



The view from the observation room, where the horseshoe crab breeding grounds can be widely seen, is also outstanding. On the beach next to the museum, releases and observation events are held.



Kasaoka City established the Horseshoe Crab Protection Ordinance in 2003 and designated July as the Raising Awareness Month of Protection of Horseshoe Crab. During this month, we release horseshoe crabs and carry out a beach cleanup campaign, in which about 1,000 people participate every year to clean up Kasaoka's beach.

We are also working to let the next generation know about the importance of protecting horseshoe crabs and the marine environment. Next to the museum is a tiny sandy beach that we call our "private beach," where we hold a "Seaside School" to observe living creatures. The Horseshoe Crab Conservation Youth Group, formed by five junior high schools located mainly on the ocean side of Kasaoka City, also holds a workshop every summer vacation to release the larvae and observe the creatures in the mudflats. The "Curator Challenge," which offers hands-on museum work experience, is also popular, with elementary and junior high school students making shell lamps and fish skeletal specimens, and high school students conducting more serious research on horseshoe crabs on the mudflats and digging for fossils at a former quarry site. In the larvae survey, the students crawl on all fours across the mudflats and get down to their crotches in the mud to find larvae and molted shells. I would be too scared to go, but the high school students are energetic. We also make a lot of merchandise to promote the community. One of the most popular items is a horseshoe crab T-shirt. One of the curators made and wore a T-shirt printed with an adult horseshoe crab, and people said, "I like that," so we produced the T-shirt as a commercial product. I think that nerdy designs are more appealing than stylish designs.

I wish to continue breeding and releasing horseshoe crabs until we feel their existence is as ordinary as before.

I have loved sea creatures since I was a child and enjoyed following my mother, who was in business, to the fish market in Yorishima to watch the seafood being auctioned off. I would be yelled by the old man, "Get out of the way!" and I felt scared, but I would wait and wait, but all I saw were mantis

shrimps, and I wondered if there would ever be a shark or some other interesting fish. Now, we cannot even catch mantis shrimp anymore. Recently, I often walk along the coastline for my health. In the evening, I park my car at Osabana Beach in Yorishima and walk west toward the Shoto area on the southeastern edge of Kasaoka City. The scenery is unbelievably beautiful during the magic hour. I have many photos on my smartphone of the entire western sky turning pink just after the sun sets. I also like the sight of the light of the full moon reflecting on the sea and drawing lines of light. The ocean has been a part of my life, work, and research for a long time. It may be because I am getting older, but I feel deeply that the ocean is so beautiful.

The precise population of horseshoe crabs is not well known. We cannot manage the population, so the horseshoe crab itself cannot become a natural monument, but the breeding grounds are designated. Looking at the number of horseshoe crabs caught every year, I think the number is increasing a little, but that does not mean we should stop artificial breeding and releasing them. We still need to continue. It is practically impossible to increase the number of horseshoe crabs back to as many as before. But we would like to bring them back to the point where they are a common sight in the sea. We should not only talk about environmental conservation but also let children know about the "dark past" of the land reclamation project. I believe that one day, we can tell children, "If you go to the sea, you can see horseshoe crabs."



//////////////////////////////////// The person who works at the Kasaoka Horseshoe Crab Museum

The Seto Inland Sea is where human culture is deeply rooted and easy to visit.

I have loved all living creatures throughout my childhood and have often been taken to zoos, aquariums, and insectariums. So, I chose the Aquarium Science Course at Fukuyama University's Faculty of Life Science and Biotechnology. At the university's aquarium on Innoshima Island in Hiroshima Prefecture, I learned about aquarium management and breeding. I used to attend to little children on school excursions there. Through this experience, I became interested in education and raising awareness activities of aquatic life. Since I started working for this museum, I suggested using X (formerly Twitter) to disseminate information. I regularly post about the ecology of horseshoe crabs with other curators. Sometimes the posts go viral, such as a video of a horseshoe crab with its tail curled up and its body straightened when its back is pushed. It is nice to get a reaction from the audience.

I often go to Saburojima Island in the Yorishima area for beachcombing. I love the calm waves, beautiful

scenery, and quietness. Crawling on the beach looking for tiny shells, I lose track of time. I think it is a good thing that the Seto Inland Sea is rarely rough, and people can casually go to the sea. Many people enjoy swimming, the fishery is thriving, and the fish is delicious. I feel that human culture has taken root in the sea. I hope to see a scene where human life and sea creatures coexist better. I would like to share with many children that protecting nature is also related to protecting human life.



