



March 2004

KIWC Annual Review

It is the 10th anniversary of the sister-wetland affiliation between the Ramsar sites in eastern Hokkaido and Kooragang Wetland & associated wetlands in Australia in 2004.

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'Kushiro Wetland' by Ayaka Takeuchi (Japan)

Projects commemorating the 10th Anniversary of the Ramsar Kushiro Conference

2003 marked 10 years since the 5th Ramsar Conference was held in Kushiro in 1993. The KIWC conducted various projects commemorating the 10th anniversary.

The Kushiro Wetland Eco-Tour (Project for Participation in the Kushiro Wetland Nature Restoration Congress)

In commemoration of the 10th anniversary of the Ramsar Conference in Kushiro, the Kushiro Wetland Nature Restoration Congress was held in Kushiro on June 20-22 in 2003, hosted by the Kushiro Wetland Nature Restoration Congress Organizing Committee. KIWC also conducted a Kushiro Wetland Eco-Tour for local citizens on June 15 as a project for participation in the congress. Twenty-five participants, including elementary school students and the elderly, visited forests and wetlands around Lake Shirarutoro on the east side of Kushiro Wetlands to enjoy the nature of early summer to the fullest. The programs, in which participants enjoyed nature through the five senses under the clear blue sky as well as observed the Kushiro River while canoeing, were accepted very favorably by participants who stated, "I'm glad I came and would like to participate in this project again."



A Talk Show: Talk-Talk Kushiro Conference and Citizens' Reception

A talk show aimed at reflecting on the Ramsar Conference in Kushiro 10 years ago and considering how to conserve wetlands in the future was held on July 22, 2003 at the Kushiro Tourism and International Relations Center. Participants exchanged opinions with two guest speakers: Mr. Lawrence Mason (U.S.), the vice chairperson of the Ramsar Conference at the time, and Ms. Christine Prietto, the Chair of the Wetlands Centre Australia, which is addressing conservation of Kooragang Wetlands in Australia, a sister wetland of the Ramsar sites in Eastern Hokkaido; and with Dr. Tatsuichi Tsujii, the Chair of the KIWC Technical Committee, as the host.

During the talk show, it was stated that all aspects of citizen participation and cooperation, which greatly helped to make the conference a success, have spread around the world since the conference and are regarded as being important for the future Ramsar Convention. Approximately 90 citizens participated in the discussion. At the reception held immediately after the talk show, video footage that was recorded at the conference in 1993 was shown to the public, and nostalgic scenes brought cheers from the audience.



International Workshop on the "Wise Use of the Ramsar Wetlands-Focusing on Lagoon Wetlands"

On July 23, 2003, an international workshop for introducing case study examples of how Japan and other countries are endeavoring for wise use of lagoon (brackish-water lake) wetlands and considering future challenges was held at the Kushiro Tourism & International Relations Center. Commemorating the 10th anniversary of the Ramsar Conference in Kushiro, this workshop was held with the sponsorship of the Organizing Committee of the International Workshop on Wise Use of Ramsar Wetlands. KIWC took part in the workshop as an organizing member.

At the workshop with 110 participants from 13 countries primarily in Asia, many case study examples, including the project for wetlands restoration at Chilika Lake in India, which received the Ramsar Wetlands Award at the 8th Ramsar Conference, were reported. In addition, opinions on the conservation and restoration of lagoons and solutions for the wise use of natural resources were exchanged, and the results were adopted as the official statement of the workshop.



Projects commemorating the 10th Anniversary of the Ramsar Kushiro Conference



Student Practical Training "Kushiro Wetland Field Study"

On August 25-28, 2003, environmental education practical training called "Kushiro Wetland Field Study", which was intended for college students in Japan, was conducted. In Kushiro Wetland and its related facilities, 22 participants, including students and concerned people from 3 colleges, experienced nature in Kushiro and learned the importance of environmental conservation and how to conserve nature through various programs including experience observing nature, eco-tours, and nature crafts, etc.

Programs supported by the Foundation of River & Watershed Environment

Mini Lecture "Community Building in Rome, Italy, Focusing on Rivers"

A lecture entitled "Community Building in Rome, Italy, Focusing on Rivers" was given at the Kushiro City Koryu Plaza "Saiwai" on Tuesday, September 16, 2003. Kushiro City and the KIWC co-hosted the lecture under the auspices of the Foundation of River & Watershed Environment Management.

