



March 2005

KIWC Annual Review

January 2005 marked the 10th anniversary of the Kushiro International Wetland Centre (KIWC).

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Jacaranda blossoms

Hosting of the UNITAR Training Workshop in Kushiro

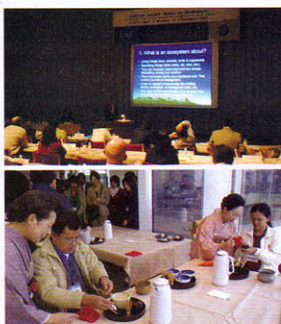
A training workshop was held at the Kushiro Tourism and International Relations Center from November 29 through December 3, 2004, under the auspices of the United Nations Institute for Training and Research Hiroshima Office for Asia and the Pacific (UNITAR HOAP) along with the co-host of the KIWC. This was the fifth joint workshop hosted by UNITAR in Kushiro and the first joint workshop hosted by UNITAR HOAP, which was inaugurated in 2004.

The theme of the workshop was "Wetlands, Biodiversity and Water." Aiming to acquire new knowledge and techniques in ecosystem management, with a focus on the water environment, 40 administrators and experts participated from 26 countries, primarily developing nations in the Asia-Pacific region.

In addition to lectures and hands-on training, a field tour to Kushiro wetland and opportunities to interact with the local community were included in the schedule. The activities capitalized on the abundant natural environment, as exemplified by the Red-crowned crane, and the remarkable achievements of civic participation, unique to Kushiro.

Furthermore, introduction to Japanese culture, including calligraphy, flower arrangement and the tea ceremony, conducted with the generous cooperation of local cultural organizations and international exchange volunteers, was well received by participants.

In the early hours of the first day of the workshop, a large earthquake (upper 5 intensity) occurred offshore Kushiro, greatly startling participants. Fortunately no one was injured, and everyone completed the programs, and cheerfully accepted their completion certificates at the closing ceremony.



River Environment Fund subsidized programs

Implementation of the Kushiro River Environment Observation Tour

On October 16, 2004, an observation tour to learn about the environment of the Kushiro River and Kushiro wetland was held. The tour was conducted under the joint auspices of KIWC and the Kushiro-shitsugen National Park Liaison Association. This observation tour, intended for members of the Kushiro-shitsugen National Park Little Rangers (elementary and junior high school students), organized by the Association, was conducted with the support of local university students. There were approximately 30 participants.

In the morning, the participants visited Kirakotan Rise, the area of which is designated as a natural treasure, in northern Kushiro wetland to observe springwater there. Through the checkup of water quality and volume, they found that the daily quantity of water that comes forth from each spring source there is equal to the monthly volume of water used by one household.

In the afternoon, they moved to the shore of Lake Toro and made windmills from used wood. They also canoed from the lake down the Kushiro River, observing the conditions of the wetlands and wildlife, including common kingfishers and other riparian life. Later that day, they observed an NPO plantation (a Nature Restoration Project site) near Lake Takkobu. Participants were able to learn about the natural splendor of the Kushiro River and Kushiro wetland through these activities.

Wetland Watching Tour in Winter

"Wetland Watching Tour in Winter" was held on January 29, 2005. Fifteen participants, both children and adults, onboard the steam locomotive "Fuyuno Shitsugen-go," which travels leisurely through the marsh, enjoyed the snow-covered wetlands on their way to Lake Toro. On the lakeside, they searched for evidence of wildlife from footprints left in the snow and other clues, observed ice while listening to the commentaries of Mitsunori Sato, an instructor at the Lake Toro Eco-Museum Center, and did experimental observations of snow crystals with guidance from Mr. Satoshi Yanagi, a teacher at Kushiro Seien High School.

Though these activities and many other programs, such as nature crafts making and quizzes on Kushiro wetland, they were able to fully enjoy the winter wetlands.

These programs were supported by the River Environment Fund in charge of the Foundation of River and Watershed Environment/Management, Japan.



