

## Evaluation Report on UNITAR/KIWC Workshop

From 1998 to 2001 KIWC and the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) jointly held the "Training Workshop for the Asia-Pacific Region on the Implementation of Multilateral Agreements related to Biological Diversity" in Kushiro three times. A report, "In-depth Evaluation After Three Years," has been compiled.

In the report, both participants and related people said that they greatly valued the series of workshops, and what they had learned brought about concrete and sustainable effects on their daily work. KIWC is highly pleased with the report.

## Ramsar Sites in Japan

### Series 11 Kushiro Shitsugen (Kushiro Wetland)

**We have introduced a series of designated wetlands in Japan under the Ramsar Convention. Let us look at Kushiro Shitsugen this time.**

Kushiro Shitsugen is located in the east part of Hokkaido. Its total area is about 18,000ha, which makes it the largest peatland in Japan. Eighty percent of the huge peatland is fen covered with reeds and sedge. The central part of the Shitsugen is dotted with sphagnum bog covered with peat moss and intermediate moors with cranberry community. The Kushiro River and its branches run through the wetlands reticulately, and three freshwater lakes, Lake Toro, Lake Shirarutoro and Lake Takkobu lie in the east part.

Kushiro Shitsugen is a repository of wildlife where threatened species such as Red-crowned Cranes, Blackiston's Fish Owls, White-tailed Sea Eagles and Steller's Sea Eagles live. Species which are said to be relict species of the glacial period, like Siberian salamanders and dragonfly *Aeshna subarctica*, also inhabit there.

As for Red-crowned Cranes which were once considered to have been extinct, scores of them were found in Kushiro wetland in 1924, and this led to the conservation campaign of the wetlands. After that, the Red-crowned Crane was designated as a special national

natural monument in 1967, and at the same time, the wetland itself was designated as a natural monument under the name of Kushiro Shitsugen. Now, the number of surviving Red-crowned Cranes amounts to 800.

In 1979, a major part of the Kushiro Shitsugen was designated as a national wildlife protection area, and in 1980, that part became a designated wetland under the Ramsar Convention. After that, a national park was established there in 1987.

In 1993, the 5th Meeting of the Contracting Parties to the Ramsar Convention was held in Kushiro. During the conference, many people from various sectors including interpreters, guides of excursions and others worked together as volunteers. Taking this opportunity to promote international cooperation in wetland conservation, KIWC was established in 1995.

KIWC aims to contribute to global-based environmental conservation while promoting, on a local basis, a conservation campaign and the wise use of designated wetlands, under the Ramsar Convention, in the Kushiro area, in

such places as Kushiro Shitsugen as well as Akkeshi-ko & Bekaubeushi-shitsugen (Lake Akkeshi & Bekaubeushi Wetland) and Kiritappu-shitsugen (Kiritappu Wetland).

KIWC's major projects are to assist JICA training courses for wetland conservation, to host international conferences and workshops related to environmental conservation, to carry out research and studies which use wetlands in the Kushiro area as field activities and to provide information on the concepts of the Ramsar Convention and wetland conservation. The research and studies are carried out by the technical committee comprised of researchers in various fields.

Kushiro Shitsugen has become an important and irreplaceable asset not only for local communities but also for the world. KIWC will continue to make efforts to pass the beautiful natural environment of Kushiro Shitsugen on to the next generation in collaboration with the national government, related local municipalities and people all over the world.

(KIWC)



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The Latest on Wetlands from the Kushiro Region



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## Activities in 2001

### Workshop on Climate Change and Public Symposium

The International Workshop on Climate Change and Wetland Conservation, whose theme was to consider the prevention of global warming issues and conservation of natural environment, was held at Kushiro Tourism and International Relations Center on September 20th and 21st, 2001. It was convened by the National Institute for Environmental Studies and jointly organized by Wetlands International Japan and KIWC.

On September 21, an open symposium was also held. It was attended by specialists who had participated in this workshop from home and abroad, and related persons who came from local companies. These local companies were promoting advanced initiatives in Kushiro to prevent global warming issues.

In this symposium entitled "Global Warming and the Kushiro Wetland," they presented the fact that wetlands function as carbon sinks and so prevent global warming. On the other hand, it might cause a large amount of greenhouse gas emissions if they are destroyed. About 130 participants debated global warming from the viewpoints of both industries and wetland conservation.



