



Iriomote wild cat

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Iriomote wildcat habitat status



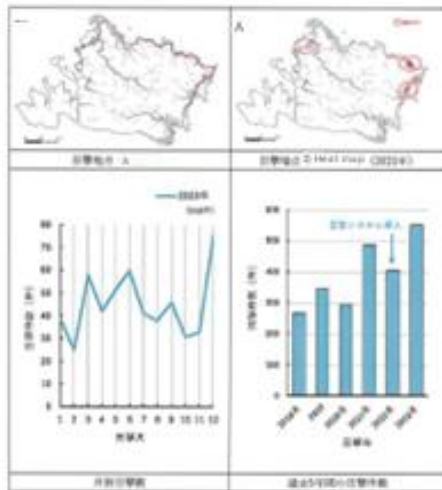
Town of Higashi District: February 26, 2024

At the Iriomote Wildcat Conservation and Breeding Project Review Meeting held on March 14, 2024, the results of the survey and monitoring of the habitat status of Iriomote wildcats in the coastal lowlands were announced. This year, Iriomote wildcats were confirmed at all 29 monitoring points. This includes the Takana area, where forests have been cut down for ranch development, and there are concerns about the impact on resident cats. All of the cats captured and surveyed tested negative for both feline (FIV), immunodeficiency virus and feline leukemia virus (FeLV), and it is believed that the social structure of the Iriomote wildcats is being maintained in a healthy state.

Iriomote wildcat sightings

In 2023, the Ministry of the Environment's Iriomote Wildlife Conservation Center received a record 552 sightings. This is not due to an increase in wildcats appearing on the roads, but rather due to the fact that the sighting information input form introduced by the prefecture has become widely known, and sightings that had not been reported before are now

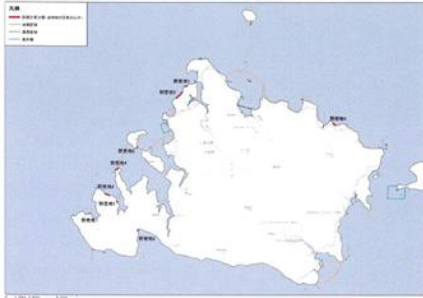
being collected. Most sightings were near the Takana Recycling Center, between Sagara and Mihara, and between Urauchibashi and Hidate, but as a result of related organizations such as the Wildcat Battalion carrying out undergrowth cutting activities, warnings and patrols based on sightings, 2023 saw zero traffic accidents involving Iriomote



Iriomote cat habitat conservation project

Moves to lift ban on camping and bonfire tours at nine locations on Iriomote Island

At the Iriomote Island Ecotourism Promotion Council held on January 29, 2024, the Taketomi Town Natural Tourism Division, which serves as the secretariat, explained that they are considering opening up the market for camping and bonfire tours at nine beach locations on Iriomote Island (locations shown in red on the map). Four of the proposed camping locations are designated as Type 1 Special Areas and World Heritage Sites, and there are concerns about the negative impact on rare wild animals and plants, including the Iriomote wildcat, and the surrounding environment.



Taketomi Town has instructed people not to camp or have bonfires on Iriomote Island except in designated places such as campsites, and the Iriomote Island Ecotourism Promotion Overall Plan, which was certified by the national government in 2022, also states that "camping, bonfires, and other activities are prohibited in principle."

In addition, the Iriomote Island Tourism Management Plan, which was formulated in March 2023, stipulates that use within the World Heritage Site will be limited to a maximum of 20 fields that are in constant use, and that the number of fields in use will not increase beyond this limit. Opening up the market to camping and bonfire tours is clearly in contradiction to these plans.

In addition, since the plan itself was drawn up based on a closed-door meeting of only a few business operators, and there are also some unclear points about the status of the review, Yamaneko Patrol has submitted a request to Taketomi Town's Nature and Tourism Division, asking for open discussion with residents and careful consideration of the plan. In addition, on August 4, 2024, the group posted an opinion piece in the Yaeyama Mainichi Shimibun titled "Will lifting the ban on camping and bonfire tours be beneficial for Iriomote Island?" to share information with local Iriomote Island residents and raise the issue.



