

# World Natural Heritage Ogasawara Islands



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世界自然遺產  
小笠原諸島



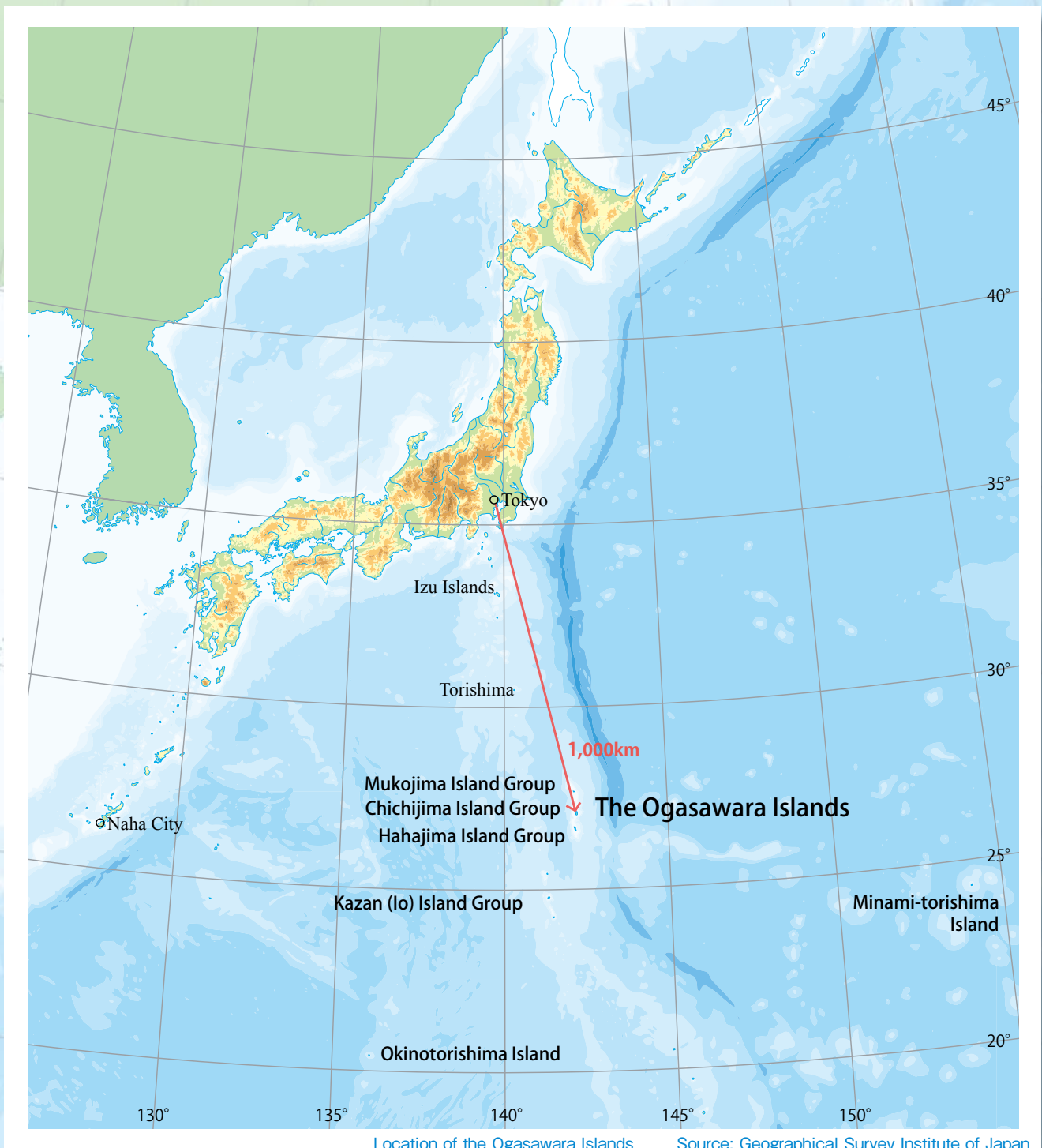
# About the Ogasawara Islands

## [Location]

The Ogasawara Islands are a group of more than 30 small subtropical islands in the northwestern Pacific Ocean, located approximately 1,000 km south of Tokyo. The Ogasawara Islands are oceanic islands that have never been connected to the land with any continent since their birth. Ogasawara Village in Tokyo Prefecture includes islands such as, from the north, the Mukojima, Chichijima, and Hahajima Island Groups, the Kazan (Iō) Island Group 250 km further south, Minami-torishima Island, Japan's easternmost island, and Japan's southernmost island Okinotorishima Island. At roughly the same latitude as Okinawa (Chichijima's latitude is 27 degrees north), they are located in the subtropical zone. With a subtropical maritime climate, it is warm all four seasons, with an annual average

temperature of 23°C and a temperature of 18°C even in winter, almost never seeing snow or frost. The annual precipitation is approximately 1,300mm, somewhat lower than that of Tokyo. Of the many islands of Ogasawara, only Chichijima (pop. approx. 2,000) and Hahajima (pop. approx. 450) are populated by permanent residents.

There is no airport on the Ogasawara Islands. The journey from Tokyo's Takeshiba Pier to Chichijima Island takes about 25.5 hours each way on a regularly scheduled liner, the *Ogasawara Maru*. The vessel leaves port at 10:00 in the morning and reaches Futami Port on Chichijima Island at 11:30 am the next day. It takes about 130 minutes from Chichijima to Hahajima on the *Hahajima Maru*.



Location of the Ogasawara Islands

Source: Geographical Survey Institute of Japan



