

## **Junior High School and High School**

### **Great**

#### **“From the shine of Ishigaki Island and its current situation”**

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Ishigaki Island, the place where I live, is an island surrounded by nature. Vegetation grows thick in lush green. Mountains range from the highest peak Mt. Omoto calmly. It has the sea of emerald green, white sandy beaches and beautiful coral reefs. Kabira Bay is a place of ultimate beauty, which has been designated one of the 100 Place of Scenic Beauty in Japan. Rich in natural environment, Ishigaki Island has uncountable natural attractions. In this rich nature, species peculiar to subtropical zones live together.

There was an incident when I went on a trip to Iriomote Island with my family. When we arrived at the port of the island, we were told to wipe the soles of our shoes with the sterilizing mat when we disembarked. It was not only at the port, we were also told to do the same thing in the memorial hall and other sightseeing spots as well. I wondered why we must do that.

I then heard from the person in charge of the memorial hall that it was caused by a kind of highly toxic frog. It was strange that the prevention was only for the poison frogs, but the poison stick on the soles if someone steps on a frog by mistake. And the poison will be spread around the island if the tourist walks around with the poisoned shoes. This will kill the existing small animals living on the surface of the island. As an elementary school student that time, I was very surprised to hear this story. As it turned out, the kind of frog with poison was actually with a fungus that infects amphibian. But recently, it has not been heard.

Nevertheless, when it comes to frogs, the cane toad has become a problem nowadays. This frog does not live on Iriomote Island originally. South America is its habitat. Originally the cane toad, is strongly carnivorous that it is omnivorous. It preys on reptiles, insects, and small shellfish in particular with a strong appetite.

In fact, cane toad has been breeding in Australia, causing a reduction in the existing native frog. The same thing is happening in Ishigaki Island and Iriomote Island as well. In addition, native organisms such as Iriomote cat preys on cane toads. It is worried that it will be killed by their strong toxicity. The effect is not only limited to wild animals, poison is also included in the tadpoles and eggs, and in some cases drinking water is also contaminated. I thought whatever creature of nature should be welcomed, but I started to know the fear of alien species at that time. Capture of cane toad was carried out last year because of the happenings.

By the way, so far I have described cane toad, but increasing number of alien species has become a problem recently on Ishigaki Island, for example, iguana originated from South America and peacock originated from India. They are those that people kept as pets but they escaped, and bred in nature. Capybara witnessed in the river near residents was reported in the local newspaper recently. Country of origin of the capybara seems to be Central and South America. I want them to be captured before breeding. It is worrying that the ecosystem will collapse due to alien species and the original nature of Ishigaki Island will change.

700 thousand people visit from Main Land Japan and abroad to Ishigaki Island every year. Tourists come to touch the beautiful nature that exists on Ishigaki only. When they enjoy and go back with satisfaction, they should be coming back again. But what do they think after knowing this current situation that the ecosystem is changing.

I want to keep an eye on the newspaper and TV news about the environmental issues and global warming in recent years. There is a nearby problem of garbage even in Ishigaki Island. Waste from abroad is picked on the beach. Candy bags and plastic bags entangle in the root of flowers, plants and street trees in the town. There is rubbish from empty cans to cigarette butts. I get used to seeing this scene myself and not beware of it at all. Perhaps there may be many people like me who does not bother to even have a look at the garbage.

Last year, when I had my internship in the Environment Division of the City Hall for work experience, I was taught about the environment surrounding Ishigaki Island from staff. I actually picked up a lot of trash that has been discarded in nature, and carried out activities that appeal to the people in the region. I have learned that it is meaningless to think about the environment alone, unless other people think in the same way. It is important that everyone is aware of the environment and cooperates together.

The problem of garbage can be solved if every individual is mindful. However, the problem of invasive species is difficult to be resolved. Some alien species were brought in for disinfection purpose like mongoose, some were brought as a pet to heal people. We are asked now to think of the idea and solution to the alien specie. It is meaningless to think about the environment alone, unless other people think in the same way. I want to welcome 70 thousand guests by the original scene of Ishigaki Island.