

## JICA 2008 Training Course on Wetland Conservation

From May 19 to July 1, 2008, a Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) group training course entitled *Conservation, Restoration and Wise Use of Wetland Ecosystems and their Biological Diversity* was held. The JICA Obihiro International Center (OBIC) served as the event's administrative institution, while the hosting institutions were the Ministry of the Environment's Nature Conservation Bureau and KIWC.

This session – the last part of a five-year training course – was attended by seven middle-ranking administrative officers and experts involved in wetland and biodiversity conservation from each of seven countries (Brazil, China, Kenya, Malaysia, Nepal, the Philippines and Uganda).

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 of Honshu (Japan's mainland), garden ponds in Kyoto and mangrove forests and coral reefs in Okinawa. The attendees experienced the environmental education programs and eco-tours offered in these wetland areas.

Based on their observations of exhibitions and research facilities concerning wetland ecosystems, the participants devised/presented specific plans for the sustainable use of natural resources and the conservation of wetland ecosystems and biodiversity in their respective countries.

During their stay of almost two months in Japan, the participants deepened their understanding of Japanese people and their lifestyles. With the cooperation of local volunteers, they visited ordinary households and schools in Kushiro and enjoyed an exchange program that included trading views with university students learning about eco-tours.



A water purification experiment by students at Hokkaido Shibecha High School

## JICA 2008 Training Course on Eco-Tourism

From September 8 to October 15, 2008, a JICA group training course entitled *Management for Eco-Tourism and Sustainable Use of Natural Parks* was held. The OBIC served as the administrative institution, while KIWC acted as the hosting institution. The course was attended by six middle-ranking administrative officers and engineers involved in national park operation and tourism promotion from five countries (Argentina, Indonesia, Laos, Samoa and Uganda).

Eco-tours have recently attracted attention as a method of regional development via conservation and sustainable utilization of regional natural and cultural resources. Through lectures and practical training, the participants learned about various aspects of eco-tours (including theory, monitoring and operation/management) primarily from case studies on national and prefectural parks in eastern Hokkaido – a place characterized by its rich natural environment – with numerous eco-tour examples utilizing fisheries, dairy farming and other existing industries. To conclude the training course, the participants devised and presented action plans according to the circumstances of their home countries based on the knowledge and experience they had gained from the sessions.

During the course, which lasted for more than a month, the participants also enjoyed interaction with locals in an exchange program that included visits to local households and schools.



## JICA 2008 Training Course on Participatory Environmental Conservation

From October 27 to November 7, 2008, a JICA group training course for Mongolia entitled *Participatory Environmental Conservation* was held. At Ogii Nuur, a Ramsar site, a visitor center is currently being constructed as part of JICA's Catchment Area Management Model Project. By way of preparation for the center's operation, four officials from national/local governments and a local NGO participated in the course.

The training was held in Kanto and Hokkaido, with KIWC in charge of the Hokkaido sessions. During the course, the participants visited national parks and nature-based facilities at Ramsar sites in eastern Hokkaido, and learned about methods of exhibition and explanation through inspection and practical training. They also learned techniques for the implementation of facility-based environmental education programs and eco-tours. The attendees shared their respective ideas about specific plans to promote environmental conservation and utilization through the participation of local residents, and also expressed their aspirations to apply the example of public-private partnership learned during the training course to their home countries.



## Citizen's Delegation from Sister Wetlands in Australia Visits Kushiro

A citizen's delegation from Australia's Port Stephens, the location of the Hunter Estuary Wetlands Ramsar site (which has a sister relationship with the one in Kushiro) visited Kushiro in November 2008. The delegation was comprised of six members of the Port Stephens Sister Cities Committee (an organization operated by local residents) and was headed by Mr. Ted Tindall, a chair of the committee. They were in Kushiro from November 13 to 17, 2008, and inspected Kushiro Wetland while enjoying stays at local households. A welcome tea party was held on November 14 with the attendance of representatives from the local governments concerned and people involved in wetland conservation, as well as Kushiro citizens who joined the official delegation to the Hunter Estuary Wetlands Ramsar site in November 2007. They celebrated their reunion and cherished memories of their exchange trips through slides shown during the party, thereby forging closer relationships between representatives of the sister wetlands in a casual, friendly atmosphere.



# 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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Winter oak buds

## KIWC Technical Committee Lecture Meeting

On May 8, 2008, the KIWC Technical Committee held a lecture meeting entitled *The Disappearance of River Otters and Increasing Mink Populations* at the Kushiro Tourism and International Relations Center. With Dr. Tatsuichi Tsujii (Chair of the KIWC Technical Committee and President of the Hokkaido Environment Foundation) leading the meeting, Atsushi Kawahara (a KIWC Technical Committee member and President of the Kiritappu Wetland Center) and Motokazu Ando (an Associate Professor at the Department of Applied Biophilia at Tokyo University of Agriculture's Faculty of Agriculture) served as lecturers and introduced the latest information on the relationships between alien mammal species and native animals in Hokkaido with a focus on mink (*Mustela vison*), which have been observed in increasing numbers in the Kushiro area in recent years.

