

Kushiro Wetland Eco-tour, "Lake Toro Expedition in Autumn"

On October 6, 2007, an eco-tour for the local residents was held. 19 people from Kushiro City, Kushiro Town and Shibecha Town participated and visited Lake Toro in the Kushiro Wetland. 9 JICA participants who came to Japan to learn about eco-tourism also joined the tour, and they tried canoeing under the beautiful blue sky.

They enjoyed the autumn nature of the lakeside, finding wild grapes and fruits of *Rosa rugosa*, or measuring the quantity of the spring water flowing from the forest into the lake.

After canoeing, they tasted boiled "water chestnuts" which had been gathered in summer. A water chestnut is a nut of waterweed which grows on the surface of Lake Toro. They have been used as a preserved food, or medicine, for a long time in this area. It was the first time for most of them to taste it. They really liked it and said "It's tasty like a chestnut!".

For the JICA participants, it was the first exchange with the local residents since they came to Japan. They made good friends with each other through canoeing or sharing water chestnuts.



2008 Eco-tour in Winter Commemorating "World Wetlands Day"

On February 2, 2008, an eco-tour for the local residents was held as an event related to "World Wetlands Day (February 2)", a memorial day established to commemorate adoption of the Ramsar Convention. 19 people participated and went to Lake Shirarutoro, which is located to the east of the wetland, by a winter-only train called "SL Fuyu-no-Shitsugen-go". This train runs along the Kushiro Wetland, and participants observed the meandering Kushiro River and herds of sika deer through the window on the way to the lake.

On the frozen surface of the lake, they looked for footprints or traces of food of red foxes, red-crowned cranes or sika deer, imagining the behaviors of the animals, and enjoyed beautiful snow and ice. They were surprised at the warmth of spring water that does not freeze at freezing temperature, and the loud noise ice makes when it swells and clashes with itself. They realized the asperity of winter nature in Hokkaido and the strength of the wildlife living there. At the lakeside, they could directly observe red-crowned cranes which came flying in pairs.

They warmed themselves up at hot-springs at the lakeside after they became cold. After that, they received a lecture about "World Wetlands Day" and this year's theme, "Healthy wetlands, healthy people" was explained using some case examples.



Ramsar Sites in Japan, Series 16, Lake Tofutsu

Lake Tofutsu, straddling Abashiri City and Koshimizu Town, is located at latitude 43°56' N and longitude 144°24' E. It is a brackish lake cut off from the Okhotsk Sea by a long and thin dune area made by a developed sand bank and connected to the sea narrowly at its north-west edge. It is 27km around, 900ha in area and its mean water-level is 0.7m. It is shallow with the deepest point being 2.5m.

More than 60,000 anatine birds arrive every year, and more than 1% of bean geese (*Anser fabalis middendorffii*), whooper swans, eurasian widgeons, snaws and red-breasted mergansers in East Asia are here. Also, endangered species such as white-tailed eagles, Steller's sea eagles, red-crowned cranes and yellow-breasted bunting are proliferating.

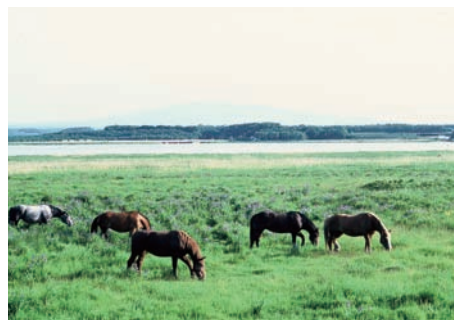
At the lakeside low land, saline wetland is developed and *Triglochin maritima* and *Potentilla egedei* var. *groenlandica* grow gregariously. At the freshwater wetland, there are a reed community and an alder stand. The biggest attractions are communities of white arum, *Salicornia europaea* and *Iris setosa*, and the "Gensei Kaen" with a carpet of about 40 kinds of wild flowers such as *Rosa rugosa*, *Lilium maculatum* subsp. *dauricum* and *Hemerocallis yezoensis*. "Gensei Kaen" is a community of moorland vegetation of 8km long and 275ha in area located on a dune extending from the west side of Lake Tofutsu to the Okhotsk Sea. Many people visit to enjoy the beautiful scenery of Lake Tofutsu with the backdrop of Shiretoko Peninsula and Mt. Shari.

Lake Tofutsu forms a bed for a waterweed *Zostera japonica*, and fish and shellfish including *Palaemon pavidus*, *Hypomesus nipponensis*, *Corbicula japonica*, oysters and Japanese littlenecks live there. Therefore, it is utilized as a fishing ground of inland water fisheries.

