

## 2005 JICA Training Course "Conservation, Restoration and Wise Use of Wetland Ecosystems and Their Biological Diversity"

From May 18 to July 8, 2005, a 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 Centre 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 second session for this theme, was provided for six participants from six countries (Colombia, Laos, Nepal, Oman, Tanzania and Thailand) who were 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 Kushiro wetlands in Hokkaido to coral reefs and the mangrove coast in Okinawa, in order to conserve ecosystems and biological diversity in wetlands. Participants took part in many practical training programs such as environmental education and eco-tours, and learned sustainable use of natural resources in wetlands through firsthand experience.

During their stay in the Kushiro region, the participants were able to interact with many citizens through home visits, and discussions with university students studying about eco-tourism and environmental conservation.



## 2005 JICA Training Course "Management for Eco-tourism and Sustainable Use of Natural Parks"

From August 29 to September 30, 2005, a Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) group training course on "Management for Eco-tourism and Sustainable Use of Natural Parks" was held with the JICA Obihiro International Centre as the administrative institution and the Kushiro International Wetland Centre (KIWC) as the hosting institution.

In the current fiscal year, the third group training course was held, in which six people from six countries (Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kyrgyz, Mongolia, Nepal, Romania and Tajikistan) participated. The participants were all mid-level administrative officers involved in tourism and environmental conservation in their respective countries. During the program, which took participants to various natural parks in eastern Hokkaido and even as far as Yakushima in Kagoshima Prefecture, there were numerous activities for the participants to take part in, including hands-on eco-tour programs, lectures on natural park systems and concepts of ecotourism, and observation of Hokkaido's environmental education programs. The course included a visit to Hamanaka Kiritappu Junior High School and observation of the wetland recovery project taking place at Hokkaido Shibecha High School, which gave the participants a chance to exchange ideas with young people. The participants gave presentations at the end of the course describing action plans to make practical use of what they learned through these programs to introduce and utilize eco-tourism in their own countries.



## Dispatch of the KIWC expert to Mexico

From November 7 (Fri.) to December 10 (Sat.), 2005, a KIWC expert on the conservation of wetlands visited Mexico. He was dispatched to instruct about "Monitoring methods" required for the "Yucatan Peninsula wetland conservation project" operated by JICA at The Ria Celestún Biosphere Reserve. In order to conserve this flamingo sanctuary, participation of local residents in conservation activities and dissemination of the concept "wise use" are essential. Specific activities to achieve this goal included: preliminary research, review of the survey items, opinion exchanges with a local resident group, and guidance for local staff members.

## Dispatch of the KIWC expert to Malaysia

From January 23 (Mon.) to February 4 (Sat.), 2006, the KIWC expert on the conservation of wetlands visited the Segamat River downstream area and the Tabin Wildlife Reserve area in Malaysia. The purpose of the visit was field survey and technical guidance as a part of the wetland conservation and management project by JICA. Considering that this area is to be registered in the Ramsar Convention in the future, a study meeting to promote the concept of "wise use" of wetlands, based on the convention's principles, and a seminar to discuss the concrete program plan for the wise use of wetlands were held, targeted for the local officers in charge. This included such things as eco-tours.

## Ramsar Sites in Japan Series 14, "Lake Akan"

Lake Akan is a caldera lake (25.9km around, 1,300ha area) that is surrounded by two active volcanoes; Oakandake (1,370m) and Meakandake (1,499m) in Kushiro city in eastern Hokkaido. Lake Akan was formed by the volcanism of this area. At an altitude of 420m, there is a deep forest with ever green conifer trees (Yezo spruce and Sakhalin fir, etc.), deciduous broad-leaved trees (Oak, Japanese Katsura tree, etc.) and lakes (Penketo, Panketo, etc.). The stretch including Lake Akan is designated as Akan National Park, which many people from abroad visit to enjoy the harmony of nature's "volcanoes, forests and lakes".

The average depth of Lake Akan is 18.7m, with the deepest point being 42m. It has many rare kinds of aquatic plants and animals, including Japanese hunchens (Sakhalin Taimen), which is the largest fresh water fish in Japan, and freshwater pearly mussels. Marimo is an especially famous alga; it grows and develops into a spherical cluster. Lake Akan is the only place where the "Marimo", a velvety green and beautiful spherical alga, can be found in the world. The size of a "Marimo" is approximately 10cm to 20cm in diameter. Some are over 30cm, and they are designated as a Special National Treasure. In November 2005, Lake Akan was designated as a Ramsar Site in Japan as a habitat of rare fauna and flora like the "Marimo", and as a representative caldera lake of Japan.