Mr. Kawahara's lecture, entitled *Mustelids in Hokkaido*, introduced differences in the appearance and ecology of such animals within the prefecture in clearly understandable terms using slides and stuffed specimens. He explained that different mustelid species lived in diverse environments ranging from rivers to mountains, and that the invasion of the mink – a relatively large member of the weasel family – might have caused changes in the distribution of native weasels.

In his lecture, entitled *Widespread Distribution of Alien Mammals Centering on Mink and Surveys on Such Distribution*, Mr. Ando introduced the state of habitat distribution of alien mammals, including mink, in Japan. He explained that once an alien animal enters and begins multiplying in an ecosystem, controlling it becomes extremely difficult, which highlights the importance of preventing invasion per se as well as taking measures before alien species begin multiplying. Also covered during the lecture meeting was how Japanese river otter (*Lutra lutra*) – a member of the weasel family once commonly seen in rivers in Japan – has now disappeared. This example was used to illustrate the paramount importance of responding promptly and carrying out promotional and educational activities to protect wildlife, as well as the need to draw on this experience in future activities. Approximately 80 locals and nature conservationists attended the lecture meeting, which also saw lively question and answer exchanges.

The KIWC Technical Committee is planning to conduct hearing- and questionnaire-based investigation into the status of mink in wetlands in the Kushiro area as part of the *Research on Alien Species Affecting Wetland Ecosystems* theme of its studies from 2007 to 2009. This lecture meeting was aimed at deepening the understanding of locals and those concerned with nature conservation about mink and other alien animals prior to these studies, and the organizer called on participants to cooperate in the investigative activities involved.



Dr. Tsujii, Pres. Kawahara and Assoc. Prof. Ando (from left)



## UNITAR Training Workshop on Biodiversity and Climate Change

From June 29 to July 4, 2008, the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) and KIWC co-organized a training workshop on biodiversity for Asia and the Pacific region. This was the seventh UNITAR training workshop to be held in Kushiro, and was the last of three UNITAR workshop sessions entitled *Series on Biodiversity*, which started in 2004.

Based on the theme of biodiversity and climate change, the workshop was represented by 35 participants from 22 countries primarily in Asia and the Pacific region, including environmental policy makers, project managers for environmental conservation and development, and researchers in the fields of biodiversity and climate change. The attendees also included past participants (UNITAR Kushiro Alumni) returning to Kushiro with the results of their ensuing research activities.

As well as attending lectures and case studies, the participants also joined an overnight stay study tour to Kushiro Wetland and Lake Akan. Based on knowledge and experience obtained from this program, the attendees also engaged in practical training, breaking into groups and devising/presenting plans to conserve and manage actual wetland ecosystems.

At the main site of the workshop (Kushiro City Koryu Plaza "Saiwai"), a hands-on program to experience the Japanese tea ceremony and flower arranging was also held with the cooperation of local cultural organizations. The program was well received by the participants, many of whom had never tried the tea ceremony or flower arranging before.





## Ramsar Convention-related Activities

From October 28 to November 4, 2008, the 10th Meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties to the Convention on Wetlands (COP10) was held in South Korea's Changwon City on the theme of *Healthy Wetlands, Healthy People*. In addition to the adoption of 32 resolutions in total, the meeting witnessed robust discussions and PR activities through booth exhibitions and side events. Outside the conference venue, a variety of related events were held, including NGO meetings and wetland tours for locals.

### Participation in the 10th Meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties to the Convention on Wetlands

Three KIWC staff, including the Secretary-General of the KIWC Secretariat, participated in the 10th Meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties to the Convention on Wetlands (COP10) from October 28 to October 31, 2008. The KIWC representatives engaged in public relations activities using posters and pamphlets in the Wetlands International Japan booth at the exhibition hall of the convention center that served as the conference venue. They also made presentations at peripheral events to introduce KIWC's efforts to promote the conservation and wise use of wetlands. Furthermore, as many previous participants in international wetland conferences and training sessions hosted by KIWC also attended this conference, the KIWC representatives exchanged recent news and the latest information concerning wetland conservation.

A number of locals from Changwon and its environs who had obtained one-day passes visited the conference, which was held at the Convention Center. Various organizations put up exhibition booths and welcomed many children and their parents, as well as students on field trips. Popular attractions included paper airplane kits featuring Japanese cranes and Whooper swans and KIWC logo badges offered at the KIWC booth. Many visitors enthusiastically asked questions about wetlands in Kushiro and showed interest in KIWC's pamphlet. During their stay in Changwon, they visited City Hall and wetlands near the conference venue to learn about the situation of wetlands in South Korea – Japan's nearest neighbor.