### [History]

The Ogasawara Islands are traditionally said to have been discovered in 1593 by a man named Sadayori Ogasawara.

The first settlement on the Ogasawara Islands began with migration to Chichijima in 1830 by five Westerners and more than 10 people from Hawaii and other Pacific islands.

Full-fledged migration from Japan began around 1860, and prior to World War II the islands played an important role as a relay station to South Pacific islands such as Saipan.

In 1944, as the tide of war turned against Japan, all island residents except for military personnel were forcefully evacuated to the mainland of Japan. Even after the war, aside from some Westerners, residents were not permitted to return to the islands. In June 1968 the Ogasawara Islands were restored to Japanese sovereignty and after 23 years residents finally returned to the islands. Even after restoration to Japanese sovereignty, the general public did not return to Ioto Island due to its severe natural conditions including volcanic activity. Today it is the location of a Japan Self-Defense Forces base.

In 1979 the village government was established, and from then through today it has continued village development activities aiming for coexistence with nature.

A view of Oki Port from Hahajima's Mt. Chibusayama



Ogasawara during the prewar development years

A sunken vessel at Sakaiura on Chichijima Island



Chichijima Omura in the late 1920s



The ceremony marking restoration to Japanese sovereignty (Chichijima)

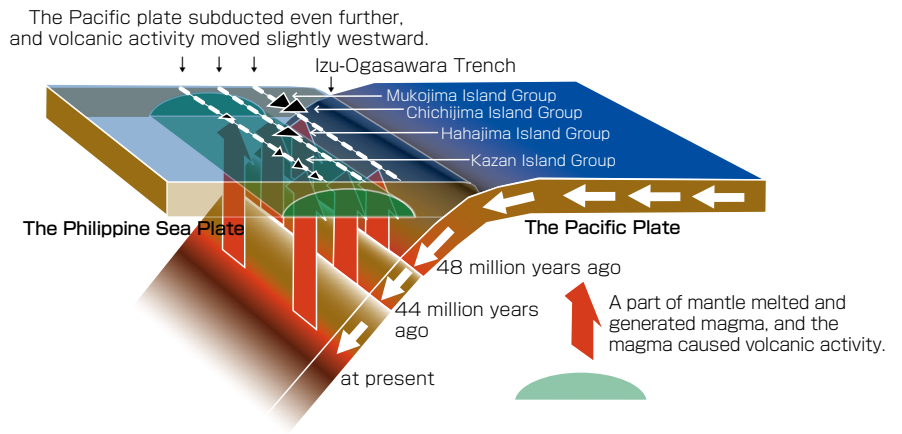
# Nature

Since they are oceanic islands of subtropical climate and there is no land connecting them to the mainland, the Ogasawara Islands are full of wonderful, unique natural characteristics.

