

Ramsar Convention COP 5
30th Anniversary

KIWC Kushiro International Wetland Centre

Kushiro International Wetland Centre

30 Years Since the Ramsar COP 5 in Kushiro

THE KUSHIRO STATEMENT

The Ramsar Convention on Wetlands was the first modern global treaty on conservation and wise use of natural resources and habitats. Since its adoption in Ramsar, Iran, in 1971, it has provided the framework for intergovernmental co-operation on wetlands.

Wetlands are important for the biological diversity they support - the characteristic flora and fauna found in the rich and varied habitats covered by Ramsar's definition of wetlands: `areas of marsh, fen, peatland or water, whether natural or artificial, permanent or temporary, with water that is static or flowing, fresh, brackish, or salt, including areas of marine water the depth of which at low tide does not exceed six metres'. From the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, Agenda 21 (Chapter 18.39) suggests that all States could set participation in Ramsar as a target. It will be natural for the Ramsar Convention to work closely with the Convention on Biological Diversity and to continue to play the leading role in conservation of wetland biodiversity.

Yet Ramsar has recognized from its earliest days that the importance of wetlands goes beyond the need for conservation of specific sites for their intrinsic value and diversity. The sustainability of wetlands is crucial to human life. Ramsar's `Guidelines for the Implementation of the Wise Use Concept' show the benefits and values of wetlands for `sediment and erosion control; flood control; maintenance of water quality and abatement of pollution; maintenance of surface and underground water supply; support for fisheries, grazing, and agriculture; outdoor recreation and education for human society; and contribution to climatic stability'.

Despite the successes achieved by Ramsar since 1971 - notably in raising consciousness of the importance of wetlands - loss, destruction, degradation, and misuse of wetlands continue in many areas of the world. The Dublin Statement, made by the 1992 International Conference on Water and the Environment (which in Section 4.15 calls on Ramsar Contracting Parties to support its recommendations), states that the fulfilment of Ramsar's objectives `can only be brought about through political commitment and involvement from the highest levels of government to the smallest communities. Commitment will need to be backed by substantial and immediate investments, public awareness campaigns, legislative and institutional changes, technology development, and capacity building programmes'.

In response to Agenda 21 and to the challenge of promoting conservation of biological diversity and the wise use of wetlands, and in the interests of the immediate application of the Convention on Biological Diversity, the Ramsar Convention will in the coming triennium reinforce these fundamental principles in pursuit of global environmental solutions.

In the next triennium the Contracting Parties will aim to meet their commitments under the Convention through the following actions:

1. Conservation and management of wetlands of international importance

- establish coherent national networks of Ramsar sites;
- monitor the status of these sites and adopt measures to maintain their ecological character;
- establish and apply methodologies to manage these sites, incorporating consideration of their catchments; and
- restore degraded wetlands and compensate for lost wetlands.

2. Formulation and implementation of planning so as to promote the conservation and wise use of wetlands

- develop national and regional wetland policies, as provided in the Ramsar `Guidelines for the Implementation of the Wise Use Concept' adopted at Montreux;
- manage wetlands in accordance with wise use principles;
- take account of wetland functions and values in developing and applying other national policies.

3. Promotion of international cooperation through development assistance and management of shared wetland ecosystems, water resources, and species

- promote cooperation with other global and regional conventions and organizations, inter alia by the active cooperation of the Bureau of the Ramsar Convention with the Interim Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity, with a view to enabling this secretariat to fulfil its tasks;
- review the impact of current development assistance on wetlands in order that it contributes to their conservation and wise use;
- generate support from bilateral and multilateral funding agencies;
- strengthen regional coordination on wetland issues of common concern; and
- establish international networks of wetlands with significant ecological or hydrological links, which require coherent management, and develop joint management programmes for shared wetlands.

4. Increasing awareness of the Convention and promotion of its aims

- promote understanding of wetland functions and values;
- increase opportunities for the training of appropriate staff in disciplines essential for wetland conservation; and
- prepare educational and information materials to publicize the Convention at regional, national and local levels.



Thirty years have passed since Ramsar COP5 in Kushiro, the first Ramsar Conference held in Asia.

The Ramsar Convention is an international treaty adopted at the International Conference on the Conservation of Wetlands and Waterfowl, held in Ramsar, Iran, in 1971.

Its purpose is to protect and conserve wetlands that provide habitats for waterbirds and other wildlife through international cooperation, and to promote their wise use.

The Kushiro Conference provided an important opportunity for local people to deepen their understanding of the Ramsar Convention.

This commemorative publication looks back on past wetland-related initiatives through the stories of those involved in the Conference, and considers the future conservation and wise use of wetlands in order to carry forward the principles of the Ramsar Convention.

1993 2023

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OVERVIEW OF RAMSAR SITES IN THE KUSHIRO REGION



01 KUSHIRO-SHITSUGEN

Kushiro City, Kushiro Town, Shibecha Town and Tsurui Village

Designated as a Ramsar Site in 1980 (Designated area: 7,863 ha)

Kushiro-shitsugen is Japan's largest wetland, extending approximately 25 km from east to west and 36 km from north to south, with a total area of 22,070 ha. It was the first wetland in Japan to be designated as a Ramsar Site.
Most of the wetland consists of reed and sedge marshes. The Kushiro River flows through it from north to south in broad meanders, while its tributaries spread across the wetland like a network. The wetland supports many rare species of plants and animals, including the red-crowned crane, designated as a Special Natural Monument of Japan, and the Siberian salamander, a northern relict species found in only a very limited number of areas in Japan.



02 AKKESHI-KO AND BEKAMBEUSHI-SHITSUGEN

Akkeshi Town

Designated as a Ramsar Site in 1993 (Designated area: 5,277 ha)

Lake Akkeshi is a brackish lake connected to the Pacific Ocean and does not freeze over completely even in winter. More than 10,000 whooper swans visit the lake each winter, making it one of Japan's leading stopover and wintering sites for waterbirds.
Bekambeushi Wetland extends in narrow, branching strips along the Bekambeushi River and its tributaries, which flow into Lake Akkeshi. Most of its approximately 8,300 ha consists of reed and sedge marshes. The wetland retains a largely untouched natural landscape and provides habitat for many rare wild species, including the red-crowned crane and the Sakhalin taimen.

Photo: Akkeshi Waterfowl Observation Center



03 KIRITAPPU-SHITSUGEN

Hamanaka Town

Designated as a Ramsar Site in 1993 (Designated area: 2,504 ha)

Kiritappu Wetland extends for approximately 3 km from east to west and 9 km from north to south along the Pacific coast. Most of the wetland is sphagnum peatland. Five rivers flow through it in branching patterns, and more than 30 small ponds are scattered throughout the area.
From spring through autumn, flowers of many colours bloom one after another, making the area popular with visitors as the "Wetland of Flowers." Kiritappu Wetland was the first place in Japan where a land trust movement was introduced to protect a wetland. Land around the wetland that was under pressure from development has been leased or purchased through donations and gifts in order to conserve the wetland.

Photo: Kushiro City Museum



04 AKAN-KO

Kushiro City

Designated as a Ramsar Site in 2005 (Designated area: 1,318 ha)

Lake Akan is a caldera lake with a circumference of 25.9 km, situated between the two active volcanoes Mount Oakan and Mount Meakan. It supports many rare aquatic plants and animals, including the Sakhalin taimen, Japan's largest freshwater fish.
The lake is especially famous for marimo, a species of green alga designated as a Special Natural Monument of Japan. Large spherical marimo colonies have been confirmed nowhere else in the world but Lake Akan. Deep forests surround the lake and provide habitat for large mammals such as brown bears and Ezo sika deer, as well as rare birds including the black woodpecker, designated as a Natural Monument of Japan, and Blakiston's fish owl.

Kushiro International Wetland Centre 30 year Timeline

Year	Month	Milestone
1992	Mar.	• Faizal Parish, Director of the Asian Wetland Bureau (AWB), visited Kushiro. • Kushiro City began discussions with him on cooperation following the Ramsar Convention Kushiro Conference (COP5).
1993	Jun.	• **COP5 was held at the Kushiro Tourism and International Relations Center from 9 to 16 June. Akkeshi-Ko and Bekambeushi Wetland, and Kiritappu Wetland, were designated as Ramsar Sites.** • On 15 June, Kushiro City, the International Waterfowl and Wetlands Research Bureau (IWRB; now Wetlands International), and AWB signed an agreement on future cooperation for wetland conservation and wise use.
	Jul.	• Based on the agreement, IWRB, AWB, the Environment Agency, Hokkaido Prefecture, and Kushiro City established a working group and held its first meeting on 19-20 July.
	Dec.	• Initial consultations began with the relevant organizations on establishing the Kushiro International Wetland Centre. • The East Asia-Australasia Wetland and Waterbird Workshop (later EAAFP) was held in Kushiro.
1994	May	• The municipalities and other relevant bodies reached a basic agreement on establishing the Centre.
	Jun.	• **The Preparatory Committee for the Kushiro International Wetland Centre was established; meetings were held in August and November.**
	Aug.	• **The Centre began accepting responsibility for training programmes commissioned by the Japan International Cooperation Agency (then the Japan International Cooperation Agency, JICA).**
	Nov.	• **A delegation from Kushiro visited Australia. At the Shortland Wetlands Centre in Newcastle, the parties signed Japan's first sister-wetland and sister-school affiliation on 7 November.**
1995	Jan.	• The third meeting of the Preparatory Committee was held. • **The inaugural general meeting of the Kushiro International Wetland Centre was held.** • **The Technical Committee was established, with TSUJII Tatsuichi appointed as its first Chair.** • The Centre's logo was selected.
	Mar.	• The Technical Committee published its report, "A Study on Ecotourism."
	May	• **The Centre hosted its first sister-wetland delegation. By 2023, 18 reciprocal visits had taken place.**
	Sep.	• Publication of the newsletter in Japanese and English began and continued through 2013.
1996	Mar.	• **A delegation of 86 people, led by the Chair of KIWC (the Mayor of Kushiro), attended Ramsar COP6 in Brisbane, Australia. Thereafter, KIWC participated in COPs as a regional NGO observer and presented local conservation initiatives through exhibition booths until 2015.**
1998	Mar.	• The Technical Committee published "Conservation of Wetland Ecosystems: Environmental Survey of River Flows and Springs."
	Sep.	• KIWC hosted the UNITAR Asia-Pacific Training Workshop on the Implementation of Multilateral Environmental Agreements Related to Biodiversity. Seven workshops were held through 2008.
2000	—	• Events commemorating the 20th anniversary of the designation of Kushiro-shitsugen as a Ramsar Site were held, including a symposium, ecotour, and nature observation programme. The initiative continued as a winter ecotour commemorating World Wetlands Day on 2 February. • KIWC launched its official website in Japanese and English.
2001	Mar.	• The Technical Committee published "Environmental Education Using the Wetlands of Eastern Hokkaido as a Field." Thereafter, it selected a new research theme and compiled a report every three years.
	Sep.	• An international workshop and public symposium on global warming and wetland conservation were held.
2003	Jul.	• The international forum "The Ramsar Convention in the 21st Century" was held to commemorate the 10th anniversary of COP5.
	Nov.	• **Following enactment of the Act for the Promotion of Nature Restoration in January, the Kushiro Wetland Nature Restoration Council was established. As a member organization, KIWC carried out outreach activities for local residents, including field observation events.** • An International Children's Art Exhibition on Ramsar Wetland Conservation was held, followed by travelling exhibitions in municipalities within the Kushiro area, Ramsar Sites elsewhere in Hokkaido, Australia, China, the Republic of Korea, and Lithuania through 2004.

Year	Month	Milestone
2004	Mar.	• The Technical Committee published the three-year research report "Attempts to Restore and Rehabilitate Wetlands and Their Environments," focusing on nature restoration.
	—	• **To mark the 10th anniversary of the sister-wetland affiliation, the KIWC Chair (Mayor of Kushiro) visited Australia and renewed the affiliation.**
2005	Oct.	• Kushiro City, Akan Town, and Onbetsu Town merged. To commemorate both the 10th anniversary of KIWC and the municipal merger, the International Crane Forum, "Cranes and Our Future," was held.
	Nov.	• **Lake Akan was designated as a Ramsar Site at COP9 in Kampala, Uganda, on 8 November.**
2007	Feb.	• An English-language field guide was published; it was revised eight times by 2018.
	Jul.	• To commemorate the 20th anniversary of the designation of Kushiro-shitsugen National Park, a workshop, lecture, and related sessions were held under the theme "Considering the Wise Use of Kushiro-shitsugen and Lake Akan."
2009	Mar.	• **KIWC received the Hokkaido Social Contribution Award for distinguished service in international cooperation.**
	Nov.	• The Technical Committee conducted a questionnaire survey of residents on the occurrence of mink, focusing on Ramsar Sites in the Kushiro region.
2010	Mar.	• The Technical Committee published "Research on Invasive Alien Species Affecting Wetland Ecosystems" and held a public report meeting, "Mink and Invasive Alien Species in the Kushiro Region."
	—	• **As part of the Kushiro Wetland Restoration Project, the meandering channel of the Kushiro River in the Kayanuma district of Shibecha was restored and water flowed through it for the first time in 30 years. A citizen-participation river survey began to monitor post-restoration changes, with support from the River Foundation, and continued through 2020.**
	Dec.	• "Wetland Treasure Box," an event commemorating the 30th anniversary of the designation of Kushiro-shitsugen as a Ramsar Site, was held.
2011	—	• A public symposium was held to commemorate the 40th anniversary of the Ramsar Convention.
2012	—	• A photo contest and travelling exhibition, "Kushiro-shitsugen Photo Call," were held to commemorate the 25th anniversary of the designation of Kushiro-shitsugen National Park.
	Jul.	• **TSUJII Tatsuichi received the Ramsar Wetland Conservation Award.**
2013	May	• Hisashi Shinsho was appointed Chair of the Technical Committee.
	Jul.	• A commemorative lecture and Children's Ramsar event were held as part of "Ramsar +20," marking the 20th anniversary of COP5.
2014	—	• **To mark the 20th anniversary of the sister-wetland partnership, the KIWC Chair (Mayor of Kushiro) visited Australia and renewed the affiliation.**
2015	Jan.	• KIWC helped host the 8th Meeting of Partners (MOP8) of the East Asian-Australasian Flyway Partnership (EAAFP) and organized a public symposium.
	Aug.	• **KIWC received the Foreign Minister's Commendation for promoting international cooperation in the field of the global environment.**
2016	—	• KIWC expanded its programmes for university students from Japan and overseas to study Kushiro-shitsugen, including students from Sophia University and Rakuno Gakuen University.
2017	—	• KIWC launched its Facebook page; Instagram followed in 2021.
2020	Jan.	• **COVID-19 spread worldwide. JICA training programmes in Japan shifted to remote delivery, and the acceptance of university students was suspended.**
2022	Sep.	• The 14th Annual Meeting of the Japanese Wetland Society was held in Kushiro. • Following the Japanese Government's 2050 carbon-neutrality declaration in 2020 and the Ministry of the Environment's designation of Akan-Mashu National Park and Kushiro-shitsugen National Park (Kushiro City) as Zero Carbon Parks, KIWC held a panel exhibition in the city.
2023	—	• **KIWC resumed hosting JICA training programmes in Japan. The course was redesigned to focus on solving social challenges caused by climate change through the use of wetland ecosystems.** • To commemorate the 30th anniversary of COP5, KIWC held the symposium "What Should We Do about Kushiro-shitsugen? Proposals for the Future," a wetland-learning presentation session, a stamp rally, a bus tour for children, and a Japan-Australia migratory-bird symposium attended by a sister-wetland delegation.

Chapter 1

Kushiro Conference

Overview of the Ramsar Convention Kushiro Conference

The Ramsar Convention Conference of the Contracting Parties held in Kushiro in 1993 became a major turning point in wetland conservation in the Kushiro region. It profoundly changed the way wetlands were viewed not only by the local institutions involved in organizing the conference, but also by the people of the region.



The Fifth Meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties to the Ramsar Convention, Kushiro, 1993

1. Name: Fifth Meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties to the Ramsar Convention (COP5)

2. Dates: Wednesday, 9 June to Wednesday, 16 June 1993

3. Venues: Kushiro Tourism and International Relations Center, Kushiro Shitsugen Wetland, and other locations

4. Participants: 95 countries and 151 organizations; 1,217 participants, including 338 participants from overseas

5. Main Topics

The central theme was the "wise use of wetlands." Guidelines for the sustainable use of wetlands were confirmed and adopted on the final day as the "Kushiro Statement."

① Conservation and management of wetlands of international importance

② Planning and implementation of measures to promote wetland conservation and wise use

③ International cooperation through development assistance, and management of transboundary wetland ecosystems, water resources, and migratory species

④ Public awareness of the Convention and promotion of its objectives

The resolutions embodied in the Kushiro Statement continue to underpin today's framework for wetland conservation.

6. Conference Personnel

Hospitality and other volunteers: 4,446 person-days (1,470 individuals)
Kushiro City Conference Headquarters staff: 4,400 person-days (668 individuals)

WISE USE OF WETLANDS

The Ramsar Convention seeks not only to promote the conservation of wetlands, but also to ensure that wetlands are used appropriately to the greatest extent possible. "Wise use" means recognizing the value of wetlands and using them sustainably in ways that maintain their ecosystems.

