama Folk Performing Arts Festival was held in Yorishima-cho, Asakuchi City, and we performed with 12 dancers, drummers, and *ondo-tori* on stage.



From left to right: An old postcard of Shiraishi-odori dance, the 1970 Osaka Expo, and the 2024 Okayama Folk Performing Arts Festival

Nearly 50 years ago, many more tourists visited the island than now, and there were many more *ryokan* inns and guest houses. The members of the Association for Shiraishi-odori decided to do something for the tourists. Every Saturday evening in the summer, the members of our association would perform Shiraishi-odori. Since there were no private rooms with beds in the inns then, while the guests were watching the dance, the innkeepers were cleaning up the food and spreading out the bedding. The hospitality of the island community was alive and well at that time. At the same time, young people started leaving the island and the nuclear family began to spread, making it difficult to pass on the Shiraishi-odori dance in the home as it had been in my childhood. So, we began to teach Shiraishi-odori in school education by having children dance it at sports festivals. At first, children learn the basic choreography of *Bura-bura-odori*. After mastering this movement, boys learn *Kasa-odori*, which is characterized by holding a woven hat (*kasa*), and *Yakko-odori*, which is characterized by its sharp movements. Among girls, in addition to *Musume-odori* (young women's dance), *Ogi-odori* (fan dance), which is characterized as *Futatsu-byoshi* (double-count dance) was popular. I guess they like to hold props such as fans (*ogi*). They also performed for students from other schools on a school excursion to experience bottom trawling and other types of fishing.

Passing on culture and dance to young people who grew up on the island and to people outside the island

On Shiraishijima Island, there is a temple called Kairyuji Temple, which is famous for its hall built under a huge stone. There is a Thai-style stupa where the bones of Buddha are enshrined, which led us to dance at the bicentennial celebration of the founding of the Rattanakosin Dynasty in Thailand in 1982. At that time, it was not easy to gather young members. Young people do not have the time to travel abroad. So we had no choice but to have my mother, who was in her 60s then, perform the *Musume-odori* (young women's dance). Forty years have passed since then, but there are no young women on the island who perform the *Musume-odori*. Although we are most proud that we have preserved the Shiraishi-odori from generation to generation since ancient times, as the islanders age, it is becoming increasingly difficult to find people to carry on with the tradition.

Under such circumstances, young people who grew up on the island are doing their best. Even though they have left the island for higher education or careers, they return home every *Obon*

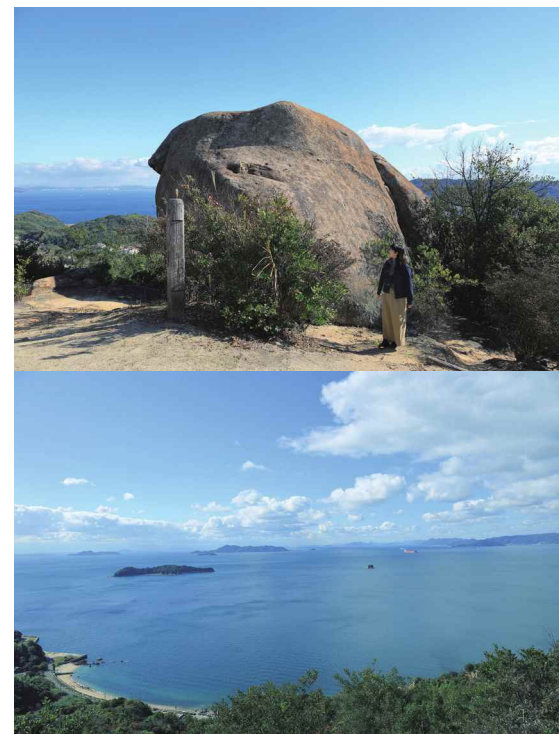


festival and join the dance circle. Even when they perform on other stages than the island, they call out to each other and join the dance. They have been dancing since kindergarten, elementary, and junior high school, so they are always ready for the big day. The young are reliable not only for dancing but also for carrying the *mikoshi* (portable shrine) for the festival. They also help us clean up the *Obon* decorations. It is really reassuring for old people to know that they climb high places for us.

