

Uncovering the Mysteries of Nature

The Kujukushima Visitor Center works closely with universities and municipal organizations to conduct regular investigations and surveys of the islands. This is essential to continue preserving the natural treasures of the islands, and also offers a better understanding of the individual ecosystems and the forces affecting the environment.

For example, a 2000 survey of the uninhabited island of Tokoi uncovered the presence of a flowering vine called *tobikazura* (*Mucuna sempervirens*). While this protected purple-flowered plant is found across southwestern China, this is the first time it was found growing wild in Japan. How the vine came to thrive here is still a mystery—theories include continental drift, seeds floating in from China, or being brought in by humans.

- Use the QR code to get more information about the photos on display. Free WiFi is available.

<PHOTOS>

Discovery of *Tobikazura*

This rare flowering plant blooms in natural wooded settings, and was found during a botanical survey of Tokoi Island.

Examining Flowering *Lilium speciosum*

A regular investigation of this member of the lily family, known as *kanoko yuri* in Japanese.

Survey of Ocean-Dwelling Water Striders

Researchers are studying two species of endangered ocean water striders in the Kujukushima islands: *shio amenbo* (*Halovelia septentrionalis Esaki*) and *shio umiamenbo* (*Halobates japonicus*). The insect is the mascot of the Visitor Center; a large stuffed *umiamenbo* is on display above the front desk.

Water Quality Check

The water is checked twice a month to keep an eye on temperature, clarity, and any

changes.

Ice Goby Spawning Survey

The ice goby, or *shirouo* (*Leucopsarion petersii*) is an important seasonal food fish. It can even spawn in the small rivers that run through some of the islands of Kujukushima.

Survey of Ocean Vegetation

Specialists and volunteers join forces to survey the distribution of the many forms of ocean vegetation found in Kujukushima.