

Environmental Conservation at the Coastal Areas in the Sea of Japan

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Takeno Snorkeling Center (located at the coast of Nihon Sea in Takeno Town, Hyogo Prefecture, in the San-in Kaigan National Park) was established in July 1992 by Environmental Agency of Japan (of the time). It is the first national park center for public use of marine national parks in Japan. Specially, it is aimed for education of natural marine environment by means of underwater observation using snorkeling. The center undertakes various activities including educational classes on biology of intertidal organisms, and observation of underwater environment using snorkeling. These activities are mostly aimed for children of elementary school ages and run by volunteer staff of the center.

In January 1997, massive amount of heavy oil spilled from a Russian Tanker "Nakhodka" stranded the coast around Takeno Snorkeling Center, giving serious impact on coastal environment. The volunteer staff of the center organized a civil volunteer group for recovering the spilled oil immediately after the accident. Later, the area has been used for field research of environmental monitoring of the oil impact on coastal ecosystems. Several research projects has been organized by a local government and academic institutions (such as Hyogo Prefecture, Kobe University and University of Tokyo). The park volunteers has joined these projects, cooperating specialists of biology and environmental science, and playing important roles in the fieldworks that monitor recovery process of intertidal animals and plants after the oil spill.

Since the oil spill accident, the extent of the park activities has broadened greatly: various activities such as ecological monitoring of natural environments and environmental conservation has added to previous environmental education activity given by limited members of instructors of the center. Information on coastal ecosystems and biology of marine organisms obtained by the cooperative research projects with academic institutions has facilitated greatly to improve skills and motivation of volunteer staff to further environmental education of the center.

In this presentation, we will introduce ongoing activities by the volunteer staff of Takeno Snorkeling Center as described above. We will also discuss about perspectives on future environmental conservation activities cooperated by specialists in academic institutions, administrators in local governments and civil volunteers in local communities.