Humans have long used wetlands, which provide many resources essential to human life, in a wide variety of ways. However, depending on how they are used, wetlands can lose their functions in a short period of time, and their landscapes and ecosystems can be altered. It is therefore essential to use wetland resources carefully and sustainably.


Onnenai Boardwalk


Canoe Tour on Lake Toro



Registration Desk



Press Conference



With Secretary General Daniel Navid (Ms Sato, left)



Preparing for a Press Briefing

An Open Door

—— The Kushiro Conference through the Eyes of International Participants

Then Secretary, Secretariat of the Regional Promotion Committee for the Ramsar Conference in Kushiro **SATOH Naoko**

During the preparation and hosting of the Kushiro Conference, I had the opportunity to help international communications and assist overseas participants as a member of the local secretariat, which comprised 270 organizations from the communities related to the Kushiro Wetland area. Ramsar Conference Kushiro 1993, published by the Regional Promotion Committee for the Ramsar Conference in Kushiro in 1993, presents comments from 20 overseas participants.

> "The citizens of Kushiro and neighbouring communities opened their doors and their hearts to us in so many ways during our stay in Kushiro."
> — L. N. Mason, USA
> "What left a truly unforgettable impression on me was that everyone in the city was involved in and contributed to the conference. The Kushiro Conference will become a milestone in the history of the Ramsar Convention." (Translation)
> — A. Antonietti, Switzerland



Welcoming Participants at the Airport



Venue: Kushiro Tourism and International Relations Center



Kushiro after Its Selection as the Conference Host City

A total of 4,446 volunteers supported the Kushiro Conference, which brought together the collective efforts of the entire regional community. Two years later, the Kushiro International Exchange Volunteers Association (now the Kushiro International Friendship Association) was formed by members of this volunteer community. Through steady grassroots international exchange efforts, the association received the Hokkaido Social Contribution Award (for Distinguished Service in International Cooperation) in FY2016 and the Hokkaido Multicultural Coexistence Award 2020.

Through the doors that were opened, a more harmonious world continues to take shape.
The smiles and heartfelt moments shared through the exchanges at the Kushiro Conference remain with us thirty years later and will continue to be with us for years to come.

Ramsar Conference Kushiro 1993



Ramsar Parade



Reception Hosted by the Government of Japan



SOGA Tetsuya



Home visit



Working session

VOLUNTEERING AT RAMSAR COP5 IN KUSHIRO

President, Friends of the French Language Association **SOGA Tetsuya**

Thirty years have passed since the Ramsar Convention Kushiro Conference.
I participated as a French-language interpreter and as a volunteer for the home-visit program. I invited three French visitors and a Belgian couple into my home, where we talked about our respective countries. It was their first time entering a Japanese home. When I showed them the Buddhist room, they seemed very surprised that an ancestral Buddhist altar was kept inside the household.
I also accompanied participants from Morocco and Tunisia to the Kushiro Branch of the Hokkaido Federation of Fisheries Cooperative Associations. Staff there explained how fish are distributed in Japan and how sales proceeds are collected. The two visitors were greatly impressed by Japan's almost seamless distribution system, from fishers to consumers.
Serving as an interpreting volunteer gave me an invaluable experience. There were, of course, many occasions when I was unable to interpret everything perfectly. Even so, I learned that people can understand one another when they share a sincere desire to communicate.



Fog Festival



Culture exchange event



Plenary session



Morning walk (Takkobu)



Joint excursion



Conference closing



Lawrence Mason
Former Chair of the Standing Committee of the Ramsar Convention

Ramsar Convention COP 5

— 30th Anniversary

When the RAMSAR Convention delegates departed from COP4 in Switzerland they had just accepted an invitation from Mayor Wanibuchi of Kushiro, Hokkaido, Japan to host COP5. The delegates had no idea what that invitation would include.

When the Convention staff and Standing Committee departed from COP4, they understood that the Kushiro meeting would be critical to the future of the Convention. Technical workshops held during COP5 had to be more concise and more cutting edge. The relationship between the parties to the Convention and the NGO community had to be integrated. In some conservation conventions this relationship was adversarial. The Convention needed to be brought closer to the people.

During an early preparatory meeting with the city, the Bureau and Standing Committee came to learn about Kushiro's commitment to COP 5. Even though there had been a major earthquake, there was a rush to finish new hotels in time for the Convention. A corps of volunteers had been formed and trained to deal with the influx of foreign delegates. It seemed that everyone from barbers and taxi drivers to elementary school children were to be involved. Art contests and displays were planned. Theater presentations would introduce delegates to Japanese cultural activities. There would be a tea ceremony, flower arrangement demonstration, a Taiko concert. An opening parade. Local food at lunch times. There would be home visits to Japanese families for visiting delegates. None of these efforts had ever occurred at prior COPs. The Kushiro COP was going to be excitingly different. It would be a week full of learning and cultural exchanges.

Kushiro was going all out and we quickly understood that this would create the perfect environment for an extraordinary conference.

And that's exactly how it worked out. Some of the best technical discussions to date took place in Kushiro with rich participation by the NGO community. Amazingly, there was no weariness from the flood of technical talk - after all, in another hour something special would be happening with the citizens of Kushiro. Decisions related to the participation of citizens in wetland wise use were forthcoming and even continued into future meetings. This had to be influenced by the extensive citizen participation in COP5.

When our week in Kushiro came to a close, the work of COP5 kept going. There were resolutions that called for future considerations and actions by the Parties to the Convention. The enthusiasm of the delegates had even led them to decree a 100% increase in the Bureau budget. And there were new institutions created to carry the work of the COP into the future. Primary among these was the creation of the Kushiro International Wetlands Center - dedicated to global training and research into the wise use concept and centered around the spectacular Kushiro Shitsugen National Park. Sister wetlands were established. These were not temporary phenomena. They still endure.

The goals of COP5 were not only met - they were vastly exceeded. The key, it seems, was the city - its dedication, its deep involvement, and most of all the strong feeling of the city and its leaders for its own wet-land.

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Daniel Navid
Former Secretary General and Head of Secretariat COP5
Ramsar Convention

Ramsar Convention COP 5
— 30th Anniversary

The 1993 Kushiro Conference – COP5 of the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands of International Importance – has been recognized to be an important milestone for international cooperation for nature conservation. It was also a deeply satisfying personal experience.

I always recall fondly the dedication of the Kushiro Center staff as well as the kindness of the citizens of Kushiro in welcoming a first international conference to the city. To this day, I receive comments from participants telling me that Ramsar COP5 was the most enjoyable meeting they have ever attended.

Going into COP5 the Ramsar Convention was still finding its way. Some necessary administrative improvements had recently been made (e.g. via the Paris Protocol and the Regina Amendments). At the 4th COP in Montreux the international community began to appreciate the potential of the Convention for conservation and development. But at COP5 in Kushiro, the Ramsar Convention truly "came of age". Significant steps were taken to solidify the focus of work through the adoption of the Kushiro Program and Kushiro Declaration. The crucial role wetlands can play for sustainable development was widely acknowledged and accepted. And the member states backed up their commitment by adopting the first significant budget for convention work.

These accomplishments were made possible in large part because of the positive atmosphere that week in Kushiro. The Japanese government provided significant support and took the lead in designating new Ramsar sites as well as playing a proactive role in the COP discussions. In Kushiro the delegates saw at first hand how a committed local community can manage an internationally important wetland for conservation and development purposes.

I had the pleasure to first visit Kushiro some five years in advance of COP5. During the preparations and of course during the event, I greatly enjoyed working with the Kushiro colleagues many of whom who became close friends. I have had the pleasure to return several times in subsequent years, and have always said that I considered Kushiro to be my second home. I am very much looking forward to the next opportunity to return!

Sending my best wishes for a meaningful 30th Anniversary observance.

My Years at the Ramsar Secretariat, 1991–93



Professor Emeritus, Kushiro Public University of Economics **KOBAYASHI Satoshi**

Back in 1991, I was preparing to leave Kushiro City for an overseas training assignment. The year began with the Gulf War and proved to be a year of great upheaval. Arrived in Geneva together with the late Mr. Furuya, the Deputy Mayor at the time.
In the town of Gland, where construction was about to begin on a new building to which the International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN) would relocate, we had the opportunity to attend a reception that also included WWF International.

My principal responsibility was to help prepare for the Kushiro Conference of the Ramsar Convention. I had been told that I would also be responsible for the Asian region, but I assumed that could take a backseat for a while. Little did I know what I was in for.
Promoting the Convention across the vast regions of Asia and Oceania became a major responsibility, including work relating to Iran, where the Ramsar Convention was born, and Iraq, which was then engulfed in the Gulf War. While no end was yet in sight to the conflict in the former Yugoslavia, Croatia and Slovenia declared independence in June.
In the following July, I travelled to Kenya with Mr. Smart, then Deputy Secretary General. Kenya had just joined the Ramsar Convention, and at that time there was no staff member specifically responsible for Africa.
Kenya's first designated Ramsar Site was Lake Nakuru, a national park renowned for its flamingos. However, a dam was scheduled to be constructed under an agreement between the Governments of Japan and Kenya to supply water to the rapidly developing city of Nakuru, and serious adverse impacts on Lake Nakuru were anticipated. Fortunately, during the Kushiro Conference, we received welcome news from Japan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs that the dam project would be cancelled.

The year 1991 came to a close with the collapse of the Soviet Union. In March 1992, the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) was held in Kyoto. Although issues closely related to Japan, such as the ivory trade and the poaching of rhinoceroses for their horns, were discussed, regrettably there was little input from Japanese NGOs.
Encouragingly, however, Japanese NGOs gradually grew in strength. At the Kushiro Conference, they made an active contribution by providing information on Japan's designated Ramsar Sites, the importance of tidal flats that were being lost, and many other issues.
The preparations and management of the Conference were carried out through the wholehearted efforts of Kushiro City officials and citizens.

It may even be said that the spirit of omotenashi-Japan's distinctive approach to hospitality at international events-began with the Kushiro Conference.

The success of the Conference thirty years ago, which is still remembered and spoken of today, remains deeply engraved not only in the memories of the participants, but also in those of the many people who were involved.
The scope of research into wetlands, as well as activities under the many international environmental conventions, including Ramsar, has continued to expand, and many people are now actively contributing in these fields.
Having had the opportunity to play even a small part in the preparation and management of the Kushiro Conference is one of the greatest treasures of my life. I am filled with gratitude to all the contributors, including Mr. Navid and Mr. Mason, and to the countless others who supported us-far too many to name individually.

Great Thanks to the City and People in Kushiro for Your Valuable Contribution to Ramsar COP5!



Senior Adviser, Wetlands International Japan (NPO) **NATORI Yoshihiro**

In September 1990 when I returned to the Environment Agency(today's Ministry of the Environment) , after completing a three-year assignment to the Embassy of Japan in Kenya, it had already been decided that I would be responsible for COP5 as Director of the Kushiro Conference Preparatory Office.

In 1988, Daniel Navid, then Secretary General of the Ramsar Convention, visited Japan and proposed that Japan host COP5. The Environment Agency (EA)believed that this could be an opportunity both to raise public awareness of the importance of wetlands, which attracted little attention in Japan at the time, and to make the still little-known Ramsar Convention more widely recognized.
EA also believed that holding the first COP in Asia would help raise awareness of wetland conservation throughout the region and encourage more Asian countries to join the Ramsar Convention. When EA approached Kushiro City, the local community, led by then Mayor Toshiyuki Wanibuchi, actively began campaigning to host the conference, making the event possible.
At COP4, held in Montreux, Switzerland, in July 1990, a delegation of more than 30 people from Kushiro reportedly hosted receptions and other events and developed ties with those involved in the Convention. During preparations for the Kushiro Conference, Kushiro City officials were seconded to the Convention Secretariat and the Environment Agency. This greatly facilitated communication and coordination with the Secretariat and provided substantial support for preparations within Japan.

A new international conference hall was built for the Kushiro Conference. However, in January 1993, just five months before the event, Kushiro was struck by a major earthquake, and the newly completed venue was also damaged. Messages of sympathy and encouragement arrived from the Convention Secretariat and people around the world. The Secretariat even suggested postponing the conference until the immediate aftermath of the earthquake. Thanks to the dedicated hard work and efforts of the local community, however, the conference was held as scheduled in June that year.

In 1989, under the leadership of Kushiro City, the Council of Municipalities with Ramsar Sites was established by municipalities throughout Japan that had designated Ramsar Sites, with the aim of contributing to the success of the Kushiro Conference. The Council has continued to meet annually since the Kushiro Conference and has become an important partner of the national government, NGOs, and other organizations. Networks of local governments connected with Ramsar Sites are rare worldwide, and the Council has been highly appreciated by the Convention Secretariat and others.

As the Environment Agency had expected, the Kushiro Conference heightened interest in wetland conservation throughout Japan and stimulated conservation initiatives across the country. The number of Contracting Parties to the Convention in Asia also increased.

Kushiro City and the wider local community made an enormous contribution to the conference. Particularly noteworthy was the participation of more than 5,000 volunteers in total, who assisted with hospitality, interpretation, nature interpretation, flag-raising, and other duties. Their warm hospitality was highly praised by the participating countries and the Convention Secretariat.
No other Ramsar COP has ever seen such extensive public participation. Now, 30 years after the Kushiro Conference, I would once again like to express my sincere gratitude to the people of the Kushiro region for their invaluable contribution to its success.

The Ramsar Kushiro Conference and Citizens' Participation



(Then)Chief, The Ramsar Conference Preparatory Division, Policy Development Office, City of Kushiro **SUZUKI Makoto**

The Ramsar Convention was adopted at an international conference held in Ramsar, Iran, in 1971. It came into force in 1975, when seven countries became Contracting Parties.
The number of the contracting parties to the Ramsar Convention was 48 when Kushiro City began to develop the activities for inviting the meeting of the conference of the contracting parties to Kushiro. And the number of the contracting parties increased to 77 when their meeting took place in Kushiro.
Today, 177 countries—about 90 percent of all United Nations Member States—are Contracting Parties.
It is possible to say that the Ramsar Convention, initially regarded as a relatively little-known treaty, has grown up to a major international convention through the Kushiro Conference.

Participation of the ordinary citizens in organizing and running the meeting realized in the Kushiro Conference. And that was the first occurrence in the history of the Ramsar Convention.
The scale of citizens' participation reached to 5,000. They were engaged in various works including interpreting and guiding, giving hospitality to conference participants, raising national flags, and hosting delegates in their homes.
In addition, several times as many citizens took part in related events such as the Ramsar Parade and the Evening of Japanese Culture.
The overseas participants were clearly surprised to see so many ordinary citizens taking part in the Conference of the Contracting Parties, which was normally attended by representatives of contracting parties' government and international organization, and wetland experts. At the same time,they thoroughly enjoyed meeting and interacting with the local people.
This large-scale public participation was the greatest factor in the success of the Kushiro Conference.
Moreover, "involving local community" became a main theme of the Ramsar Convention. It also had contributed to the future development of the Ramsar Convention.
At the Sixth Meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties in Brisbane, a recommendation on "Involving Local and Indigenous People in the management of Ramsar Wetlands" was adopted. Then, at the Seventh Meeting in Costa Rica, a resolution on "Guidelines for establishing and strengthening local communities' and indigenous people's participation in the management of wetlands" was adopted.

After the closing ceremony of the Kushiro Conference, Daniel Navid, then Secretary General of the Ramsar Convention, asked the conference volunteers to gather in the main hall and expressed his gratitude to them, saying: "Kushiro is the place where the Ramsar Convention is better known than anywhere else in the world. Thanks to your support, the Kushiro Conference has become a turning point for the Convention."
I believe this was the highest praise for Kushiro as the host city and for the people of the region.

Thirty years have passed since the Kushiro Conference, but whenever I recall those days, the warm exchanges between overseas participants and the volunteers come vividly back to me.
I feel deeply fortunate to have been part of work that allowed me to truly feel that, together with the people of Kushiro, we had made a meaningful contribution to the international community.

Chapter 2

Post–Conference Initiatives

1994 – 2023



Role of KIWC

- To translate the concept of wise use, which took root in the region following COP5, into concrete environmental conservation initiatives and further develop it.
- To disseminate knowledge and experience concerning wetland conservation and use throughout the Kushiro region in cooperation with relevant organizations
- To share this knowledge and experience with local residents and use it to contribute internationally.

Establishment of KIWC

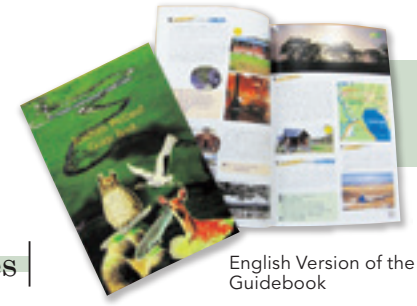
The Kushiro International Wetland Centre (KIWC) was established on 26 January 1995 as an organization comprising local governments in the Kushiro region, national government agencies, NGOs and other bodies. Its purpose is to promote in the Kushiro region the participation of local residents and cooperation between government and non-governmental organizations in the conservation and wise use of wetlands—principles highlighted at the Ramsar Convention's Kushiro Conference.
The establishment of KIWC ensured that the momentum for wetland conservation generated locally by the Kushiro Conference would not be temporary and laid the foundation for the continued practice and further development of wise use into the future.

