



June 25, 2017

TO: the UNESCO Association of Japan

The Pacific Seabird Group is writing to strongly support the proposal for the Kaminoseki region of the Seto Sea to become a UNESCO future heritage site. This enclosed sea is very vulnerable to industrial development (dredging, filling and pollution) that will greatly impact the unique biodiversity that is only now being appreciated for its important diversity. We urge that this area gains increased protection from development.

The Pacific Seabird Group (PSG) is an international, non-profit organization that was founded in 1972 to promote knowledge, study, and conservation of Pacific seabirds with a membership drawn from the entire Pacific basin, including Canada, Mexico, Russia, Japan, Korea, China, Australia, New Zealand, and the USA. Among PSG's members are biologists who have research interests in Pacific seabirds, government officials who manage seabird refuges and populations, and individuals who are interested in marine conservation. Over the years, PSG has been a leader in conservation, developing the monitoring protocols and convening a standing Japanese seabird working group. Collectively, the Group's members have a great deal of knowledge and experience with respect to murrelet conservation in the Asian Region.

Japanese Murrelets (*Synthliboramphus wumizusume*) are rare seabirds that utilize the Kaminoseki area throughout the year. Since 1994, Japanese Murrelets have been listed as Vulnerable by the IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources) due to their small population size (less than 10,000 breeding birds), restricted range and ongoing losses due to introduced predators (cats, rats) and gill net fisheries. Over the years several members of PSG have participated in studies of the Japanese Murrelet, and they have been the focus of Symposia, Special Paper Sessions and poster presentations at annual meetings of PSG, including several presentations about the Kaminoseki region by Midori Takashima of the Kaminoseki Nature Conservation Association (KNCA).

The Pacific Seabird Group and the Japan Seabird Group wrote a letter in 2011 expressing concern over the lack of information about the biodiversity of the region. Since that time more scientific research points to the fact that the Western Seto Sea is habitat for unique and rare species. For example, the KNCA have carried out surveys in the Kaminoseki region of the Seto Sea every year from 2008 to 2017. Each year they have found Japanese Murrelets during both the breeding and non-breeding season. There is no other place known to be used by Japanese Murrelets throughout the year. In addition, other unique species that have been discovered in this region such as *Ceratia nagashima*, a gastropod found only in Tanoura Bay, Kaminoseki. Furthermore, the finless porpoise (*Neophocaena asiaeorientalis*) of the Seto Sea is found there and is currently classified by the IUCN Red List as vulnerable. Not much is known about these rare species. For example, no complete survey of islands and rocks has thus far been carried out to find the location of the breeding colonies of Japanese Murrelets.

Consequently, PSG feels protection from industrialization is warranted and critical to the ecological health for the shallow sea, and pollution will greatly impact the biodiversity that is in the early stages of being studied. We urge that this area gain protection by becoming a heritage site.

Thank you for your consideration.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Mark Rauzon". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Mark" and last name "Rauzon" clearly distinguishable.

Mark Rauzon  
Vice Chair for Conservation  
Pacific Seabird Group