We have compiled a report entitled "Three Years After Iriomote Island's World Heritage Registration" Submitted to IUCN

On July 26, 2021, the World Heritage Committee recommended that the contracting party, Japan, implement two measures to "keep the number of visitors to Iriomote Island within the environmental carrying capacity" and "strengthen roadkill measures for the Iriomote cat." Since then, Okinawa Prefecture has formulated the "Iriomote Island Tourism Management Plan," which seems to be a tentative measure, but unfortunately it is not an effective plan that responds to the World Heritage Committee's criticisms. In addition, there are also efforts to use the World Heritage area for tourism in new ways, such as considering opening the market to camping and bonfire tours mentioned above. In response, JTEF Yamaneko Patrol examined issues surrounding the conservation and management of the World Heritage Site of Iriomote Island and prepared a report entitled "Three years after Iriomote Island was registered as a World Heritage Site, tourist entry restrictions have stagnated and the market is opening up to new tourism businesses within the heritage area," which makes recommendations on what should be done by the Ministry of the Environment, Okinawa Prefecture, and Taketomi Town. The report was then submitted to the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), an advisory body to World Heritage Sites.

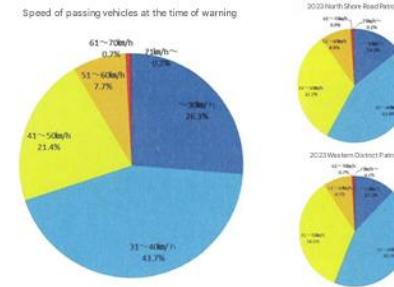


Measures to prevent traffic accidents There are currently 0 traffic accidents in 2024!

There have been no traffic accidents involving Iriomote cats since last year, and the number of consecutive days without accidents has exceeded 780 (as of February 15, 2025). However, wildcats still frequently appear on the roads, with multiple individuals repeatedly appearing on the roads between Urauchibashi and Hidate in May and June, and between Komi and Sagara in August and September. To improve visibility in the area, grass was cut and LED signs and flags were erected to directly warn people. On June 9, a very dangerous situation occurred when a subadult cat began wandering along the road during a procession of cars returning from the Kajin Festival Eve held in Shirahama, but the cat was chased away and an accident was prevented.

Continuing from last year, we conducted awareness-raising activities in areas where Iriomote wildcats are frequently seen on the roads. In fiscal 2023, we conducted 24 awareness-raising activities at the Takana Recycling Center and other locations, and also conducted a shortened version of the awareness-raising activities at the entrance to the Inaba Forest Road as part of the patrol experience conducted by the Iriomote Wildcat Club.

When comparing the results of speed surveys conducted in conjunction with warnings by people on the road with the results of traffic surveys conducted during car patrols, it was found that the speed was slower and that direct warnings increased the rate of speed compliance. There was also a slight decrease in the number of drivers in the high-speed zone of 51km/h or more.



Iriomote Wildcat Day 2024

April 15th is Iriomote Wildcat Day, as designated by Taketomi Town ordinance. JTEF/Branch Wildcat Patrol has planned and implemented various events since the ordinance was enacted in 2015, and this year we cooperated with the "Iriomote Wildcat Children's Guide" event held at the Iriomote Wildlife Conservation Center of the Ministry of the Environment. The guides were the 5th graders of Uehara Elementary School, who receive a class every year from JTEF/Branch Wildcat Patrol as part of the "Life with Wildcats Project". They seemed a little nervous at first, but as the explanation went on, they gradually relaxed, and by the end they had become excellent guides. Thank you to the 5th graders of Uehara Elementary School for your hard work. In addition, from the second week of April to Iriomote Wildcat Day on April 15th, we strengthened our night patrols and conducted intensive awareness activities near the entrance to the Inaba forest road, where wildcats often appear on the road.