### Ramsar COP10 Debriefing Session Held



Ms. Ayami Kawamura

In addition to the KIWC staff, several individuals from the Kushiro region participated in the COP10 and related events. Aiming to report on the results of activities at the conference and related events and share information about local wetlands to help those in the Kushiro region use such areas more effectively, a debriefing session was held at the Kushiro Tourism and International Relations Center on December 16, 2008. Participating in the session were fifty local residents and people involved in wetland conservation as well as four individuals who visited Changwon from the Kushiro region, including junior and high school students.

Following the KIWC Secretariat's report on the conference, Professor Satoshi Kobayashi from the Kushiro Public University of Economics (who served as a staff member of the Ramsar Convention Secretariat from 1991 to 1996) explained the newly adopted resolutions and wetland conditions in South Korea, among other matters.

Next, Ms. Ayami Kawamura (a third-year junior high school student) and Ms. Natsuko Sato (a first-year high school student) reported on the Kodomo Ramsar project – an international children's workshop held on the sidelines of COP10 in Changwon – in which the two students represented Kushiro Wetland. Ms. Kawamura presented her impressions of interaction with children from other countries while engaging in collaborative work or introducing wetlands and reported on her visits to overseas. Having often participated in international wetland-related events for children like this since she was an elementary school student, Ms. Sato played a major role at the COP10 opening ceremony, where she represented Japanese children and introduced Kushiro as a past COP host venue. During the debriefing session, Ms. Sato presented the history of Kodomo Ramsar's activities, talked about what she had learned from experience and gave her opinions on wetland conservation from the viewpoint of children.



Prof. Kobayashi presents a report

#### Message from Ms. Natsuko Sato

I participated in COP10 as a Japanese children's representative. Children from other countries where COP has been held in the past also participated, and we exchanged opinions on wetlands. Talking about myself, I was raised near Kushiro Wetland, which is why I became interested in its unique environment. Since then, I have had various opportunities to discuss with children of my age both at home and abroad. Until I participated in such exchanges, I used to enjoy the blessings of wetlands only passively, but these exchanges made me realize the preciousness of wetland environments and ecosystems once



again. This gave me a strong desire to do what I can to help conserve wetlands, and I have shared my views with many people.

In real life, I feel that few children are interested in environmental issues. For the younger generation, these problems are concluded in school textbooks, and children are not aware that such issues are all around them. This can also be said of adults. I hope there will be many more opportunities for people to think about the environment in their immediate surroundings.

### Winter Eco-tour 2009 Held to Mark World Wetlands Day

To mark this year's World Wetlands Day, the Winter Eco-tour 2009 was held for locals on January 31, 2009. Participating in the tour were 16 people ranging from elementary school students to people in their 80s and staff members. Those present took a winter-only steam locomotive that runs in the eastern part of Kushiro Wetland, observed the Kushiro River from a train window and visited Lake Toro, which is connected to the Kushiro River at its tributary.

At Lake Toro, which was covered with snow and ice, they observed the lakeside terrace and sedimentary soil using a soil probe, and envisioned how the environment around the lake has changed. They also deduced animal behavior based on footprints left in the snow by Red squirrels and Ezo red foxes, and tried ice fishing for Japanese smelt. After this, they listened to presentations by officials from the local fisheries cooperative association about the ecology of the Japanese smelt, its relationship with river and lake environments and fishing operations in the wetland. At the end of the tour, the participants learned about the Ramsar Convention from explanations on World Wetlands Day and wetland-related quizzes.

Despite the bitter midwinter cold and freezing temperatures at Kushiro Wetland, the participants were full of vigor and enjoyed exploring the lakeside area by making their way through the snow.



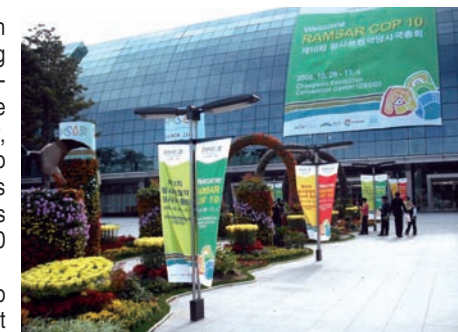
### Report on an Event to Mark World Wetlands Day in South Korea

Yoshikatsu Kikuchi, Deputy Secretary-General of the KIWC Secretariat and Chief Manager for Wetland Conservation of the Environmental Policy Division of Kushiro City.

