IUCN Conservation Outlook Assessment 2014 **(archived)**
Finalised on 26 May 2014

Please note: this is an archived Conservation Outlook Assessment for Ogasawara Islands. To access the most up-to-date Conservation Outlook Assessment for this site, please visit https://www.worldheritageoutlook.iucn.org.

Ogasawara Islands

SITE INFORMATION

Country:
Japan
Inscribed in: 2011
Criteria:
(ix)

Site description:
The property numbers more than 30 islands clustered in three groups and covers surface area of 7,939 hectares. The islands offer a variety of landscapes and are home to a wealth of fauna, including the Bonin Flying Fox, a critically endangered bat, and 195 endangered bird species. Four-hundred and forty-one native plant taxa have been documented on the islands whose waters support numerous species of fish, cetaceans and corals. Ogasawara Islands' ecosystems reflect a range of evolutionary processes illustrated through its assemblage of plant species from both southeast and northwest Asia, alongside many endemic species. © UNESCO

SUMMARY

2014 Conservation Outlook

Good with some concerns

The outstanding values of the site - high plant and invertebrate diversity with high levels of endemism - have been relatively well preserved to date. However, the recent invasion of Green Anole (Anolis carolinensis) to Ani-jima Island and expansion of invasive flatworm (Platydemus manokwari) to the land snail habitat of Chichi-jima Island pose a high threat to these values. Components of the property are protected as wilderness area, national park, national wildlife protection area, forest ecosystem reserve and natural monument. Ministry of the Environment, Forestry Agency and Agency for Cultural Affairs effectively enforce laws concerning the protection of Ogasawara Islands. Comprehensive management and action plans are in place; however, funding for protection and management is sometimes slow in responding to urgent and fast moving threats such as the invasion of Green Anole to Anij-ima Islands in 2013.

Current state and trend of VALUES

Low Concern
Trend: Data Deficient

The World Heritage values of the site, namely ongoing ecological and evolutionary processes and high levels of endemism, have so far been well preserved. However, these values remain under high threat from invasive alien species.

Overall THREATS

High Threat

Invasive species represent the most serious threat to the ongoing ecological processes on the islands. Significant progress has been achieved in mitigation and eradication; however, the level of threat remains high as evidenced by the newly recorded invasive Green Anole and further expansion of the invasive

flatworm Platydemus manokwari. Increase in visitation and establishment of air services to the islands are the main potential threats, however the level of both threats is, for the moment, low.

Overall PROTECTION and MANAGEMENT

Mostly Effective

The component protected areas of the site are protected under different designations with the Ministry of the Environment, Forestry Agency and Agency for Cultural Affairs effectively responsible for law enforcement concerning the protection of Ogasawara Islands. Management plan and action plan for protection and management of property are being implemented effectively by Ministry of the Environment, Forestry Agency, Tokyo Metropolitan Government and Ogasawara Village with local community’s participation facilitated through a Regional Liaison Committee. Funding is overall sufficient, but some delays occur in responding to urgent threats such as invasion of Green Anole to Anij-ima Islands in 2013.

FULL ASSESSMENT

Description of values

Values

World Heritage values

► Valuable evidence of evolutionary processes

Criterion:(ix)

The Ogasawara Islands provide valuable evidence of evolutionary processes through their significant on-going ecological processes of adaptive radiation in the evolution of the land snail fauna as well as in their endemic plant species. The examples of fine-scale adaptive radiation between and sometimes within the different islands of the archipelago are central to the study and understanding of speciation and ecological diversification. This is further enhanced by the relatively low extinction rates in taxa such as the land snails (SoOUV, 2011).

► Exceptionally high levels of endemism in selected taxonomic groups

Criterion:(ix)

The property has a very high percentage of endemic species in selected taxonomic groups, resulting from evolutionary processes. Within the flora the site is an important centre for active, ongoing speciation. It is the combination of both the concentration of endemism and extent of adaptive radiation evident in the Ogasawara Islands which sets the property apart from other places illustrating evolutionary processes. When taking into account their small area, the Ogasawara Islands show exceptionally high levels of endemism in land snails and vascular plants (SoOUV, 2011).