Living with Wildcats Lessons

In 2023, we held outreach classes at Iriomote Elementary School, Uehara Elementary School, and Shirahama Elementary School, and carried out programs such as fecal analysis and fieldwork. In addition, during the summer vacation, we held an Iriomote cat training session for newly appointed teachers on Iriomote Island at Obara Junior High School in collaboration with the Taketomi Town Board of Education.



5th graders from Uehara Elementary School who served as child guides (left) and nighttime caution activity on Iriomote Wildcat Day (right)

Iriomote Wildcat Conservation Fund Activity Report (2024)

Concerns about opening up the island to camping and open fire tours

- On January 29, 2024, the Iriomote Island Ecotourism Promotion Council was considering lifting the ban on camping and campfire tours at nine locations along the beach. Despite Taketomi Town previously banning camping as a general rule. So this new plan contradicts these existing policies.
- Four of the candidate sites are designated as World Heritage Sites or Type I Special Areas, and there are concerns about the impact on the environment and the wildlife.
- Yamaneko Patrol has requested that Taketomi Town's Tourism Department carefully consider the matter and disclose information to residents.

Iriomote Cat Habitat Conservation Our objective is to conserve the habitat of wildcats in the lowlands of Iriomote Island by investigating the impacts of land use and to make recommendations to relevant agencies. A more systematic approach for biodiversity conservation is needed.

Issues Three Years After World Heritage Registration

- In 2021, the IUCN made recommendations "managing the number of visitors to the island" and "strengthening measures against roadkill."
- However, Japanese government has offered no effective plans that have been put in place, and there are new moves to expand use of different areas for tourism.
- In 2024, the JTEF Yamaneko Patrol submitted a report to IUCN pointing out these problems *“Three years after inscription of Iriomote Island on the World Heritage List: Stagnant visitation controls and creation of new tourism business opportunity inside the properties”*.

<https://www.jtef.jp/en/report-three-years-after-inscription-of-iriomote-island-on-the-world-heritage-list/>

Traffic accident countermeasures and current situation

- There were zero cat traffic accidents in 2024 (over 660 accident-free days)
- However, frequent appearances on the streets continue, sometimes high risk cats have been seen
- Grass is being cut to ensure visibility, and LED signs and flags are being used to raise awareness
- Direct warnings improve speed compliance rates

Environmental Education Activities

- **Environmental Education Classes were held** “Living with Iriomote cats” was held at Iriomote Elementary School (ES), Uehara ES and Shirahama ES
- **Iriomote Cat Day (April 15th)** : A children's guide event was held
- **Strengthened night-time patrols** : Focused warning signs for drivers to see in areas where wildcats were sighted



イリオモテヤマネコ

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イリオモテヤマネコの生息状況



高那地区の牧場 撮影 2024年2月28日

2024年3月14日に開催されたイリオモテヤマネコ保護増殖事業検討会で、沿岸低地部におけるイリオモテヤマネコの生息状況の調査及びモニタリング結果が発表されました。今年も29ヶ所のモニタリングポイントすべてでイリオモテヤマネコが確認されています。牧場開発に伴う森林の伐開が行われ、定住個体への影響が心配されている高那地区もそこに含まれます。なお、捕獲して調査された個体は、ネコ免疫不全ウイルス感染症(FIV)、ネコ白血病ウイルス感染症(FeLV)ともに全て陰性で、イリオモテヤマネコの社会構造が健全な状態で維持されていると考えられています。

