

Wakimoto Coast – Shoreline News

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Sea mist drifting over the shoreline on a chilly December dawn

Kagoshima Aquarium Conducts Training Program at Wakimoto Coast (Outreach Activity)

About fifty aquarium staff members visited the coast, where they attended a lecture on “Coastal Nature and Conservation Activities,” followed by a guided tour of the shoreline.

According to the participants’ reports sent later, many commented that they “learned a great deal, were amazed by the beauty of the coast, and felt a strong connection to the conservation efforts.”

From an outside perspective, the coastline received far higher praise than the local community had expected. Based on this feedback, we proposed installing signage and establishing a scenic preservation ordinance at the coastal council meeting with the city in December.



Cutting Kudzu in the Coastal Windbreak Forest (Scenic Preservation Activity)



Post-work group photo with Akune Ōshima behind

We carried out kudzu(Kazura in Japanese) cutting as advance work for the third coastal windbreak-forest cleanup scheduled for next March. Members of the Hakusa-Seishō Association and the glamping staff also joined us, and together we spent two hours clearing about 200 meters of the southern windbreak forest. Now we’re just waiting for the main cleanup event in March. We look forward to everyone’s participation.

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Wakimoto Coast Sea Turtle & Kentish Plover NPO
Akune City, Kagoshima Prefecture



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Aquarium Hosts Sea Turtle Program at Wakimoto Elementary School

This year, our NPO again provided four nature programs to Wakimoto Elementary School, including coastal training. In response to the students’ interest in learning more, the Kagoshima Aquarium offered a special lecture. Curator Kashiwagi, who supports our sea-turtle research, led an engaging session using videos and model turtle eggs. Seeing all the third-graders learning with tablets was striking.



Curator Kashiwagi presenting with video materials



Students happily riding the model after the session

Wakimoto Elementary School Receives the Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries Award

In December, it was announced that Wakimoto Elementary School was selected as one of the four top schools nationwide in the FY2025 “Environmental Beautification Education Awards,” chosen from elementary and junior high schools recommended by each prefecture. The award recognizes schools that demonstrate creativity, sustained commitment, and strong collaboration with their communities in promoting environmental beautification.

Wakimoto Elementary’s efforts to foster a love of nature and encourage environmental stewardship from an early age are truly commendable, and our NPO will continue to support their activities.

Please search online for “26th Environmental Beautification Education Award” to read the full article about the commendation. The materials below are only an excerpt, so please refer to the complete document for full details written in Japanese.

海岸清掃を続けシロチドリやウミガメが産卵する豊かな砂浜取り戻す

農林水産大臣賞 鹿児島県 阿久根市立脇本小学校

遠浅の白い砂浜が約3kmにわたって続く脇本海水浴場。夏場は県内外から多くの観光客が訪れ、東シナ海に沈む夕陽スポットとしても知られている。その景観を守るために海岸清掃活動に取り組むのが同校の児童たちだ。砂浜にはペットボトルや空き缶などの漂着ごみが広範囲に散乱しており、長年にわたりごみ回収に励んでいる。

きめの細かい砂浜には多様な動植物が生息している。中でも、アカウミガメやシロチドリが毎年、産卵に訪れる浜辺としても有名で、児童はNPO法人脇本海岸ウミガメ・シロチドリ会の協力を得て、体験学習に取り組む。絶滅危惧種であるシロチドリは、全国的に急速に数が減少しており、脇本海水浴場でも、ヒナの巣立ちを確認できない年が増加。要因は複数考えられるが、砂浜の減少やヘビ、タヌキなどによる捕食などさまざま。砂に直接卵を産む習性があるシロチドリは、砂浜に草が伸びていたり、ごみが散乱していたりすると、産卵できない。無事に産卵したとしても、保護色の卵は人が気づかずに踏んでしまうこともある。そうした現状を学んだ児童は、注意を促すボスターや看板を作り、住民と海岸に設置している。



What is *Mokumāō* (Casuarina)?

Creeping Threat

The coastal windbreak forest at Wakimoto Beach is increasingly dominated by *Casuarina*, an invasive species, and the area is gradually turning into a monoculture of this tree. *Casuarina* has also begun spreading onto the sandy beach, making it difficult for sea turtles to dig their nests.

As an initial countermeasure, our NPO has begun removing *Casuarina* from the beach to secure nesting sites. However, large-scale removal within the main windbreak forest requires government leadership, and discussions have begun within the coastal council to address the issue.

Distribution of Casuarina

The trees are densely concentrated along Origuchi Beach (the southern half of Wakimoto Beach), where medium-sized trees with trunk diameters over 10 cm have already advanced beyond the windbreak net and onto the sand.

Toward the northern area, the forest is less dense and beach encroachment is limited, but several large trees with trunk diameters exceeding 30 cm are scattered throughout. These mature trees produce large quantities of seeds, making further expansion highly likely.

Characteristics: Comparison with Pine Trees

Trunk of the Casuarina Tree



Their overall tree form is quite similar



Trunk of a pine tree



The leaves of Casuarina are over twice the length of pine needles, but the tree produces much smaller cones.



Casuarina produces small cones, each packed with numerous winged seeds that disperse easily in the wind.

When and Why Was It Introduced?

Casuarina was introduced to the windbreak forest of Wakimoto Beach around 1970 for the purpose of wind and sand protection. After pine trees in the windbreak forest were wiped out by pine-wilt disease in the late 1960s, *Casuarina* was considered a suitable replacement nationwide. As part of this trend, it appears that *Casuarina* was also planted at Wakimoto Beach.

Why Does It Spread So Rapidly?

Casuarina spreads widely because its roots extend horizontally and sprout new shoots, and because it produces large numbers of winged seeds that disperse easily. Its rapid growth and the thick layer of fallen needle-like leaves cover the ground surface, suppressing the germination and growth of other plant species. Since it thrives in salty sandy soil, it can also sprout directly on the beach. As a result, it has begun invading the sandy area in front of the seawall, which serves as a nesting site for sea turtles and Kentish plovers.

How Should We Respond Going Forward?

If left unmanaged, *Casuarina* will continue to displace native species—such as pine, toera, Japanese spindle, and *Rhaphiolepis*—turning the windbreak forest into a bleak monoculture. It will also deprive endangered species of their nesting habitat.

Our NPO continues steady volunteer work to remove small *Casuarina* seedlings from sea-turtle nesting areas, but the species spreads so aggressively that removal requires significant effort.

Recognizing the ecological risks, the Tokyo Metropolitan Government began removing *Casuarina* in the Ogasawara Islands (a World Natural Heritage site) around 2020. In Kagoshima, similar removal efforts were carried out on Amami Ōshima in 2023–2024 through cooperation between local government and NPOs.

Learning from these precedents, we will continue urging the prefecture and the city to support the removal of *Casuarina* as an invasive species before it spreads any further.