Curator of the Horseshoe Crab Museum

Mr. NINOMIYA, Hayato



Active social networking service posting from a curator's unique perspective, which communicates the ecology and unusual appearance of horseshoe crabs, is increasing the number of horseshoe crab fans! In the breeding room, small and cute first-instar to tenth-instar larvae are kept with lots of love and care.

The Kasaoka Horseshoe Crab Museum //////////////////////////////////////



It is located near the Konoshima Strait, which is designated a Natural Monument as a breeding ground for horseshoe crabs. This is the only museum in the world dedicated to horseshoe crabs, and in addition to exhibiting horseshoe crabs alive, visitors can learn more detailed information about their ecology through videos and models. The museum is also active in research and efforts to protect horseshoe crabs, including breeding and releasing horseshoe crabs. Right next to the museum is the Dinosaur Park, where eight life-size models of seven different species, including a Tyrannosaurus and a Pteranodon, are on display, providing a place for families to enjoy a relaxing time together.



Horseshoe Crab Museum

Genkodai

Horseshoe crabs, known as "living fossils," have lived unchanged for 200 million years. On the east side of Konoshima Strait, the breeding ground of the horseshoe crab is Genkodai in Mt. Mitake, where you can see the spectacular view of the Kasaoka Islands archipelago, which consists of 31 islands of various sizes in the Seto Inland Sea, to a great distance.



On a clear day, the Kasaoka Islands archipelago can be seen.



Genkodai

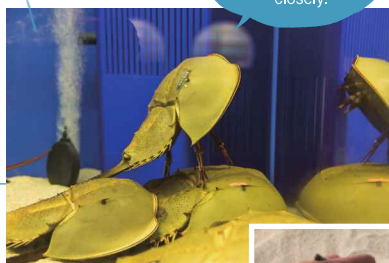
Mt. Mitake, 310 meters above sea level, with a panoramic view of the Kasaoka Islands below. From the viewpoint just before the summit of the mountain, visitors can enjoy a panoramic view of the Seto Inland Sea and the Kasaoka Islands archipelago. Because of the splendor of the view, the area is designated the Setonaikai National Park.

Kasaoka Horseshoe Crab Museum



This is the only museum in the world dedicated to horseshoe crabs. The building is designed in the shape of a horseshoe crab, and in addition to the horseshoe crab, dinosaurs that have lived in the same era are on display.

Horseshoe Crabs



You can observe live horseshoe crabs closely.



Visitors can dig for fossils hidden in the sand using a brush and enjoy learning about horseshoe crabs in a quiz style at the Horseshoe Crab Theater.

Exhibition Section



You can learn more precisely about horseshoe crabs through the display of specimens, fossils, and movable marionettes. The dinosaur specimen exhibit includes a moving model of a Baryonyx, which is very dynamic.

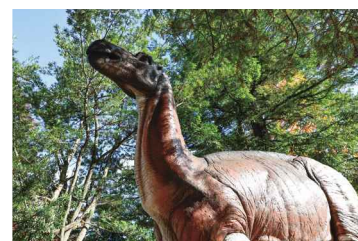
Marionette



You can move it freely with the control lever in your hand!

Dinosaur Park

The park is adjacent to the Horseshoe Crab Museum. Full-scale dinosaurs are on display throughout the park. The park is divided into three zones: Forest, Desert, and Sea, and the plants of the time are reproduced. This is a popular spot among families and locals because it offers a realistic experience of stepping back in time to the era of the dinosaurs.



It is very exciting to see it up close!



The life-size dinosaurs are much taller than visitors and are so realistic that they look like they are about to start moving.

It is a place of non-daily life, a miraculous natural environment.

We will communicate the charm of the National Park in collaboration.

Mr. ITO, Yuki

Commerce and Tourism Division,
Industry Department, Kasaoka City

Mr. TAKEUCHI, Naoya

Industry Promotion Division, Industry and
Construction Department, Asakuchi City

— These two people support the Setonaikai National Park on the front lines of tourism administration, including facility management, information dissemination, and planning events. We asked them to share their efforts to preserve the beautiful scenery and abundant nature, as well as new ideas to draw out the charms and explore the possibilities for the region.

The “island time” that passes leisurely will purify your soul.

— What memories or memorable views do you have of your hometown where the Setonaikai National Park is located?

ITO : I was born and raised in Konoshima, Kasaoka City, and my parents had a picture of the sea before it was reclaimed. As a child, I looked at it and thought it was amazing that such a large area of land used to be the sea. At my employment interview for the Kasaoka City government, I told the interviewer that I wanted to work with many people. Later, I was assigned to the Commerce and Tourism Division to be in charge of Kasaoka Bay Farm Roadside Station near my parents' home. I felt an unforeseen connection.