Projects to Commemorate the 10th Anniversary of the Foundation of Sister-Wetland Affiliation Agreement

IN NOVEMBER 1994, THE SISTER-WETLAND AFFILIATION AGREEMENTS BETWEEN RAMSAR SITES IN THE KUSHIRO AREA (KUSHIRO WETLAND, LAKE AKKESHI AND BEKANBEUSHI WETLAND, AND KIRITAPPU WETLAND) AND A RAMSAR SITE AT THE HUNTER RIVER ESTUARY (FORMERLY REGISTERED AS KOORAGANG WETLAND), NEW SOUTH WALES, AUSTRALIA, WERE CONCLUDED WITH THE AIM OF ADVANCING EXCHANGES FOR CONSERVING MIGRATORY BIRDS AND WETLANDS, AS WELL AS TECHNICAL COOPERATION.

IN 2004, WHICH MARKED THE 10TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE AGREEMENTS, THE REVIEW AND RENEWAL OF THE AFFILIATION AGREEMENTS WERE MADE, AS WELL AS COMMON DESIRE OF FURTHERING FRIENDSHIP AND TECHNICAL EXCHANGES IN THE FUTURE WAS CONFIRMED.

From Australia to Kushiro: Visit by Australian Delegation from Sister Wetland

From September 24 to 27, 2004, a sister-wetland delegation of 19 citizens from Port Stephens in New South Wales visited eastern Hokkaido. This is the third visit by Australian delegations from sister wetlands.

The delegates visited Hokkaido Shibeche High School, which is making a concerted effort to conserve wetlands and promote technical development for that purpose. They also went to Kiritappu wetland for lively exchange of views with locals, who play a central role in promoting wetland conservation. In order to encourage exchanges between citizens, a get-together with people involved in international exchange associations in Kushiro was held, and home visits were organized with the cooperation of volunteer citizens. At the party, handmade kilts presented by the Port Stephens delegation were displayed. Australian flora and fauna expressed using colorful cloths prompted admiration and questions from participating citizens.



From Kushiro to Australia: Visit by Representatives of Six Municipalities in the Kushiro Area to Australia

From November 4 to 9, 2004, three people representing six municipalities associated with the KIWC, including the KIWC President, visited Newcastle and Port Stephens in Australia to renew the sister-wetland affiliation agreements and discuss future exchange programs.

During the stay, they attended a welcome reception at the Newcastle Region Art Gallery, an expert-guided tour to the sites under the Kooragang Wetland Rehabilitation Project and a wetland observation tour (Morning Walk) for general visitors, among other activities. They undertook a variety of exchanges while enjoying the hospitality and cooperation of many involved locals.

Approximately 50 people, including Lord Mayor of Newcastle John Tate and Port Stephens Mayor Craig Baumann, joined the renewal ceremony of the sister-wetland affiliation agreements held at the Wetland Centre Australia, celebrating the renewal of the agreements in a friendly atmosphere. A workshop was held afterward, where opinions about future activities in seven related fields were shared, including civic exchanges and environmental education.



Photo : Sue Rostas, KWRP

At Wetland Centre Australia

Reunion in Australia with Participants of the World Children's Summit in Kushiro

KIWC participated in the poster session at the World Children's Summit in Kushiro, which was held between August 2 and 7, 2004, in the Kushiro area. The event was hosted by the Executive Committee of the World Children's Summit in Hokkaido.

About 240 children from 30 regions in nine countries, including a region where KIWC's sister wetlands are located, participated in various exchange programs and presentation sessions whose theme was the "Environment."

At the signing ceremony of the renewal of the sister wetland affiliation agreements in Australia, students at Callaghan College in Newcastle and children from Port Stephens, who participated in the summit, made presentations on the local nature and efforts of environmental conservation.



Donation of the Artworks of Children in the Kushiro Area to the Wetlands Centre Australia

Among the art displayed at the International Child Artwork Exhibition for the Conservation of Ramsar Sites, which was held between November 2003 and February 2004 in the Kushiro area, 18 works drawn by elementary school students in the area under the theme of "Wetlands" were donated to the Wetlands Centre Australia.

The art was displayed at the signing ceremony venue on November 7, enhancing the friendly atmosphere between the two parties.



Welcomed by Jacaranda: Report on the visit to Australian sister wetlands

Toshihiro Kimura,
Director/ Manager, KIWC

We arrived at Sydney Airport on the morning of November 5 and immediately headed for Newcastle on a microbus. Sand and rocks exposed along the highway surprised us and made us realize that we were really on the Australian continent.