The mountain forests around the lake were designated by the forest industry as private lands for 100 years. Now, a nature conservation foundation has been established to control the property. They work on managing the forest environment where the brown bears and black woodpeckers live. (Environmental Policy Division of Kushiro City)



Photo credit: Akan Lakeside Eco Museum Center



# KIWC Annual Review

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In November 2005, some other wetlands in the Kushiro region were newly designated as Ramsar Sites. Ten years have passed since the KIWC was established, and we are determined to continue to promote dissemination activities and international cooperation for the conservation of the wetlands.

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## Implementation of the 2005 River Environment Observation Tour

The River Environment Observation Tour was held again in fiscal year 2005, subsidized by the Foundation of River & Watershed Environment Management's River Environment Fund. This year it was held twice, once for citizens (adults) and once for the Kushiro Wetlands Little Rangers (children). The October 10th (Sunday) program gave adults the chance to observe the environment around Lake Kussharo, the source of the Kushiro River, while riding on rafts. Later, they played a card game by Lake Toro in which they learned about the environmental conditions necessary for Red-crowned crane habitats and then took canoes to observe the natural environment around the middle of Kushiro River and compare it with what they saw upstream. The weather was good on this nice autumn day and allowed the 19 participants, including three foreign citizens, to have a good time while learning about river environments.

On November 3rd, the children's event was held. A total of 31 people participated, including 27 Kushiro Wetlands Little Rangers, and they took a hike to observe the natural environment around Lake Toro. They also participated in beach seining, and when everyone worked together to pull up the net, the children were excited to see many different kinds of fish, from large carp to tiny pricklybacks (the fish were released back into the river after observation). They then took canoes from the lake down the Kushiro River and observed wildlife around the riverside and the flow of the water.

## Implementation of winter wetland Eco-Tour "Ski Touring & Observation of Snow Crystal"

On February 25 (Sat.), 2006, a winter wetland eco-tour to enjoy the wetlands in winter was held at the Onnenai Visitor Center. Nine citizens from the Kushiro area participated in the tour. In the morning, the participants skied into the forests, which one can only enter in the winter season, guided by an instructor, Mr. Koichi Wakayama. They observed holes in the timber made by woodpeckers, and footprints and eating traces made by animals such as Red-crowned cranes, Mountainhares and Red-backed voles in the forests and from the boardwalks. They also observed the winter buds of willies.

In the afternoon, Mr. Satoshi Yanagi, a teacher at Kushiro Seien High School, lectured them on the history of the study of snow and the mechanism of snow crystallization. They simulated making snow crystals using plastic bottles and observed the crystals growing like a bird feather. They also observed the structure of ice crystals using a polarized glass sheet. The participants were surprised at the structural difference between store-bought and natural ice. They fully enjoyed the beautiful designs of ice. They were interested in the rich activities of nature, moved by fresh discoveries, and enjoyed them in seldom visited wetlands.

## 2005 Technical Committee Field Case Study Group Held

The Technical Committee held a field case study group on August 2, 2005 on the theme of "Communication, Education and Public Awareness for Conservation and Wise Use of Wetlands." A total of 16 people, including observers and staff, visited the Kiritappu Shitsugen Center and were given the opportunity to observe and get firsthand experience with the environmental education and public awareness programs being implemented there.

The participants were first given explanations about the operations and activities of the Kiritappu Shitsugen Center and some of the programs that it carries out such as the "Environmental Education Programs in Cooperation with Schools," the "Environmental Education Program to Make Use of Local Materials and Human Resources," and the "Eco Tour Program" by staff of the Center, including Mr. Toshikazu Ito, who is the director of the Center and also a member of the Technical Committee.

Following the explanations, the participants were given actual firsthand experience through a "Wetlands Exploration Tour," in which they performed case studies by observing plant and animal life and the waterfront environment, experimenting with handmade outdoor play sets and exchanging opinions and ideas.

During the introduction to the Center's environmental education program called "Fish Observation," the participants were given the opportunity to make their own rods with "suzutake" (borealis bamboo). One of the committee members pointed out that this plant grows only in eastern Hokkaido. To find out that what they actually had in their hands was an indigenous plant was an unexpected surprise for the participants. Each of the committee members was also inspired by the various inventions and ideas that were in abundance at the Center.