### Workshop for Riparian Buffer Zones and Citizen's Forum

"International Workshop on 'Efficiency of Purification Processes in Riparian Buffer Zones, their Design and Planning in Agricultural Watersheds (organized by the Organizing Committee for International Workshop on Riparian Buffer Zones and co-organized by KIWC)' was held at Kushiro Tourism and International Relations Center from November 5th to 9th, 2001. Citizen's Forum "Riparian



Buffer Zones and Kushiro Mire" was held as a program on the final day.

With 90 specialists from home and abroad gathered together, we took the opportunity to organize public debates featuring four of them. They shared with us the latest information which, besides being useful for the conservation of the Kushiro wetland, was presented in a way that the general participants could clearly understand. The information included how much the riparian buffer zones have contributed to the purification of the water which flows into the wetlands and lakes and how to effectively construct them.

### Participation in "Asian Wetland Symposium 2001"

"Asian Wetland Symposium 2001" was held at Penang, Malaysia from August 27th to 30th, 2001. It was attended by about 400 participants from 37 countries centering on Asia. "Penang Statement," aiming at further promotion of partnership in the Asia Pacific region, was adopted.

Since many of the "Asian Wetland Symposium 2001" participants had also participated in JICA Training Course or international conferences in Kushiro, many old friendships could be renewed.

In the symposium, KIWC introduced "Activities of KIWC including Monitoring Research on the Ramsar Site Kushiro Wetland," which was of great interest to the participants.

A former JICA trainee participated in the symposium



### Exchange with sister wetlands, "Kooragang Wetland and associated wetlands"



The site of the Wetland Rehabilitation Project

Mr. Shinsho, a wetland specialist of KIWC, visited the Kooragang wetland and associated wetlands in Australia, which were sister wetlands of the Ramsar sites in the Kushiro region, from August 31st to September 5th, 2001. The expert had the opportunity to share information with staff members of local organizations and discussed our exchange program in the future.

The Kooragang Wetland Rehabilitation Project (KWRP) was in progress, which provided us with useful information in promoting wetland conservation activities of the same kind.

### KIWC Technical Committee Research Report "Environmental Education regarding Wetlands in Eastern Hokkaido"

The research report from FY 1998 to 2000 by KIWC Technical Committee, "Environmental Education regarding Wetlands in Eastern Hokkaido," was issued in March, 2001, and was distributed to the related institutions. The research report covered the environmental education programs, which intended for a wide range from elementary school children through university students to teachers, is actually conducted in the wetlands of eastern Hokkaido. These wetlands are a repository of wildlife and reflect the various aspects of wetlands.

\*We have only a few copies left in store. Please contact KIWC Bureau.



## Special Feature: Eco-Tourism

### Implementation of the "2001 Management / Administration and Wise Use of Natural Parks (Eco-Tour) JICA Training Course"



From September 17 to October 25, 2001, the "2001 Management/Administration and Wise Use of Natural Parks (Eco-Tour) JICA Training Course" was implemented, in which two trainees from two countries participated.

This training course is intended for administrative officials in charge of natural park management / administration and eco-tours in Asia, and has been conducted since 1998 by the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) Hokkaido International Centre (Obihiro) as an implementing body, and the Kushiro International Wetland Centre as an accepting body.

In this year's training course, Kirishima-Yaku National Park in the Kyushu-Okinawa Area (Yakushima) and Iriomote National Park (Iriomote Island) were added to the previous training sites, i.e., national parks in Eastern Hokkaido (Daisetsuzan National Park, Akan National Park, Kushiro Shitsugen National Park and Shiretoko National Park).

Trainees experienced management methods and wise use applicable to the regional characteristics, and learned concepts, technical know-how and methods for eco-tourism through various eco-tour experiences, such as canoeing and hiking, and practical training for spring water, marsh and wild animal surveys.

Mr. Le Duc Tuan from Vietnam, who participated in this training course, is an administrative official in charge of conservation of the Can Gio Mangrove Biosphere Reserve in Vietnam. Though the entire biosphere reserve was in a devastated state at one time due to the spreading of "Agent Orange" during the Vietnam War and indiscriminate postwar deforestation, currently it has been converted into a forest visited by domestic and overseas tourists after more than 20 years of afforestation activities began to bear fruit.