It was the beginning of summer, and Jacaranda, tall trees native to South Africa, were exhibiting their pale purple flowers everywhere in Newcastle, relieving our fatigue of 10-hour-plus economy trip.

In the late afternoon, we received an enthusiastic reception from many people, including the Lord Mayor of Newcastle, at the Newcastle Region Art Gallery. On the same day, an exhibition on Japanese ceramics was being held at the venue. Surrounded by the works of art, we were able to deepen our friendship by exchanging information.

On the next day, guided by those involved, we visited a wetland forest, where the restoration of leaf mold by wood chips and the planting of trees by children had been conducted, and a koala sanctuary, managed by local residents, to learn about the efforts to conserve and restore wetlands.

In the afternoon, we visited a wetland restored by an artificial tideland, where a number of pelicans and snipes feed and rest, as well as an office of the Kooragang Wetland Rehabilitation Project, restoration sites of mangroves and salt marshes, and farms managed in order to secure revenues for the project.

November 7 was a memorable day for us, as the day marked the 10th anniversary of the conclusion of the sister-wetland affiliation agreements. In the early morning on that day, we participated in a guided morning walk hosted by the Wetlands Centre and enjoyed bird watching with local citizens. We were impressed by the enthusiastic volunteers, who provided all guide services and breakfast. Beginning at 10 a.m., an official welcoming ceremony was held. Following the introduction of a message by Dr. Bridgewater, Secretary General of the Ramsar Convention Bureau, students at Callaghan College and children from Port Stephens made presentations. Then, mayors of three cities signed the renewed sister-wetland affiliation agreements.

In the afternoon, we attended a workshop on the future development of the sister wetlands exchanges, where the need for a regional coordinator who organizes the wetlands activities and the importance of volunteers were discussed. It was concluded, based on the discussions, that concerted considerations would be made on 10-year action plans for the promotion of sister wetlands exchanges.

Then, we traveled to Sydney and took a flight back to Japan, arriving in Kushiro on time on November 9.



Koala sanctuary



Workshop held at the Wetland Centre, Australia

Sister Wetlands and Latham's Snipes

The Sister Wetland Affiliation Agreements were concluded, mainly as Latham's snipes, locally known as "Kaminarishigi (thunder snipes)" due to the lapping sound they make, breed in the wetlands in the Kushiro area, and winter in the southeastern Australia such as wetlands in Hunter River Estuary.

The Citizens' Wild Bird Survey, conducted by Kushiro City in May and June of 2004, reported that Latham's snipes were confirmed in over 80% of the area of the city.

KIWC's logo was created in the motif of the bird.



Artwork of Children from Three Overseas Countries Now Being "Relay-displayed" by Ramsar Sites in Japan!

Among the children's works exhibited at the "International Child Artwork Exhibition for the Conservation of Ramsar Sites," which ended in February 2004, about 100 works of overseas children (China, South Korea and Lithuania) have been "relay-displayed" by Ramsar sites throughout the nation.

Relay exhibition means that the works, after being displayed at one Ramsar site, are sent to another. So far, thanks to the efforts by those involved at each site, the works have been displayed at Lakes Miyajimanuma, Kutcharo and Utonai in Hokkaido. They will be sent to Lake Izunuma-Uchinuma in Miyagi Prefecture in January 2005.

Issue of a Report by the KIWC Technical Committee and the Establishment of FY 2004-2006 Committee

The KIWC Technical Committee issued a report of their research studies from FY2001 to 2003, under the theme of "Restoration and Rehabilitation of Wetlands," in March 2004, which were distributed to related organizations and other interested parties.

Upon the issue of the report, we received many orders for it from within and outside the Kushiro area, amid rapidly growing interest among the public regarding the restoration and rehabilitation of nature in recent years, following the enactment of the Law for the Promotion of Nature Restoration and the establishment of the Kushiro Wetland Nature Restoration Council.

"Communication, education and public awareness" has been adopted as a research theme for FY 2004 through 2006, to promote the conservation of wetlands, as was in the resolution announced at the last meeting of Ramsar Convention contracting parties. Along with the decision, nine people, including experts and others in the fields of environmental education and the promotion and raising awareness of wetland conservation, became members of the committee. In the coming three years, the Technical Committee will mainly focus its activities on case studies of the environmental education and promotion and raising awareness programs that have been implemented at educational and nature observation facilities, among others, in the Kushiro area.

