

# GGN - Geopark Annual Report 2020

## 1. GEOPARK IDENTITY

### **Geopark name, country, regional Network:**

Itoigawa UNESCO Global Geopark, Japan, (Asia-Pacific Geoparks Network)

### **Year of inscription / Year of the last revalidation:**

2009 / 2017



Itoigawa Shimpaku Project Bonsai Workshop

## 2. GEOPARK FIGURES

**Number of Geopark staffs:** 16 members of staff including 5 geoscientists and 2 archaeologists

**Number of visitors:** 49,310 visitors to the Fossa Magna Museum (Jan 2020 to Dec 2020)

**Number of Geopark events:** 29 events held by management body and cooperating organizations

**Number of school classes realize Geopark educational programs:** 97 schools, 538 classes

• School excursions visiting the Geopark: 76 schools, 4,000 students

**Number of Geopark press releases:** 120 (Fax, email, homepage, social media, newsletter)

## 3. GEOPARK ACTIVITIES

### **Major achievements in 2020**

- Held Itoigawa UNESCO Global Geopark 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Ceremony (Ceremony, Exchange Program, Celebratory Dinner, SDGs Workshop)
- New Geosite Discovered: Yamanobō Kosmochlor Outcrop is now legally protected as an Itoigawa City Natural Monument. Security cameras and fences installed to prevent damage.
- The Itoigawa-Shizuoka Tectonic Line Fault Exposure at Fossa Magna Park received designation as a National Natural Monument of Japan, enhancing legal framework for preservation and conservation efforts.
- The Fossa Magna Museum was registered as an ESD Partner by the ESD Resource Center of Japan, improving the Geopark's ability to achieve goals in Education for Sustainable Development through regional networks.
- The Fossa Magna Museum and Niigata University Faculty of Science signed a Satellite Museum agreement, deepening cooperation in research and science popularization efforts.
- Responded to the COVID-19 Global Pandemic by promoting school excursion and experience programs to schools in the local region, achieving an increase in school visits compared to previous years.

## Contribution towards GGN - Networking and participation

- Actively participated in GGN and APGN Online Meetings and Events (16 times)
- Helped facilitate online exchange meetings with Hong Kong Geopark, the Japanese Geoparks Network and APGN (8 times)
- Submitted articles to the GGN Newsletter and Website

## Management and Financial Status

- Our management remains stable through the Itoigawa Geopark Council, a management body consisting of 34 member organizations comprising national and local government bodies, local commercial and tourist organizations, local resident groups, transportation companies and universities. These organizations assist in the management and activities of the Itoigawa Geopark through five working groups: “Education & Disaster Risk Reduction,” “Preservation & Conservation,” “Community Development,” “Tourism” and “Project Management.”
- The finances of the Itoigawa Geopark remain stable. Direct funding from local government authorities has decreased compared to previous years, but self-funding through merchandise sales remains stable. New projects make use of available national, local and private grants whenever feasible. Conditions related to the COVID-19 Global Pandemic have resulted in a decrease in revenue from sponsor organizations.

## Geoconservation

- An outcrop of the rare mineral kosmochlor was confirmed in the Yamanobō District of Itoigawa (pictured). Kosmochlor rocks and pebbles have been found along the rivers and coasts of Itoigawa Geopark, but an outcrop had never been located. This is only the third such locality in Japan, making it a valuable addition to the Itoigawa Geopark. The outcrop was designated an Itoigawa City Natural Monument and fencing, signs and cameras were installed as security measures.
- One of our most important geosites, the Itoigawa-Shizuoka Tectonic Line Fault Exposure at Fossa Magna Park, was selected for designation as a National Natural Monument of Japan. This designation will strengthen the legal framework for the preservation and conservation of this valuable geological heritage.
- The Geopark’s Jade Rescue Program was successful in recovering and protecting an at-risk boulder. We were also successful in implementing a reporting requirement jade material uncovered during infrastructure projects.
- The Itoigawa Geopark Council’s Natural Resources Preservation Committee continues work



Close-up of the Kosmochlor Outcrop

in surveying and cataloging local plants and wildlife.

