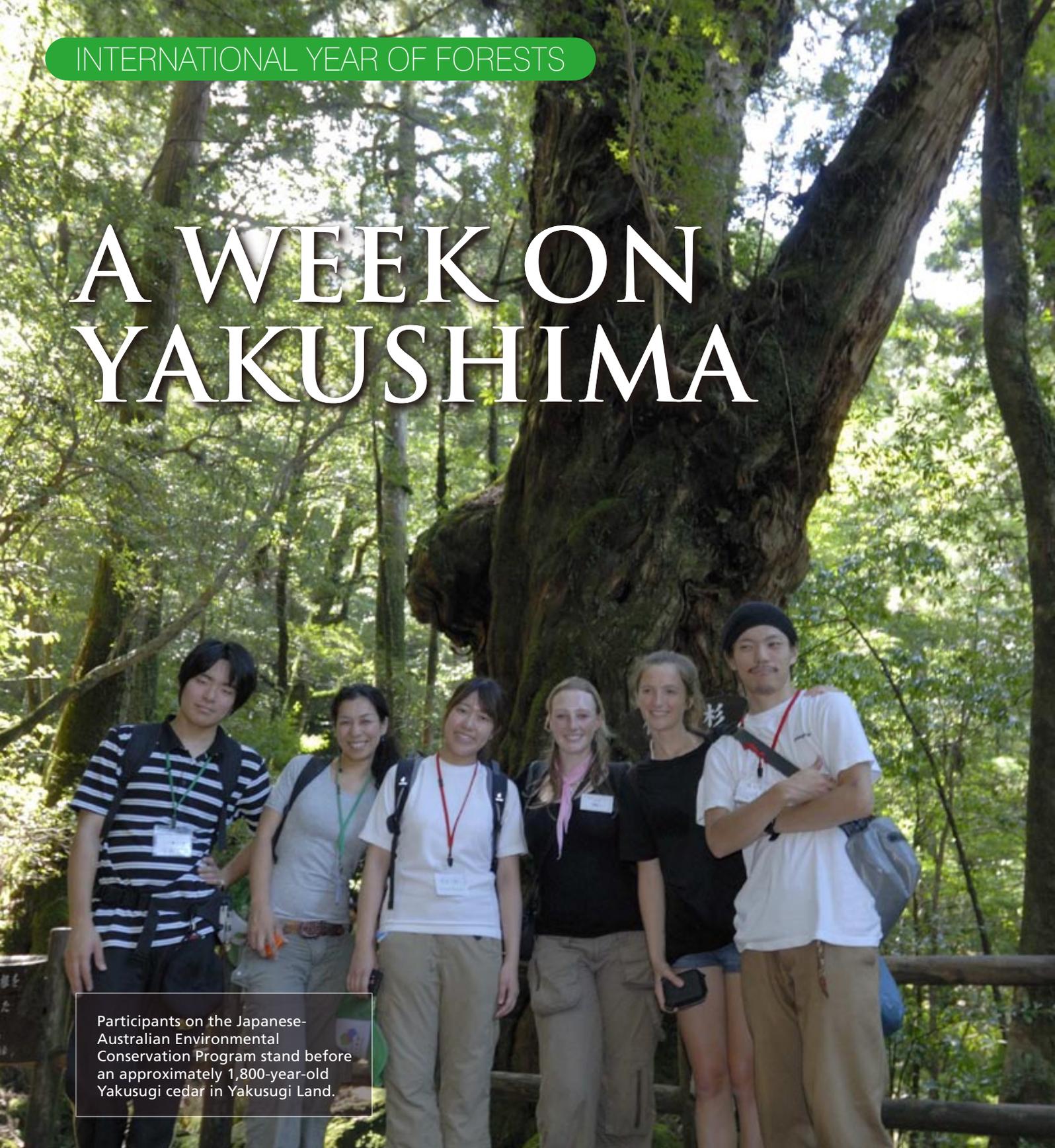


A WEEK ON YAKUSHIMA



Participants on the Japanese-Australian Environmental Conservation Program stand before an approximately 1,800-year-old Yakusugi cedar in Yakusugi Land.