イリオモテヤマネコの目撃情報

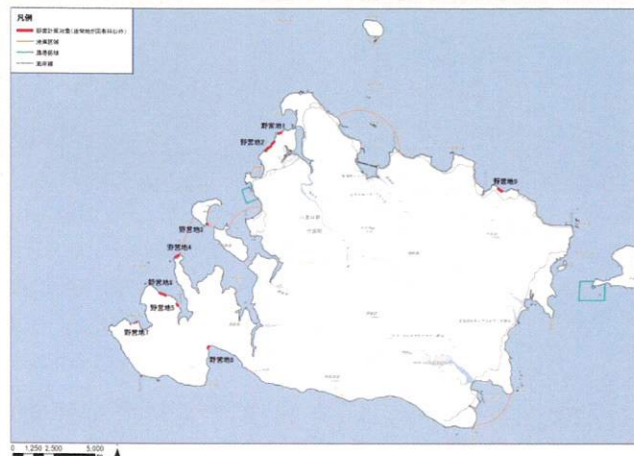
2023年に環境省西表野生生物保護センターに寄せられた目撃情報は552件と過去最多を記録しています。これは道路に出ているヤマネコが増えたためというより、県が導入した目撃情報入力フォームが一般に周知され、これまで報告されていなかった目撃情報が集まりつつあるためと考えられます。目撃が多かったのは、高那リサイクルセンター付近、相良～美原、浦内橋～干立間ですが、やまねこパトロールなど関係機関が目撃情報を基に下草刈り活動、注意喚起やパトロールを実施した結果、2023年はイリオモテヤマネコの交通事故0を達成しています。



イリオモテヤマネコ生息地保全プロジェクト

西表島の9か所で キャンプ・たき火ツアー解禁の動き

2024年1月29日に開催された西表島エコツーリズム推進協議会において、事務局の竹富町自然観光課から西表島の海浜9か所におけるキャンプ・たき火ツアーの市場開放を検討している旨の説明がなされました(地図に赤色で示された場所)。キャンプ候補地のうち4か所は第一種特別地域及び世界遺産区域に指定されており、イリオモテヤマネコをはじめとする希少野生動植物および周辺環境への悪影響が懸念されています。



竹富町はこれまで西表島島内ではキャンプ場などの指定場所以外でのキャンプ、たき火は行わないよう指導しており、2022年に国に認定された西表島エコツーリズム推進全体構想においても「キャンプ、たき火等の行為は原則禁止する」と

されています。また、2023年3月に策定された西表島観光管理計画では、世界遺産区域内の利用について「恒常的に利用されているフィールド20か所を上限としてそれ以上利用箇所が増大しないよう制限する」と定められており、キャンプ・たき火ツアーの市場開放はこれら計画と明らかに矛盾しています。

また、この計画自体が一部の事業者からなる非公開会合を基に計画されているなど、検討状況にも不透明な点があることから、やまねこパトロールは竹富町自然観光課に対して、住民に開かれた議論と計画の慎重な検討を求める要望書を提出したほか、2024年8月4日には、八重山毎日新聞に意見「キャンプ・たき火ツアー解禁は西表島のためになるのか?」を投稿し、地元西表島住民への情報共有と問題提起をしました。



報告書「西表島の世界遺産登録から3年が経過して」を作成し IUCN に提出しました

2021年7月26日、世界遺産委員会は西表島ほかを世界自然遺産リストに記載するとした決定の中で、締約国=日本に対して「西表島の来島者数を環境容量内に収めること」「イリオモテヤマネコのロードキル対策を強化すること」の2つの対策を実施するよう勧告しました。その後、沖縄県によって「西表島観光管理計画」が策定されるなど、一応の対策はされたかのように見えますが、残念ながら世界遺産委員会の指摘に応えるような実効性のある計画ではありません。また、前出のキャンプ・たき火ツアーの市場開放検討など、世界遺産地域を新たに観光利用しようという動きも出てきています。そこで、JTEFやまねこパトロールは、世界遺産西表島の保護管理に関する問題を考察し、環境省・沖縄県・竹富町が実施すべきことを提言する報告書「西表島の世界遺産登録から3年が経過して観光客入域規制の停滞と、遺産地域内における新たな観光ビジネスのための市場開放」を作成し、世界自然遺産の諮問機関である国際自然保護連合(IUCN)に提出しました。

西表島の世界遺産登録から3年が経過して

観光客入域規制の停滞と、遺産地域内における新たな観光ビジネスのための市場開放



2024年5月

認定NPO トラ・ゾウ保護基金(JTEF)
JTEF 西表島支隊やまねこパトロール



交通事故防止対策 2024年の交通事故は現在0!