International Crane Forum





# Commemoration Projects to Mark the 10th Year of the Foundation of KIWC

This year marked the 10th year of the foundation of the KIWC. As projects to commemorate the anniversary, a forum and an exhibition based on the "crane", a symbol of the natural environment of the Kushiro area for the local residents, were held. In addition to many Kushiro citizens, people from abroad who cooperated with us to build a good relationship through various activities over the past 10 years also participated in these events.

## International Crane Forum - Future of Cranes and Ourselves

On March 18 (Sat.), 2006, "International Crane Forum: Future of Cranes and Ourselves", co-organized by the JICA Obihiro International Center and Tancho (Red-crowned crane) Protection Unit, was held at the Kushiro Tourism and International Relations Center. Approximately 100 citizens participated. Activities for conservation and dissemination of cranes in eastern Asia were introduced through various programs, including a presentation of case examples from abroad and panel discussions. There was also a keynote speech by Ms. Masako Inoue, who is the communication director of Kushiro City Zoo and president of the co-organizer, "Japan Crane and Stork Network".

One of the speakers, Mr. Kim Jin-Han, senior researcher of "Korea Biological Resource Center", was one of the participants in the JICA group training course "Conservation of Wetlands and Migratory Birds" organized by the KIWC before, and now is an active operator in Korea as a key person for the conservation of the cranes.

JICA participants from Bhutan were in Kushiro to learn about the conservation of cranes and also participated in this forum. In the exchange party after the forum, slides of past JICA training programs were introduced at the forum site, which was decorated with photos and ethnic costumes introducing Bhutan's nature and culture. The Hokkaido Bhutan association's Kushiro branch provided these articles for exhibition. The participants enjoyed tea and cakes from Japan, China, Korea and Bhutan in a friendly atmosphere.

On the following day, March 19 (Sun.), a study tour was held for the lecturers of the forum and JICA participants from Bhutan. At the Akan International Crane Center, they experienced an environmental education program and discussed how to improve the method for research on the ecology of cranes.

Later, at the Tsuru-Ito Tancho Sanctuary, the crane conservation activities by citizens were introduced and the participants exchanged their views on the coexistence of cranes and human beings while introducing the situation in each country.



The exchange event

## International Crane Art Exhibition

On March 18 (Sat.) and from March 29 (Wed.) to April 2 (Sun.), 2006, the "International Crane Art Exhibition" was held. We recruited genre-straddling hand-made work based on the "crane", and nearly 400 wonderful pieces of work from kindergarteners to seniors mainly from the Kushiro region and other regions were applied for. The works ranged from paintings to calligraphies, artwork and handcrafts, etc. At the same time, paintings of cranes by children of Bhutan and photographs, paintings and patchworks from England, Russia, Australia and Korea were exhibited with a comment on each work.

On March 18, these works were also exhibited at the "International Crane Forum" that was held at the Kushiro Tourism and International Relations Center. These original "cranes" pleased the eyes of the participants and let us recognize the meaning of our cranes that symbolize the ecosystem of the wetlands in Kushiro Area.

From March 29 to April 2, the exhibition was also held at Manabotto Nusamai (Kushiro lifelong study center) and attracted many people. It was impressive that so many people greatly appreciated the work and asked us about the relationship between the countries participating in the exhibition and the Kushiro area.

### Programs

**Keynote Speech**  
"Efforts for conservation of Red-crowned Cranes and educational/promotional activities"  
Ms. Masako Inoue  
Communication Director, Kushiro City Zoo

**Case Example Presentation**  
"Efforts for conservation of Cranes and educational/promotional activities in East Asia"

Report from Bhutan:  
Mr. Kunikazu Momose  
Chairperson, Tancho Protection Unit

Report from Korea:  
Mr. Kim Jin-Han  
Senior Researcher, National Biological Resource Center, Korea

Report from China:  
Mr. Simba Chan  
Flyway Officer, North East Asian Crane Site Network

**Panel Discussion**  
Panelists:  
The four speakers above  
Ms. Naoko Satake  
Head, Volunteer Network Challenge Team

Coordinator:  
Mr. Hisashi Shinsho  
Manager, Kushiro International Wetland Centre



Mr. Kim Jin-Han, third from left



The forum "International Crane Forum"



Manabotto Nusamai (Kushiro Life-long learning Center) A lot of work from abroad



## JICA Partnership Training Program with Local Government Collaboration

The JICA Partnership Training Program with Local Government Collaboration for conservation of Black-necked cranes in Bhutan that has been executed under the 3-year plan since 2003 was concluded in 2005. Up until now, four staff members from the Royal Society for Protection of Nature in Bhutan have been invited to eastern Hokkaido. They have received training on the management of the visitor's center for dissemination, environmental education, and utilization of eco-tourism, etc.