Gathered sediment interrupts the water flow at the entrance of the lake in early winter, so the local residents do "Shiokiri (opening the entrance of a lake)" in the beginning of spring to preserve the lake. For vegetation maintenance, horses are pastured at the lakeside, and the field in front of Koshimizu Gensei Kaen is burnt before the flowers bloom every spring.

To promote conservation and wise use of the environment of Lake Tofutsu and the surrounding area, a "Council", where people concerned study and debate, was inaugurated. Also, Abashiri City and Koshimizu Town collaborate on formulating "Utilization and environmental conservation plan for Lake Tofutsu".

(Living Environment Division, Citizen Affairs Department, Abashiri City)



Sad news

Mr. John Bartlett, the chairperson of the sister city committee, passed away from a disease in January 2008.

He visited Kushiro as the mayor of Port Stephens (later a state representative of New South Wales) in 1999 for the first time. He visited here repeatedly after that and made significant efforts as a leader of the citizen exchange of sister wetlands. We would like to offer our deepest condolences.



KIWC newsletter

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The Kushiro International Wetland Centre (KIWC) is a regional network designed to use diversified regional facilities and human resources based in the Kushiro area in Hokkaido, which is endowed with nature. It is actively promoting public awareness and international cooperation activities for community-based wetland conservation.

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2007 JICA Training Course for Wetland Conservation

From May 21 to July 3, 2007, 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. The 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 fourth session as a group training course, was provided for 6 participants from 5 countries (China, Kenya, Mexico, the Philippines and Uganda) who were researchers and middle-ranking administrative officers involved in environmental conservation and nature protection. During the training, the participants visited all types of wetland nationwide, ranging from wetlands in Eastern Hokkaido to tidal flats and countryside forests (Satoyama) in the Tokyo Metropolitan Area in Honshu, the mainland of Japan, and to garden ponds in Kyoto, and mangrove forests and coral reefs in Okinawa. The participants experienced in the environmental education programs and eco-tours offered in these wetland areas, and based on their experience, devised specific plans for the sustainable use of natural resources in their respective countries.

During the long training period, which lasted for one and a half months, the participants visited ordinary households in Kushiro and enjoyed exchanges with locals with the cooperation of local volunteers.



2007 JICA Training Course for Eco-tour

From September 25 to November 1, 2007, the JICA group training course on the "Management of Eco-Tourism and Sustainable Use of Natural Parks" was held. The JICA Obihiro International Center was the administrative institution and the KIWC was the hosting institution. This course restarted as a new series of group training sessions this year after having held training for 5 years, and was provided for 7 participants from 5 countries (Ghana, Kiribati, Laos, Lesotho and Mexico) who were involved in tourism or environmental conservation.

During the training, participants learned about the institution and the utilization promotion measures of natural parks in Japan, and the principle of eco-tourism. They also visited national parks in Eastern Hokkaido and experienced eco-tourism programs including canoeing and hiking. Through these experiences and debates with the tour operators, or the people at the facilities they visited for inspection, they made specific plans to introduce and promote "eco-tourism" as a way to utilize natural and cultural resources in their respective countries, which enable regional improvement and environmental conservation at the same time. At the end of the training, they gave presentations about their plans.

Participants enjoyed socializing with people of various generations in the local communities participating in exchange programs such as home visits, eco-tours with the local residents and school visits during their stay.



JICA Mongolia Training Course, "Participatory Environmental Conservation"

From November 19 to December 3, 2007, a training course by JICA Obihiro International Center targeted for Mongolia, "Participatory Environmental Conservation" was held. It was provided for 6 participants who are officials in national or municipal government, or local entities concerned, as part of the "Catchment Area Management Model Project" which JICA promotes at Ogii Nuur, a Ramsar site.

The training sessions were held in Kanto and Hokkaido, and KIWC was in charge of the one in Hokkaido. Participants joined an eco-tour utilizing local industries such as fishery or horse production. They received explanations about ingenuity and points to remember to operate tours, and learned about the ways to exhibit materials in the nature-information facilities, and what kind of environmental education programs were implemented.

Ogii Nuur residents, who cooperated with our research there when KIWC sent specialists in 2001, participated in this training. We had a happy reunion in Kushiro, and shared the latest information about Ogii Nuur.



Projects commemorating the 20th anniversary of the designation of Kushiro Shitsugen National Park

To commemorate the 20th anniversary of the designation of Kushiro Shitsugen(wetland) National Park, various commemorative events were held by both public and private sectors. KIWC held a workshop and a lecture meeting on conservation and wise use of regional wetlands including Kushiro Wetland as a commemorative project.

Workshop for Considering the Wise Use of Kushiro Wetland and Lake Akan

On July 27, 2007, the Workshop for Considering the Wise Use of Kushiro Wetland and Lake Akan was held at the Kushiro Lifelong Learning Center under the joint auspices of the Wetlands International Japan.