Assessment information

Threats

Current Threats

High Threat

Invasive species represent the most serious threat to the ongoing ecological processes on the islands. Significant progress has been achieved in mitigation and eradication; however, the level of threat remains high as evidenced by the newly recorded invasive Green Anole and further expansion of the invasive flatworm Platydemus manokwari.

► Invasive Non-Native/ Alien Species

High Threat
Inside site
Outside site

Alien invasive species present the most significant immediate and future threat (IUCN, 2011). Invasion of Green Anole (Anolis carolinensis) to Ani-jimaIsland was recorded in 2013. Invasive flatworm (Platydemus manokwari) continues to expand to the snail habitats on Chichi-jima Island (R5). Increments of invasive plants were observed after eradication of Goat and Black rat.(R6)

Potential Threats

Low Threat

Increase in visitation and establishment of air services to the islands are the main potential threats, however the level of both threats is low.

► Utility / Service Lines

Low Threat

Outside site

The establishment of air services to the islands through an airstrip on Chichij ima Island has in the past been under discussion and will likely continue to be debated. Most residents seem strongly supportive but appear to favour a small scale solution for residential and emergency use (IUCN, 2011).
No plan has been approved yet.

► Tourism/ visitors/ recreation

Low Threat
Inside site

The site is very well protected through a strict access control regime with many sensitive areas off-limits to visitors or only accessible through guided tours (IUCN, 2011). An increase in visitation to Ogasawara Islands may pose a certain threat to the values of property. Number of hotels and beds has been strictly controlled in Ogasawara Islands up to now.

Protection and management

Assessing Protection and Management

► Education and interpretation programs

Mostly Effective

Visitor Centre run by the Tokyo Metropolitan Government as well as tourism organizations such as Ogasawara Whale Watching Association provide education and interpretation programs.

► Relationships with local people

Mostly Effective

A Regional Liaison Committee was established in 2006 and meets annually to facilitate the community’s participation in management decisions.

► Tourism and interpretation

Mostly Effective

Ecotourism operations provide an opportunity to interpret the values of

Ogasawara Islands to visitors under an Ecotourism Master Plan which has been prepared for the islands.

► Legal framework and enforcement

Mostly Effective

The components of the property are protected as wilderness area, national park, national wildlife protection area, forest ecosystem reserve and natural monument. Ministry of the Environment, Forestry Agency and Agency for Cultural Affairs effectively enforce laws concerning the protection of Ogasawara Islands.

► Integration into regional and national planning systems

Mostly Effective

Action plans under the management plan are integrated within the policies and plans of the Tokyo Metropolitan Government and Ogasawara Village at regional and local scales.

► Management system

Mostly Effective

Multi-agency management system by three central agencies and two local administrations is complex, however the Regional Liason Committee provides an effecfive mechanism for coordination.

► Management effectiveness

Data Deficient

Evaluation of management effectiveness has not yet been carried out.

► Implementation of Committee decisions and recommendations

Mostly Effective

Committee decisions and recommendations have mostly been implemented, however the control of invasive alien species has experienced both successes and setbacks such as the newly emerging invasions of Green Anole and Invasive Flatworm.

▶ Boundaries

Mostly Effective

Boundaries are clearly defined and understood.

▶ Sustainable finance

Some Concern

Budgets for preventing expansion of Green Anole and Invasive Flatworm were increased in 2013, but the allocation of funds was delayed in response to Green Anole being discovered on Ani-jima Island between two fiscal years: 2012-2013. Budget to build a new World Heritage Centre was suspended in the fiscal year 2014 by Ministry of the Environment.

▶ Staff training and development

Data Deficient

Evaluation of effectiveness of staff training in Ogasawara Islands has not yet been carried out.

▶ Sustainable use

Mostly Effective

The Ecotourism Master Plan includes regulation of the number of visitors to Minami-jima Island, Sekimon Trail at Haha-jima Island and specifies a certification program required for tour guides.