TAKEUCHI : I was also born in Kasaoka City but moved to the neighboring Satoshio Town in childhood. My favorite memory is going to Osabana Beach to swim with my family and friends every summer. I used to play baseball, so I often went to Yorishima Sports Ground for games. At that time, Yorishima Town also held marathons, and I had a strong image of Yorishima as a

place for sports. I went to junior high and high school in Asakuchi City, the same city as Mr. Ito, and I joined the Asakuchi City government because I wanted to make Asakuchi City, which is my second hometown, as it were, more vibrant.

ITO : Kasaoka City has national park areas on both the Kasaoka Islands and the mainland side. The charm of the islands is their non-daily atmosphere. When I spend time on the islands, I always feel purified by the relaxing “island time.” I sometimes go to Shiraishijima Island to survey the water quality at the beach. When I take a break and have lunch while listening to the sound of the waves, I find myself thinking, “I do not want to go back there.” On the mainland side of the city, I especially recommend Mt. Mitake in the Oshima area. From the Genkodai View Point, just before the summit, you can see

the whole Kasaoka Islands and the vast reclaimed land. When I was managing public facilities such as public restrooms at tourist attractions, my boss took me there for the first time. I was impressed, no joke.

TAKEUCHI : I also love the view of the sea. I enjoy riding my motorcycle, and whenever I feel the urge to go for a short ride, I always head for the sea. The prefectural road from Kasaoka, through Yorishima, and from Kurosaki to Tamashima in Kurashiki City is the best. The route is a mixture of straight and winding roads along the coast, and you can drive while looking at the ocean all the way. The pleasant sea breeze and the smell of the sea can be experienced as the charm of the sea. When I see people running, cycling, taking pictures, and enjoying themselves, I realize that the sea is a very special place.

Wishing more people would know about the spots where the charm shines

— Is there anything you keep in mind to promote local charms?

TAKEUCHI : Since being assigned to the Industry Promotion Division, I have made it a point to go into the field and learn as much as possible about each tourist attraction in precise detail, and to convey what I have experienced. Although I went to junior high school and high school in Asakuchi City and still work in the same city, there are many things I do not know about the city. I only know the names and locations, but I have never been there, even though it seems like I have. If the place is near, people usually think, “I could go there anytime.” So I do not look into it that deeply. This area is situated between the large cities of Kurashiki and Fukuyama but has spots that shine brightly. I would like more people to know about it.

ITO : I try to start with publicity to those close to me, such as friends and family. Kasaoka and Asakuchi were the locations for the movie “*Tonbi* (kite),” which was released in 2022, and the graduation ceremony scene was filmed in the former Oshima Higashi Elementary School building near the sea. My aunt's house was next to this old elementary school and was used as a waiting room for the actors. I try to include “little tidbits” like this unwritten in the tourist brochures to attract the visitors' interest.



The view from the Genkodai on Mt. Mitake. The panoramic view of the Kasaoka Islands is breathtaking.

profile

ITO, Yuki

Born in 2000 in Kasaoka City, Okayama Prefecture. After graduating from university, he joined the Kasaoka City government in 2022. Assigned to the Tourism Section of the Commerce and Tourism Division, Industry Department, he is engaged in attracting tourists and managing the natural park. He is also working on improving the attractiveness of Kasaoka Bay Farm Roadside Station which attracts the most tourists in the city, and is responsible for meetings with the

TAKEUCHI, Naoya

Born in 1991 in Kasaoka City, Okayama Prefecture. After graduating from university, he joined the Asakuchi City government in 2015, working in the Tax Division, Industrial and Construction Division of Konko General Branch Office, Secretarial Policy Division, and General Affairs Division before being assigned to the Industry Promotion Division in 2024. In addition to managing tourist facilities such as the Mt. Osayama Odaiba (View Point) and Fujinami Pond Campsite, he is also in charge of organizing events such as the Yorishima Sea and Fish Festival and Konko Garden Plants Festival.

The glasswort growing in a miraculous environment is protected by the Society for the Glasswort Protection.

— What efforts are made by the government and residents to enhance their respective areas, including scenic areas designated as National Parks?

TAKEUCHI : The biggest event in the Yorishima area, where the national park is located, is the annual winter event, “Yorishima Sea and Fish Festival -- Hometown Industry Festival.” Particularly popular is the sale of Yorishima oysters, which sell out in no time after opening. The “Asakuchi Fireworks Festival” held in summer is also popular. The vast reclaimed land of Yorishima provides a spectacular viewing area where visitors can lie back and enjoy the fireworks set off to music.