This workshop was held for locals and was attended by approximately 40 people, consisting mainly of local residents engaged in fisheries, tourism and so forth in the Kushiro region and Lake Akan.

After people involved in fisheries and tourism had introduced case examples, all the participants sat in a circle and discussed industrial promotion friendly to wetland environments and commonalities and differences between the two wetlands. Many opinions were voiced concerning the formulation of proper use guidelines, the marketing of the regions' distinctive characters and so forth.



Lecture Meeting / Ikebana Demonstration "Traditional Arts for Wetland Restoration"

On July 28, 2007, the lecture meeting "Traditional Arts for Wetland Restoration" was held at the Kushiro Lifelong Learning Center. Dr. Akio Maita, a professor at the Kyoto Saga University of Arts, introduced the landscape restoration project for Osawa Pond in Kyoto as an example of using Japanese traditional arts, which place a high value on harmonization with nature, for nature restoration projects.

In an effort to restore the ecosystem and landscape of Osawa Pond, which was devastated by the feeding damage of grass carp (*Ctenopharyngodon idellus*), an exotic fish, Professor Maita explained that he had played a central role in organizing the Grass Carp Bustards consisting of experts in a host of fields, local residents, students and so forth. He also pointed out that restoration plans have been under way in the environment, civil engineering, landscape architecture fields and many others and that they aim to realize the ancient image of Osawa Pond expressed in the "Keshiki-ike (scenic arrangement)" at the Saga Goryu School of Ikebana (Japanese traditional flower arrangement) under the restoration plans.

At the venue, Ms. Mika Tsuji, Vice President of the Academy for the Saga Goryu Ikebana and one of the key persons for the restoration plans, demonstrated the Keshiki-ike and the beautiful yet somewhat nostalgic water landscape arranged in the vase fascinated the approximately 40 participants.



Participating in Official Delegation to Sister Wetlands in Australia

The official visiting party to sister wetlands in Australia (A total of 23 people participated) was organized for a project commemorating the 20th anniversary of the designation of Kushiro Shitsugen National Park. They visited Hunter Estuary Wetlands, sister wetlands in New South Wales, and stayed there from November 2 to November 8, 2007. The visiting party included Kushiro City Council members, those in regional commerce and industry, and citizens who are interested in international exchange. The superintendent of Shibechea Town participated to represent the KIWC, and a wetland specialist of KIWC Bureau accompanied the delegation as a supporter.

At Hunter Estuary Wetlands, a Ramsar site, we planted memorial trees with the members of the Kooragang Wetland Rehabilitation Project who have been working on the nature restoration project for many years. We also interacted with many people including the local bird-watching group, environmental conservation volunteers, and those involved with the wetland center.



Report on Visit to Sister Wetlands

Hisashi Shinsho, KIWC Senior Technical Manager

I participated in the "Delegation to Sister Wetlands in Australia" which Kushiro City hosted. I joined the Kooragang Wetland Rehabilitation Project held by Hunter Wetlands Centre, and a sister wetlands exchange program with the members of Port Stephens Sister City Committee. Hunter Estuary Wetlands, which is located in an area extending through New Castle and Port Stephens, along with Kushiro Wetland, Lake Akkeshi, Bikanbeushi Wetland, and Kiritappu Wetlands signed a "Continuance of Sister Wetland Affiliation" in 2004.

Hunter Wetlands Centre is carrying out wetlands conservation activities mainly with citizen volunteers to return a rugby field and part of a dairyland, which were built in the wetlands, to the original wetland. At Kooragang Wetland around the center, rehabilitation of the wetland is attempted by building a dam to regulate water level, restoration of a wetlands forest, a salt wetland, and a tideland.

The delegation observed various activities of the local residents, and participated in a program planting trees such as ash trees and redwoods which used to dominate this area. In Port Stephens, we strengthened exchanges with the members of the sister city committee at the "Community Art Gallery", a base of civil activities. We visited Tomaree and Wallaroo national parks facing Nelson Bay, which is known as a recreation area, and observed koalas and opossums living there. We also visited Stockton Beach dune marine park that is designated as the "Green Corridor (green corridor where wildlife lives)". The Green Corridor includes a dune area of 33 km extending through Port Stephens and New Castle, and national parks, natural reserves and state parks dotting the eastern beach area of the state. We learned about the sister city committee's various activities led by John Bartlett, the chairperson of the committee. The citizen delegation from Australia is scheduled to visit Kushiro Wetland in November of 2008.



Activities of the KIWC Technical Committee

To continue conservation and wise use of wetlands effectively, the KIWC forms a technical committee of specialists and conducts investigation and research activities on specific themes established every three years.