The present status and future prospects of eco-tours in Can Gio will be introduced by Mr. Tuan.

### Eco-tours in Can Gio Mangrove Biosphere Reserve in Vietnam

**Le Duc Tuan**  
Permanent Secretary,  
Management Board for the  
Can Gio Mangrove Biosphere  
Reserve, Ho Chi Minh City  
People's Committee



#### Outline of the Can Gio Mangrove Biosphere Reserve

The Can Gio Mangrove Biosphere Reserve is situated in the coastal area, 60 km to the south of Ho Chi Minh City, with a total area of 75,740 ha. It was designated as a national protected environmental forest in 1992, since our afforestation activities and case studies for this area were recognized by the government.

As the reserve was also recognized as a subject area of MAB (The Man and the Biosphere Programme) by UNESCO, it has become the first biosphere reserve in Vietnam that belongs to the World Biosphere Reserve Network.

The Can Gio Mangrove Biosphere Reserve is managed by the Management Board for Can Gio Mangrove Biosphere Reserve, which belongs to the Ho Chi Minh City People's Committee, and is divided into 24 controlled areas. Actual activities are conducted by the regional forest rangers who monitor, keep records of and report on illegal activities within the reserve, with a head office and five branch offices in Can Gio as strongpoints.

Currently, this reserve is an intriguing subject of scientific research and a fascinating place for tourists from Ho Chi Minh City and other places.

#### Present status of eco-tours in the Reserve

Saigon Tourist Company and Phu Tho Tourism Company located in the two areas out of the 24 controlled areas of the reserve organize

and manage eco-tours for visitors under authorization from Saigon City.

Saigon Tourist Company established the following five sections for eco-tours in May 1999.

1. Wild animal section: Monkeys (crab-eating macaques [*Maccaca fascicularis*] and other species), estuarine crocodiles (*Crocodilus porosus*), wild boars (*Sus scrofa*), otter (*Lutra lutra*), and snakes (*pythons*) inhabit this area.
2. Camping section: Services for tourists who wish to camp in a tent are provided.
3. Guest house section: Five guest houses, which were built under the sponsorship of ACTMANG, a Japanese NGO, are available.
4. Fishing section: Establishment of fish ponds
5. Reconstruction section for the former Anti-America Guerilla Base

In the meantime, Phu Tho Tourism Company organized eco-tours in the following three places in June 2000.

1. Bird sanctuary: 200ha mangrove forest inhabited by wild birds
2. Bat lagoon: 50ha mangrove forest inhabited by wild bats
3. Observation tower: 30 m in height, higher than the mangrove canopy, from which visitors can take a panoramic view of the mangrove forest.

The Can Gio mangrove forest won its reputation as an eco-tourism site after the UNESCO/MBA recognition. However, because of the remarkable increase in the estimated number of visitors, exceeding 250,000 in 2001, burdens on the environment due to tourist activities have increased. Issues on waste that continue to increase day by day, ill-equipped facilities for visitors and insufficient capacity have also arisen.



#### Action Plans for Eco-tour Reorganization

The ideas that follow are from the eco-tour action plans for the Can Gio Mangrove Biosphere Reserve, which were presented as part of the programs in the "2001 Management/Administration and Wise Use of Natural Parks (Eco-tour) JICA Training Course" in which I

participated from September to October 2001.

1. Enhancement of eco-tour facilities: The following facilities are considered necessary:

- (1) Museums where the ecosystems, archaeology and local historical events will be showcased
- (2) Observation facilities: to be set up along the forest trails, riverbanks, scenic spots and boardwalks
- (3) Automatic monitoring systems: to be installed in various places within the Reserve

2. Environmental education

Although environmental education programs have been implemented several times in the Can Gio Mangrove Biosphere Reserve, they could not fully meet the demand of future generations. The following can be given as examples of new environmental education activities:

- (1) Distributing brochures and leaflets for visitors to introduce the Can Gio mangrove ecosystems

- (2) Training eco-tourism guides and offering education to local people and students
- (3) Dissemination and raising awareness of environmental protection programs

3. Eco-tour management

We plan to organize attractive new eco-tour programs of one-day to three-day two-night trips in cooperation with relevant domestic and overseas bodies, individuals, scientists and universities. For instance:

- (1) Nature observation by canoeing, hiking, cycling and ballooning (wild animals including birds, monkeys, crocodiles, deer, bats and fireflies, forest ecosystems, etc.)
- (2) Events associated with the Fishermen's Festival held on August 15 every year by the lunar calendar
- (3) Fishing programs

Presently, after my return home from the training course I completed in Japan, preparation for the construction of eco-tour facilities is in progress to realize these action plans.