The Association for Shiraishi-odori has also focused on training successors for people without a connection to the island. In 2017, we created the Kasaoka branch of our association to start practice sessions twice a month at the Kasaoka Central Community Center in the center of Kasaoka City. Anyone who wants to learn is welcome to come, even those with no dance experience. There are many high school students, and they are learning hard. In addition, for those who cannot stay overnight on the island, we also offer one-day tours for appreciation, with some participants coming from as far as Tokyo. Recently, we have also guided students who chose Shiraishi-odori as their theme for their graduation research at university. I am reminded of how valuable it is from a folklore perspective, and I feel a strong sense of duty to pass it on to the future.

You can enjoy marine sports and queer-looking rocks in the mountains.

Shiraishijima Island is characterized by the double enjoyment of the sea and the mountains. Even now, the island is crowded with bathers during the summer, and it is common to see sea kayakers and women enjoying SUP (Standup Paddleboard) on large boards and paddling on the water. Trekking courses are also available, ranging from a little over an hour to three or four hours, depending on your fitness level. I also serve as a guide. Recently I took nearly 30 fifth-grade students up to



At Shiraishijima Island: *Odama-iwa* Rock and magnificent view of the Kasaoka Islands

Odama-iwa Rock and *Yoroi-iwa* Rock, which offer a panoramic view of the entire island. So, they felt as if they had conquered the island. Some people stayed for about half a month. One of the accommodations, the Shiraishi Island International Villa is equipped with an Internet connection, so more and more people are visiting the island for workcation.

For these people, the community center offers a menu of cultural and industrial experiences, such as weaving. Since the land was reclaimed during the Edo period and cotton, which grows well in salty soil, has been cultivated for a long time, weaving was practiced in each house. Using looms and spinning wheels inherited from old houses, visitors can experience hand spinning and hand weaving. We believe that we can further convey the charm of the area through hands-on experience, and in the future, it may be a good idea to offer hands-on farm work experience using fallow field.

For visitors to experience the beauty of the Setonaikai National Park, I think it is necessary to improve access between the islands. Right now, the only transportation in the Kasaoka Islands is passenger ships and ferries that connect to the mainland of Kasaoka City and the islands. I would like to see the establishment of a route that traverses the islands through the Seto Inland Sea in the image of the *kitamaebune* (northern-bound merchant ship) of old times. I hope that the world-class charm of the beautiful archipelago will spread further as the number of inbound tourists increases.



At the community center, visitors can try hand weaving and hand spinning using an old-fashioned spinning wheel.

PICK UP

Shiraishi-odori

Shiraishi-odori is a bon odori dance that has been handed down from ancient times on Shiraishijima Island in Kasaoka City and is designated the National Important Intangible Folk Cultural Property. On the nights of August 13 through 16 of the Western calendar year, the dance is performed on the beaches in the northern part of the island in a circle around an *ondo-tori* (singer) and a *taiko* drummer. The main feature of this dance is that several different types of dances with various costumes and gestures are performed to a single *kudoki* (*ondo*, a song). There are 13 dances, such as dynamic *Otoko-odori*, elegant *Onna-odori*, *Futatsu-byoshi* with fans in their hands, *Musume-odori* (*Tsukimi-odori*), *Kasa-odori*, *Yakko-odori*, *Ogi-odori*, and others. It is impressive how the various dances create harmony within the same circle. It was registered a UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage in 2022, along with 40 other dances in Japan, as *Furyu-odori*. Along with Ohmiya-odori in Maniwa City and Bicchu Takahashi Matsuyama-odori in Takahashi City, it is one of the three major bon odori in Okayama Prefecture.



The Shiraishi-odori dance performed on the sandy beach of Shiraishijima Island brings together the setting sun and the beautiful Seto Inland Sea to create a fantastic atmosphere. The dance, which has been preserved as a traditional culture on the island from generation to generation, is graceful yet powerful and fascinating to all who watch it.