Activities at Meetings of the Conference of the Contracting Parties to the Ramsar Convention

Since the Fifth Meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties in Kushiro, KIWC has participated as an observer in the meetings held every three years. Through poster exhibitions, oral presentations, and other activities at side events, KIWC has shared information with the international community on wetland conservation activities and the current state of wetlands in the Kushiro region. It has also exchanged information on future directions and new initiatives for wetland conservation with government representatives, NGOs from around the world, conservation practitioners from various countries, and Sister Wetland partners. To date, KIWC has participated in eight such meetings held outside Kushiro.







English Version of the Guidebook

KIWC Activities

KIWC promotes the wise use of wetlands to ensure that the benefits of the Kushiro region's four Ramsar Sites—Kushiro-shitsugen, Akkeshi-ko and Bekambeushi-shitsugen, Kiritappu-shitsugen, and Akan-ko—can be enjoyed sustainably while maintaining their ecosystems. KIWC also shares information on the region's initiatives and achievements, thereby contributing to environmental conservation at the global level.

1. Public Awareness Activities to Promote the Wise Use of Wetlands

- Lectures, nature observation events, exhibitions, and other activities
- Planning and operation of ecotours featuring local wetlands
- Publication of printed materials and management of the KIWC website, Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube channels

2. Enhancing Technical Capacity for the Wise Use of Wetlands

- Research and database development by the Technical Committee
- Development of wetland management techniques and provision of technical advice

3. International Cooperation Drawing on the Kushiro Region's Experience

- Training courses on wetland ecosystems and ecotourism
- Organization of and participation in conferences on wetland and biodiversity conservation
- Technical exchange and cooperation with Sister Wetlands in Australia
- Promotion of international cooperation and collaboration with other organizations.



Recipient of the Foreign Minister's Commendation for Fiscal Year 2015

The Kushiro International Wetland Centre received the Foreign Minister's Commendation, which recognizes organizations for their outstanding achievements in various fields of international relations.

(August 27, 2015, Iikura Guest House, Ministry of Foreign Affairs)



We strive to create opportunities to engage with as many local residents as possible, placing the highest priority on putting into practice the principle of public participation established at the Kushiro Conference and giving back to the local community.

International Cooperation

International Conferences and Workshops



Drawing on its experience in hosting the Kushiro Conference, KIWC has organized international conferences and hosted workshops on wetland conservation. Events held in Kushiro include the 7th IMCG Field Symposium in Japan 1996 and the International Workshop on Local-Level Wetland Conservation Activities in 1998.

By 2008, seven training workshops on environmental and biodiversity conservation had also been conducted by the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) for participants from developing countries in the Asia-Pacific region. These workshops included case studies and field visits in Kushiro-shitsugen.

In 2022, KIWC hosted the 14th Annual Meeting of the Japan Wetland Society in Kushiro. Wetland researchers from across Japan gathered to learn about the attractions of Kushiro-shitsugen and exchange information on wetland conservation, wise use, and related topics.





Mr. Tsujii (left), recipient of the Ramsar Award at COP11 in Bucharest, Romania.

Through international conferences, workshops, and training programs, KIWC has developed networks of cooperation extending beyond regional and national boundaries and actively promoted the exchange of information and expertise on wetland conservation. In recognition of these achievements, KIWC received the Foreign Minister's Commendation in 2015. Other individuals associated with KIWC have also received awards for their contributions to international cooperation.

2008 — JICA President Award: Hisashi Shinsho, Chair of the KIWC Technical Committee

2012 — Ramsar Wetland Conservation Award for Science: the late Tatsuichi Tsujii, Founding Chair of the KIWC Technical Committee

2017 — Foreign Minister's Commendation: Hisashi Shinsho, Chair of the KIWC Technical Committee)



Japan Wetland Society (JAWS)

JICA

Since 1994, KIWC has conducted JICA-commissioned training on wetland conservation and wise use for participants from developing countries. In Japan, they learn from Kushiro's initiatives and techniques for application in their own countries. The programs continue today, adapting their themes and target countries to changing needs. By 2023, KIWC had held 25 ecotourism courses on balancing tourism based on Japan's natural environment and traditional culture with conservation. Recent courses also cover Nature-based Solutions (NbS), which use nature to address societal challenges while benefiting ecosystems and people, including disaster risk reduction, climate change mitigation and adaptation, and biodiversity conservation.



Courtesy Visit to the KIWC President



Sister Wetland Exchanges

In November 1994, Kushiro-shitsugen, Akkeshi-ko and Bekambeushi-shitsugen, and Kiritappu-shitsugen formed a sister wetland affiliation with Australia's Hunter Estuary Wetlands. To promote conservation and wise use, the partners share knowledge and experience of wetlands and migratory birds and encourage exchanges between local communities.

Sister Wetlands Linked by a Migratory Bird

The sister wetland partnership began with Latham's snipe, a migratory bird that breeds in summer in wetlands and grasslands from Honshu northward, mainly in Hokkaido, and spends winter in Australian wetlands.

A report on the bird by Kushiro high school students caught the attention of Australian government officials. This led to a sister school partnership with a high school in the Hunter region of New South Wales, one of the bird's wintering areas, and later to the sister wetland partnership.

Hunter Estuary Wetlands

Area designated as a Ramsar Site: 3,388 ha

The Hunter Estuary Wetlands Ramsar Site lies at the mouth of the Hunter River in southeastern Australia, spanning Newcastle and Port Stephens. Its sandspits, tidal flats, islands, mangroves and brackish wetlands support migratory birds and attract birdwatchers and researchers. Known as Kooragang Nature Reserve when the sister-wetland affiliation began, the site was expanded and renamed in 2002.

Hunter Wetlands Centre

Just 13 km from central Newcastle, this nature reserve is home to over 200 bird species. It offers birdwatching, canoeing, guided tours and a children's playground, as well as an Animal House and changing art exhibitions. It is operated on a nonprofit.

Newcastle

Newcastle, the Hunter Region's principal city, has about 160,000 residents. Once a coal-mining and shipbuilding center, it is becoming a tourist destination known for historic buildings and beaches. It is also a gateway to the Hunter Valley wine region.

Port Stephens

Located immediately north of Newcastle, Port Stephens has a population of approximately 70,000. Aerospace manufacturing and tourism, including dolphin- and whale-watching, are major local industries. The Stockton Sand Dunes, located within the Aboriginal-owned Worimi Conservation Lands, are among the largest dune systems in Australia.



Activities of the Technical Committee


Research Reports


Poster Presentation
by Technical Committee Members


Exchange of Views


Assistance with the velopment
of the Card Game

The Kushiro International Wetland Centre has established a Technical Committee to promote research on wetlands in the region. The Committee comprises researchers and other experts in the natural sciences and environmental education who are affiliated with local universities, nature centres, museums and other institutions. The research findings are compiled in research reports and distributed free of charge to wetland conservation organizations, research institutions and other bodies throughout Japan.
The reports are available on the KIWC website **https://www.kiwc.net/index.html**

The Technical Committee meets regularly under the leadership of its Chair to discuss the progress of its activities and future plans and sets a research theme every three years. In line with each theme, the Committee holds field study sessions, visiting sites to examine examples of wetland and river environments and exchange views. The Committee also conducts its own surveys. Past surveys have addressed topics such as springs and invasive alien species, and their findings have long served as reference materials for research.

The Committee also participates in the annual conference of the Japan Wetland Society, where its members exchange information with researchers from across Japan and present their own research findings in poster sessions. In fiscal year 2023, the Committee supervised the explanatory text for ecosystem cards created by high school students in Kushiro Town as part of the MyEarth card game, providing advice and information on the flora and fauna of Kushiro-shitsugen.

Main Sites Visited during Field Study Sessions

01. C.hurui Bay, Lake Akan Surveying marimo habitats, primarily along the northern shore of
02. Tsurui–Ito Tancho Sanctuary: Surveys of red-crowned crane populations and natural feeding grounds
03. Kenbokki Island, Hamanaka: A study of its history of conservation, free from the impacts of tourism development, and its local industries


01


02



Public Awareness Activities

The Kushiro International Wetland Centre actively organizes a wide range of events and panel exhibitions for local residents to raise awareness of the attractions and importance of wetlands. KIWC will continue to promote the wise use of wetlands to a broad audience, encouraging people to take an interest in wetland conservation while enjoying and experiencing wetland nature.

Main Sites Visited during Field Study Sessions

01



Yumegaoka Observatory(October16,2021)



Akanuma,Kushiro-shitsugen (July 31,2021)



Every year, to mark World Wetlands Day on 2 February, KIWC organizes a winter eco-tour that allows participants to fully experience nature in the depths of winter.

02

World Wetlands Day Winter Eco-tour: Onnenai River

Onnenai River, February 2,2019



釧路市湿原展望台の常設展示

03

Zero Carbon Park Panel Exhibition

In 2022, the Kushiro City area of Kushiroshitsugen National Park was registered under the Ministry of the Environment's Zero Carbon Park initiative. Kushiro City is raising public awareness of the wetland's capacity to absorb carbon while working with Akan-Mashu National Park, which is also registered under the initiative, to promote sustainable tourism.

Kushiro Wetland Restoration Project

Steps Leading to the Establishment of the Kushiro Wetland Restoration Council Committee

Following the adoption of Japan's New National Biodiversity Strategy in March 2002, the Ministry of the Environment, the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, and the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure and Transport began working together to develop and secure funding for nature restoration projects based on the participation and collaboration of diverse stakeholders. In December of that year, the Law for the Promotion of Restoration was enacted through legislation initiated by Diet members to provide a legal basis for these projects and ensure their continuity.

Before these developments, researchers and local NPOs had pointed out that conservation and restoration across the entire river basin were essential in Kushiro-shitsugen, where the wetland area had decreased and the forest area had expanded during the 1990s. In 2001, the Committee for the Conservation of the River Environment of Kushiro-shitsugen, established by the Hokkaido Regional Development Bureau, compiled recommendations on conserving the wetland's river environment. These efforts were positioned as a model initiative under the revised River Act of 1997, which added the improvement and conservation of river environments to the Act's conventional objectives of flood control and water use.

The Ministry of the Environment also established the Working-level Meeting on the Kushiro Wetland Restoration Project and held discussions toward establishing the Committee. In addition, the Ministry presented the procedures and methods developed in Kushiro as the "Kushiro Approach" (Kushiro Initiative) at the Eighth Meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties to the Ramsar Convention (COP8), held in Valencia, Spain, in 2002.Against this background, the Kushiro Wetland Restoration Committee was established the following year, in 2003, under the Law for the Promotion of Restoration. With the goal of "restoring Kushiro-shitsugen to its condition before its designation as a Ramsar Site," the Overall Concept for Nature Restoration in the Kushiro Wetland provides for seven subcommittees: Wetland Restoration, Old Channel Restoration, Forest Restoration, Hydrologic Cycle, Sediment Control, Community Development, and Public Awareness. Nature restoration projects are currently being implemented by the respective implementing bodies.



Organizational Chart

11th-term Membership: 149 November 2022–November 2024	
Individuals	79
Organizations	47
Observers	13
Government Agencies	10

Participation of Diverse Stakeholders—The Role of KIWC

The Law for the Promotion of Restoration requires the establishment of a local committee to promote nature restoration projects and calls for the participation of diverse stakeholders, including local residents (Article 3, paragraph 2 of the Law). The Kushiro International Wetland Centre (KIWC) had undertaken public awareness activities in the local community even before the establishment of the Kushiro Wetland Restoration Committee.For four years from 2000, KIWC organised river environment observation events for local residents. At the same time, its Technical Committee, comprising local experts, selected "Attempts to Restore and Rehabilitate Wetlands and Their Environments" as its research theme for the three years beginning in 2001. The Committee compiled a report on the progress of wetland restoration and rehabilitation projects at Ramsar Sites in the Kushiro region and, in 2003, held an international forum entitled "Restoring the Natural Environment of Wetlands."

Following the completion of the Kushiro River Meander Restoration Project, implemented by the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism, and the commencement of water flow through the restored channel in the Kayanuma area in 2010, KIWC conducted the "Citizen Environmental Survey" for 11 years until 2020 to monitor changes in the natural environment. In 2013, an interim reporting session was held to present the results of the first four years of surveys. Going forward, it will be necessary to continue clearly communicating the role of nature restoration projects and encouraging local residents to participate in them.



Citizen Environmental Survey (Kayanuma Area)

From Environmental Education to Wetland Education in the Kushiro Region

The Ramsar Convention and Environmental Education

The idea that wetland education is part of environmental education began to take shape when Resolution VI.19 on "Education and Public Awareness" was adopted at Ramsar COP6 in 1996. This can be seen as a further development of the approach taken at COP5 in Kushiro, where the importance of public participation was recognized. At COP7 in 1999, these ideas were brought together under the concept of CEPA as an important activity for wetland conservation. Since then, CEPA has become more widely used in countries with Ramsar Sites.

CEPA: Under the Ramsar Convention, communication, capacity building, education, participation and awareness are considered essential for the conservation and wise use of wetlands. The Ramsar Convention's CEPA Programme has continued through regular updates over the years.
CEPA stands for Communication, Capacity Building, Education, Participation and Awareness.

Environmental Education in the Kushiro Region

At the Ramsar Sites in the Kushiro region, KIWC has taken the lead in promoting activities based on the CEPA approach. At that time, the broader term "environmental education" was commonly used. From 1998, KIWC's Technical Committee conducted a three-year study and published a report entitled Environmental Education Using the Wetlands of Eastern Hokkaido as a Field. The report introduced environmental education activities and new approaches being carried out by committee members in their respective fields, including universities, primary education, nature observation facilities, and lifelong learning facilities. It also discussed future prospects for environmental education using wetlands. During this period, universities in the Kushiro region also began to develop curricula that incorporated environmental education.

From Environmental Education to Wetland Education

In 2015, the Environmental Education Working Group was reorganized as the School Support Working Group for Wetland Learning. To make wetland education easier to introduce in schools, the group developed lesson models for elementary and junior high schools based on inquiry learning. In FY2023, four schools carried out wetland learning and presented their results.

Since 2023, joint presentations by several schools have also been held, co-hosted by the Kushiro Children's Museum Kodomo Yugakukan, the Kushiro City Museum, and the Kushiro City Zoo. In October of the same year, KIWC organized a wetland learning presentation as part of the symposium marking the 30th anniversary of Ramsar COP5 in Kushiro. Through these efforts, a process from introducing wetland learning in schools to presenting learning outcomes is gradually being established.

Nature Restoration Projects and Environmental Education

The Nature Restoration Promotion Subcommittee of the Kushiro Wetland Restoration Committee, established in 2003, launched an Environmental Education Working Group in 2007 to explore environmental education using the Kushiro-shitsugen as a learning resource. The group carried out the first survey of schools and boards of education in the region on the status and challenges of environmental education. The results, together with examples of activities in schools and local organizations, were published in the guidebook Notice, Understand, Protect: Kushiro-shitsugen — An Environmental Education Guidebook Linking Schools and Communities.

At Hokkaido Kushiro Koryo High School, a wetland field-study curriculum was developed under its designation as a Super Science High School by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology. Hokkaido Shibecha High School, which has a small wetland on its extensive school grounds, established a Regional Environment course to build practical skills in environmental conservation and food safety through a wide range of hands-on activities.

Since the sister-wetland affiliation was established in 1994, KIWC has continued technical and community exchanges with the Hunter Wetlands Centre Australia. Based on this relationship, KIWC helped coordinate with Australian wetland conservation organizations when Kushiro Koryo High School visited Australia. The Chair of KIWC's Technical Committee has also continued to provide instruction and advice as an external lecturer for the school's curriculum.

Toward the Future of Wetland Education

One challenge in making these efforts firmly rooted in local communities is that wetland education has not yet become part of the formal school curriculum. At a learning exchange held in Kushiro City in November 2023 as part of a meeting of municipalities with Ramsar Sites, participants reviewed Resolution XIV.11 on wetland education in formal education, adopted at COP14. Municipalities with Ramsar Sites shared examples of how wetland education could be promoted locally in Japan.



Source: Ministry of the Environment website

Along with expanding wetland learning beyond formal education, municipalities need CEPA plans and organizations or systems that can actively support such efforts. As KIWC has long supported CEPA activities at Ramsar Sites in the Kushiro region, it is now expected to build on these activities and play a greater role in supporting wetland education in cooperation with local boards of education.

Initiatives by Municipalities in the Kushiro Region



Clean-up Day

Kushiro City's Initiatives

As a Core City of Eastern Hokkaido

As a core city of eastern Hokkaido encompassing two national parks—Kushiroshitsugen National Park and Akan-Mashu National Park—and two Ramsar Sites, Kushiro City has worked with other municipalities in the region to promote the use of the national parks and the wise use of the Ramsar Sites.

The Kushiroshitsugen National Park Liaison Association, established in 1997, works with the Ministry of the Environment, the Hokkaido Government, and municipalities in the Kushiro region to provide nature experience programs at visitor centres in Kushiro-shitsugen, nature observation and hands-on activities mainly for elementary school children, and citizen-led cleanup activities.

In addition, as part of the national government's Project to Fully Enjoy National Parks, Akan-Mashu National Park has worked to develop stay-based tourism programmes and improve facilities and services for international visitors. In recent years, the park has attracted growing attention as a base for adventure travel and is working with Kushiro-shitsugen to develop a sustainable multi-destination tourism area.