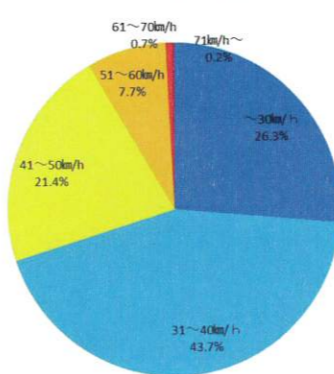
イリオモテヤマネコの交通事故は昨年から発生しておらず連続無事故日数は780日を超えました(2025年2月15日現在)。ただし、ヤマネコが路上に頻出する事態は相変わらず発生しており、5~6月には浦内橋~干立間で、8~9月には古見~相良にかけて複数の個体が繰り返し路上に出没していたため、現場付近の見通しを良くするための草刈りや、LED看板やのぼりを立てた直接注意喚起を実施しました。6月9日には白浜で開催された海神祭前夜祭帰りの車列が続く中で、垂成獣が道路を徘徊し始めるという極めて危険な状況が発生しましたが、追い返しを行い事故を未然に防ぐことができました。

イリオモテヤマネコの路上出没が多発している地点では昨年に引き続き注意喚起活動を行いました。2023年度は高那リサイクルセンターなどで24回実施したほか、西表ヤマネコクラブで実施しているパトロール体験の一環として、稲葉林道入り口で、時間短縮版の注意喚起を行いました。

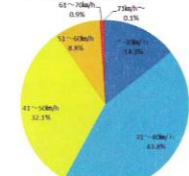
人が路上に立つ注意喚起と合わせて行っている速度調査の結果を、自動車によるパトロール時の交通調査の結果と比較すると、速度がより遅く、直接注意喚起によって、速度順守率が上がることが分かりました。51km/h以上の高速度帯のドライバーについても僅かではあるが減少しています。



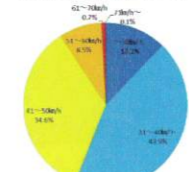
注意喚起時の通行車両の速度



2023年度北岸道路パトロール



2023年度西部地区パトロール



2024年 イリオモテヤマネコの日

4月15日は竹富町条例で定められたイリオモテヤマネコの日。JTEF/支隊やまねこパトロールは、2015年の条例制定からこれまで様々なイベントを企画、実施してきましたが、今年は環境省 西表野生生物保護センターで行われた「イリオモテヤマネコ子ども解説員」のイベントに協力しました。解説員を務めたのはJTEF/支隊やまねこパトロールが毎年「ヤマネコのいる暮らしプロジェクト」で出前授業を受けた上原小学校5年生の皆さん。最初は少し緊張した様子でしたが、解説していくうちに徐々にリラックスしたようで、最後は立派な解説員になっていました。上原小学校5年生の皆さん、お疲れ様でした。また、4月の第2週から4月15日のイリオモテヤマネコの日までは、夜間パトロール強化期間に位置づけ、ヤマネコの路上出没が多い稲葉林道入り口付近で集中的に注意喚起活動を行いました。

ヤマネコのいる暮らし授業

2023年度は、西表小学校、上原小学校、白浜小学校で出前授業を開催し、ファン分析やフィールドワークなどのプログラムを実施した。また、夏休みには大原中学校にて、西表島に新しく赴任した教員の方たちを対象としたイリオモテヤマネコ研修会を竹富町教育委員会と開催しました。



子ども解説員を務めた上原小学校5年生の皆さん(左)イリオモテヤマネコの日に行った夜間注意喚起活動(右)