//////////////////// The successor of the Shiraishi-odori

Wishing to preserve the traditions of this “proud island” where the warm hospitality of the islanders remains

I went to school on Shiraishijima Island for kindergarten, elementary school, and junior high school. Then, I went to high school on the mainland by passenger ship. When I entered university to study nursing, I moved to the Kasaoka mainland. But even after leaving the island, I continued to dance at various places to promote Shiraishi-odori and pass it on to future generations. Whenever a dance performance was scheduled, Tadashi-san would contact us and ask if we could come that day. I have a group of childhood friends on LINE. So we send messages to each other and try to get as many young members as possible to participate. Since the dance was inscribed in the UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage List, we have been invited to perform outside of the island one after another. The number of opportunities for us to be asked to participate seems to have been increasing. I became involved in the dances largely because of my elder sister, who was researching Shiraishi-odori at university. When I

saw her presenting her thesis at the island's community center, my desire to be involved in traditional culture grew stronger. I have taken part in events other than dancing, and have even carried a *mikoshi* (portable shrine) at festivals with my sister's friends.

I danced Shiraishi-odori throughout my kindergarten, elementary, and junior high school days. So, childhood friends who have worked hard together at sports festivals, school arts festivals, *Obon* festivals, etc., are now like family members and brothers. Even after meeting for the first time in a long time, we can still dance in perfect harmony. When I go to the schoolyard or other places where we used to spend time together, memories of those days still come back to me.

I still go back to the island where my grandparents live almost every week. The most attractive point of the island is the warmth of the people. They have taken very good care of me from the time I was a baby until now. It was the elderly islanders who inspired me to become a nurse. There used to be a private clinic on the island, but it was closed in 2015, and I wanted to contribute as much as I could to the elderly who have difficulty receiving medical services.

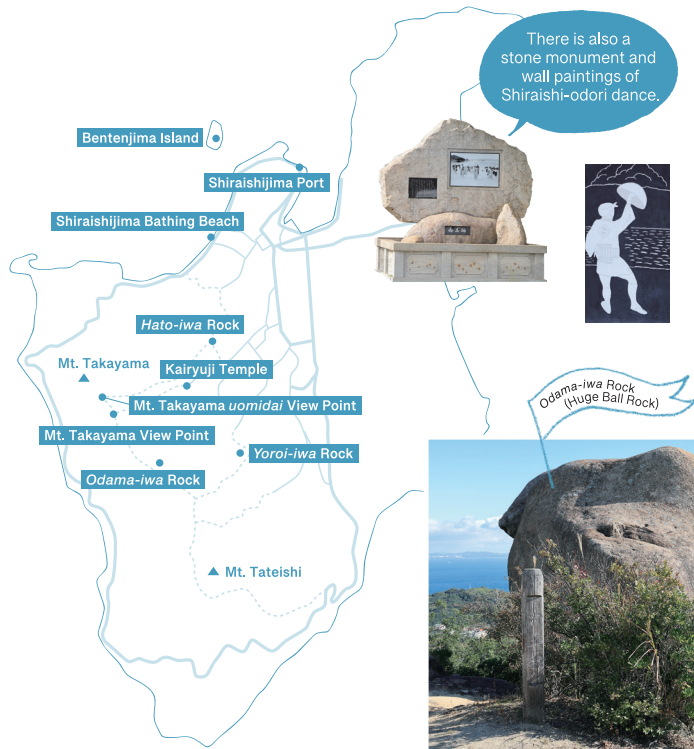
The students three years younger than myself were the last graduates of Shiraishi Junior High School, and there are no younger children than that. That is why we are all very aware of the need to preserve our traditions. It may be difficult to return to the island to live again, and I may not be able to do much for my hometown, but I still want to be able to tell my children the charm of this island, “This island is Mom's pride and joy,” when it comes time for me to have children of my own in the future.



Ms. AMANO, Shiho, who grew up on the island, said that she feels that everyone who lives on the island is like family. Even though she has left the island, she continues to dance the Shiraishi-odori dance that she has danced since she was a child, hoping to pass it on to the next generation younger than herself.