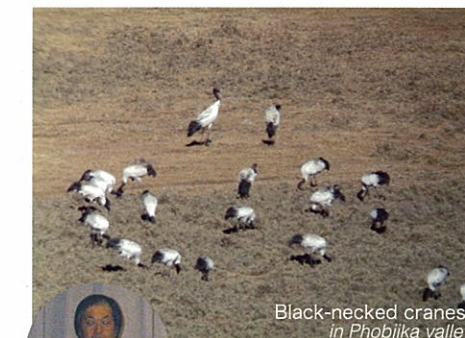
Two big programs were implemented this year; a Japanese crane specialist was sent to Bhutan and the KIWC invited several Bhutan officers to participate in a training course on cranes. Staff members from RSPN who participated in the previous training and Bhutan administrative officers also joined the training. The administrative officers were from the administrative district of the crane habitat in Bhutan. These two programs in FY2005 were implemented to further reinforce the skills related to crane conservation that the KIWC provided for Bhutan in the past and let those skills be firmly established in the crane habitat area of Bhutan.

## Visit to Bhutan by a Japanese Expert on Cranes

From November 22 (Tue.), 2005 to January 10 (Tue.), 2006, Mr. Kunikazu Momose, Head of the Tancho Protection Unit, was sent to Bhutan as an expert of JICA.

Mr. Momose organized a research group together with the local staff of RSPN and residents and studied the number of cranes flying in and their behavior in the Phobjikha conservation area, a wintering spot for black necked cranes. The number of cranes flying in at that time (355 cranes) became the official number in winter of 2005. In addition, they captured cranes and attached a tarsal band and transmitter to research their flying route and details of their behavior. After his return home, the locally trained staff took over this research and succeeded the project of attaching tarsal bands and transmitters to cranes.

In March 2006, Mr. Momose presented the achievements of the study and the environment of the crane's habitat in Phobjikha valley at the "International Crane Forum" and talked about not only the future issues of the project, but also the "ideal relationship" for the coexistence of human beings and cranes in Japan.



Black-necked cranes in Phobjikha valley



Mr. Kunikazu Momose

## Implementation of Training

From March 3 (Fri.) to March 20 (Thu.), 2006, a training program concerning the "Capacity Building for Management of the Black Necked Crane Information Center in the Phobjikha Conservation Area" was implemented. Four participants consisted of related administrative heads, an administrative officer in charge, and staff of RSPN. The participants visited wetlands in eastern Hokkaido, including the Kushiro wetlands (a red-crowned crane habitat), and went through a program of dissemination and environmental education training conducted by the facility set up in each wetland for nature walking and exhibition. They also learned about useful case examples for the coexistence of regional development and crane conservation, such as eco-tours, that utilize rich natural resources symbolized by the cranes. Furthermore, they discussed how to apply these programs to the activities in Phobjikha.

On March 18, the participants participated in the "International Crane Forum" and joined the study-tour the next day. During these events, they discussed activities for crane conservation and environmental education operated in Japan, China and Korea with the experts from each country.

Though the training schedule was rather hard for the participants, due to a lot of fieldwork in midwinter, they were able to finish training with the support of the citizens in the area which was offered for the friendship of the Hokkaido Bhutan Association etc.

## Poster exhibition at The 9th Meeting of the Ramsar Conference of the Contracting Parties

From November 8 (Tue.) to 15 (Tue.), 2005, the 9th Meeting of the Ramsar Conference of the Contracting Parties was held in Kampala, the capital of Uganda. In this conference, 20 wetlands in Japan were newly registered; the numbers of Japanese domestically registered wetlands were more than doubled. The KIWC prepared posters in English introducing the new wetlands, Lake Akan, and providing information about previously registered wetlands in the Kushiro area, as well as the KIWC activities. Those posters were posted on the walls of the conference hall, and brochures and newsletters were handed out to the participants. Incidentally, affiliated body Wetlands International Japan (NPO) cooperated in transporting and displaying the posters.



Participation in The International Crane Forum (Front row)



Photo credit: Wetlands International Japan