Hosooka Observatory

Kushiro Town's Initiatives

Promoting Tourism in Kushiro-shitsugen

Kushiro Town is home to Hosooka Viewpoint, one of the best-known viewpoints in Kushiro-shitsugen. Its magnificent scenery, which changes with the seasons, inspires many visitors and helps them appreciate the importance of nature. The nearby Hosooka Visitors Lounge provides tourist information and offers visitors a comfortable place to relax and enjoy their time.

Takkobu Auto Campsite also allows visitors to experience the wetland up close. The Town is continuing to improve the campsite as a place for promoting knowledge and awareness of the wetland through nature-based learning, recreation and other activities.



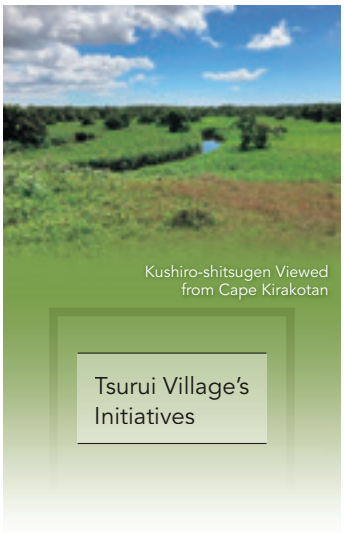
Cleanup activities in Kushiroshitsugen National Park

Shibecha Town's Initiatives

Cleaning Activities in Kushiroshitsugen National Park

Shibecha Town has conducted cleaning activities in Kushiroshitsugen National Park for many years. Under a service contract with a local community association, litter collection and grass cutting are carried out annually from May to October, the main tourist season, with a particular focus on Sarubo and Sarurun Observatories and Kottaro Marsh Observatory, which attract many visitors. These activities have contributed to the sustainable use and conservation of the wetland.

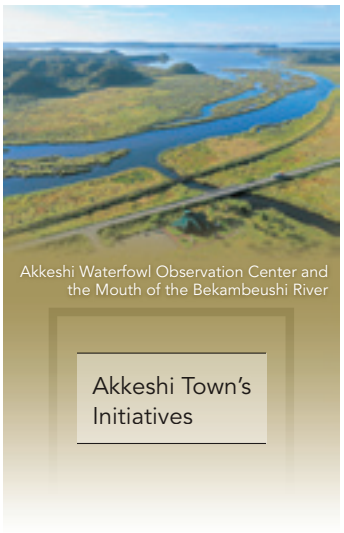
As a gateway to the eastern part of Kushiroshitsugen National Park, Shibecha Town will continue its efforts to conserve the wetland and promote its appropriate use.



Protecting the Natural Environment

Tsurui Village is endowed with natural assets of global significance, notably Kushiroshitsugen National Park and the Red-crowned Crane. Recognising that protecting this rich natural environment inherited from previous generations and passing it on to future generations contributes to the conservation of the global environment, and that taking such action is the responsibility of those living today, the Village enacted the Tsurui Village Basic Environmental Ordinance in March 2009.

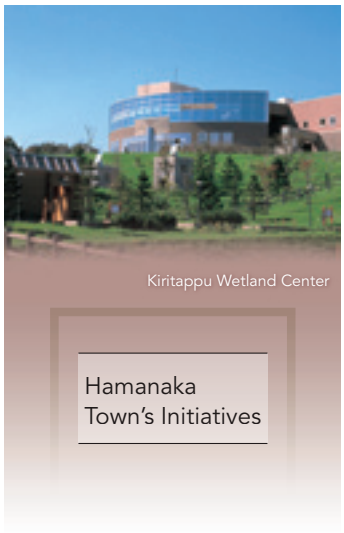
To put the objectives of the Ordinance into practice, the Village established the Tsurui Village Environmental Committee, comprising representatives of relevant organisations, academic experts and residents selected through an open recruitment process. Following extensive deliberations by the Committee and broad public consultation, including a questionnaire survey of residents of junior high school age and above, the Village formulated the Tsurui Village Basic Environmental Plan in March 2011. Since then, it has taken action to conserve the natural environment, safeguard biodiversity and build a society that coexists in harmony with nature.



Establishment of the Akkeshi Waterfowl Observation Center

When Akkeshi-ko and Bekambeushi-shitsugen was designated as a Ramsar Site, Akkeshi Town had no facility serving as a base for wetland research and public awareness activities. The Environment Agency, now the Ministry of the Environment, therefore constructed the Akkeshi Waterfowl Observation Center as the first in its series of Waterfowl and Wetland Centers. The Center opened in 1995.

It serves as a base for wetland research and undertakes activities to explain the findings to local residents in an accessible manner.



Operation of the Kiritappu Wetland Center

Following the designation of part of Kiritappu-shitsugen as a Ramsar Site in connection with COP5, the Kiritappu Wetland Center opened in 1993 as a facility serving the functions of a visitor centre.

Since then, it has served as a base for raising awareness of wetland conservation and promoting environmental education. The Town currently entrusts its management and operation to the certified non-profit organisation Kiritappu Wetland National Trust under the designated manager system. The Center is also actively operated as a hub for tourism promotion, providing information on ecotours that incorporate the wetland, local landscapes and industries.

Chapter 3 Future of Wetland Conservation

In recent years, expressions such as "X 1.0" and "X 2.0" have become a popular way of describing a new phase. This convention originated in version numbering for computer operating systems, but is now widely used to convey different stages of development in a readily understandable manner. Following this convention, this chapter divides the conservation of Ramsar Sites in the Kushiro region into three phases and considers the future of wetland conservation in the region.

Each phase inevitably overlaps and gradually transitions into the next, rather than changing abruptly in any particular year. This is self-evident and requires no further explanation. Details of individual projects are provided in the respective sections.

Public Awareness Activities

Wetland Conservation 3.0: New Initiatives Addressing Climate Change and the Role of Wetlands, 2023►►►

Keywords:
Carbon neutrality , **Climate change** , **Nature-based Solutions (NbS)** , **Environmental Treatment**

- Linking Zero Carbon Park initiatives with ecotourism
- Promoting wetland education and supporting youth activities
- Advancing nature restoration projects that take climate change into account
- Monitoring the impacts of climate change by local researchers

Wetland Conservation 2.0: Phase of Promoting Post-Ramsar Initiatives ►►►2022

Keywords:
Nature restoration , **international outreach**

- Wetland conservation through nature restoration projects
- Establishing the KUSHIRO brand at meetings of the Conference of the Contracting Parties to the Ramsar Convention and other international forums
- Promoting local initiatives internationally through JICA programmes
- Promoting the activities of the four wetlands in eastern Hokkaido internationally through Sister Wetland Affiliation and the hosting of international conferences
- Establishment of the Kushiro International Wetland Centre in 1995

Wetland Conservation 1.0: Phase of Transformation in Public Awareness ►►►1993

Keywords: **Wise use** , **Ramsar Convention**

- Hosting of the Fifth Meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties to the Ramsar Convention and designation of wetlands in the Kushiro region as Ramsar Sites in 1993
- Designation of Kushiro-shitsugen as a national park in 1987
- Designation of Kushiro-shitsugen as a Ramsar Site in 1980

Wetland Conservation 1.0: Phase of Transformation in Public Awareness ▸▸▸ 1993

Wetland Conservation 1.0 was the period leading up to the Fifth Meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties to the Ramsar Convention in Kushiro. It was during this period that the name "Kushiro-shitsugen" came into use and the wetland gained recognition among local residents. A Copernican shift in public awareness led people to see Kushiro-shitsugen in a new light. This period can therefore be described as the "Phase of Transformation in Public Awareness."

This change in public awareness developed gradually through a series of events and activities leading up to the Conference. These included various citizen-led activities and local surveys, which provided a foundation for the designation of Kushiro-shitsugen as a Ramsar Site and subsequently as a national park. Around ten years before the Conference, these efforts grew into a movement uniting the public and private sectors and rapidly gained momentum.

The keywords of this period are the "Ramsar Convention" and "wise use." Following the adoption at the Kushiro Conference of a resolution providing additional guidance on the implementation of the wise use concept, the concept of wise use and ecotourism as one means of putting it into practice subsequently spread throughout Japan.

Wetland Conservation 2.0: Phase of Promoting Post-Ramsar Initiatives ▸▸▸ 2022

Wetland Conservation 2.0 was the post-Ramsar era. Following the transformation in local awareness of wetland conservation prompted by the Kushiro Conference, the Kushiro International Wetland Centre was established. With the Centre serving as an information hub, initiatives were undertaken to promote "wise use" and "ecotourism" in Japan and abroad, support national efforts to increase the number of Ramsar Sites in Japan, and highlight the importance of international cooperation in wetland conservation through the Sister Wetland Affiliation with Australia.

The Centre also hosted international workshops and training programmes conducted by the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA). It participated in nine of the fourteen triennial meetings of the Conference of the Contracting Parties to the Ramsar Convention held up to 2022, presenting local wetland conservation activities and working to establish the "KUSHIRO" brand. Drawing on the expertise in conference management developed through the Kushiro Conference, the Centre organised international conferences and public symposia. This was a period in which Kushiro's international activities flourished. Among the post-Ramsar initiatives, the enforcement of the Act for the Promotion of Nature Restoration and the establishment of the Kushiro Wetland Nature Restoration Council had the greatest impact on the conservation of Kushiro-shitsugen.

One of the fundamental principles of the Act is the participation of diverse actors, including local residents (Article 3, paragraph (2)). This concept was readily accepted in a region where public participation had been highly valued following the Kushiro Conference. Moreover, restoring the wetland to its condition at the time of its designation as a Ramsar Site became the region's next major goal, bringing local stakeholders together.

The scope of nature restoration was extended beyond Kushiro-shitsugen to encompass the entire river basin. This helped foster recognition that the area from the upper to the lower reaches forms a single ecosystem. It also promoted comprehensive studies of the hydrological and material cycles that sustain the wetland, leading to more comprehensive understanding of the wetland ecosystem as a whole.

The Phase of Promoting Post-Ramsar Initiatives can therefore be characterised by the keywords "international outreach" and "nature restoration."

Wetland Conservation 3.0 and the Future Role of KIWC

What initiatives should we focus on as we enter the era of Wetland Conservation 3.0? They can be summarised from the following four perspectives.

• Linking Zero Carbon Parks with Ecotourism

As part of global efforts towards a decarbonised society, and following the adoption of the Paris Agreement, the Japanese Government declared in October 2020 that Japan would achieve net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050. In April 2021, it also announced a target of reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 46% from fiscal 2013 levels by fiscal 2030.

In Akan-Mashu National Park and the Kushiro City area of Kushiroshitsugen National Park, both registered under the Zero Carbon Park initiative promoted by the Ministry of the Environment, there is a need to renew our understanding of the role wetlands play in achieving carbon neutrality and to promote ecotourism that contributes to wetland conservation.

Ecotourism should be sustainable, communicate local history and culture, and benefit the local economy. In conserving the wetlands of the Kushiro region, it is essential to develop tourism that embodies the principles of ecotourism while also contributing to carbon neutrality, and to communicate these initiatives widely.

• Promoting Wetland Education and Supporting Youth Engagement

In November 2022, the Fourteenth Meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties to the Ramsar Convention, which had been postponed twice because of the global COVID-19 pandemic, was held in hybrid format in Wuhan, China, the host country, and Geneva, Switzerland, where the Convention Secretariat is based. Two new resolutions concerning education and youth were adopted:

Resolution XIV.11: Wetland education in the formal education sector
Resolution XIV.12: Strengthening Ramsar connections through youth

In 2000, the Technical Committee of the Kushiro International Wetland Centre compiled a report on wetland education in the formal education sector and on a wide range of other lifelong learning initiatives at wetlands in the Kushiro region, drawing attention to the importance of wetland education in local communities.

The Committee for the Promotion of Nature Restoration of the Kushiro Wetland Nature Restoration Council, whose secretariat is provided by the Ministry of the Environment, also recognised the importance of environmental education. In 2007, it established the Environmental Education Working Group, now the Working Group for Supporting Wetland Learning in Schools. The Working Group compiled information on wetland-related activities at primary and lower secondary schools, cooperating organisations and available facilities in the 2008 guidebook Discover, Understand and Protect Kushiro-shitsugen: An Environmental Education Guidebook Connecting Schools and Local Communities.

The current Working Group develops curricula, provides teaching materials and supports wetland learning in response to the needs of boards of education and schools in municipalities encompassing Kushiro-shitsugen. It has provided continuous support over an eight-year period and regularly offered pupils opportunities to present the results of their wetland studies.

Although wetland education is gradually spreading throughout the region, it is not established as a separate subject in the national Courses of Study for public primary and lower secondary schools. Individual schools and teachers must therefore undertake it on their own initiative, using the frameworks described above. The extent of implementation also varies among the six municipalities encompassing the Kushiro region's four Ramsar Sites.

Meanwhile, some municipalities with recently designated Ramsar Sites have begun developing conservation plans and implementation plans in cooperation with their boards of education to determine how the Convention can be used after designation. Some have already incorporated wetland education into school education as a standard component. One example is Oyama City's Oyama Biodiversity Action Plan.

To promote wetland education at Ramsar Sites in the Kushiro region, the existing support framework of the Kushiro Wetland Nature Restoration Council needs to be developed further. An organisation should be established with a coordinating, or "concierge," function to identify the learning support required by individual schools, arrange the necessary assistance and help resolve practical issues. Making the outcomes visible by providing opportunities such as presentations of pupils' work would also contribute to implementing the resolutions and firmly establishing wetland education in the region.

• Promoting Nature Restoration in Anticipation of Climate Change

In 2023, record-breaking heat was experienced around the world, prompting the United Nations Secretary-General to make the striking declaration that "the era of global boiling has arrived." Climate change was no longer perceived simply as a distant issue involving Arctic sea ice, but as a challenge directly affecting our everyday lives.

The Kushiro Wetland Nature Restoration Council, established in 2003, planned to reorganise its initiatives by 2025, its twentieth-year milestone, in response to changing social and regional challenges, including climate change and carbon neutrality, as outlined in the materials of its 29th meeting.

At the same time, nature-positive approaches and Nature-based Solutions (NbS), which harness nature to address societal challenges, have gained international attention. Measures based on these approaches are being introduced in many regions as new ways of mitigating disasters and changes in the natural environment thought to be associated with climate change. These include river basin flood management, which addresses flood risks across an entire river basin, green infrastructure, and Ecosystem-based Disaster Risk Reduction (Eco-DRR).

As a member organisation of the Council, the Kushiro International Wetland Centre will be expected to serve as a "science interpreter," communicating scientific knowledge in an accessible manner to explain local initiatives such as nature restoration and flood management plans developed in anticipation of climate change. The Centre will also be expected to continue playing an active role in communicating these initiatives internationally.

The effects of climate change on Kushiro-shitsugen are likely to be broadly shared by the other Ramsar Sites in the Kushiro region—Akkeshi-ko and Bekambeushi-shitsugen, Kiritappu-shitsugen and Akan-ko. These effects should therefore also be addressed through the activities of the Technical Committee described below.

• Monitoring the Impacts of Climate Change by Local Researchers

Conservation activities undertaken by local researchers and field surveyors date back to the establishment of the Kushiro Wetland General Scientific Survey Team in 1971, whose work contributed to the designation of Kushiro-shitsugen as a national park.

Because local researchers are regularly involved in their respective field sites, they can continue observing long-term changes in the region's natural environment and notice even subtle changes through their day-to-day activities. Their role may be compared to that of a family doctor who knows a patient over many years.

The Kushiro International Wetland Centre has had a Technical Committee since its establishment. Its members conduct individual research in the wetlands that constitute their principal field sites, while also undertaking joint studies on such subjects as the effects of invasive alien species, the promotion of environmental education and surveys of spring-water areas. They are also jointly investigating and monitoring the effects that climate change may already be having on Ramsar Sites throughout the Kushiro region.

The Technical Committee should continue to establish common monitoring themes and indicators that allow conditions at the different wetlands to be compared. Such long-term monitoring is possible precisely because the Centre is an organisation firmly rooted in the region.

Building on this history, KIWC must continue its outreach and awareness-raising activities from the four broad perspectives outlined above, guided by the principle of "Think globally, act locally." This is Wetland Conservation 3.0—the mission that the Kushiro International Wetland Centre should pursue over the next decade, now that thirty years have passed since the Ramsar Convention's Kushiro Conference.



Future Initiatives at Ramsar Sites in the Kushiro Region



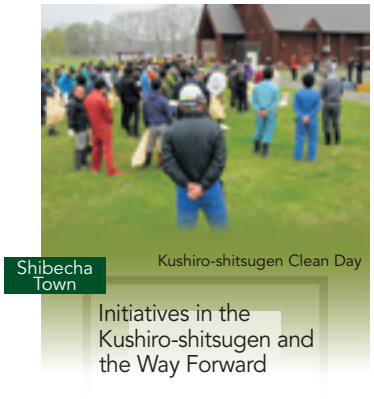
Attracting More Visitors through the Appeal of Kushiro-shitsugen

Since 2018, Kushiro Town has worked with the Kushiro Branch of Hokkaido Railway Company and Kushiro Town Toya Elementary School to hold a one-day stationmaster ceremony at Kushiro-Shitsugen Station as part of its efforts to welcome visitors to the wetland. During the stop of the Kushiro Shitsugen Norokko Train, pupils promote local tourism and give the signal for the train's departure, helping to generate excitement about tourism in the wetland.
The Town will continue to promote tourism by making the fullest possible use of the wetland's tourism resources. At the same time, it will work in close cooperation with relevant organisations to preserve this rich natural environment for future generations.