Prof. Paola E. Falini at the University of Rome's Faculty of Architecture served as the lecturer and Dr. Tatsuichi Tsujii, Chairperson of the KIWC Technical Committee and President of the Hokkaido Environment Foundation, served as the coordinator. During the lecture, the outline of the Tiber River in Italy, which has been a part of people's daily lives since ancient Roman times, and river plans currently under way were explained, among other topics. In Rome, which is located in the Tiber River basin, rivers have played a wide variety of roles in city planning, such as transportation, tourism & water resources and corridors connecting green tracts contributing to community building as important regional resources. With the example of Rome as a reference, 70 participants considered how the Kushiro River should function in the development of Kushiro.



River Environment Observation Program

An observation program which aimed at learning more about the environment and water quality of the Kushiro River was conducted on Saturday, October 18, 2003. It was co-hosted by the Kushiro Shitsugen National Park Liaison Association, subsidized by the Foundation of River & Watershed Environment Management's River Environment Fund. This program was planned for Little Rangers belonging to the Association and the JICA eco-tourism training participants who were staying in Kushiro. Approximately 30 people participated in it.

The participants visited Lake Kussharo, the source of the Kushiro River, and took rafts from the upper reaches of the Kushiro River. They observed the riverhead area that is so high in water transparency that participants could see spawning white-spotted char while aboard the rafts. Then they conducted underwater observations using handmade hydroscopes at Lake Toro. From Lake Toro, they experienced tours in canoes in the midstream of the Kushiro River, enabling them to closely observe White-tailed Sea Eagles, Common Kingfishers and many other species of wildlife. Through the tour, participants learned about the rich nature of the Kushiro River, differences in riverside environments and water conditions depending on the catchment area.



National Crane Workshop and Citizens' Forum for the "Future of Cranes"

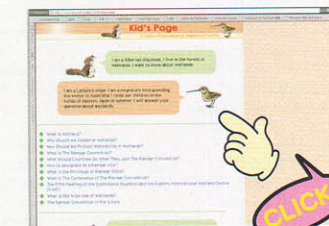
On November 14-16, 2003, the "Northeast Asian Crane Site Network's National Workshop" was held with the participation of approximately 30 people involved in the protection of cranes. The workshop was organized by the Wild Bird Society of Japan and co-hosted by the KIWC. At the venue, the Kushiro City Tourism & International Relations Center, the present conditions of crane breeding and overwintering in Japan were reported, as well, congestion, infectious diseases and other problems were introduced, and information and opinions were rigorously exchanged toward the resolution of these problems confronting crane habitats.

On November 16, the final day of the workshop, a forum for the local people entitled the "Future of Cranes" was held as part of the project aimed at commemorating the 10th anniversary of the Ramsar Conference in Kushiro. Approximately 70 people participated in the forum, at which experts delivered speeches, and discussions were held with local people. Topics included the current situation of crane habitats, present protection activities and the importance of collaboration for crane conservation via the "Crane Site Network" which includes northeast Asian countries.



KIWC "Kid's Page" on the Internet Website: <http://www.kiwc.net/english/child/index.html>

The KIWC has opened the "Kid's Page" on the KIWC website in both Japanese and English. The Page explains about wetland conservation and the Ramsar Convention in easy words with a lot of pictures. It has a Q&A section answering questions such as "What is a wetland?" etc. We hope the page is used as a reference material for self-study or comprehensive learning for Japanese as well as foreign children. We also hope that school-related people and those who are interested in wetlands will utilize the page in various situations. The KIWC reported this program to the head office of the Ramsar Convention as a participation project for World Wetlands Day (February 2).



International Child Artwork Exhibition for the Conservation of Ramsar Sites

The "International Child Artwork Exhibition for the Conservation of Ramsar Sites" was held from November 14, 2003 to February 24, 2004, rotating the venue among six municipalities (Kushiro City, Kushiro Town, Shibecha Town, Akkeshi Town, Hamanaka Town, Tsurui Village), which constitute the KIWC. At a public facility in each of those municipalities, approximately 130 pieces in total were shown to the public. They were collected from artwork produced by children in elementary schools and junior high schools in the Kushiro region with a theme of "wetlands", as well as calligraphic works and paintings produced by children in China, Korea and Lithuania, which were donated from foreign organizations involved in wetland conservation. In response to the invitation for flat screen artwork regardless of genre, a wide variety of fine works such as paintings, posters, photographs, and essays were received, and they got the attention of visitors.