#### Participation in COP10 in Changwon

Changwon, the venue for COP10, is a new planned city located to the west of Busan Metropolitan City in South Korea's Gyeongnam Province. It is also a central urban area filled with vitality, and places emphasis on improving the environment, education and welfare as well as playing host to the provincial government and central government institutions. Gyeongnam Province was called Silla previously in South Korea's rich history, and locals have long been both open-minded and upright. When I commuted to the conference venue at the Convention Center, I was strongly impressed by the hospitality offered by locals who worked as volunteers, ranging from children to the elderly. In a country where people value Confucianism, I had a lot to learn from the way people treat superiors and guests. On the other hand, I was impressed that locals appeared unwavering in the face of demonstrations by farmers in front of police stations and loud appeals for environmental conservation in front of the COP10 venue. People were accustomed to them, probably because of the energetic character of the local community.

During the conference, I mostly worked at the KIWC booth to introduce the organization's activities, but I also enjoyed reunions with those who had visited Kushiro on various occasions, including the UNITAR training that KIWC has hosted as part of its international cooperation project. As such, my participation gave me an opportunity to realize once again that more and more people learn about Kushiro every time a Ramsar conference is held every three years somewhere in the world, resulting in a boost to KIWC's modest activities on such occasions.



#### Participation in a tour and symposium to mark World Wetlands Day in South Korea's Gyeongnam

In Changwon City, where people's excitement over the success of the COP10 meeting held there on World Wetlands Day in 2008 remains unabated, an eco-tour and a symposium for citizens were held as commemorative events timed to coincide with World Wetlands Day. On February 1, 2009, approximately 200 citizens assembled in front of the Gyeongnam Provincial Government Office in Changwon, from where a convoy of five buses took them on a tour to wetlands in southern Goseong County. In the county, places that used to be connected to the sea were separated and became ponds. While numerous migratory birds make stopovers there, the regional government is considering converting the land into agricultural fields, and citizens, including children, spent an hour observing wetlands that are torn between environmental conservation and development. After that, the participants observed a feeding colony of Eurasian black vultures (a rare sight in South Korea and Japan) in a field next to a junior high school.

On the following day, February 2, a symposium was held under the auspices of the Gyeongnam Ramsar Environmental Foundation at the Convention Center in Changwon, the COP10 venue. Following speeches by the Vice-Governor of Gyeongnam Province and the Deputy Mayor of Changwon City, I presented *Changes in the Wetland Conservation Plan in Kushiro after COP5 and the Introduction of Wetland Activities* as the symposium's KIWC representative. Next, Professor Gea-Jae Joo from Pusan National University spoke on *Changes after COP10*. The speech was followed by presentations and discussions with the participation of 11 local organizations including NPOs and sponsors, and approximately 250 citizens who assembled there asked a succession of questions. I felt that the enthusiasm for COP10 that surrounded Changwon is still alive, as is the passion for environmental conservation.



### Ramsar Sites in Japan, Series 17 – Notsuke Peninsula and Notsuke Bay (Hokkaido)–

Located almost exactly between the Shiretoko and Nemuro peninsulas, the fishhook-shaped Notsuke Peninsula measures 28 km in length and is Japan's largest sand pit. The area it encloses is called Notsuke Bay, and is well known for Hokkaido shrimp fishing in Utasebune fishing boats characterized by their three-cornered sails in early summer and autumn. These boats are designed to use wind power via their sails as propulsion to prevent eelgrass (a habitat of shrimps within the shallow bay) from being damaged by propellers. In addition, wise use is practiced by fisheries through the adjustment of catches and fishing seasons. The tidal flat of eelgrass appears at low tide, when spotted seals take a rest. These seals live in and around the peninsula throughout the year, and more than 50 of them can be seen at peak times.

A characteristic of this site is the bleak scene called Todowara-Narawara, a spectacle of Sakhalin firs and oaks standing dead and weathered white due to land subsidence and erosion by seawater. From early summer to autumn, the grassland along the peninsula's coasts is filled with colorful flowers, and orange daylily communities spread along the roads. Along a walking trail at Todowara, Japanese roses produce dark pink flowers, giving off a sweet scent. Japanese cranes (designated as a special natural monument) visit the wetland from spring to autumn, and several pairs build nests. Nests of White-tailed eagles and common redshanks have also been confirmed on the peninsula. In autumn, many geese and ducks fly to the area; Notsuke Bay is considered the nation's largest stopover for brent geese (designated as a natural monument) among other species. Furthermore, as winter approaches, Steller's sea eagles (also a natural monument) and White-tailed eagles fly to the bay to spend the winter. In particular, more than 300 Steller's sea eagles assemble at peak times, accounting for more than one third the total number wintering in Japan.

The Notsuke Peninsula and Notsuke Bay have a rich natural environment with abundant wild flora and fauna. Locals have introduced continued measures to protect this natural environment for as long as possible, with children cleaning the beach and learning about nature as part of efforts to study their hometown. (Notsuke Peninsula Nature Center)