Coexistence between Red-crowned Cranes and Local Communities

In 2018, the Tsurui Village Council for Community Development in Harmony with Red-crowned Cranes was established to promote coexistence between Red-crowned Cranes and local communities, including the conservation and wise use of Kushiro-shitsugen. The public and private sectors are working together to conduct surveys and implement initiatives while exploring appropriate approaches to coexistence.
Its activities include considering and testing appropriate feeding practices for crane conservation, monitoring breeding status in and around the wetland, and conducting surveys to support environmental conservation. The Council is also working on measures to reduce conflict with agriculture, establishing the Tsurui Rules for observing and photographing the cranes, and documenting the history of relations between Red-crowned Cranes and local communities.



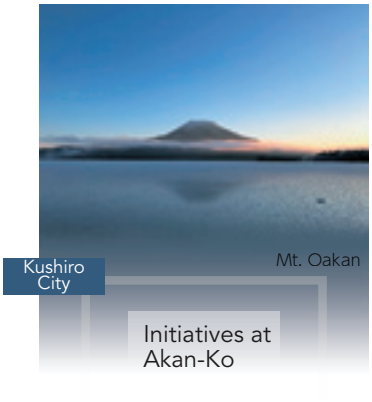
Kushiro-shitsugen Clean-up Day

Kushiro-shitsugen Clean-up Day is held annually in the Toro area around late May. A wide range of participants, including local residents, local high school students, relevant organisations and businesses, take part in the event. Their efforts have helped improve the local environment and conserve the wetland's magnificent natural landscape and scenic views.
The Toro area lies beside Lake Toro, the largest lake in Kushiro-shitsugen. It is an important area for environmental education about nature and history, offering opportunities for canoeing, nature-based activities and encounters with historical remains. Shibecha Town will continue this activity and work to conserve the wetland.



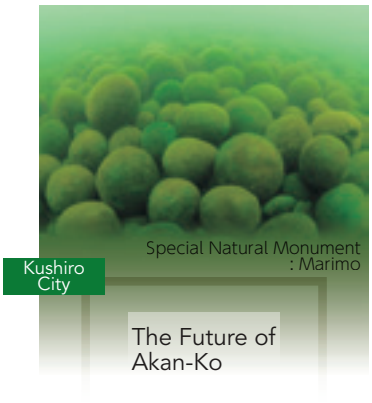
Registration as a Zero Carbon Park

In July 2022, the Kushiro City area of Kushiroshitsugen National Park was registered by the Ministry of the Environment as a Zero Carbon Park. In October of the same year, Kushiro City and the Ministry jointly organised a tree-planting event with local primary school pupils as part of the Urban Forest Regeneration Project. A class was also held to deepen their understanding of how tree planting helps address global warming.
The City is raising awareness of the role wetlands play in achieving carbon neutrality and promoting sustainable tourism in cooperation with Akan-Mashu National Park, which is also registered as a Zero Carbon Park.



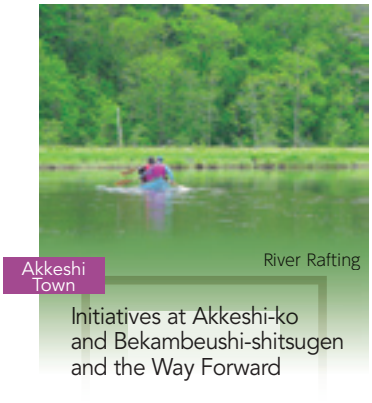
Initiatives at Akan-Ko

Lake Akan, designated as a Ramsar Site in 2005, twelve years after the Kushiro Conference, lies within Akan-Mashu National Park, one of Hokkaido's oldest national parks, designated in 1934.
Even before its designation as a Ramsar Site, the lake had a long history of conservation and sustainable use as part of the national park. In 2016, Akan-Mashu National Park became the only park in Hokkaido selected as one of the eight pioneering parks under the "Project to Fully Enjoy National Parks," which aims to develop Japan's national parks into world-class destinations. In 2022, it became the first national park in Hokkaido to be registered as a Zero Carbon Park and has since promoted decarbonisation and sustainable tourism within the national park.



Current Status of Marimo and Future Challenges

The "Marimo of Lake Akan," designated as a national Special Natural Monument, is one of the organisms symbolising the rich ecosystem of the Lake Akan area. Lake Akan is considered the only lake in the world where large spherical marimo exceeding 15 centimetres in diameter grow in colonies, making their long-term conservation a matter of particular importance.
However, changes in vegetation in Lake Akan and the effects of global climate change are thought to be altering the conditions in which marimo grow. A key challenge is therefore to establish an effective and efficient monitoring system that can promptly detect such changes and enable the necessary conservation measures to be implemented.



Canoeing in a Rich Natural Environment

Many Red-crowned Cranes breed in the Bekambeushi River basin. The river is also one of the few rivers east of the Kushiro River suitable for canoeing. To allow canoeing on the largely unspoilt Bekambeushi River, which has very few artificial structures, crane behaviour along the canoe route was studied over a two-year period, and restrictions on canoe use were introduced based on the findings. Although the restrictions are not legally binding, they help prevent overuse of the river.



Conservation Activities in Kiritappu-shitsugen

In 2000, local residents established the Kiritappu Wetland National Trust, a certified non-profit organisation. The Trust actively conserves the wetland by purchasing privately owned land adjacent to it, and its work has gained nationwide recognition.
The Town also continues its efforts to preserve the wetland landscape and raise environmental awareness. Each May, it organises the Kiritappu Wetland Clean-up Campaign, in which local residents, students, industry groups, non-profit organisations and businesses work together to collect litter along the road crossing the wetland.

Functions and Roles of Wetlands

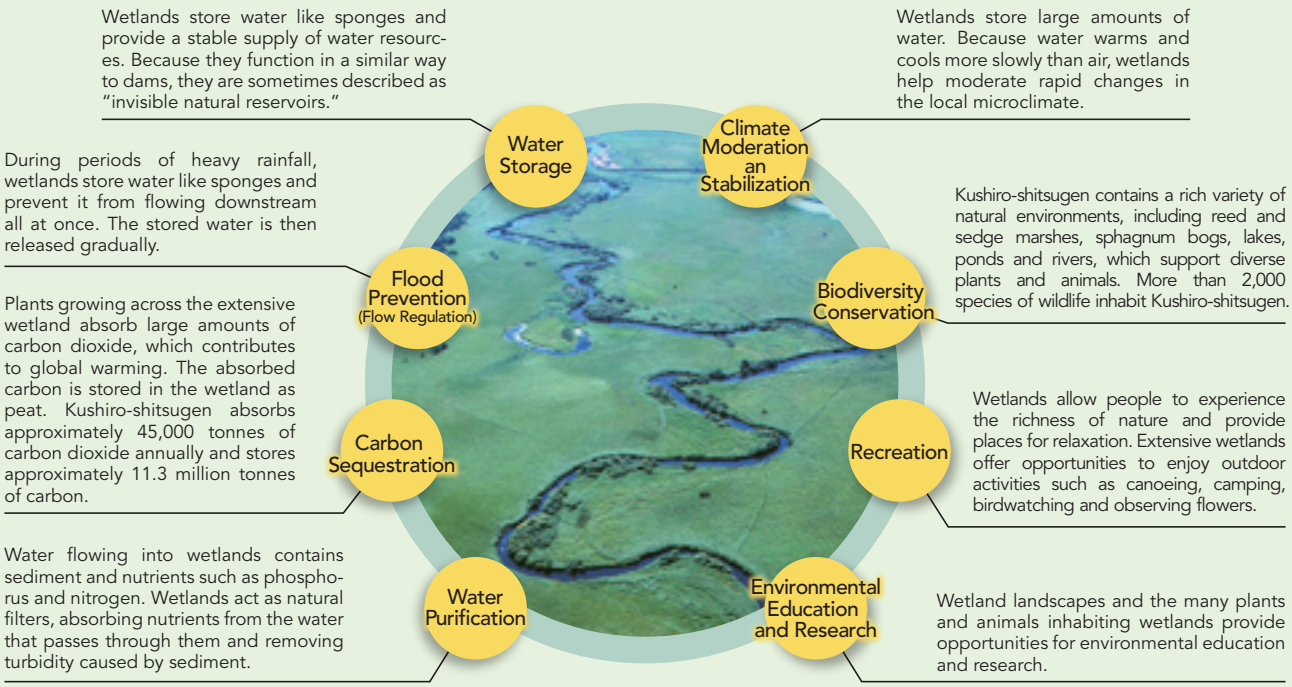
Wetlands include marshes, lakes and ponds, tidal flats, artificial wetlands such as rice paddies and reservoirs, caves containing groundwater, and marine areas with a water depth of no more than six metres, including coral reefs. Wetlands are classified into 42 types. Wetlands contain large amounts of water and support an extraordinary abundance of life both within and around them. Many wetlands and wetland ecosystems once existed, but much has been lost through land reclamation and other forms of development.

Goal 15, "Life on Land," of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), adopted in 2015, also addresses wetland ecosystems and their conservation. Wetlands support diverse ecosystems and provide not only abundant water and food resources but also habitats for valuable wildlife.

The objective of the Ramsar Convention is to ensure that the benefits provided by wetlands can be used sustainably for generations to come. Achieving this requires measures and initiatives for the "wise use" of wetlands—using them while conserving them and avoiding damage.



Source: Ministry of the Environment website



Kushiro-shitsugen

Few people today can imagine that Kushiro-shitsugen was once regarded as a "barren land." Kushiro-shitsugen not only provides habitat for a rich diversity of plants and animals, including the Red-crowned Crane and Siberian Salamander, but also possesses a landscape of unparalleled beauty that attracts many visitors throughout the year.

For those of us who live nearby, it also provides a setting for a wide range of recreational activities, including fishing, canoeing and birdwatching. The majestic Kushiro River, which flows through the wetland, carries nutrients supplied by the wetland to the sea, where they support the growth of seaweed, fish and shellfish. Simply by existing, Kushiro-shitsugen brings a wealth of benefits to our lives. The irreplaceable value of Kushiro-shitsugen became widely recognized among local residents through a series of significant events: its designation in 1980 as Japan's first Ramsar Site, its designation as Kushiroshitsugen National Park in 1987, and the Fifth Meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties to the Ramsar Convention, held in Kushiro City in 1993.In recent years, increasing attention has also been paid to the wetland's role in climate regulation, disaster prevention and disaster risk reduction. Climate change is one of the most serious issues facing the world today. In Japan, natural disasters caused by extreme weather events believed to be associated with global warming have become increasingly frequent. Kushiro-shitsugen absorbs and stores carbon dioxide (CO_2), a greenhouse gas that contributes to global warming, and therefore plays an important role in mitigating climate change. In addition, the wetland acts as a natural floodwater storage area, reducing the risk of flooding caused by typhoons and other extreme weather events and helping to protect the lives and livelihoods of local residents in times of disaster. At the same time, however, it is also true that changes in land use resulting from human activities have caused a rapid decline in the area of the wetland. In response, the Kushiro Wetland Nature Restoration Project was launched in the 2000s to restore the natural environment that had been lost. Although progress has been gradual, the project has begun to produce tangible results. Looking ahead, local residents must renew their awareness of the wetland's value and further advance efforts in conservation, wise use and restoration, so that the benefits of Kushiro-shitsugen, which we often take for granted, are not lost but passed on to future generations.



TERUI Shigeharu
NPO Network for Promoting Environmental Understanding—PEG

Preserving the Benefits of Kushiro-shitsugen for Future Generations

Kushiro International Wetland Centre Technical Committee



NOMOTO Kazuhiro
Kushiro Museum



Reflections on the 30th Anniversary of Ramsar COP5 in Kushiro

SHINSHO Hisashi
Chair, Technical Committee Kushiro International Wetland Centre

The fifth Meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties to the Ramsar Convention (COP5), held in Kushiro, was the first Ramsar COP to take place in Asia.
The Kushiro Conference encouraged many Asian countries to join the Convention. The Conference also adopted guidelines on the "wise use of wetlands," one of the Convention's basic philosophy. During those discussions, the Convention emphasized: "From the beginning of human history, people have lived alongside wetlands. They have drawn their livelihoods from wetlands, made use of them, and built civilizations around them. Human history has always been built with wetlands."

Today, the importance of conserving all natural environments and biodiversity—not only wetlands—and using natural resources sustainably is widely recognized.
The Ramsar Convention promotes the wise use of wetland resources while conserving wetland ecosystems and their biodiversity.

It promotes the sustainable use of wetland resources (consumptive use) and the active use of wetland functions (non-consumptive use).

It advocates the sustainable use of water, fisheries, and other resources provided by wetland ecosystems, together with the use of the diverse functions that wetlands provide without damage to their ecosystems and that are sustained through conservation.

Wetlands help the local natural environment while sustaining the lives of people and wildlife through such functions as "flood regulation," whereby they act as natural floodwater storage areas that hold snowmelt and seasonal heavy rainfall; "water and air purification" by wetland plant communities extending over vast areas; "water storage," through scattered lakes and countless springs that retain water resources; "moderation of the local microclimate," including temperature and evapotranspiration; "the supply of iron-rich water" that sustains coastal seagrass beds; "the provision of habitats" for local wildlife, including the Red-crowned Crane, Siberian salamander, and Marsh Jacob's ladder; and "support for a wide range of human activities," including diverse cultural and recreational activities and the tourism industry.

Nature is changing as it absorbs the impacts of human activity, but these changes are not always readily apparent. When human impacts become too great, natural processes and functions begin to break down, threatening the living environment of both people and wildlife. Wetlands are sometimes described as "ecosystems shaped by water." Water responds particularly quickly to the effects of human activity, and these effects are closely reflected in the processes and functions of wetlands.

By observing changes in wetland ecosystems, we can understand how human activities are affecting them, whether they are damaging their processes and functions, and whether the living environment of the people and wildlife that depend on them remains healthy. We should visit wetlands as the seasons change and whenever the opportunity arises—to experience their vitality and notice how they are changing.

We might think of this as checking in on a wetland to see how it is doing, or giving it a "health check." Are our activities affecting the wetland ecosystem? Are they still within the limits that the ecosystem can tolerate?
Can the wetland continue to absorb their effects?

Get to know a wetland. Become its friend—then its close friend. The better we know and understand wetlands, the more clearly we will see how to conserve them while making wise use of them.

At the closing ceremony of the Kushiro Conference, the Secretary General of the Convention concluded with these words: "This Conference could not have succeeded without the understanding and cooperation of the local community. The understanding and support of local people are essential to advancing the conservation and wise use of Ramsar wetlands. Wetlands are always closely connected with the communities around them."

I look forward to a future in which we come to know and fully enjoy the wetlands that sustain the region's natural environment and the lives of its people and wildlife, live alongside them, and further advance community development through the "conservation and wise use of wetlands."



Appendices

Information Sheet on Ramsar Wetlands

As approved by Rec C.4.7. of the Conference of the Contracting Parties Montreux, Switzerland- July 1990

1. Country: Japan **2. Date:** December 1992 **3. Ref:** JP001

4. Name and address of compiler:
Yoshihiro NATORI,
Wildlife Protection Division,
Nature Conservation Bureau,
Environment Agency,
1-2-2 Kasumigaseki Chiyoda-ku,
TOKYO 100

5. Name of wetland: Kushiro-shitsugen

6. Date of Ramsar designation: 17 June 1980

7. Geographical coordinates: 43° 09'N 144°26'E

8. General Location: (e.g. administrative region and nearest large town)
In the eastern Hokkaido, approximately 5km north of Kushiro city

9. Area: (in hectares) 7,726 ha

10. Wetland Type: (see attached classification, also approved by Montreux Rec C 4.7)
M O S U W X

11. Altitude: (average and/or maximum and minimum)
The entire area lies between 3m and l0m (above sea level).

12. Overview: (general summary, in two or thee, sentences, of the wetland's principal characteristics)
Most of the mire consists of fen and swamp, including swamp forest. Bog is dotted central area of the mire. The mire is the largest peat land of Japan which is one of the most important habitat of *Grus japonensis*.
The mire has about 10 tributary rivers of the Kushiro river and 3 lakes in eastern area.

13. Physical Features:(e.g. geology; geomorphology; origins - natural or artificial; hydrology; soil type; water quality; water depth; water permanence; fluctuations in water level; tidal variations; catchment area; downstream area; climate)

The formation of the mire started about 4,000 years ago by growing of sandbank and sand-dune facing the Pacific Ocean which blocked the way out of ancient gulf.
Hillsides which are 60-140m above sea level extend in the west, the north and the east of the mire.
The peat of the mire consists of Sphagnum, reed and sedge peat.
The pH of the water indicates between 6.8 and 8.5 in the rivers and 6.5 and 8.5 in the lakes.
A channel which is about 8km long was constructed towards the Pacific Ocean in the lower course of the Kushiro river.

The eastern Hokkaido belongs to the subarctic zone, the average temperature of the year is between 5°C and 6°C and the average precipitation of the year is between 900 mm and 1,200mm.
A lot of fog covers the mire from spring to summer and daylight time of the year is the shortest in Japan.