The KIWC is planning to introduce those works one by one on its website, etc.

Pieces from the International Child Artwork Exhibition for the Conservation of Ramsar Sites

Essay—Let's conserve Kushiro Wetland! Maki Ikeda (Japan)

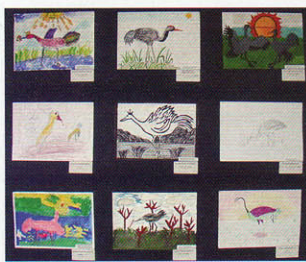
I currently live in Kushiro, where I moved from Tokyo. Since Kushiro is completely different from Tokyo, at first I felt that it was a lonely city. When I went for a drive with my family, however, I learned that there is a wonderful place in Kushiro. The wetlands I saw from the Kushiro Shitsugen Observatory were very large, making me realize that this is what Hokkaido has to offer. The wind was blowing at that time, and it was very refreshing.

I am very proud to live near Kushiro Wetland, which has an abundance of nature. I am very glad that I moved to Kushiro.

I believe that the marsh should remain as it is without undergoing development. At Kushiro Wetland, we can discover many things. After moving here, I began to think that I really want to help conserve the beautiful Kushiro Wetland.



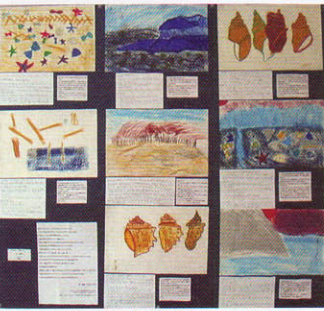
Colorful artwork by Chinese children



Drawings of Common cranes by Lithuanian children



'Friends in the Wetlands' by Chiemi Mita (Japan)



'The Report from the Tidal Flat' by Lee Hee-Oun (Korea)

Participation in the Kushiro Wetland Nature Restoration Council

In November, 2003, the Kushiro Wetland Nature Restoration Council was established, as part of projects to rehabilitate and restore the Kushiro Wetland, where a decrease in a dimension and a sort of ecological change has become recently significant according with the expansion of economic activities in the Kushiro River basin. Its establishment was based on the Law for the promotion of Nature Restoration enforced in 2003, and it consists of local residents, NPOs, NGOs, local authorities, related governmental agencies, and experts, etc. The KIWC decided to participate in the council as an organization.



Eco-tour in Winter

"Ecotour in winter" for the local people was held on February 24, 2004. Fourteen participants including infants and children observed animal footprints and trees from the window of the steam train, which starts from JR Kushiro Station. In the Hosooka Visitor's Lounge, Mr. Yanagi, a teacher at Kushiro Seien High School, showed participants an experiment making snow crystals in a plastic bottle.

Participants enjoyed learning about nature in wetlands, which they could observe only in winter.

JICA Training Course on Conservation of Wetland Ecosystems and their Biological Diversity

From May 26 to July 2 in 2003, a JICA (Japan International Cooperation Agency) group training course on the "Conservation of Wetland Ecosystems and Their Biological Diversity," was held with the JICA Hokkaido International Centre (Obihiro) as the administrative institution, and the Nature Conservation Bureau of the Ministry of the Environment and the KIWC as the hosting institutions.

In the 2003 course, which was the final session, a curriculum with a wide variety of contents, including an introduction to Japan's administrative practices for nature conservation, practical methods for research and monitoring, as well as experiences in environmental education and eco-tourism, was provided for the eight participants from six countries in South America and Africa who are involved in research and educational institutes related to environmental conservation/nature conservation and middle-ranking administrative professional engineers.

This training course featured opportunities to learn about the diversity of natural environments and methods to conserve them while traveling the length of Japan, from the Okinawan Islands to Hokkaido. Moreover, participants took part in international exchanges through the home visit program set up by local volunteers and the Environmental Education and Global Understanding Program led by Kushiro Municipal Musa Elementary School.