ITO : Kasaoka City also holds a fireworks festival every summer. The fireworks are launched from the embankment of Kasaoka Bay reclamation. In 2024, the festival date coincided with Asakuchi City, so the number of visitors was dispersed just right for both cities. In addition, we hold an event called “Kasaoka *Yotcharé no Yoru* (Welcome to Kasaoka night),” in which residents form a dance troupe and dance on the main street in front of JR Kasaoka Station.

TAKEUCHI : The best thing about it is the glasswort. On the south of the Yorishima reclaimed land, there is the only wild habitat in Honshu, where it miraculously grows in the rare environment of



Every year around mid-October, the “Glasswort Festival” is held.



Mt. Kobo Kairyuji Temple's Daishido Hall is said to be the place where Kobo Daishi practiced asceticism.

a salty marsh. Here, residents have formed a group, “Society for the Glasswort Protection,” to protect the plant and are engaged in conservation activities. Volunteers from elementary, junior high, and high schools conduct annual weeding and cleaning activities, which shows the children who will lead the next generation support this activity. The group has also begun exchanges with the Akkeshi Town in Hokkaido, where the first glasswort was discovered, exchanging opinions on how to grow the plant and elementary school students presenting the results of their studies online.

ITO : There are many spots of interest on the islands, including Takashima and Shiraishijima Islands, which are designated National Place of Scenic Beauty. Kairyuji Temple on Shiraishijima Island is a wonder that the Daishido Hall is built under a huge rock and is not crushed. Though Kitagishima Island is not included in the national park, these Kasaoka Islands were registered as a Japan Heritage in 2019 as “Setouchi *Ishi no Shima* (Islands of Stone in the Setonaikai Sea),” together with Kagawa Prefecture islands in one city and two towns. Kasaoka City also supports environmental preservation by providing a budget to local groups for weeding and other landscape preservation work. 2025, the sixth year of the Japan Heritage designation, will be the year in which the designation will be reviewed, and we wonder how our efforts to date will be evaluated. The municipal government is facing a critical moment.

Wishing to attract tourists through a broad approach

— What initiatives do you think should be promoted in the future to make the Setonaikai National Park more attractive?

ITO : In the case of Japan Heritage activities, it is not enough for Kasaoka City alone to do its best. Instead, we need to work together with other constituent municipalities, such as Marugame City, Tonosho Town, and Shodoshima Town in Shodoshima Island for conservation and publicities to make it work. I think it is important to cooperate with other cities and towns in the same way to promote the attractiveness of Setonaikai National Park. The three cities and two towns in the western part of Okayama Prefecture, including Kasaoka City, Asakuchi City, and Satosho Town where Mr. Takeuchi lives, have an organization called the “Ikasa *Koiki Kanko Kyokai* (Ikasa Wide-Area Tourism Association),” which is involved in various projects such as creating driving maps and gourmet maps. I hope to create an atmosphere of “let's all work together,” including Fukuyama City and other areas in the Bingo region to attract tourists.

TAKEUCHI : To the south of Yorishima Picnic Site is the only island in Asakuchi City called Mitsuyama (Mt. Mitsuyama). As the name suggests, the island looks like three rice balls arranged in a row. Today, no trees are growing on the island. However, a photo from the Showa period (1926-1989) shows there used to be magnificent pine trees growing on the top of the mountain. Efforts are now underway to restore the landscape. One of the former residents of Yorishima Town donated to the city in hopes of restoring the old landscape. The merged Konko-cho is known as a town of garden plants, and we are researching with Konko's gardeners how to grow *kuromatsu* black pines that can withstand the sea breeze. We



Mt. Mitsuyama, which can be seen beautifully from nearby Mt. Osayama Odaiba



From the Yorishima Picnic Site, you can see the scenery of the Seto Inland Sea including Mt. Mitsuyama and oyster rafts.



Ryokan-inns and guest houses are lined up around the Shiraishijima Island Bathing Beach. Some visitors come here for workcation. You can experience a relaxing “island time.”

have already planted seedlings and cannot wait to see them thrive.

ITO : The population of Kasaoka City is declining, but I think the city is attracting attention because Kasaoka has been chosen as the filming location for many movies, including “*Tonbi* (kite)” and “Radiation House,” released in 2022. I would be happy if this is a good opportunity for people to feel something attractive about Kasaoka by utilizing these tourism resources. When I am on the mainland, I spend most of my time on my phone, but it is nice to spend relaxing time on the island doing nothing at all. There are more accommodations on the islands than on the mainland. Spending some “Island Time” and experiencing non-daily life would be nice. I recommend it because I love it, too.

