

## Some Cases from Japan for Integrating Protected Areas into Wider Landscapes and Seascapes

Susumu TAKAHASHI

### 1. Introduction: Background

In Japan, a small and densely populated land has been managed and used for a broad array of different uses since ancient times. The land comprising National Parks cannot be exclusively allocated as government-owned park land as in such countries as the United States and Australia. For this reason, National Parks of Japan has adopted the system that the authority can designate National Parks without obtaining the land within the boundaries and impose certain regulations to achieve the purpose of park, with the result that National Parks in this country encompass privately owned areas to a large extent. Since many people also live inside National Parks and because such industries as agriculture and forestry are also conducted in these areas, National Parks are administered alongside efforts made to accommodate the lives, industries, and other concerns of inhabitants.

### 2. Collection and Use of Information

Since 1973, the Environment Agency (Ministry of the Environment at present) has carried out the National Survey of the Natural Environment every five years. These surveys are specified in the Nature Conservation Law. Popularly known as the Green Census, this nationwide survey is designed to clarify the current state of Japan's natural environment and monitor any changes. It covers land, surface water, and coastal areas. The survey is subdivided into such categories as animals, plants, rivers/lakes/marshes, and tidal flats/seaweed beds/coral reefs.

The survey is implemented by local governments with the cooperation of researchers, experts, and volunteers across the nation. Over the years, a huge volume of valuable data has been compiled. The Biodiversity Center was established in 1998 to expand the survey network and continue monitoring the nation's ecosystems. Survey results are released to the public in the form of reports and maps. The reports provide fundamental data for nature conservation policies (the designation and planning of natural parks, etc.) and environmental assessments.

Through analyzing the survey results, the Third National Biodiversity Strategy 2007 pointed out four crises: Species and habitat degradation due to excessive human activities (Crisis 1); Degradation of the countryside landscape due to abandonment or underutilization of secondary woodlands and grasslands, and to insufficient level of management (Crisis 2); Ecosystem disturbances caused by the introduced alien species (Crisis 3); Crisis caused by Global Warming (Crisis 4).

The Ministry of the Environment has just started to collect and analyze the outputs of the survey in order to complete an ecological gap assessment of the protected areas system in Japan by 2010. In addition, it plans to enhance protection of marine ecosystems, particularly in shallow sea areas.

### 3. Cooperative management plan with local community: Case from Shiretoko

Shiretoko area is one of the few rare locations in Japan where the virgin natural environment has

been preserved. The steep peaks and sheer cliffs created by volcanic activities have protected the rich nature and supported its diverse wildlife. It is an outstanding example of an integrated ecosystem that consists of a terrestrial ecosystem interlinked with a marine ecosystem which reflects the unique characteristics of the seasonal sea ice area at the world's lowest latitude. The area was designated as a national park in June 1964, and registered on the World Heritage list in July 2005.

In the process of registration on the world heritage list, the "Shiretoko Nominated Site Regional Liaison Committee" was established in October 2003 to facilitate close collaboration/cooperation between related government agencies and bodies. The Management Plan was established to appropriately conserve and manage the extremely diverse, unique and valuable natural environment of the Nominated Site for future generations. The Management Plan planned to facilitate close collaboration and cooperation among the government agencies, local municipalities and other related agencies in charge of various systems as well as to promote the participation and cooperation from local residents and related bodies in order to enhance the effective management of the nominated site.

Taking advantage of the opportunity of inscription on the World Heritage list as a natural heritage, it was decided to formulate an integrated marine management plan in order to keep ensuring both the conservation of marine ecosystem and the proper use of the area for human activities, such as fisheries and marine recreation, in the future. "The Multiple Use Integrated Marine Management Plan for Shiretoko World Natural Heritage Site" was established in December 2007. In this management plan, it is necessary to conduct research and monitoring and understand accurately the trends and dynamics of marine environment, marine structure, and indicator species of the marine ecosystem, in order to ensure the balance between conservation of the marine ecosystem and sustainable fisheries based on adaptive management.

#### 4. Regional Cooperation: Protected Areas and Coral Reef

The East Asian region is a collection of eight areas – China, Hong Kong, Macau, Taiwan, Japan, DPRK, ROK and Mongolia. These have a combined land area of 11.79 million km<sup>2</sup> and constitute a large and important part of the eastern Palearctic. In 1996 IUCN published "A Regional Action Plan for Protected Areas in East Asia". The plan included, besides improving management and the legal framework for protected areas, the goal of reaching 10 per cent protected area coverage by 2000 as advocated in the Caracas Action Plan from the IVth World Congress on National Parks and Protected Areas. In addition, the plan builds on the objectives of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) for protected areas, and identifies a number of key actions and projects requiring further regional attention. It also outlines various national actions essential to ensuring a strong regional protected area network. The government of Japan contributes to fundraising every year in order to enhance these actions.

To facilitate conservation of coral reefs and related ecosystems through developing of marine protected area (MPA) networks in East Asia, Japan has proposed to organize the "International Coral Reef Marine Protected Area Network Meeting / 4<sup>th</sup> ICRI East Asia Regional Workshop" in 2008 and follow-up meetings in 2009 and 2010. The overall objectives are to: (1) take stock information of MPA implementation, identifying gaps and challenges, and (2) to develop a regional strategy as a basis for regional cooperation and to support national efforts. The workshop in 2008 will be placed as a launch of development process of the regional strategy on MPA networks on coral reefs and related ecosystems in East Asia which is targeted until 2010.