JICA Training Course "Management of Eco-tourism and Sustainable Use of Natural Parks"

From September 16 to October 25, 2003, a JICA group training course on the "Management of Eco-tourism and Sustainable Use of Natural Parks," was held with the JICA Hokkaido International Centre (Obihiro) as the administrative institution and the KIWC as the hosting institution. In the current fiscal year, the second group training course was held, in which eight people from seven countries participated. The participants were all middle-ranking administrative technical experts involved in environmental conservation at national parks in their countries. During the program, which was aimed at providing useful information with which participants could introduce and utilize eco-tourism in their own countries, there were numerous activities for the participants to take part in, including presentations of eco-tour case-study examples in Japan, with a focus on experimental training; lectures on natural park systems and concepts of eco-tourism; and inspections of Hokkaido's environmental education programs. Aiming to allow the participants to learn not only about eco-tours featuring natural resources, but also those focused on cultural heritages, the course included a visit to Kyoto, the ancient capital of Japan.

Dispatch of a KIWC Specialist to Bhutan

On December 16-25, 2003, a KIWC specialist visited the Phobjikha Wetlands in Bhutan for a research on conservation of the wetland and black-necked cranes which inhabit the site. This was conducted as a preliminary survey for the project of JICA Technical Cooperation at the Grassroots Level (Community Empowerment Program).

As a result of the research, two officials from the Royal Society for Protection of Nature in Bhutan will participate in the training course entitled "Management of Black-necked Cranes Information Center in Phobjikha", conducted by the KIWC.

Dispatch of KIWC Specialists to Malaysia

On February 2-15, 2004, the KIWC specialists were dispatched to Sabah in Malaysia in order to co-operate the program for Malaysia Bornean Biodiversity and Ecosystems Conservation conducted by JICA. They visited natural parks in the area including the Crocker Range National Park, and offered advice on plans for exhibition in facilities such as a visitor center and park maintenance.

Ramsar Sites in Japan series 13 Fujimae Tidal Flat

Fujimae Tidal Flat is located in the head of Ise Bay facing the Pacific Ocean, in the southwestern part of Nagoya City. Its area is approximately 200 ha, extending at the river mouths of Shonai, Shinkawa and Nikko.

Fujimae Tidal Flat is one of the stopovers for such migratory birds as snipes and plovers between East Asia and Australia, and is one of the famous places in Japan where more than ten thousand of those birds come from abroad. Therefore, its area of 323 ha including its surrounding areas was designated as a wetland of international importance under the Ramsar Convention on November 18, 2002.

There was a time when most tidal flats, which had existed in the head of Ise Bay in the past, were landfilled and the land was used for port facilities or factories. Against this background, Nagoya City drew up a plan to landfill a part of Fujimae Tidal Flat to use as a garbage disposal site.

It is five years since citizens and the municipality started to work together on garbage reduction including recycling soon after the plan was cancelled by the local citizens' movement and at

the discretion of the municipality and it was decided that the tidal flat was to be conserved.

As a result, the amount of garbage produced in Nagoya City has reduced about 30% less than before efforts started. Fujimae Tidal Flat is important not only to migratory birds, but also to Nagoya citizens as a symbolic place which led us to review our consumption-oriented society.

At present, the Ministry of the Environment plays a central role in planning to build facilities around Fujimae Tidal Flat which will become a base for environmental education, aiming at conservation and wise use of the tidal flat. It may take more time to give shape to the plan.

In order to conserve Fujimae Tidal Flat, which is left in the big city, as a citizens' valuable asset, Nagoya City is going to actively work on its conservation and sustainable use, trying to get more publicity for its importance.

(Ecological City Promotion Division, Environmental Affairs Bureau, Nagoya City)



Implementation of the On-Site Study Meeting of the KIWC Technical Committee

An on-site study meeting concerning the "Restoration and Rehabilitation of Wetlands," which is the research theme for FY 2001 to 2003, was held on August 22, 2003, with the participation of members of the KIWC Technical Committee and people from KIWC member organizations. Participants visited the site of the Red-crowned Crane Habitat (reed fields) Restoration Project, which is being carried out at Kushiro Wetland by the Wild Bird Society of Japan. They also inspected former spawning beds of Japanese Huchen (Sakhalin Taimen) in the small streams running through the wetland while listening to an explanation about the present condition of Japanese Huchen habitat in Kushiro Wetland. Discussions were held on-site about requirements for securing habitat for Red-crowned Cranes, Japanese Huchen and other endangered species by rehabilitating and restoring wetlands and challenges to be addressed in the future. A report on research results will be compiled at the end of FY 2003, and distributed among related organizations.