TAKEUCHI : Population decline is the same problem in Asakuchi City. Especially in Yorishima-cho, the number of vacant houses is increasing. The city is creating a vacant house database to help bridge the gap between owners and those who want to live there. Some seniors like the ocean view of the location and move in as if living in a villa. I think the best way to create a lively community is to let people know how attractive it is. The glasswort is wonderful, but I also recommend the nearby Yorishima Picnic Site, where cherry blossoms bloom all over in spring and visitors can view the cherry blossoms while enjoying a panoramic view of the Setonaikai National Park. We should make sure that such information is disseminated. Of course, the cooperation of residents is essential, so we would like to organize events with their full involvement and create mechanisms to attract many visitors.





Fishery workers who protect
the marine environment and conserve
fishery resources
Preserving beautiful scenery and
prosperous livelihoods forever

Mr. MIYAKE, Hidejiro

Union President of Yorishima-cho Federation of Fisheries Co-operative Associations

— Mr. MIYAKE, Hidejiro is involved in “collecting marine debris,” “recycling oyster shells,” and “revitalizing eelgrass beds” as SDG activities of the fishery cooperative. We asked him about the gift of the sea, such as aquacultured oysters and charms of the sea at Yorishima, which is bountiful fishing grounds.

Aquacultured oysters, Spanish mackerel, Gazami crab... Delicacies of the sea in each season

I was born and raised in Yorishima, and the sea and the mountains here were my playgrounds. It was in the latter half of my elementary school days when video games appeared, so I had no choice but to go outside and play near my house. At that time, there were still mudflats dotting the area near the fishing port. The construction of sea embankments made the fishery workers' work more convenient, but places to play have gone. My grandfather and uncle were both fishermen, and two of my

cousins followed in their father's footsteps, but my father was a company employee. For some reason, he did not become a fisherman but worked at a sake brewery. But the people close to me were working in the sea, and my uncle also told me to come to the Fisheries Cooperative, so I got a job at the Yorishima Town Fisheries Cooperative. The most well-known marine product of Yorishima is probably the aquacultured oyster. It started in 1963 when the director of the fishery cooperative

profile

Born in Yorishima-cho, Asakuchi City, Okayama Prefecture in 1976. After graduating from high school, he joined the Yorishima-cho Federation of Fisheries Co-operative Associations. After working as a clerk, he became the 8th union president of the association in 2010. He also serves in various important positions related to the sea and local community, including director of the Okayama Prefectural Fisheries Cooperative Association, member of the Okayama Sea Area Fisheries Adjustment Commission, and member of the local school management council.

then visited the oyster growing region and called for, “Let's all do it together.” From spring to October, when the oysters are small, the rafts are densely placed close to land to slow their growth and protect them from typhoons. When the rafts are moved offshore in early October, where nutrients are abundant, the oysters begin to eat the food and grow rapidly. This process produces rich, nutritious oysters. While other oyster farms in the prefecture produce more shelled oysters, which attract customers from mass merchandisers and restaurants, our oysters are mainly sold in their shells and are intended for consumers. Visitors can buy freshly landed oysters at the producers' processing plant at the fishing port, which is so crowded with shoppers that cars cannot get through on holidays

during the season. They come to us by word of mouth, so we do not have to pay for shipping or advertising. We also ship locally, and if people who receive oysters like them, they repeat their orders or send them to other people, which leads to new customers, forming an ideal cycle. In addition to oyster aquaculture, you can enjoy a variety of fish in each season. In spring, there is drift-net fishing for Spanish mackerel. In summer, pike conger and red sea bream, and in fall, Gazami crabs are caught. These seasonal fish can be purchased at “Hama-no-Ka'chan Yorimichi (the stopover for Mom in the fishing community),” a fish market operated by the fisheries cooperative. It is so popular that customers line up early in the morning when the store is open on Fridays and Saturdays.



Customers eagerly await the opening of this popular fisheries cooperative market near the fishing port. The market is filled with fresh seafood. Some of them are even alive.

The abundance of the Mizushima Sea supported by the Takahashi River

It is thanks to the abundance of the Mizushima Sea that we can catch a variety of fish and harvest oysters with some stability in oyster farming. The amount of plankton and chlorophyll (pigment contained in plants and algae), which is essential for photosynthesis, Yorishima leads the prefecture's waters by far. Oysters are aquacultured for two or three years in some areas, but in the nutrient-rich waters of Yorishima, we cultivate oysters only one year before harvest.

This is because the Takahashi River, which flows into the Mizushima Sea, provides a bountifulness for the oysters. That is why the fishery workers of Yorishima are active in planting trees every year in places such as Mt. Osa in the upper reaches of the Takahashi River system. When people talk about Setonaikai National Park, they tend to focus only on the sea, but it is also closely connected to the mountains. According to a university professor, it takes almost 30 years for fallen leaves from the

mountains to turn into leaf mold and flow back to the sea as nutrients. In that sense, tree-planting activities are also an effort that will benefit fishery workers in the future, 30 years from now. However, the sea has changed a lot in the past few years. Maybe it is because of climate change. It looks like there is no autumn. The water temperature in the seas around Japan remains high even in October, and typhoons are a common occurrence, so the oyster rafting process has been delayed year after year. In 2024, the operation was also delayed by half a month to a month, so I am concerned about the size of the oysters.