14. Ecological Features: (main habitats and vegetation types)

Vegetation of the mire is characterised in *Phragmites australis, Carex lyngbyei, C fedia* var.*miyabei* and *C.lasiocarpa* var.*occultans,* including sedge tussock with *C.caespitosa and C. augustinowiczii* in the fen area and *Nuphar pumilum, Nymphaea tetragona, Trapa japonica, Potamogeton natens, Menyanthes trifoliata, Zizania latifolia*, *Phragmites australis, Spiraea salicifolia* and *Alnus japonica* in the swamp and *Ledum palustre* var.*nipponicum*, *Chamaedaphne calyculata*, *Myrica gale* var.*tomentosa*, *Vaccinium oxycoccus, Andromeda polifolia* and *Sphagnum* in the bog.

15. Land Tenure/Ownership of:

(a) site

National Government owned land	6,224 ha
Local Government owned land	673 ha
Non-private owned lake	816 ha
Private owned lake	13 ha

(b) surrounding area

16. Conservation Measures Taken: (national category and legal status of protected areas - including any boundary changes which have been made: management practices; whether an officially approved management plan exists and whether it has been implemented)

Special Protection Area of National Wildlife Protection Area
Special Protection Zone and Special Zone of National Park
In this area, construction, modification of land, mining, reclamation, changing of the water level, tree felling, taking of wildlife are prohibited without the permission of the Environment Agency.

17. Conservation measures proposed but not yet implemented: (e.g. management plan in preparation; officially proposed as a protected areas etc)

None

18. Current land use: principal human activities in:

(a) site
National Park
Fishing (pond smelt, shrimp)

(b) surroundings/catchment
Pasture land, agricultural land and golf course locate in the catchment area of the mire.

19. Disturbances/threats, including changes in land use and major development projects: (factors which may have a negative impact on the ecological character of the wetland)

(a) at the site

None

(b) in the surroundings/catchment

Excreta of cattle and agricultural chemical which is sprinkled over pasturage and golf course flow into the upper course of the tributary rivers in the mire.
Soil erosion of hillsides around the mire by tree felling. Population of introduced mink which escaped from ranch is increasing rapidly in the mire.

20. Hydrological and Physical Values: (groundwater recharge, flood control, sediment trapping, shoreline stabilisation etc)

Control the water level of the lower course of Kushiro river.
Purify the water which flows through the mire.

21. Social and Cultural Values: (e.g. fisheries production, forestry, religious importance, archaeological site etc)

Water supply for living and industry.
Habitat supply for salmon which is the most important natural resources in this country.

22. Noteworthy Fauna: (e.g. unique, rare endangered, abundant or biogeographically important species; include count data etc)

One of the most important habitat of wildbird, *Haliaeetus albicilla, Ketupa blakistoni* and *Grus japonensis* whose population is approximately 560 only in Japan.
Breeding habitat of summer visitor *Gallinago hardwickii* which is endangered species in Australia.
One of a few habitat of threatened species, *Hucho perryi* in Japan.
Only one habitat of threatened species, *Salamandrella keyserlingii*, *Aeschna subarctica*, *Lercorrhinia intermedia ijimai* and *Erythromma najas baicalensis* in Japan.

23 Noteworthy Flora: (e.g. unique, rare, endangered, or biogeographically important species/communities etc)

One of a few habitat *Polemonium caereleum* var.*laxiflorum* and *Cardamine pratensis*.
The widest swamp forest of *Alnus japonica* and the widest habitat of *Phragmites australis - Carex* community in Japan.

24. Current Scientific Research and Facilities: (e.g. details of current projects; existence of field station etc)

Research on habitat condition of *Grus japonensis*, *Ketupa blakistoni* and *Haliaeetus pelagicus*.
Feed *Grus japonensis* for supplement food during winter,
Make breeding pond of *Salamandrella keyserlingii* in the mire.
Monitoring research on change of mire vegetation every five years.
Visitor Centre of National Park Office (management, education)
Wildlife Centre (data base, protection, management)
Natural History Museum (data base, education, research)
Japanese Crane Sanctuary (protection, research, education)

25. Current Conservation Education: (e. g. visitor centres, hides, information booklet, facilities for school visits etc)

Nature observation by National Park office
Training course for National Park volunteers
Nature observation in the mire by Natural History Museum

26. Current recreation and tourism: (state if wetland used for recreation/tourism; indicate type & frequency/intensity)

Horse-back riding hike on hillsides around the mire
Canoeing tour in rivers of the mire
Cross-country skiing hike in the mire
Hike around the mire for watching ruins of the prehistoric age

27. Management authority: (name and address of body responsible for managing the wetland)

Kushiro-shitsugen National Park Office, Nature Conservation Bureau,
Environment Agency, Koh-roku building
Saiwai-cho, Kushiro city, Hokkaido
085 Japan

28. Jurisdiction: (territorial e.g. state/region and functional e.g Dept of Agriculture/Dept of Environment etc) -

Territorial conservation jurisdiction:
Wildlife Protection Section
Nature Conservation Department
Health Environment Division
Hokkaido Prefecture Government
Functional conservation jurisdiction:
Wildlife Protection Division
Nature Conservation Bureau
Environment Agency
Japan

29 Bibliographical References: (scientific/technical only)

Kushiro City Museum 1977. Report on natural Historical research in the Kushiro mire

Hokkaido Prefecture Government 1985. Report on research in conservation measure of the Kushiro mire

Environment Agency 1986. Report on urgent research in conservation measure of the Kushiro mire

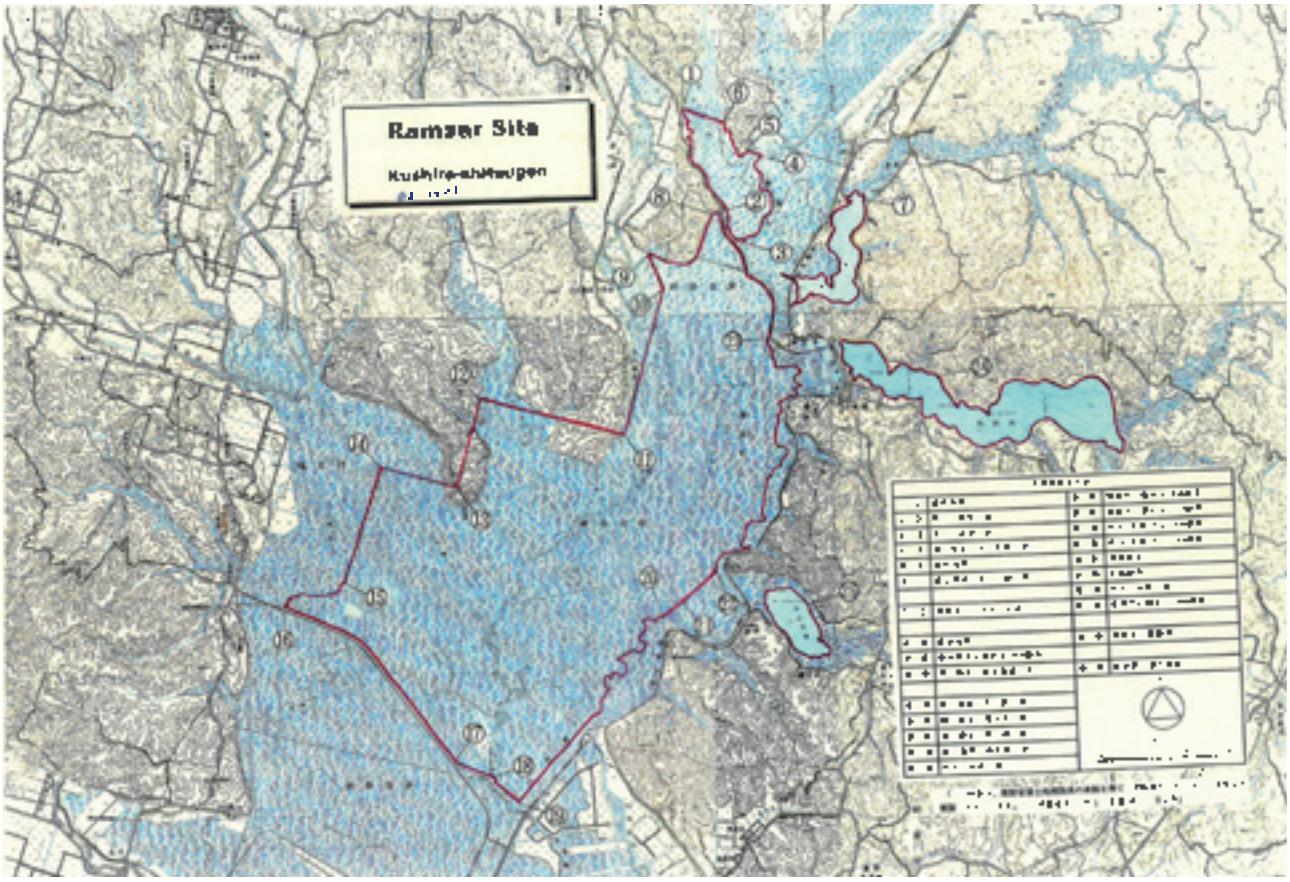
Hokkaido Prefecture Government 1991 Report on special research in habitat of Japanese Crane.

Environment Agency 1991. Report on research in vegetation of the Kushiro mire

30. Reasons for Inclusion: (state which Ramsar criteria - as adopted by Rec.C.4.15 of the Montreux Conference - are applicable)

1(a)
2(a), 2(b), 2(d)
3(b) (Family Gruidae, Family Accipitridae)

31. Map of site (please enclose the most detailed and up-to-date map available - preferably at least 1:25,000 or 1:50,000)



Map of the Kushiro-chitsugen Ramsar Site

Information Sheet on Ramsar Wetlands (RIS)

Categories approved by Recommendation 4.7, as amended by Resolution VIII.13 of the Conference of the Contracting Parties.

Note for compilers:

1. The RIS should be completed in accordance with the attached *Explanatory Notes and Guidelines for completing the Information Sheet on Ramsar Wetlands*. Compilers are strongly advised to read this guidance before filling in the RIS.

2. Once completed, the RIS (and accompanying map(s)) should be submitted to the Ramsar Bureau. Compilers are strongly urged to provide an electronic (MS Word) copy of the RIS and, where possible, digital copies of maps.

1. Name and address of the compiler of this form:

FOR OFFICE USE ONLY.

DD MM YY

Designation date

Site Reference Number

Ms. Noriko MORIWAKE
Wildlife Division, Nature Conservation Bureau,
Ministry of the Environment
1-2-2 Kasumigaseki Chiyoda-ku Tokyo 100-8975, Japan
Telephone: +81-3-5521-8284
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E-mail: wildlife@env.go.jp

2. Date this sheet was completed/updated:
8 November, 2005

3. Country: Japan

4. Name of the Ramsar site: Akkeshi-ko and Bekambeushi-shitsugen

5. Map of site included:
Refer to Annex III of the *Explanatory Note and Guidelines*, for detailed guidance on provision of suitable maps.

a) hard copy (required for inclusion of site in the Ramsar List): *yes* ■ -or- *no* □

b) digital (electronic) format (optional): *yes* ■ -or- *no* □

6. Geographical coordinates (latitude/longitude): 43°03'N 144°54'E

7. General location:
Include in which part of the country and which large administrative region(s), and the location of the nearest large town.

The site is located in the center of Akkeshi town (located approximately 40km east of Kushiro city), at the mouth of the Bekambeushi River, in eastern Hokkaido.

8. Elevation: (average and/or max. & min.) 0-20 m

9. Area: (in hectares) **5,277 ha** (extended 381 ha)

10. Overview:
Provide a short paragraph giving a summary description of the principal ecological characteristics and importance of the wetland.

Akkeshi-ko, a brackish water lake flown into by the Bekambeushi River, and Bekambeushi-shitsugen formed at the mouth of this river, is one of the leading primeval natural environment in Japan. Bekambeushi-shitsugen is composed of extensive fens and some bogs along the basin of Bekambeushi River. This site is known as the

largest passing winter area for Whooper Swan (*Cygnus cygnus*) in Japan, this is because this site is not frozen in the winter.

11. Ramsar Criteria:
Circle or underline each Criterion applied to the designation of the Ramsar site. See Annex II of the *Explanatory Notes and Guidelines* for the Criteria and guidelines for their application (adopted by Resolution VII.11).

1 • 2 • 3 • 4 • 5 • 6 • 7 • 8

12. Justification for the application of each Criterion listed in 11. above:
Provide justification for each Criterion in turn, clearly identifying to which Criterion the justification applies (see Annex II for guidance on acceptable forms of justification).

Ramsar Criterion 1: Bekanbeushi – shitsugen is one of the leading primeval natural lake in Japan.

Ramsar Criterion 2: This site is one of the important breeding sites for Japanese Crane (*Grus japonensis*), [MoE RDB Category:Vulnerable (VU*1), Domestic Endangered Species*2, Endangered IUCN Global Red List'04]. Every year more than 40 pairs breed in this site.

Ramsar Criterion 4: A part of the Akkeshi-ko surface is not frozen even in winter and 1,000 – 3,000 Whooper Swans (*Cygnus cygnus*) pass winter in this lake every year.

Ramsar Criterion 6: More than 80 (>10%) Japanese Cranes (*Grus japonensis*) breed in the site and also visit of 6,050 (10.08%) Whooper Swans (*Cygnus cygnus*) are recorded. The site regularly supports over 1% of the East Asian region population of Japanese Crane (*Grus japonensis*) (8) and Whooper Swan (*Cygnus cygnus*) (600).

Note: *1 Red List of Threatened Wildlife of Japan. Ministry of the Environment
*2 Designated under the Law for Conservation of Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (Species Conservation Law)

13. Biogeography (required when Criteria 1 and/or 3 and /or certain applications of Criterion 2 are applied to the designation):
Name the relevant biogeographic region that includes the Ramsar site, and identify the biogeographic regionalisation system that has been applied.

a) biogeographic region:
Japan

b) biogeographic regionalisation scheme (include reference citation):
Japan is recognized as single biogeographic region, because Japan is an island country which has unique and rich biota with many endemic species.

14. Physical features of the site:
Describe, as appropriate, the geology, geomorphology; origins - natural or artificial; hydrology; soil type; water quality; water depth, water permanence; fluctuations in water level; tidal variations; downstream area; general climate, etc.

Akkeshi-ko, a brackish water lake, receives water from Bekambeushi River and is connected with the sea by a narrow channel. The depth of the lake is 11 meters at the deepest point and is surrounded by wetlands and plateaus. Bekambeushi-shitsugen was developed at the floodplain along the slowly winding Bekambeushi River. It is mainly composed of fens (of reeds and sedge) and partially bogs around its center. Salt marshes develop along the shorelines.

15. Physical features of the catchment area: Describe the surface area, general geology and geomorphological features, general soil types, general land use, and climate (including climate type).

16. Hydrological values:
Describe the functions and values of the wetland in groundwater recharge, flood control, sediment trapping, shoreline stabilization, etc.

The Lake maintains the balance of underground water and functions to control floods. It also contributes to maintenance of water quality.

Bekambeushi–shitsugen maintains the quality of Bekambeushi River, keeps the balance of underground water and functions to control floods. It also maintains and controls water quality in its ecological system.

17. Wetland Types

a) presence:
Circle or underline the applicable codes for the wetland types of the Ramsar "Classification System for Wetland Type" present in the Ramsar site. Descriptions of each wetland type code are provided in Annex I of the *Explanatory Notes & Guidelines*.

Marine/coastal: A • B • C • D • E • F • G • H • I • J • K • Zk(a)

Inland: L • M • N • O • P • Q • R • Sp • Ss • Tp Ts • U • Va •
Vt • W • Xf • Xp • Y • Zg • Zk(b)

Human-made: 1 • 2 • 3 • 4 • 5 • 6 • 7 • 8 • 9 • Zk(c)

b) dominance:
List the wetland types identified in a) above in order of their dominance (by area) in the Ramsar site, starting with the wetland type with the largest area.
J-Sp-F-H-M-W-U-Xf

18. General ecological features:
Provide further description, as appropriate, of the main habitats, vegetation types, plant and animal communities present in the Ramsar site.

Salt marsh vegetation is partially distributed around Akkeshi Lake. Bekambeushi mire is typical of fens of extensive reed, sedge, and alder community. Bogs have developed in the central area of the mire as well. Bekambeushi mire supports a fishery of oysters and clams in Akkeshi Lake. Important flora species include Crowberry/Gaoko-ran (*Empetrum nigrum*), Labrador-tea/Iso-tsutsuji (*Ledum palustre*), Peat Moss/Mizu-goke (*Sphagnum* spp.), Yachi-tsutsuji (*Chamaedaphne calyculata*) and Iwa-nogariyasu (*Calamagrostis canadensis*).

19. Noteworthy flora:
Provide additional information on particular species and why they are noteworthy (expanding as necessary on information provided in 12. Justification for the application of the Criteria) indicating, e.g., which species/communities are unique, rare, endangered or biogeographically important, etc. *Do not include here taxonomic lists of species present – these may be supplied as supplementary information to the RIS.*

This site is the habitat of follows Noteworthy flora,
- Glasswort/Akkeshi-sou (*Salicornia europaea*)(endangered species (EN)*1)
- Community of Peat moss/Mizu-goke (Sphagnum)(rare community) composed of Bog moss/O-mizugoke (*Sphagnum palustre* L.) (endangered species(CR+EN)*1)
- Yachi-tsutsuji (*Chamaedaphne calyculata*) (endangered species(EN)*1) etc.