## [Topography, Geography & Geology]

Rock formations exposed on the land and the geological strata of the Ogasawara Islands record the collision between tectonic plates that started the formation of the continents and the subsequent geological growth process from the initial stage of subduction through today.

It is possible to see a variety of rare rock formations and terrains on the Ogasawara Islands.



The development of the Ogasawara Islands



Lapies (Minamijima Island)



Chihiroiwa (Chichijima island)



"Uguisu Suna," oriole-green sand of boninite

## [Animals & Plants]

The Ogasawara Islands are oceanic islands that have never been connected to with any continent since their birth. Therefore, only the limited organisms that managed to reach the islands across the ocean have been able to spread in the islands with little competition.

As a result of their unique evolution, a large number of endemic animals and plants are found only on the Ogasawara Islands. The endemic ratios of endemic vascular plants, insects, and land snails are 36% , 28% , and 94% , respectively.



Subtropical rainforest (home to many endemic species)



*Mandarina kaguya* (endemic species)



Endemic subspecies of Japanese wood-pigeon (*Columba janthina nitens*)



Coral reefs (Kitako Bay, Hahajima Island)



Indo-Pacific Bottlenose Dolphin



Humpback Whale (season: January – April)

### [The Seas of Ogasawara]

The seas of Ogasawara are deep blue in color. Diverse marine scenery spreads out in the sea, including coral reefs, multicolored tropical fish, and black rock surfaces slanting sharply into the sea. The vicinity of the Ogasawara Islands also is home to many creatures such as dolphins and whales, and the islands also have Japan's largest green-turtle spawning ground. These and other creatures provide the opportunity to see a variety of living creatures in the sea as well.

## World Heritage Nomination Process

The World Heritage is an irreplaceable asset of mankind as a whole and is a treasure to be handed over to future generations. The Ogasawara Islands were inscribed on the World Heritage List in June 2011, valued for the unique ecosystems that can only be seen in Ogasawara. The Ogasawara Islands are the fourth World Natural Heritage site in Japan, after Yakushima, Shirakami-Sanchi, and Shiretoko.



On-site mission by the IUCN experts.

May 2003	Selection of Ogasawara Islands in Japan as a candidate of World Natural Heritage
January 2007	Submission of the Tentative List to the UNESCO World Heritage Centre.
January 2010 July 2010	Submission of nomination dossier and management plan to the UNESCO World Heritage Centre. On-site mission by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN).
May 2011	Preparation by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) of an evaluation report and submittal of the report to the UNESCO World Heritage Centre.
June 2011	Ogasawara Islands were inscribed as a World Natural Heritage site in the 35th session of the World Heritage Committee.

# World Natural Heritage, “Ogasawara Islands”

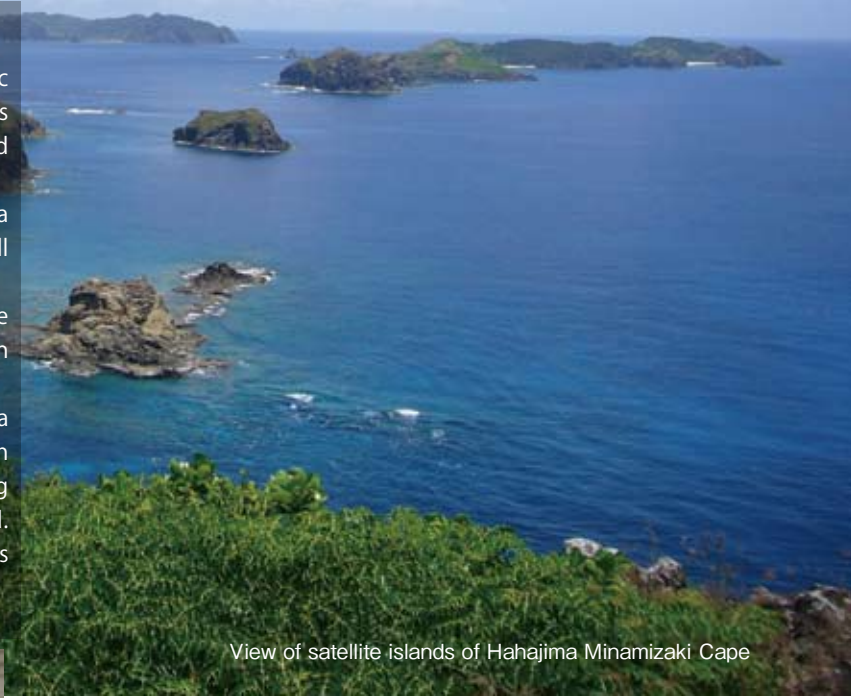
## [Value of the Ogasawara Islands]