The variety of fish landed is also changing. The catch of conger eels and black rockfish has decreased, and we no longer see marble flounders and greenlings. Even the commonplace mantis shrimps are no longer being caught and are becoming smaller. They are holding their eggs for longer periods as a defensive instinct to avoid extinction, which is why they are getting smaller.



Harvesting is done with a crane starting around November.



Oysters harvested in Yorishima.

On the other hand, the number of red seabreams and pike congers is increasing. The same is true in other regions as well. The director of a cooperative in Yamagata Prefecture, whom I met recently at a conference in Tokyo, told me that Spanish mackerel are now caught on longlines for seabreams in the Japan Sea. Fish spawn millions of eggs, and the right temperature for hatching and growth differs for each species. What may be just right for seabreams and pike congers is becoming too warm for cold-water fish. Despite such circumstances, efforts to protect fishery resources have been made for a long time. Based on the national resources

recovery plan, Spanish mackerel fishery workers in 11 prefectures around the Seto Inland Sea have enlarged the mesh size of their drift-nets and implemented a total suspension of fishing for fall Spanish mackerel. The results of these efforts have brought the fish back to the area. As for Gazami crab, we are also working with Okayama Prefecture to promote intermediate rearing, and we are releasing crabs that are still holding eggs or are too small. Fishery workers are nurtured by the blessings of the Mizushima Sea. Therefore, I believe that we must take the lead in both food and the conservation of the environment.

Conserving the sea through marine debris collection and oyster shell recycling

The Yorishima-cho Federation of Fisheries Co-operative Associations has been making efforts to collect marine debris in the Setonaikai National Park for many years. It all started when the Mizushima Area Environmental Restoration Foundation, working in the Mizushima area of Kurashiki City where the industrial complex is located, asked us to send a boat out to survey the marine environment. We used a bottom trawl net to scrape the seafloor to see what kind of trash we could find, and among them, we found empty beer cans that were 30 years old. It had been on the seafloor for a long time without being decomposed. Since then, some fishery workers have started bringing back the garbage caught in their trawl nets. We do not have a specific mandate as a fisheries cooperative to collect the trash, but the circle of activity has naturally expanded, and now some people even pick up the trash before they fish.

The marine debris is especially caught in November when the fishing gear changes. The ban on attaching hooks to bottom trawl nets is lifted and, sorry to the fish, hooks start digging up and catching the fish diving at the bottom of the sea. The plastic waste gets caught by those hooks. It is said that 70% of marine debris flows into the sea from rivers, and it is now known that the amount of debris varies depending on the amount of rainfall in a given year.

We also recycle oyster shells. In addition to collecting the empty shells from sorting and shelling, we also collect “fallen oysters” that have fallen under oyster rafts with bottom trawl nets. The collected shells are crushed and exposed to water for at least six months, after which they are recycled by specialized companies into chicken feed and fertilizer for agricultural crops. JA (Japan Agricultural Cooperatives) in Okayama Prefecture is



Oyster rafts seen from Yorishima Picnic Site

also promoting a project called “Setouchi Oyster Shell Agri-Business.” Rice grown with fertilizer made from oyster shells is named “*Satoumi Rice*” and is branded as such. The rice is so popular that it is in short supply and was distributed at a ceremony to commemorate the 90th anniversary of the designation of the Setonaikai National Park.

We are also trying to revitalize the eelgrass beds where fish spawn and grow. According to an old fisherman, eelgrass used to grow so abundantly that it would wrap around the propellers of fishing boats. The seeds were given from advanced areas such as Hinase-cho Bizen City. We sowed them off the coast of Osabana Beach. It is easy to say, but finding the right location for eelgrass to grow is quite difficult; if the water is too deep, eelgrass cannot photosynthesize, and if it is too shallow, the sea becomes turbid. In Hinase-cho, where they have been working for nearly 40 years, eelgrass has grown over several hectares, but at our site, there are only a few patches of eelgrass. I hope that one day the eelgrass beds will expand and become a “cradle of the sea,” a place that supports many lives.

Goal 14 of the SDGs (Sustainable Development Goals) states “Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, sea and marine resources for sustainable development.” As I have been promoting various initiatives, I have often been asked to be a lecturer at study groups on the SDGs. I am not used to giving presentations or lectures, so I always ad-lib. Sometimes the listeners from companies asked me, “How can we promote the SDGs?” My answer is “Keep doing what you can do naturally and steadily, and as a result, what you did will be linked to the SDGs.” I think this is the ideal SDG.