Note: *1 Red List of Threatened Wildlife of Japan. Ministry of the Environment

20. Noteworthy fauna:

Provide additional information on particular species and why they are noteworthy (expanding as necessary on information provided in 12. Justification for the application of the Criteria) indicating, e.g., which species/communities are unique, rare, endangered or biogeographically important, etc., including count data. *Do not include here taxonomic lists of species present – these may be supplied as supplementary information to the RIS.*

This site is the habitat of follows Noteworthy fauna,

- Whooper Swan (*Cygnus cygnus*) (This site is the largest passing the winter area for Whooper Swan (*Cygnus cygnus*) in Japan.)
- White-tailed Eagle (*Haliaeetus albicilla*) (Endangered species(EN)*)
- Japanese Crane (*Grus japonensis*) (Endangered species(VU)*1)
- Grey-headed Woodpecker (*Picus canus*) (Rare species because Hokkaido is the only habitat for them in Japan.)
- Ezo squirrel (*Sciurus vulgaris orientis*) (Rare species; this is the sub species of *Sciurus vulgaris* and Hokkaido is the only habitat of them in Japan.) etc.

Note: *1 Red List of Threatened Wildlife of Japan. Ministry of the Environment

21. Social and cultural values:

e.g., fisheries production, forestry, religious importance, archaeological sites, social relations with the wetland, etc. Distinguish between historical/archaeological/religious significance and current socio-economic values.

The area around this site is home for "AINU" (native or first people of Hokkaido) the first information about these people dates back to around 6,000 years ago. Now, still there are ruins or stone tools which are a subject of archaeological excavation.

22. Land tenure/ownership:

(a) within the Ramsar site:

Owned by the National Government	1,765ha
Owned by Akkeshi Town (public lake)	3,228ha
Privately owned land	284ha

(b) in the surrounding area: It is difficult to identify, since land tenures are too complicated.
National land, private land

23. Current land (including water) use:

(a) within the Ramsar site: Akkeshi-ko—Fishery, aquaculture
Bukambeushi-shitsugen—forestry

(b) in the surroundings/catchment: forestry, aquaculture, fishery

24. Factors (past, present or potential) adversely affecting the site's ecological character, including changes in land (including water) use and development projects:

(a) within the Ramsar site: none
(b) in the surrounding area: none

25. Conservation measures taken:

List national category and legal status of protected areas, including boundary relationships with the Ramsar site; management practices; whether an officially approved management plan exists and whether it is being implemented.

The entire area is designated as the special protection area of a National Wildlife Protection Area and the Special Area of the Akkeshi Prefectural Natural Park. Akkeshi Town is purchasing pieces of private land around the site (2,100 ha as of 1997). Also, the Town has purchased 519 ha in cooperation with NGOs.

To protect fisheries resources, citizens' group primarily consisting of fishermen, are planting trees upstream. The Town also plants trees for wetland conservation with residents' participation.

26. Conservation measures proposed but not yet implemented:
e.g. management plan in preparation; official proposal as a legally protected area, etc.

None

27. Current scientific research and facilities:
e.g., details of current research projects, including biodiversity monitoring; existence of a field research station, etc.

Research on habitat condition of *Grus japonensis*.
Research on condition of bogs.
A foundation for academic research in Akkeshi-ko and Bekanbeushi-shitsugen was established by Akkeshi town in 1997. It has funded 40 research projects by 2001.

28. Current conservation education:
e.g. visitors' centre, observation hides and nature trails, information booklets, facilities for school visits, etc.

The Ministry of the Environment constructed Akkeshi Waterfown Observation Center in 1995; the Akkeshi Town is responsible for administration and management of the Center.

29. Current recreation and tourism:
State if the wetland is used for recreation/tourism; indicate type(s) and their frequency/intensity.

From May to October, 9km-stretch of Bekanbeushi River is used as a canoe course; the Town operates three canoe stations. In 2002, from May to October, some 344 canoes (May: 53, Jun.:18, Jul.: 64, Aug.:93, Sep.:46, Oct.:70) used these stations. When the river surface is frozen (from late December to early March), fishing on ice is popular.

30. Jurisdiction:
Include territorial, e.g. state/region, and functional/sectoral, e.g. Dept of Agriculture/Dept. of Environment, etc.

Territorial: Akkeshi Town, Hokaido
Functional: Ministry of the Environment

31. Management authority:
Provide the name and address of the local office(s) of the agency(ies) or organisation(s) directly responsible for managing the wetland. Wherever possible provide also the title and/or name of the person or persons in this office with responsibility for the wetland.

Kushiro Wildlife Branch, East Hokkaido Regional Office for Nature Conservation,
Nature Conservation Bureau, Ministry of the Environment
Hokuto 2-2101, Kushiro city, Hokkaido 084-0922, JAPAN
Telephone:+81-154-56-2345
Facsimile:+81-154-56-2267

32. Bibliographical references:
scientific/technical references only. If biogeographic regionalisation scheme applied (see 13 above), list full reference citation for the scheme.

- The Report on the Annual Census of Waterfowls (ANATIDAE) in January. Ministry of the Environment, Japan

- Threatened Wildlife of Japan – Red Data Book 2nd ed. –Aves. Ministry of the Environment, Japan. 2002
- "Excellent Natural Areas." Natural Environment Investigation Report. Hokkaido. 1992.
- Report of the Overall Investigation of Prefectural Natural Parks, Akkeshi Prefectural Natural Park. Hokkaido. 1986.
- BirdLife International 2004. *Grus japonensis*. In: IUCN 2004. *2004 IUCN Red List of Threatened Species*.

Please return to: **Ramsar Convention Bureau, Rue Mauverney 28, CH-1196 Gland, Switzerland**
Telephone**: +41 22 999 0170** • Fax: **+41 22 999 0169** • e-mail: **ramsar@ramsar.org**



Map of the Akkeshi-ko and Bekambeushi-shitsugen Ramsar Site

Information Sheet on Ramsar Wetlands

1. Country: Japan

2. Date:

3. Ref: 2JP005

4. Name and address of compiler:
Yoshihiro Natori, Wildlife Protection Division, Nature Conservation Bureau, Environment Agency, 1-2-2 Kasumigaseri, Chiyodaku, Tokyo, 100 Japan

5. Name of wetlands: *Kiritappu-shitsugen ((1) Kiritappu-shitsugen (2) Hichirippu-numa (3) Mochirippu-numa)*

6. Date of Ramsar designation: June 1993

7. Geographical coordinates: (1) 43°05'N and 145°05'E
(2) 43 02° 45'N and 145 00° 30' E
(3) 43° 01' N and 145 00° 30' E

8. General location: In the southeast of Hamanaka Town in east Hokkaido

9. Area: 2,504 ha

10. Wetland type: H, M, Q, S, U

11. Altitude: 0-20 metres above sea level

12. Overview:
Kiritappu Mire formed on a row of ancient sand-dunes, and is a bog mainly composed of sphagnum peat. Hichirippu Marsh and Mochirippu Marsh are brackish water lakes filled by sea water at high tide.

13. Physical features:
Hichirippu Marsh and Mochirippu Marsh, both surrounded by the plateau, are connected with the sea by a narrow channel. The sea water flows backward into the marshes at high tide. The water depth of both marshes is relatively shallow. The deepest point of Hichirippu Marsh is less than 3 metres. Kiritappu Mire is mainly composed of sphagnum bogs, and one unique point is that the configuration of the northern and southern sections are very different from each other. At the mouth of Biwase River running through the centre, the reverse flow of ocean water is visible. The temperature in the region is characterised by highly humid and cool summers. The average annual temperature is 5.5°C, two degrees lower than other regions at the same latitude.

14. Ecological features:
Kiritappu Mire is based on the sphagnum bogs and distributed with the association of Moliniopsis japonica-Phragmites, the community of Phragmites-Calamagrostis canadensis-Carex sp., and other wetland vegetation. Around Hichirippu Marsh and Mochirippu Marsh are seen the vegetation of wetlands and salt marshes, such as the community of Phragmites-Calamagrostis canadensis-Carex sp.

15. Land tenure/ownership of:
(a) site: National Government-owned land 1,231ha; Town-owned land 248ha; Private land 610ha; Public lake 415ha
(b) surrounding area: Private land; Prefectural land

16. Conservation measures taken:
Special Protection Area of National Wildlife Protection Area 2,504ha.
Special Zone of Akkeshi Prefectural Natural Park 6,780 ha; Natural Monument 803ha.

17. Conservation measures proposed but not yet implemented:
Hokkaido Wetland Protection Master Plan (in preparation).

18. Current land use:
(a) site: Kiritappu Mire - a highway across the area; Hichirippu Marsh, Mochirippu Marsh - Fishery; aquaculture.
(b) surroundings/catchment: forestry, fishery.

19. Disturbances/threats, including changes in land use and major development projects:
(a) at the site: There is a possibility that the wetlands will be damaged by the increased number of visitors. Waste water which flows into the wetlands and marshes can damage the area.
(b) in the surroundings/catchment: Contaminated water flowing into the wetlands and marshes can deteriorate the area.

20. Hydrological and physical values:
Kiritappu Mire develops and supplies underground water and maintains and controls the water quality.

21. Social and cultural values:
In the recent trend of reassessing wetland values, Kiritappu Mire has attracted wide attention, and stands as an important resource for tourism and other local promotion projects. The mire has bee designated as a Natural Monument, increasing its cultural values. Hichirippu and Mochirippu Marshes also provide fishing grounds for Clams, etc.

22. Noteworthy fauna:
Podiceps crisegena, Anser fabalis, Cygnus cygnus, Anas platyrhynchos, Anas penelope, Aythya marila, Mergus serrator, Haliaetus albicilla, Haliaeetus pelagicus, Grus japonensis, Tringa eryhropus, Heteroscelus brevipes, Sterna hirundo, Sciurus vulgaris, Vulpes vulpes schrencki, Cervus nippon vesoensis, etc.

23. Noteworthy flora:
Eriophorum vaginatam, Hemerocallis dumortierii, Thermopsis lupinoides, Iris setosa, Rosa rugosa, Lilium maculatum etc.

24. Current scientific research and facilities:
Monitoring research on change of water level

25. Current conservation education:
Nature observation by Kiritappu Mire centre

26. Current recreation and tourism:
Nature (flora and fauna) observation of the mire

27. Management authority:
Wildlife Protection Division, Nature Conservation Bureau, Environment Agency, Japan

28. Jurisdiction:
*Territorial conservation jurisdiction: Game Management Section, Nature Preservation Division, Department of Health and Environment, Hokkaido Government; *Functional conservation

jurisdiction: Wildlife Protection Division, Nature Conservation Bureau, Environment Agency, Japan.

29. Bibliographical references:
Report of the Overall Investigation of Prefectural Natural Parks, Akkeshi Prefectural Natural Park, March 1986.

30. Reasons for inclusion: 1(a), 2(b), 2(d).



Map of the Kiritappu-shitsugen Ramsar Site

Information Sheet on Ramsar Wetlands (RIS)

Categories approved by Recommendation 4.7, as amended by Resolution VIII.13 of the Conference of the Contracting Parties.

Note for compilers:

1. The RIS should be completed in accordance with the attached *Explanatory Notes and Guidelines for completing the Information Sheet on Ramsar Wetlands*. Compilers are strongly advised to read this guidance before filling in the RIS.

2. Once completed, the RIS (and accompanying map(s)) should be submitted to the Ramsar Bureau. Compilers are strongly urged to provide an electronic (MS Word) copy of the RIS and, where possible, digital copies of maps.

1. Name and address of the compiler of this form:

Ms. Noriko MORIWAKE
Wildlife Division, Nature Conservation Bureau,
Ministry of the Environment
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Tokyo 100-8975, JAPAN

Phone: +81-3-5521-8284 Fax: +81-3-3581-7090
Email: wildlife@env.go.jp

FOR OFFICE USE ONLY.

DD MM YY

Designation date

Site Reference Number

2. Date this sheet was completed/updated:
24 October, 2005

3. Country:
Japan

4. Name of the Ramsar site:
Akan-ko

5. Map of site included:
Refer to Annex III of the *Explanatory Note and Guidelines*, for detailed guidance on provision of suitable maps.

a) hard copy (required for inclusion of site in the Ramsar List): *yes* ■ -or- *no* □

b) digital (electronic) format (optional): *yes* ■ -or- *no* □

6. Geographical coordinates (latitude/longitude):
144°6' 3" E, 43°27' 5" N

7. General location:
Include in which part of the country and which large administrative region(s), and the location of the nearest large town.

Kushiro / Hokkaido region
It is located in Kushiro City, Hokkaido Prefecture (population c. 200,000, area c. 1,363 sq. km)

8. Elevation: (average and/or max. & min.)
+ 420 m

9. Area: (in hectares) **1,318ha**

10. Overview:
Provide a short paragraph giving a summary description of the principal ecological characteristics and importance of the wetland.

Akan-ko is a large caldera lake located in the inland area of eastern Hokkaido. The site is an important habitat for endangered alga, fishes and shellfish. It is also renowned as a habitat for the rare round green alga Marimo *Cladophora aegagropila*.

11. Ramsar Criteria:
Circle or underline each Criterion applied to the designation of the Ramsar site. See Annex II of the *Explanatory Notes and Guidelines* for the Criteria and guidelines for their application (adopted by Resolution VII.11).

1 • 2 • 3 • 4 • 5 • 6 • 7 • 8

12. Justification for the application of each Criterion listed in 11. above:
Provide justification for each Criterion in turn, clearly identifying to which Criterion the justification applies (see Annex II for guidance on acceptable forms of justification).

Criterion 1: Akan-ko is a caldera lake created by volcanic activity. It is a representative caldera lake in Japan.

13. Biogeography (required when Criteria 1 and/or 3 and /or certain applications of Criterion 2 are applied to the designation):
Name the relevant biogeographic region that includes the Ramsar site, and identify the biogeographic regionalisation system that has been applied.

a) biogeographic region:
Japan

b) biogeographic regionalisation scheme (include reference citation):
Japan is recognized as single biogeographic region, because Japan is an island country which has unique and rich biota with many endemic species.

14. Physical features of the site:
Describe, as appropriate, the geology, geomorphology; origins - natural or artificial; hydrology; soil type; water quality; water depth, water permanence; fluctuations in water level; tidal variations; downstream area; general climate, etc.

Geology: mainly quaternary volcanic mountain
Geomorphology: A caldera lake formed after collapse of a mountain caused by volcanic activity.
Origins: Natural
Hydrology: 11 inflow streams, 1 outflow stream
Water quality: pH8.1(8.1 ~ 8.2)(1991), DO 10.3(10.1 ~ 10.7)ppm(1991), EC 0.219(0.217 ~ 0.222)µs/cm(1991), Alcalinity 0.938(0.932 ~ 0.937)mg/L(1991), COD 2.2(1.9 ~ 2.5)ppm(1991), T-N 0.19(0.17 ~ 0.21)ppm(1991), T-P 0.021(0.019 ~ 0.023)ppm(1991), Chl-a 1.2(0.96 ~ 1.56)µg/L(1991), SS <1ppm(1990), Cl^- 12ppm(1990), SO_4^{2-} 34ppm(1990), NH_4-N 0.11ppm(1990), $N0_2$-N <0.005ppm(1990), $N0_3$-N <0.05ppm(1990), $P0_4$-P <0.003ppm(1990), Ca 14.9ppm(1990), Mg 6.82ppm(1990), K 2.41ppm(1990), Na 17.4ppm(1990)
Water level fluctuation: fluctuation by intake for electric power
Water depth: 17.8 m on average, 45.0m at maximum
Climate: Annual temperature fluctuation is large and rainfall is observed mainly from August to October. Annual precipitation: 1,207 mm, annual mean temperature: 3.7 degrees Celsius, fluctuation of mean temperature in each month: -10.7-+17.7 degrees Celsius (average of Akan-ko lakeside from 1979 to 2000)

15. Physical features of the catchment area:
Describe the surface area, general geology and geomorphological features, general soil types, general land use, and climate (including climate type).

Surface area: 161.3 sq. km
General geology and geomorphological fuatures:
The area where Akan-ko exists has once been a huge Akan caldera which had been formed by volcanic activity followed by collapse in middle Diluvium. The caldera was gradually filled with water and it became Ko-Akan-ko (Old Akan-ko lake). The Ko-Akan-ko was almost filled by later volcanic activities. Then, lava flow from OAkan-dake damed up Ko-Akan-ko and present Akan-ko was formed.

Three rivers flow into Akan-ko at northernside of the lake: Ibeshibetsu-gawa that originates from Lake Akanpanke-ko, Kinetanpe-gawa and Chuurui-gawa.

General land use: forest
Climate: Annual temperature fluctuation is large and rainfall is observed mainly from August to October. Annual precipitation: 1,207 mm, annual mean temperature: 3.7 degrees Celsius, fluctuation of mean temperature in each month: -10.7-+17.7 degrees Celsius (average of Akan-ko lakeside from 1979 to 2000)

16. Hydrological values:
Describe the functions and values of the wetland in groundwater recharge, flood control, sediment trapping, shoreline stabilization, etc.

17. Wetland Types

a) presence:
Circle or underline the applicable codes for the wetland types of the Ramsar "Classification System for Wetland Type" present in the Ramsar site. Descriptions of each wetland type code are provided in Annex I of the *Explanatory Notes & Guidelines*.

Marine/coastal: **A • B • C • D • E • F • G • H • I • J • K • Zk(a)**

Inland: **L • M • N • O • P • Q • R • Sp • Ss • Tp Ts • U • Va •**
Vt • W • Xf • Xp • Y • Zg • Zk(b)

Human-made: **1 • 2 • 3 • 4 • 5 • 6 • 7 • 8 • 9 • Zk(c)**

b) dominance:
List the wetland types identified in a) above in order of their dominance (by area) in the Ramsar site, starting with the wetland type with the largest area.