The theme of FY 2007 to FY 2009 is the "Research on Alien Species Affecting Wetland Ecosystems". Alien species have been given attention as a result of the human activities affecting wetland ecosystems these days. In FY 2007, we conducted the research mainly centering around case studies about the current situation and issues of alien species related to wetland ecosystems in the Kushiro area.

FY 2007 – FY 2009 Technical Committee

Chairman Tatsuchi Tsujii (Hokkaido Environment Foundation)

Members Atsushi Kawahara (Kiritappu Wetland Center)

Tatsuo Shibuya (Akkeshi Waterfowl Observation Center)

Yachiyo Takashima (Hokkaido Univ. of Education, Kushiro Campus)

Tsutomu Hariu (Kushiro City Museum)

Shin-ichi Hiruta (Hokkaido Univ. of Education, Kushiro Campus)

Isamu Wakana (Akan Lakeside Eco-Museum Center)

Koichi Wakayama (Kushiro Shitsugen Onnenai Visitor Center)

The First On-site Study Meeting: Case Study of Signal Crayfish

On July 4 (Wed.), 2007, the KIWC Technical Committee's On-site Study Meeting in fiscal 2007 was held at Lake Harutori, Kushiro City. As the first activity for the Research on Alien Species Affecting Wetland Ecosystems, which will be conducted for three years from this fiscal year, 13 people including members of the KIWC technical committee and observers, inspected how alien organism surveys were performed in Lake Harutori.

After Dr. Shin-ichi Hiruta, a professor at the Kushiro Campus of the Hokkaido University of Education and one of the KIWC technical committee members, explained the state of the inhabitation of signal crayfish (*Pacifastacus leniusculus*) in the lake, the participants visited the survey site, where they inspected how signal crayfish caught were removed and subsequently how their measurements and other data were collected.

Participants raised questions and exchanged opinions about how to participate in volunteer activities intended to exterminate signal crayfish, their relations with Japanese indigenous crayfish (*Cambaroides japonicus*), and so on.



The Second On-site Study Meeting: Case Study of *Rudbeckia laciniata*

On September 1, 2007, the second KIWC Technical Committee's On-site Study Meeting in FY 2007 was held at Nenohi Park in Akkeshi Town. As one of the activities of "Alien Species Affecting Wetland Ecosystem", which is the theme from FY 2007 to FY 2009, we monitored the rampant condition of *Rudbeckia laciniata* and exterminated some of them. *Rudbeckia laciniata* is an asteraceous plant which is native to North America, and is rapidly proliferating in Hokkaido in recent years. The extermination work was part of experimental monitoring research which Akkeshi Town started this fiscal year to prevent *Rudbeckia laciniata* from invading important areas in respect of landscape and ecosystem conservation such as Bikanbeushi Wetland in the town. About 70 people including volunteers and interested persons from in and out of Akkeshi Town participated in the work. From the KIWC, 9 people including the technical committee members participated. After they were lectured about the rampant condition of *Rudbeckia laciniata* in Akkeshi Town, they weeded in the monitored community.

In the discussion meeting after the weeding work, information about the pattern of distribution of alien species, the rampant condition in wetlands in the Kushiro area, etc. was exchanged. We also discussed the importance of preventing the entry of alien species to important areas in respect of ecosystem conservation, disseminating the concept and educating people.



Making the Kits of Paper Plane in the Shape of Crane/Swan

In the technical committee activity for FY2004 to FY2006, "Research Survey on Communication, Education and Public Awareness for Conservation and Wise Use of Wetlands", Tatsuo Shibuya, an expert member of Akkeshi Waterfowl Observation Center and a technical committee member, reported on an education activity using "paper planes in the shape of crane/swan" which the committee developed. The kits containing a paper plane pattern and the description of red-crowned crane/whooper swan were brought out in August 2007 and distributed to the related organizations as separate volumes of the technical committee's research survey report issued in the end of FY2006.

They are now used as description tools of red-crowned cranes/whooper swans and gifts at nature conservation related events etc. in municipalities comprising the KIWC and nature information facilities.



Report on Alien Species Management Activity by a JICA Participant from Zambia

Mr. Griffin Kaize Shanungu from Zambia (Ministry of Tourism, Environmental and Natural Resources) participated in a JICA wetland training session in FY2006 and sent us a report on the activities after returning home.

He is now the coordinator of an extermination project of *Mimosa pigra*, an alien species, in Lochinvar National Park established in a Ramsar site, Kafue Flats Wetlands. *Mimosa pigra* is a fertile shrub and grows into a bush covered with thorns. It has become a big menace, not only to the ecosystem in the park, but also to lives of cattle breeders or tourist agents in recent years. His detailed report on the project included extermination work by the local residents, experiments and monitoring research. It was introduced at the KIWC technical committee as a case example of region-centered alien species management, and the members were very interested.