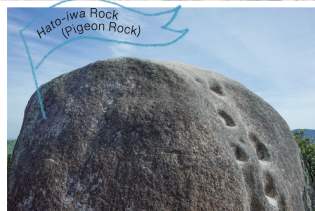
Shiraishijima Island

A scenic island in the Kasaoka Islands. In summer, many people enjoy swimming in the sea. The Shiraishi-odori dance, which is designated the National Important Intangible Folk Cultural Property, is performed during the Bon Festival. The island is also dotted with strange-shaped stones and megaliths. From the View Point, you can enjoy a panoramic view of the islands of the Seto Inland Sea.



Shiraishijima Island is dotted with megaliths and unique rocks. *Hato-iwa* and *Odama-iwa* have foot-hang indentations and can be climbed. If you are confident in your physical strength, give it a try.

The nostalgic townscape warms our heart.



Shiraishijima Bathing Beach



The view of the Kasaoka Islands from the top of the rocks of Mt. Takayama-uomidai (fish lookout) View Point is truly spectacular!

Yoroi-iwa Rock (Armor Rock)

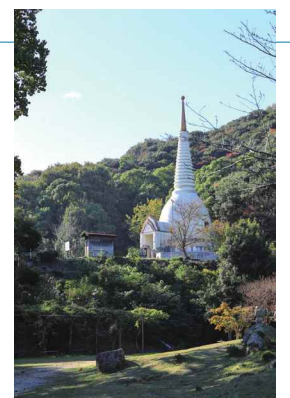


The name comes from the fact that it resembles armor (*yoroi*) with cracks in the shape of a grid. It is a National Natural Monument.

Hato-iwa Rock (Pigeon Rock)

Kairyuji Temple

Built at the end of the Heian period (794-1185) to commemorate the souls of the dead from the Genpei Battle of Mizushima. The Daishido Hall, where Kobo Daishi is said to have stopped on his way back from Tang Dynasty China to undergo ascetic training, is built under a huge stone, creating a very solemn atmosphere. The Thai-style stupa, called a pagoda, enshrines the bones of Shakyamuni Buddha, which were donated by a temple in Thailand.



A power spot where wishes come true



Fudo-iwa (immovable rock), is said to make wishes come true. Place your forehead in the hollow of the rock and chant your wish three times.

The view from the trail also gives us a relaxing experience.



The Setouchi Story

vol.2

Horseshoe Crabs Survive

Beyond 200 Million Years

Hoping to increase the number of them

to make it an everyday creature to see

Mr. MORINOBU, Satoshi

Director, Kasaoka Horseshoe Crab Museum

— Mr. MORINOBU, Satoshi is involved in the protection and research of the horseshoe crab, a “living fossil,” and communicates the fascination and wonder of its ecology through exhibitions and events. He talks about his conservation activities, such as artificial breeding and release of horseshoe crabs, as well as about the sea landscape where horseshoe crabs live.

“Too nerdy” exhibits attract tourists.

The Horseshoe Crab Museum is the world's only museum dedicated to the horseshoe crab. There used to be a “Horseshoe Crab Conservation Center,” mainly for academic research with little consideration for exhibiting to the public. They remodeled the inside of an old vehicle given to them by a bus company and used it as an exhibition space. They thought it was necessary to let the public know more about the museum, so the present facility was built in 1990. I joined the

museum as a curator in 1996, six years after it opened. I visited the museum as a practicum student during my senior year of college. When I was in my first year of graduate school, I was contacted and told that a position was available. However, I could not apply because I was researching sharks then and was given a ride on a tuna fishing boat to research in the Indian Ocean. I thought I had no luck, but the following year there was another offering for a curatorial position, and I was accepted.

profile

Born in Satoshio Town, Okayama prefecture in 1970. After graduating from a master's program, he joined the Kasaoka City Government in 1996 as a curator at the Horseshoe Crab Museum before becoming the museum director in 2020. In addition to working to increase the population of horseshoe crabs by breeding larvae artificially and releasing them into the sea, he continues to disseminate information through biological observation events and the production of museum merchandise.