To conserve the landscape and the livelihood of the sea so that it remains the same forever

The sea has changed over time, but some scenery has remained the same. The best place to visit is the Yorishima Picnic Site. In particular, I used to go to Saburo Beach on the south side when I was a child. There is a road now, but when I was a child, there was no road, so we had to go along the rocks on the beach or over the mountain at the Yorishima Picnic Site. After a bit of a hard walk, we arrived at a place with a spectacular view that was indescribable. Osabana Beach, on the other side of the fishing port across from Yorishima Reclaimed Land, is still the same as it was in the past. The sea view does not change much throughout the year, but the sky looks different with each season. In summer, there are many cumulonimbus clouds, and in autumn, mackerel sky appears. When these scaly clouds appear clearly, it is said to be a prelude to stronger winds, and fishery workers used to refrain from going out to sea. In the old days, there was no such thing as weather radar, so fishery workers relied on this kind of saying to decide whether or not to go out fishing.

With the local population declining, the lack of successors in the fishery is a major challenge. In the past, all boys used to become fishermen, but that is not the case anymore. My cousin has three sons, but he says he does not intend for all of them to become fishermen. On the other hand, in aquaculture, where the income is relatively stable, there are young people in their 20s who are doing well. I think it is still important for fishery workers to be financially stable to sustain the fishing port and the region. If we overcome this challenge, I think the beautiful scenery of the Setonaikai National Park will be preserved.



Saburo Beach. From the beach, you can also see Mt. Mitsuyama. The secluded location on the mountainside allows you to relax and enjoy your stay.

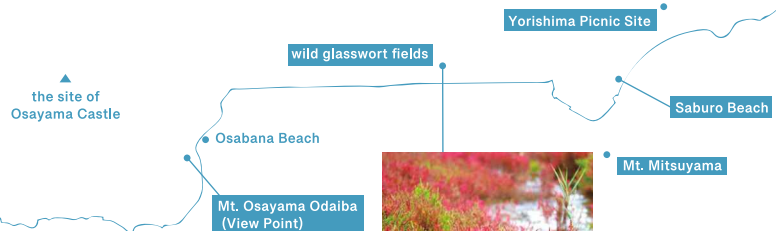


From left: Oyster processing plant in the fishing port. Oysters are sold here, too. Oyster processing. Young people are working.



Yorishima Picnic Site Mt. Osayama

Asakuchi City is also known as the “City of Astronomy.”
Yorishima Picnic Site, which was once an island, has been
reclaimed and is now connected to the land, the entire area is
included in the Setonaikai National Park.
From Yorishima Picnic Site and Mt. Osayama,
the symbolic Mt. Mitsuyama and the archipelago beauty of
the Seto Inland Sea can be seen.
It is adjacent to a natural coast, rich in nature, and a healing place.



You can walk across
to the beach from
the parking lot.



