

To promote conservation and restoration of coral reefs

1. What are coral reefs?



Coral reefs are called the rainforests of the ocean. They mainly grow in tropical to subtropical oceans and are the place to encounter brightly colored fish and many other marvelous creatures and are a treasure trove of biodiversity. The coral reefs in Japan surround islands such as the Ogasawara Islands and Nansei Islands, more than 420 species of reef-building coral have been reported until now. The ocean of the Yaeyama Islands group around the Sekisei Lagoon is especially abundant and more than 360 of these species can be found here making it a globally valuable coral reef area.

2. What is happening to our coral reefs?



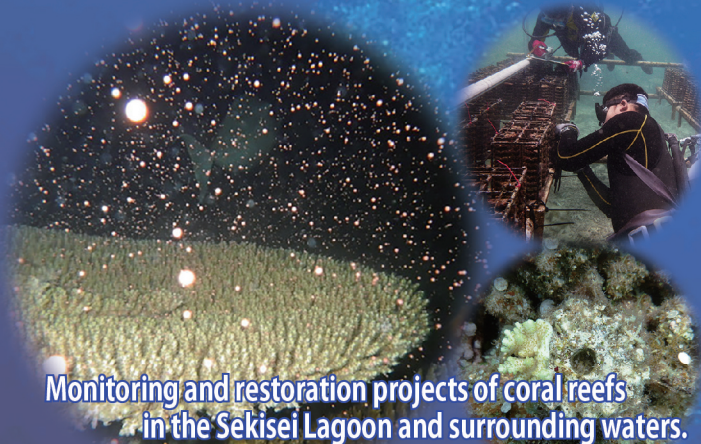
In the 1970's and 80's the coral reefs in the Yaeyama area suffered devastating damage from population outbreaks of crown-of-thorns starfish. While the reef was slowly recovering, large scale bleaching in 1998 and 2007 and frequent outbreaks of crown-of-thorns starfish after 2000 were the reason the recovery leveled off for some time and is climbing to a slight increase only in the last few years. Also, the influence of domestic wastewater and red soil runoff as a possible major obstructive factor to the natural recovery of coral reefs has been suggested. For the coral reef to be able to show its utmost natural resilience it is desirable that every individual makes choices that put as little strain on the coral reefs as possible.

3. Establishment of the International Coral Reef Research and Monitoring Center to promote ICRI



The conservation of coral reefs is an urgent issue around the world, in 1995 an international partnership for sustainable management and conservation of coral reefs, the International Coral Reef Initiative (ICRI) was launched. The ICRI builds consensus for policies concerning conservation of coral reefs through meetings and forums, it created the Global Coral Reef Monitoring Network (GCRMN) and takes important initiatives in strengthening the capabilities of developing countries to achieve conservation of coral reefs. The International Coral Reef Research and Monitoring Center is expected to play an important role as the central point of the GCRMN in East Asia.

4. Main activities of the International Coral Reef Research and Monitoring Center



Monitoring and restoration projects of coral reefs in the Sekisei Lagoon and surrounding waters.

Monitoring of changes in the coral reefs of the Sekisei Lagoon and the surrounding ocean, initiatives to aid the natural resilience of coral reefs through extermination of crown-of-thorns starfish and coral reef restoration using sexual reproduction methods. It also supports research and initiatives concerning coral reefs by researchers and citizens.



Public awareness of coral reefs

The center tries to raise the public awareness of coral reefs. In addition to panel and specimen exhibitions about the value, the role and the necessity of conservation of coral reefs, it also involved in education about conservation of coral reefs and the hosting of nature observation meetings.



Collection and provision of information about coral reefs

The center strives to gather national and international information on coral reefs, and to provide information through a website and by opening its library to the public, among other things.