On the Ogasawara Islands, one can see numerous endemic creatures that evolved independently on these small islands isolated by the sea and the ecosystems that have developed among them.

The islands have been recognized to have global value as a classic example of the evolution of living creatures on small oceanic islands.

“Adaptive radiation” refers to creatures that originally were identical splitting into multiple phyla through changes in form and color suited to different environments.

For example, the snails of *Mandarina* genus in the Ogasawara Islands have evolved into a variety of species through adaptive radiation, with snails with pale-colored shells living in trees and those with darker shells living on the ground. Comparison of fossil shells with species living today shows the history of evolution.



View of satellite islands of Hahajima Minamizaki Cape



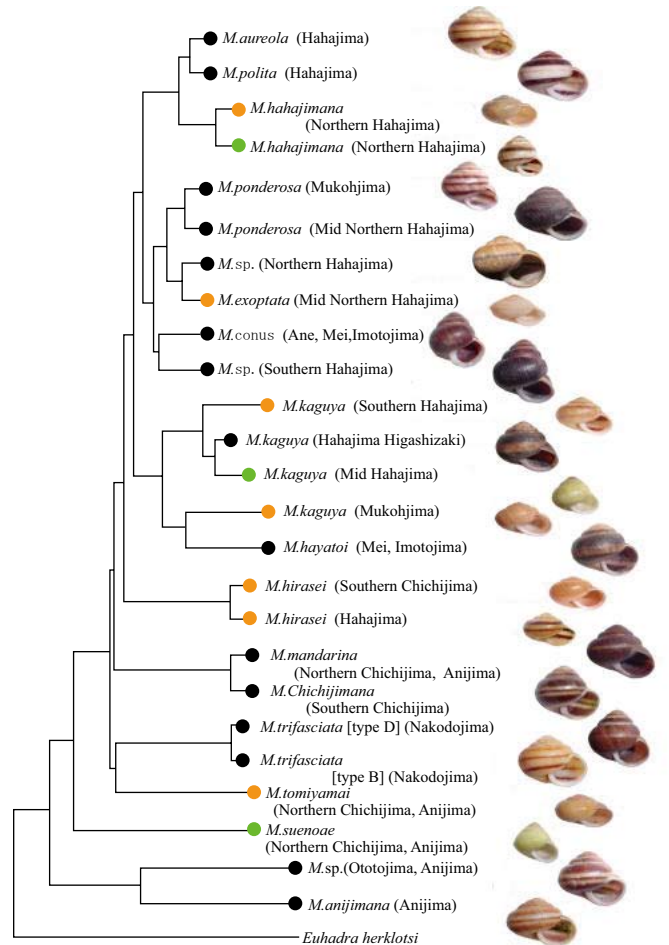
Semifossil of *Mandarina luhuana* (Minamijima Island)

Sclerophyllous scrub woodlands cover large areas of Chichijima and Anijima Islands. Within these woodlands grow endemic plants that have evolved in response to the dry island environment, through adaptations such as changes in leaf shape.

In addition to adaptive radiation, one can see the distinctive evolutionary forms characteristic of marine islands, such as plants that evolved from herbaceous to woody plants that differentiated into male and female.