The museum has many unusual exhibits. One exhibit has all 1,200 gills of a horseshoe crab pasted on it, a model of a larval horseshoe crab spinning backward in its egg, a fossil of a crawling trail of horseshoe crab from Solnhofen in southern Germany, etc. This may sound too nerdy, but strangely enough, it is much more appreciated by visitors. On the other hand, we also need to attract children's interest, so we introduce dinosaurs that lived in the same era as horseshoe crabs. It is rare to find a museum with a life-size dinosaur model. I think this is the only place where visitors can see a replica of a Tyrannosaurus skull up close and personal. The Dinosaur Park adjacent to the museum also attracts many family visitors. So, the dinosaurs may be the biggest contributors to the more than two million visitors to the museum since it opened in 2019.

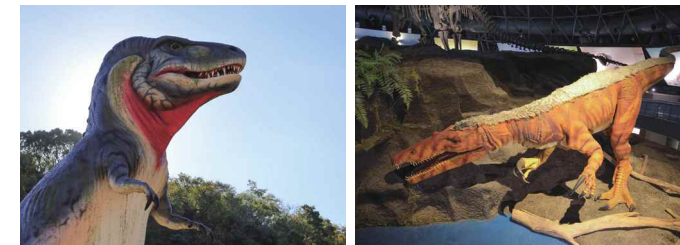
Change in tidal flow has caused a rapid decline in habitat.

The horseshoe crab mainly eats shellfish and ragworms. They have scissor-like legs, but their grip is very weak, and it does not hurt at all even if you are pinched by a horseshoe crab. That is probably why they eat shells, which are easy to break. Horseshoe crabs seem to prey on the ragworms together with mud, and when we examine their poop, we often find no food but only mud. It is said that horseshoe crabs hold 20,000 or 25,000 eggs during the spawning season, but the details are unknown such as how many of these eggs hatch. There are still many mysteries, and for this reason, I think they are creatures worth researching. They molt (shed shells) repeatedly to become adults for 10 years. Only about four survive to this point, and most of them are eaten by other creatures.

They spawn on sandy beaches, especially in brackish water, and their babies crawl out of the sand and move to mudflats to live. There used to be many horseshoe crabs inhabiting the Kasaoka Bay area, and a place called Oehama at the back of the bay was once designated a Natural Monument as a breeding ground. The reclamation project began in 1966, and by the time I can remember, the sea was already gone. The Konoshima Strait, which barely remained, was additionally designated a Natural Monument. When I went fishing in this area as a child, I once saw a wild horseshoe crab. I remember my father saying, “We have to let this one



You can also see wild horseshoe crabs in the breeding grounds.



Visitors can observe live horseshoe crabs up close, and there are many unique and enjoyable exhibits, including a powerful dinosaur replica and a moving dinosaur model.

go,” and releasing it. When I asked my classmates in Kasaoka, they told me they found many eggs when they dug on the sandy beach.

Sandy beaches, rivers flowing into the sea, and mudflats. For horseshoe crabs to live, all three are necessary, but such places are hard to find in this area. The tidal flow of the Konoshima Strait has been changed by land reclamation, and mudflats are no longer possible as they were in the past. The river has been protected with concrete, and the beaches have lost their sandy texture. Although it is less common now, the beaches are sometimes dug up by clam diggers. Due to a combination of factors, the habitat suitable for horseshoe crabs has rapidly declined.

Promote horseshoe crabs through workshops and merchandise.

We want to protect the horseshoe crab, which has lived for 200 million years and is called a “living fossil.” With this in mind, the museum has been engaged in artificial breeding and the release of horseshoe crabs since 1995. When a female carrying eggs is found, she is released into the spawning pond in the museum. Since the pond is connected to the sea and the tides ebb and flow, the environment is the same as in nature, so there is no special assistance in the spawning process. It takes about 50 days for the eggs to hatch, and then it is our turn to help. After one winter, when they molt, they become predatory, so we start feeding them until releasing them the following July. We invite the public to participate in the release.