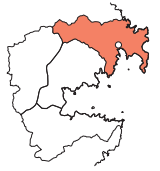


Human Connections Formed by a Postbox



▲ A postbox that was washed away from Utatsu, Minamisanriku drifted out into the Pacific Ocean and was later returned to Utatsu with the support of Okinawan people.

Photo courtesy of Minamisanriku Machizukuri Mirai

In Minamisanriku, the tsunami triggered by the Great East Japan Earthquake claimed the lives of many people and also carried away a wide variety of objects that were full of memories. One such object was the mailbox that had stood in front of a convenience store in the Utatsu district.

As Minamisanriku residents gazed sorrowfully at their hometown, changed beyond recognition, and put themselves to the task of reconstruction, they were greeted with some rather unbelievable news.

A postbox that had stood in the Utatsu district before being swept out to sea by the tsunami had washed up at the mouth of the Yutsun River in the northeastern part of Iriomote Island, Okinawa Prefecture, 2,400 kilometers away. It had spent 1 year and 9 months adrift in the Pacific Ocean.

Covered in sand and full of scratches, the postbox was returned to Utatsu on August 11, 2013, thanks to the efforts of numerous people in Okinawa. We were so moved by the kindness of the people of Okinawa who returned this humble postbox to us, as if it were a treasure. This news made a big impression on people all over Japan.

Utatsu Reconstruction Summer Festival was put on by the community to celebrate the human connections that had been formed thanks to this postbox. Although it did not contain any letters, the postbox was filled with warm messages invisible to the eye. A strongly heartfelt bond had been formed between the people of Okinawa and Utatsu district.