▶ Monitoring

Mostly Effective

Monitoring of tourism impact on sensitive ecosystems such as Minami-jima Island, Sekimon Trail and Higashi-daira Trail has been carried out by Tokyo Metropolitan Government, Forestry Agency and Ministry of the Environment with participation of scientists and NGOs.

▶ Research

Mostly Effective

Research on conservation of endemic species and eradication of invasive

alien species has been carried out by Ministry of the Environment, Forestry Agency, Tokyo Metropolitan Government with participation of scientists and NGOs including the Boninology Institute

Overall assessment of protection and management

Mostly Effective

The component protected areas of the site are protected under different designations with the Ministry of the Environment, Forestry Agency and Agency for Cultural Affairs effectively responsible for law enforcement concerning the protection of Ogasawara Islands. Management plan and action plan for protection and management of property are being implemented effectively by Ministry of the Environment, Forestry Agency, Tokyo Metropolitan Government and Ogasawara Village with local community's participation facilitated through a Regional Liaison Committee. Funding is overall sufficient, but some delays occur in responding to urgent threats such as invasion of Green Anole to Anij-ima Islands in 2013.

▶ Assessment of the effectiveness of protection and management in addressing threats outside the site

Mostly Effective

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▶ Best practice examples

The authoritoies are to be commended for well resourced programmes to control invasive species. These programmes have been developed based on assessing and adapting global best practice island ecosystem management. The Ogasawara Islands have established a number of excellent cooperative programmes with other countries expert in island invasive species control such as New Zealand.

State and trend of values

Assessing the current state and trend of values

World Heritage values

▶ Valuable evidence of evolutionary processes

High Concern
Trend:Data Deficient

Despite significant concerns regarding the impact of invasive species on certain species the fine scale evolutionary processes for which the islands were inscribed continue to function (R1-R6).

▶ Exceptionally high levels of endemism in selected taxonomic groups

Low Concern
Trend:Data Deficient

High levels of endemism are a product of the islands biogeographic isolation and evolutionary history. These high levels of endemism persist but are dependent on vigilant quarantining and access controls as well as ongoing effective invasive species control programmes (R1-R6).

Summary of the Values

▶ Assessment of the current state and trend of World Heritage values

Low Concern

Trend: Data Deficient

The World Heritage values of the site, namely ongoing ecological and evolutionary processes and high levels of endemism, have so far been well preserved. However, these values remain under high threat from invasive alien species.

Additional information

Key conservation issues

▶ Invasive Alien Species

Local

Expansion of Green Anole (Anolis carolinensis) to Ani-jima Island and (Platydemus manokwari) and invasive flatworm to snail habitat of Chichi-jima Island threaten endemic species of snails and insects, and therefore also pollination to endemic vascular plants.

▶ **Careful management of visitor access**

Local

The property currently only receives relatively low numbers of visitors due to access restrictions (sea access only). Continued close management of visitors and associated quarantine measures are necessary to ensure the island's fragile values are preserved.

Benefits

Understanding Benefits

▶ **Importance for research**

Since Ogasawara Islands were recognized as potential world heritage site in 2003, a lot of efforts have been done to monitor, control and eliminate invasive alien species from Ogasawara Islands by governments, communities, academics and NGOs. Communities receive benefits from this progamme, for example, control of feral cats increased the number of iconic species such as Japanese Wood Pigeon (Columba janthina nitens).

▶ **Outdoor recreation and tourism**

Since 1988, Ogasawara Islands have been recognized as ideal sites for ecotourism including whale-watching operation. World Heritage inscription promotes this practice including regulation of visitor numbers to important habitats and certification system of tour guides since Ogasawara Islands are recognized as potential world heritage site in 2003. Communities receive benefit from tourism.

Projects

Compilation of active conservation projects

№	Organization/ individuals	Project duration	Brief description of Active Projects
1	.		.

REFERENCES

№	References
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3	Ogasawara Islands World Natural Heritage Scientific Council (2011) Summary of the results of 2nd meeting of Scientific Council. (available at the web site of Ogasawara Islands Nature Information Centre, http://ogasawara-info.jp/pdf/science/FY2011_2nd_Summary_of_...)
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7	Statement of Outstanding Universal Value (2011). Decision 35COM 8B.11.