Sclerophyllous scrub



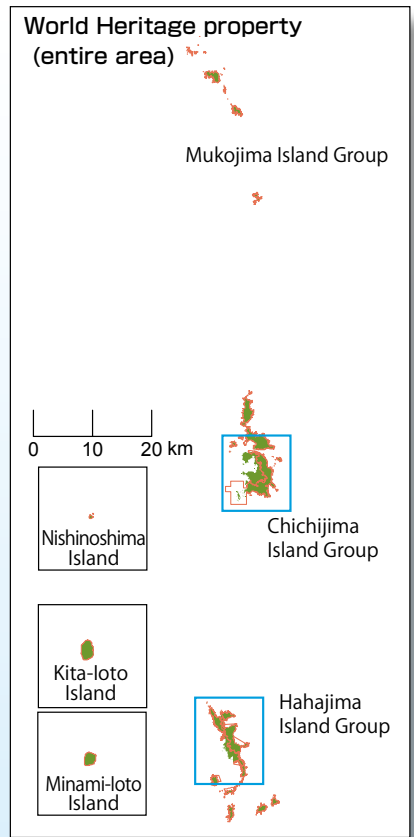
Photography: Satoshi Chiba

Evolution of *Mandarina* genus

## [World Heritage Site]

From the north, the Mukojima, Chichijima, and Hahajima Island Groups, Kita-ioto and Minami-ioto Islands of the Ito Island Group (Kazan Island Group), and Nishinoshima Island are included in the World Heritage Site, including some marine areas near Chichijima and Hahajima.

Chichijima Island is blanketed with sclerophyllous scrub woodlands, chiefly in the east of the island, where one can view rare creatures. Minamijima's features include beautiful scenery and *Mandarina luhuana* shells. The subtropical rainforest at Sekimon on Hahajima is a treasure house of endemic species.



# To Conserve the World Natural Heritage, “Ogasawara Islands”

## [Efforts in the community]

When people began to live on the Ogasawara Islands in 1830, alien species arrived together with them. The introduction of alien species has changed the original ecosystems of the Ogasawara Islands, as alien species have preyed on endemic species or taken over their habitats.

In cooperation with island residents, local NPOs, the Ministry of the Environment, the Forestry Agency, and the Tokyo Metropolitan Government, Ogasawara Village is carrying out activities including efforts to eliminate alien species.



Volunteers working to eliminate alien plants



Obligation to fit pet cats with microchips



Feral goat and cat-proof fence (Chichijima Island)

## [When Visiting the Islands]

The cooperation of visitors is requested to help pass on to future generations the natural environment of the World Natural Heritage, the Ogasawara Islands.

### ● To prevent the invasion of alien species

Please take care not to bring in any creatures not native to Ogasawara or not to take them to the mountains or other islands. If you visit the mountains or other islands, check the soles of your shoes, and your clothes and baggage, to make sure that no organisms, such as seeds and small insects, have stuck to them.



To prevent the introduction of alien species to Hahajima, visitors are advised shake any dirt off shoes when disembarking from the *Hahajima Maru*.

### ● To conserve the natural environment of Ogasawara

A variety of rules has been established in Ogasawara to protect the natural environment. Approach nature, following these rules, for example by sticking to set routes and following guides' instructions.



Visitors cannot enter Minamijima and Hahajima Sekimon area without a guide.

### ● Inquiry

Chichijima: Ogasawara Village Tourist Association  
TEL: +81(0)4998-2-2587 <http://www.ogasawaramura.com/en/>  
Hahajima: Hahajima Tourist Association  
TEL: +81(0)4998-3-2300 <http://www.hahajima.com/>  
Tokyo: Ogasawara Village Tourism Bureau  
TEL: +81(0)3-5776-2422 <http://www.visitogasawara.com/>

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General Affairs Division, Policy Office, Ogasawara Village  
Nishimachi, Chichijima, Ogasawara Village, Tokyo 100-2101  
TEL : +81(0)4998-2-3111 <http://www.vill.ogasawara.tokyo.jp/>

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