Yakushima is a small round island with a 130 km circumference, with forty-six mountains, including Kyushu's highest, Miyanouura-dake with a height of 1,936 m. Though the climate is subtropical, the temperature falls as the elevation rises, with the climate becoming subarctic at the summit. Because of this,

vegetation varies widely depending on the elevation, ranging everywhere from subtropical plants to subalpine vegetation. Yakushima was designated as a World Natural Heritage site in 1993 after being recognized for its unique ecosystem and biodiversity. There are 1,500 plant species, more than 70% of



pan's National Land Afforestation Promotion Organization. Since this year is the International Year of Forests, Yakushima was chosen as the place for the program due to its prominent forest. A total of twenty volunteers participated; six from Australia and fourteen from Japan.

Each participant worked intensively to preserve and observe Yakushima's natural environment. Such activities included placement of nets to protect evergreens from being damaged by deer overpopulation, trimming of undergrowth in forests of Yakushima white pine, an endemic conifer, and observation of over 1,000-year-old Yakusugi trees that grow in the ancient forest in Yakusugi Land. An incubation survey was also carried out in the spawning grounds of the endangered loggerhead sea turtle. "I've never seen such abundant nature. And the people of the island are so friendly, it's just wonderful. I'm so glad I came because I was able to do so many different things that you just can't do on a normal vacation," said Owen Menne, a participant in the Japanese-Australian Environmental Conservation Program for two years running.

Takaaki Hotta, one of the Japanese participants, said, "It was a valuable experience that was useful to the environment as well as myself. The big thing that I've come away with from this is that by learning about a lot of things with everyone else, I've acquired a perspective on the forest and ocean that I haven't had before." Many people also said, "I'd like to come back in a few years to see what kind of changes have happened to the plants under the nets that protect them from being eaten by deer."

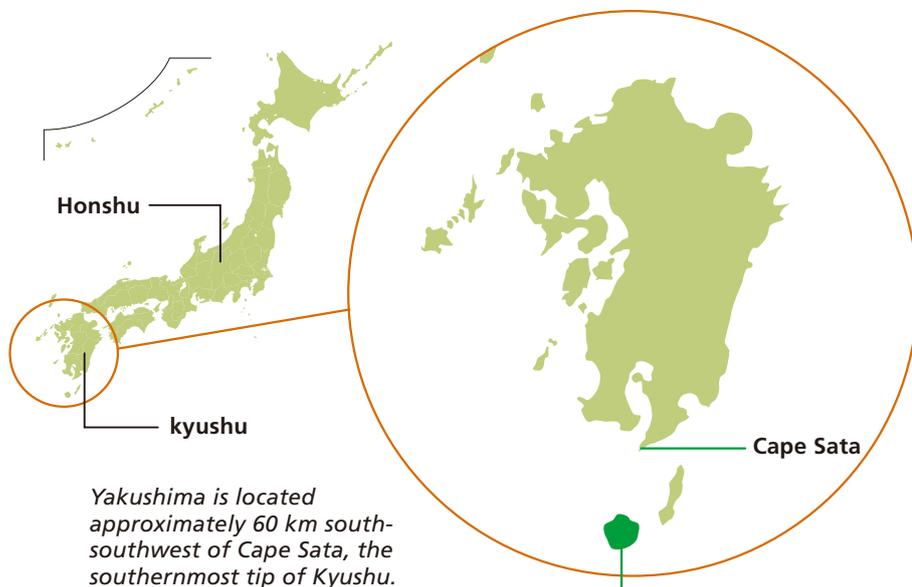


BOTH PHOTOS: YOSHIFUSA HASHIZUME

An Australian participant surveys loggerhead sea turtle eggs at a nesting beach on Yakushima, September 4. Eastern Australia and Japan are the two major nesting areas for these turtles.

those in Japan, in the forest which thickly covers 90% of the island. Forty of the native species are found only on Yakushima.

During the week of September 1 to 7, the Japanese-Australian Environmental Conservation Program was held on the island. This is part of a program started as an assistance project in 2006 by Ja-



Yakushima is located approximately 60 km south-southwest of Cape Sata, the southernmost tip of Kyushu.