JICA Training Course "Conservation, Restoration and Wise Use of Wetland Ecosystems and their Biological Diversity"

From May 17 to June 23, 2004, the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) group training course on the "Conservation, Restoration and Wise Use of Wetland Ecosystems and their Biological Diversity" was held. JICA Obihiro International Center was the administrative institution, and the Nature Conservation Bureau of the Ministry of the Environment and the KIWC were the hosting institutions.

This course, which was the first session for this theme, was provided for seven participants from six countries, including Benin, Ecuador, Nicaragua, Papua New Guinea, Rumania and Slovakia, who are researchers and mid-level administrative officers involved in environmental and nature conservation. Various case examples were presented in the course, illustrating approaches to the restoration and rehabilitation of damaged environment in Japan, from the Okinawa islands to Hokkaido, in order to conserve ecosystems and biological diversity in wetlands. Participants joined in many practical training programs such as environmental education and eco-tours, and learned how to use natural resources in wetlands sustainably by firsthand experience.

During the stay in the Kushiro area, some exchange programs, including home visits, were provided. Thanks to warm hospitality by local volunteers, participants were able to enjoy a relaxing time between tough training programs.



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

From August 23 to October 1, 2004, the JICA group training course on the "Management for Eco-tourism and Sustainable Use of Natural Parks," was held with the JICA Obihiro International Center as the administrative institution and KIWC as the hosting institution. In the current fiscal year, the third group-training course was held, in which seven people participated from six countries (Bosnia-Herzegovina, Bulgaria, China, Kyrgyz, Nepal and Slovakia). The participants were all middle-ranking administrative officers involved in tourism and environmental conservation in their respective countries. There were numerous activities for the participants to take part in, including presentations of eco-tour case-study examples with a focus on hands-on experience training, primarily in eastern Hokkaido; lectures on natural park systems and concepts of ecotourism; and inspections of environmental education programs in Hokkaido. These programs aimed at providing useful information with which participants could introduce and utilize ecotourism in their own countries. The course also included a visit to Kyoto to allow the participants to learn about eco-tours featuring cultural heritages.

The training lasted over a month, during which the participants had to make full use of their mind and body every day. However, the participants' enthusiasm enabled them to continue participating in the training up to the last day in high spirits.



JICA Partnership Training Program with Local Government Collaboration

KIWC has been offering the JICA Partnership Training Program with Local Government Collaboration under the charge of JICA Obihiro International Center. It aims to help conserve black-necked cranes, an endangered species having international significance that winters in the Phobjikha Valley in Bhutan, and their wetland habitats.

Between March 6 and 12, 2003, two staff members from the Royal Society for Protection of Nature in Bhutan visited the Kushiro area to experience environmental education programs that make the best of rich nature of Japanese crane-inhabited eastern Hokkaido and learn about the case examples in which natural resources are utilized, such as eco-tours. Also, they had many opportunities to interact with locals that have been engaged in exchange with Bhutan and the protection of cranes, including a homestay at the home of a former JICA's senior overseas cooperation volunteer, who was sent to Bhutan to promote environmental education, along with exchange parties.

Two experts in environmental education and eco-tours from the Royal Society for Protection of Nature will be invited for training in March 2005.



Participation in the Kushiro Wetland Nature Restoration Council

KIWC has been a member of the Kushiro Wetland Nature Restoration Council from the beginning, belonging to the Committee for Citizen Involvement and Promotion of Environmental Education for the Restoration of Kushiro Wetland. While presenting case examples of the ongoing Wetland Rehabilitation Project at the Hunter River Estuary, KIWC's sister wetland, and by providing additional information, it has been engaged in consultation with those involved in the field of promotion and raising awareness of Kushiro wetland's restoration and rehabilitation.

As of March 2004, KIWC's Website Hits over 20,000 Visits

This is a sharp increase of 170% compared with the previous fiscal year. This may be due to increased public interest in wetlands, triggered by the enactment of the Law for the Promotion of Nature Restoration in 2003 and the accelerated domestic campaign to increase Ramsar sites in Japan, as the 9th Meeting of the Ramsar Conference of the Contracting Parties approaches in 2005. We will continue to update and upgrade the contents so that it can be enjoyed by both children and adults and easier to use.