- Dialogue and cooperation with local residents and stakeholders continues in accordance with conservation management plans at major geosites including Fossa Magna Park, the Kotakigawa and Omigawa Jade Gorges, Oyashirazu Cliffs, etc.

### **Sustainable tourism (Geotourism)**

- In response to the COVID-19 Global Pandemic, we adopted a new marketing strategy for school excursion and educational tour programs, switching focus from the Tokyo and Osaka regions to schools in Niigata and neighboring prefectures. As a result, we our geopark actually saw a net increase in school visits (76 schools, 4,000 students)
- Work continues in developing guided tour products focused on the Otokoro Cedar Forest.
- The Itoigawa Shimpaku Project (pictured) was launched to develop new activity and tour products focused on a variety of Sargent juniper called the Itoigawa Shimpaku (*Juniperus chinensis var. sargentii 'Itoigawa'*) which is native to rocky cliffs found at several geosites, including the Kotakigawa Jade Gorge and the Umidani Gorge. The goal of this project is to revitalize the local bonsai industry, promote sustainable tourism, preserve the Itoigawa Shimpaku's native habitat and foster interest in traditional intangible cultural heritage and conservation among younger audiences.
- A number of tour programs, activities and workshops were held for local community members to maintain geotourism activities during the pandemic.



Itoigawa Shimpaku Project

### **New education programmes on geoconservation, sustainable development and disaster risk reduction**

- We continued ESD-based education programs in cooperation with Itoigawa High School, disaster risk reduction programs with Itoigawa Hakurei High School and educational programs and activities on the Sustainable Development Goals within the local community/
- The Geopark's primary education and research center, the Fossa Magna Museum, was registered as an ESD Partner by the ESD Resource Center of Japan. This will provide the Museum and our Geopark with access to new opportunities for cooperation and networking in the implementation of ESD programs and activities.

### **Strategic partnership**

- We have university partnership agreements with Niigata University, the Niigata University Faculty of Science, Joetsu University of Education and the Niigata University of Management.
- We also have partnership agreements with the Ministry of the Environment's Shinetsu Natural

Environment Office, the National Research Institute for Earth Science and Disaster Resilience (NIED) and the Naumann Family.

- Of particular note for 2020 is the signing of a new satellite museum agreement with the Niigata University Faculty of Science. By establishing the Fossa Magna Museum (pictured) as a satellite museum of the Niigata University Faculty of Science, we can expect better cooperation in research, educational programs and science popularization activities.



The Fossa Magna Museum

### Promotional activities

- The Itoigawa UNESCO Global Geopark celebrated its 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary as a Global Geopark in February 2020. This anniversary celebration had been planned for October 2019, but was postponed due to the arrival of Typhoon Hagibis (Reiwa 1 East Japan Typhoon). Due to budget restrictions, the ceremony was much smaller than had been initially planned, but it provided an opportunity for local residents and stakeholders to reflect on the past ten years and renew their resolve for continuing Geopark activities. In addition to presentations, lectures and a panel discussion, the forum featured poster exhibits, interactive activities, a special SDGs workshop and a celebratory banquet dinner (pictured) for the public featuring local produce.



Geo Blessings Banquet Dinner

- The information panels and other displays at the GeoStation GeoPal visitor center in Itoigawa Station were completely renovated.
- Information communication via website and social media in Japanese and English
- New Geopark promotional flags, banners, pamphlets, posters and merchandise.
- 12<sup>th</sup> Annual Itoigawa Geopark Certification Exam held in Itoigawa, Niigata City and Tokyo
- Bimonthly Geopark Newsletter published in the Itoigawa City Bulletin distributed to all households within the Itoigawa Geopark area.

## 4. CONTACTS (Itoigawa Geopark Council Secretariat)

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