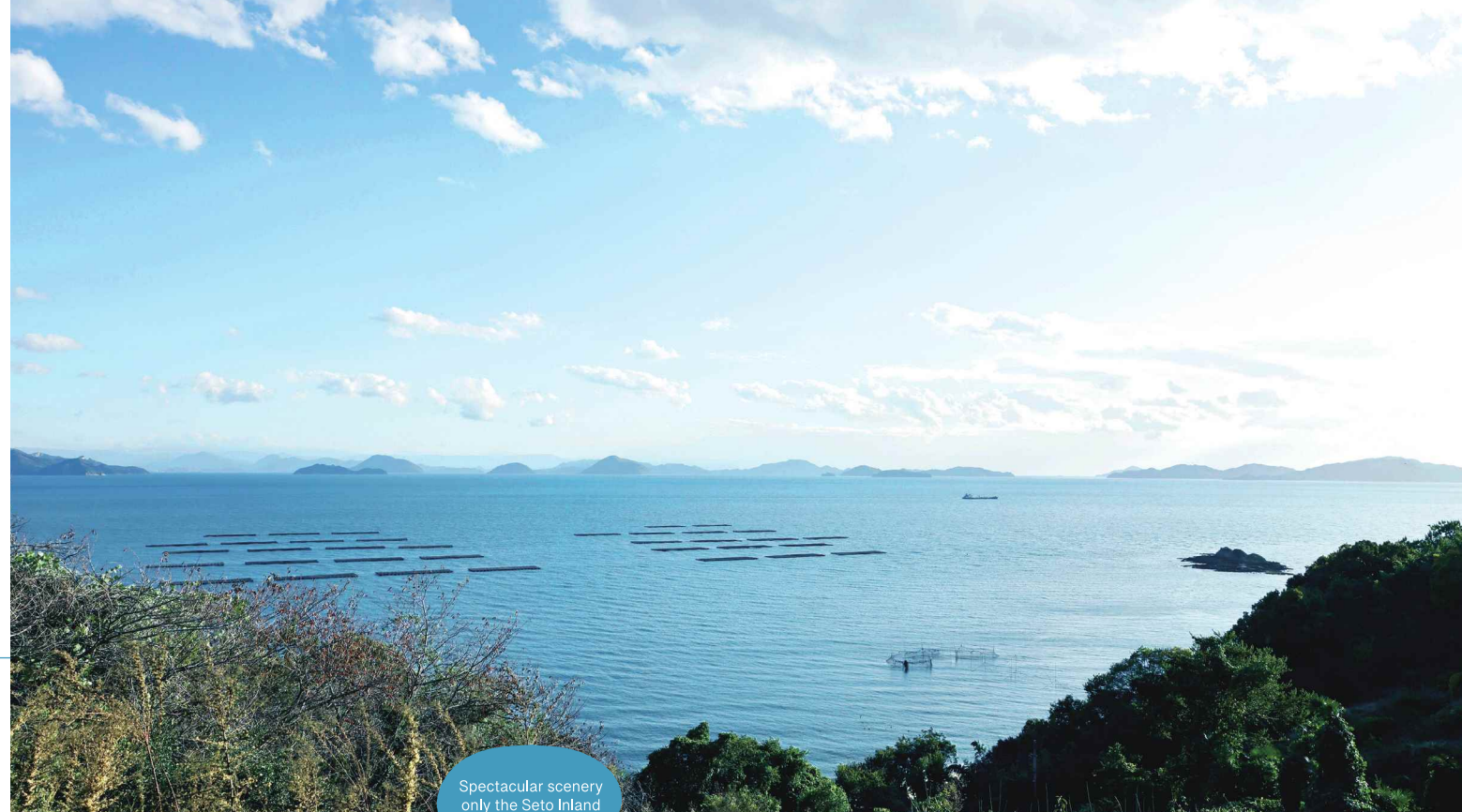
Saburo Beach

This natural coastline is adjacent
to the south of the Yorishima
Picnic Site. The sandy beach
stretches about 1 kilometer from
east to west, remaining natural
features in the past. Visitors can
enjoy fishing and swimming.



You can walk up to
the Yorishima Picnic Site
from the beach.

Yorishima Picnic Site



Spectacular scenery
only the Seto Inland
Sea can offer.

Within the Yorishima Picnic Site, observatory decks and walking trails are provided for visitors to enjoy the scenery while strolling around. Many cherry trees are planted here, making it a well-known *hanami* (cherry blossom viewing) place. The town of Yorishima can also be seen on the other side of the sea, allowing visitors to feel the charm of the Setonaikai National Park, which is blended into the daily life of the area seamlessly.



Mt. Mitsuyama



Three islands made of
granite off the west
coast of Yorishima. At
low tide, it is possible to
walk across from the
mainland.

Mt. Osayama Odaiba (View Point)



This is the site of former artillery batteries
built by the regional lord of Kamogata for
naval defenses. From here, Mt. Mitsuyama can
be seen right in front of it, which gives a
different impression from a close-up view. You
can also see the islands of Bisan-Seto Strait.
There are benches where you can relax.



The sea looks marble
pattern, and Mt. Mitsuyama
is so cute.

Setouchi Story

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Editor's Note

In this third volume, I visited Kasaoka City and Asakuchi City, located in the western part of Okayama Prefecture. I interviewed people who protect and preserve various things for the future, including traditional dances and dancers, endangered creatures and plants, the marine environment and industry, and local lifestyles in the region. They told me their thoughts on the magnificent nature of the national park, which is integrated into the place where they were born and raised and into their daily lives. The importance of their daily activities, which they have been gradually accumulating, resonated powerfully in their voices. I was reminded again that we, too, have a role in connecting them to the future. The cover of this issue features the view from Shiraishijima Island, which is dotted with oddly shaped rocks. I hope you will climb up there and experience it for yourself. I am sure it will be a place you will never forget. We hope that “The Setouchi Story” will help as many people as possible to learn about the activities of the local community and that the thoughts of those involved in various fields will be conveyed to the world. Finally, we would like to express our sincere appreciation to all those who helped us produce this booklet.

※The data in this booklet is as of March 2025.

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Setonaikai National Park Website
<https://www.env.go.jp/nature/nationalparks/list/setonaikai/>