### ~ During the JICA Training Course ~

Mr. Tuan absorbedly took notes of things whenever he visited the various fields during the training course. In his notebook, which he showed us embarrassedly, were poems in which his impressions of Japan's nature were rendered in English and Vietnamese. Some of his poems will be introduced here.

#### White Cloud Mountain Top

Forest,  
Endless greenish.  
Leaves,  
Changing reddish.  
White cloud,  
My natural spirit flying on.

## What's Eco-Tourism?

## ~ Why did Eco-tourism start? ~

Toward the latter part of the 20th century, tourism flourished not only in Japan but also in every part of the world, and it has developed into a big industry. However, because of too much emphasis on commercialism, tourism has escalated into mass-tourism. As a result, damage to natural resources and cultural heritage, which are the objects of tourism, has become a serious problem.

In addition, due to the growing number of tourists, adverse effects on the local communities, such as problems concerning the management and operation of facilities or the treatment of increasing garbage have become conspicuous. Most of the tours have been operated by major tour agencies. Therefore, the problem has arisen that economic benefits brought about by the tourism industry are not passed along to local communities.

Moreover, environmental destruction on a global basis has become a serious issue. Natural resources and cultural heritages are drawing attention not only as resources for tourism but also as important elements, which support global environment. Promotional and educational campaigns outlining the value and roles of natural resources and cultural heritages are now needed. Under such circumstances, eco-tourism has come into being.

Eco-tourism is a tourism which does not damage natural resources or cultural heritages, and it contributes economically to local communities when promoted on a local basis. It is also a tourism in which the tourists participate in activities that heighten their awareness of environmental conservation and its value,

through getting closer to nature and culture.

At present, in Central and South America and Southeast Asia, including Costa Rica and Malaysia, eco-tourism is focused on restoring economic benefits to local communities and protecting natural resources and cultural heritages. With a view to promoting environmental education, eco-tourism is promoted in Australia and New Zealand as well.

To encourage people to come into further contact with nature and culture, field and adventure tours are drawing much attention recently. However, because they are not operated on a local basis or are not meant to encourage people to participate in activities to recognize the value and roles of the natural environment and cultural heritage, these tours are different from eco-tours. In most cases, they do not aim to put the economic benefits back into the local communities. In order to achieve the objectives of eco-tourism in the future, it will be an important task for eco-tourism to work with field tours, adventure tours and other mass tours.

Eco-tours in Japan have been conducted mainly in such places as Yakushima Island, Iriomotejima Island and Hokkaido where abundant nature and cultural heritages are preserved. In those places, a wide variety of eco-tours are presented by local people or organizations. They include tours in the Japanese cedar forests in Yakushima, and kayak and snorkeling nature tours in mangrove forests in Iriomotejima. In Hokkaido, there are various eco-tours such as river watching in mountain streams, horse trekking on breeds indigenous to Hokkaido, nature tours

to rivers where salmon run and wetland-canoeing in meandering streams. In winter, snowshoe-trekking, cross-country skiing and snow hiking nature tours are provided in Hokkaido.

In June 2001, when UNESCO was scheduled to designate the following year as the International Year of Eco-tourism, the International Eco-tourism Assembly was held in Ura-bandai, Fukushima prefecture, and persons in charge and people related from countries in Asia and Oceania came together. They shared examples of eco-tours in their own countries and regions, and discussed the concepts of eco-tourism, the technical know-how of eco-tours and the framework of eco-tour marketing.

On the other hand, training of eco-tour guides are considered. In Hokkaido, a training course for eco-tour guides will be opened through the collaboration of administrative organizations, private sectors, NGOs and local universities in 2002.

In addition, KIWC, giving an eye to eco-tourism as a way for the wise use of natural resources and cultural heritages, has been providing JICA eco-tourism training courses for people from developing countries since 1997. In the future, eco-tourism should be further promoted as part of activities that will promote sustainable development of communities and community-based environmental conservation.

(Hisashi Shinsho, KIWC)