O

18. General ecological features:
Provide further description, as appropriate, of the main habitats, vegetation types, plant and animal communities present in the Ramsar site.

Endangered alga species *Nitella flexilis, Chara globularis, Chara braunii,* and *Cladophora aegagropila* are growing in the lake.

As to fish species, endangered *Hucho perryi* (Japanese huchen) and *Phoxinus percnurus sachalinensis* (Sakhalin lake minnow) are recorded. The site is the southern limit of natural distribution of *Oncorhynchus nerka nerka* (Sockeye Salmon) in Asia. Diversity of freshwater shellfish species is high and *Margaritifera laevis* and *Pisidiidae* species live in the site.

19. Noteworthy flora:
Provide additional information on particular species and why they are noteworthy (expanding as necessary on information provided in 12. Justification for the application of the Criteria) indicating, e.g., which species/communities are unique, rare, endangered or biogeographically important, etc. *Do not include here taxonomic lists of species present – these may be supplied as supplementary information to the RIS*.

Nitella flexilis [critically endangered species (CR)*1 + endangered species (EN)*1]

Chara globularis [critically endangered species (CR)*1 + endangered species (EN)*1]

Chara braunii [critically endangered species (CR)*1 + endangered species (EN)*1]

Cladophora aegagropila [critically endangered species (CR)*1 + endangered species (EN)*1]

Note: *1 Red List of Threatened Wildlife of Japan. Ministry of the Environment

20. Noteworthy fauna:

Provide additional information on particular species and why they are noteworthy (expanding as necessary on information provided in 12. Justification for the application of the Criteria) indicating, e.g., which species/communities are unique, rare, endangered or biogeographically important, etc., including count data. *Do not include here taxonomic lists of species present – these may be supplied as supplementary information to the RIS.*

[Birds]
Grus japonensis (Japanese Crane) [vulnerable species (VU)*1, endangered species (EN)*2, Domestic Endangered Species*3]

[Fishs]
Hucho perryi (Japanese huchen) [endangered species (EN)*1]

[Shellfishes]
Margaritifera laevis [vulnerable species (VU)*1]

Note: *1 Red List of Threatened Wildlife of Japan. Ministry of the Environment
*2 IUCN Red List of Threatened Species (2004)
*3 Designated under the Law for Conservation of Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (Species Conservation Law)

21. Social and cultural values:

e.g., fisheries production, forestry, religious importance, archaeological sites, social relations with the wetland, etc. Distinguish between historical/archaeological/religious significance and current socio-economic values.

Fishery of *Oncorhynchus nerka nerka* (sockeye salmon), *Cyprinus carpio* (carp), *Hypomesus nipponensis (*pond smelts), *Salmo gairdneri* (rainbow trout), and *Pacifastacus trawbridgii.*

Annual yield: 90tons by 11 Fishermen.

22. Land tenure/ownership:

(a) within the Ramsar site:
National land (publicly-owned water body)

(b) in the surrounding area:
National land, private land

23. Current land (including water) use:

(a) within the Ramsar site:

- Water intake for hyrdoelectric power generation
- Fishery of *Oncorhynchus nerka nerka* (sockeye salmon), *Cyprinus carpio* (carp), *Hypomesus nipponensis (*pond smelts), *Salmo gairdneri* (rainbow trout), and *Pacifastacus trawbridgii.* Annual yield: 90tons by 11 Fishermen.
- Aquaculture
- Pleasure boat

(b) in the surroundings/catchment:
Forest

24. Factors (past, present or potential) adversely affecting the site's ecological character, including changes in land (including water) use and development projects:
(a) within the Ramsar site:
None

(b) in the surrounding area:
Tourism, mountain climbing

25. Conservation measures taken:
List national category and legal status of protected areas, including boundary relationships with the Ramsar site; management practices; whether an officially approved management plan exists and whether it is being implemented.

Special Protection Zone (283ha) and Special Zone (1,035ha) of National Park (total: 1,318ha) (The Natural Parks Law) * From September 20, 1974

In the special zone, activities such as erecting structures, felling trees, mining minerals, and reclamation require permission from the Minister of the Environment. In the special protection zone, further activities such as planting trees and bamboos, grazing livestock, collecting and stocking products outside, firing, picking and catching plants and animals also require permission from the Minister of the Environment.

26. Conservation measures proposed but not yet implemented:
e.g. management plan in preparation; official proposal as a legally protected area, etc.

None

27. Current scientific research and facilities:
e.g., details of current research projects, including biodiversity monitoring; existence of a field research station, etc.

[Scientific research]
National Survey on the Natural Environment (Ministry of the Environment)

[Facilities established for research]
Akan Lakeside Eco-Museum Center

28. Current conservation education:
e.g. visitors' centre, observation hides and nature trails, information booklets, facilities for school visits, etc.

At Akan Lakeside Eco-Museum Center and Marimo Exhibition Center, visitors can learn about the history of Akan-ko, the status of the rare algae species Marimo *Cladophora aegagropila* and fish species that features the ecosystem of Akan-ko.

29. Current recreation and tourism:
State if the wetland is used for recreation/tourism; indicate type(s) and their frequency/intensity.

Fishing, pleasure boat, canoeing, motor boat and others. Annual visitors are c. 1.56 million.

30. Jurisdiction:
Include territorial, e.g. state/region, and functional/sectoral, e.g. Dept of Agriculture/Dept. of Environment, etc.

[Territorial]
Ministry of Land, Infrastructure and Transport (publicly-owned water body)

[Functional]
Ministry of the Environment (National Park)
Hokkaido Kushiro Construction Office (publicly-owned water body)

31. Management authority:
Provide the name and address of the local office(s) of the agency(ies) or organisation(s) directly responsible for managing the wetland. Wherever possible provide also the title and/or name of the person or persons in this office with responsibility for the wetland

Kushiro Nature Conservation Office, Hokkaido Regional Environment Office,
Ministry of the Environment
10-3 Saiwai-cho, Kushiro-shi, Hokkaido 085-8639 JAPAN
Tel: +81-154-32-7500
Fax: +81-154-32-7575

32. Bibliographical references:
scientific/technical references only. If biogeographic regionalisation scheme applied (see 13 above), list full reference citation for the scheme.

- Environment Agency 1993 "The Fourth National Surveys on the Natural Environment Report on Lake and Marsh Survey"
- Ministry of the Environment Nature Conservation Bureau 2002 "500 Important Wetlands in Japan"
- Ministry of the Environment 2002 "Threatened Wildlife of Japan –Red Data Book 2nd ed.- Volume 2, Aves"
- Environment Agency of Japan 2000 "Threatened Wildlife of Japan -Red Data Book 2nd ed. - Volume 9, Bryophytes, Algae, Lichens, Fungi"
- Ministry of the Environment 2003 "Threatened Wildlife of Japan -Red Data Book 2nd ed.- Volume 4, Pisces-Brackish and Fresh Water Fishes"
- Ministry of the Environment 2005 "Threatened Wildlife of Japan –Red Data Book 2nd ed.- Volume 6, Land and Freshwater Mollusks"
- Simon Delany et al. 2002 "Waterbird Population Estimates 3rd Edition" Wetlands International
- The IUCN Species Survival Commission "IUCN Red List of Threatened Species 2004"
- The Ornithological Society of Japan 2000 "Check-list of Japanese Birds Sixth Revised Edition"



Map of the Akan-ko Ramsar Site

Statement on the Establishment of the Kushiro International Wetland Centre

January 26th 1995

Kushiro-shitsugen, Akkeshi-ko and Bekambeushi-shitsugen, and Kiritappu-shitsugen are wetlands whose international importance has been recognized through their designation as Ramsar Sites.

Located close to urban areas and used by many local residents for productive activities, research and recreation, these wetlands have attracted international attention as places where tangible examples of wise use can be readily observed.

Furthermore, the area is well equipped with facilities where local residents, tourists and the wider public can experience wetlands first-hand and deepen their understanding of them. These facilities have been highly praised by people involved in the Convention from around the world.

Furthermore, people from around the world have praised local residents for their dedicated service at the Ramsar Kushiro Conference and for the deep understanding of and interest in wetlands and the Ramsar Convention that they demonstrated through their exchanges with delegates from participating countries. They have also expressed high expectations for the residents' continued contributions in the future.

As the host region of the Ramsar Kushiro Conference, the Kushiro region should uphold the spirit of the Kushiro Statement, actively pursue international cooperation at the local level, and fulfil the international responsibilities entrusted to the region.

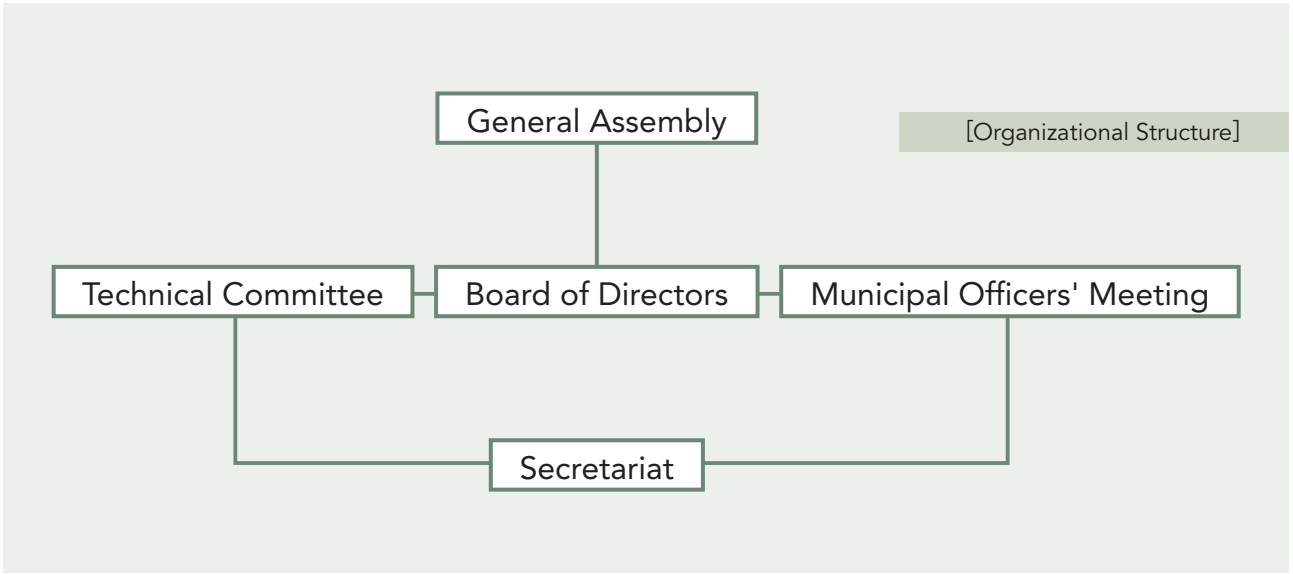
The Kushiro International Wetland Centre is hereby established to make use of the Kushiro region's rich natural environment and extensive facilities, drawing on its wealth of human resources and the support of relevant organizations; to undertake international initiatives that advance wetland conservation and wise use; to promote international understanding through cooperation and exchange programmes; and thereby to contribute to the international community.

Kushiro International Wetland Centre Constituent Organizations

Local Governments and Boards of Education
Kushiro City
Kushiro City Board of Education
Kushiro Town
Kushiro Town Board of Education
Shibecha Town
Shibecha Town Board of Education
Tsurui Village
Tsurui Village Board of Education
Akkeshi Town
Akkeshi Town Board of Education
Hamanaka Town
Hamanaka Town Board of Education

Other Member Organizations
Kushiro Nature Conservation Office, Ministry of the Environment
Kushiro General Subprefectural Bureau, Hokkai-do Government
Hokkaido University of Education (Kushiro Campus)
Kushiro Public University of Economics
Kushiro Chamber of Commerce and Industry
Kushiro Nature Conservation Society
Wetlands International Japan (NPO)

Organizational Chart



International Conferences and Workshops Organized by KIWC

Date	Event
12–15 Aug. 1993	International Symposium on Dragonfly Habitats and Their Conservation
29 Nov.–5 Dec. 1994	East Asia–Australasia Wetland and Waterbird Workshop
9 July 1995	Ecotourism Workshop
25–29 Sept. 1995	Northeast Asia–Pacific Environmental Forum
1–5 July 1996	Second East Asia Conference on National Parks and Protected Areas
25 Aug.–6 Sept. 1996	International Mire Conservation Conference in Kushiro (7th IMCG Field Symposium)
8–10 Jan. 1997	PLEA '97 International Conference in Kushiro
2–6 Mar. 1998	Workshop on Wetland Conservation Activities at the Local Level
13–19 Sept. 1998	UNITAR Asia-Pacific Regional Training Workshop on the Implementation of Multilateral Environmental Agreements Related to Biodiversity (held seven times through 2008)
28 Aug.–2 Sept. 1999	Second UNITAR Asia-Pacific Regional Training Workshop on the Implementation of Multilateral Environmental Agreements Related to Biodiversity
23–29 Mar. 2001	Third UNITAR/KIWC Asia-Pacific Regional Training Workshop on the Implementation of Multilateral Environmental Agreements Related to Biodiversity
20–21 Sept. 2001	International Workshop on Global Warming and Wetland Conservation
5–9 Nov. 2001	International Workshop on Assessing the Water Purification Capacity of Riparian Buffer Zones in Agricultural Areas and Methods for Their Establishment
27 Feb.–2 Mar. 2002	Workshop on Environmental Education and Ecotourism at Sites of the Northeast Asian Crane Site Network
6 Feb. 2003	International Forum on Restoring Wetland Ecosystems
15–21 Mar. 2003	Fourth UNITAR/KIWC Asia-Pacific Regional Training Workshop on the Implementation of Multilateral Environmental Agreements Related to Biodiversity
22–25 July 2003	International Forum on the Ramsar Convention in the 21st Century
23–25 July 2003	Lagoon Conference and Workshop on the Wise Use of Wetlands
14–16 Nov. 2003	National Workshop of the Northeast Asian Crane Site Network
28 Nov.–4 Dec. 2004	Fifth UNITAR/KIWC Training Workshop
8–15 Nov. 2005	Preparation of Posters for Exhibition at the Conference of the Contracting Parties to the Ramsar Convention
18 Mar. 2006	International Crane Forum "Cranes and Our Future"
26–31 Aug. 2006	Sixth UNITAR International Training Workshop
29 June–4 July 2008	Seventh UNITAR Training Workshop on Biodiversity and Climate Change
16–21 Jan. 2015	8th Meeting of Partners (MOP8) of the East Asian–Australasian Flyway Partnership (EAAFP)
3–4 Sept. 2022	14th Annual Meeting of the Japanese Wetland Society in Kushiro

Sister-Wetland Exchanges with the Hunter Estuary Wetlands, Australia

1990 The Mayor of Kushiro visited Australia and presented Mr. Bridgewater, Director of the National Parks and Wildlife Service, with a research report on the breeding behavior of Latham's Snipe prepared by the Outdoor Science Club of Kushiro Nishi High School.

1993 Mr. Bridgewater and his wife, who were visiting Kushiro for Ramsar COP5, visited Kushiro Nishi High School. Proposals were made to establish sister-school and sister-wetland partnerships.

1994 A delegation from Kushiro visited Australia, where agreements establishing the sister-wetland and sister-school partnerships were signed.

1995 Researchers involved in the Kooragang Wetland Rehabilitation Project and migratory bird research visited Kushiro. A group of 15 people from Jesmond High School also visited Kushiro and participated in an exchange with Kushiro Nishi High School.





1996 Representatives from Kushiro attended Ramsar COP6 in Brisbane as observers and visited the Hunter Estuary Wetlands.

1997 Two exchange students from Jesmond High School and a sister-wetland delegation visited Kushiro.

1999 J. Bartlett, Mayor of Port Stephens, and three others visited Kushiro.

2001 KIWC staff visited Australia to observe wetland restoration projects.

2002 Mr. Bartlett, a member of the state parliament and Chair of the Port Stephens Sister Cities Committee, visited Kushiro.

2003 The Chair of the Hunter Wetlands Centre participated in events commemorating the 10th anniversary of Ramsar COP5 in Kushiro.

2004 A delegation of 19 people visited Kushiro. The Mayor of Kushiro and three others visited Australia to sign a renewed sister-wetland partnership agreement marking its 10th anniversary.

2006 A delegation of 11 people visited Kushiro.



2007 A 32-member citizens' delegation led by the Mayor of Kushiro, who also served as Chair of KIWC, visited Australia.

2008 A delegation of six people visited Kushiro.

2011 KIWC received a donation from the Port Stephens Sister Cities Committee in support of recovery efforts following the Great East Japan Earthquake.

2013 A delegation of seven people visited Kushiro.



2014 Students from Kushiro Koryo High School visited Australia and delivered letters from the Mayor of Kushiro to the Mayors of Newcastle and Port Stephens.

2015 The Mayor of Kushiro and three others visited Australia. The Deputy Mayor of Newcastle, the Mayor of Port Stephens, and the Mayor of Kushiro signed an agreement renewing the sister-wetland partnership. The delegation also attended the Hunter Wetlands Centre's 30th anniversary ceremony.

2018 A delegation of 19 people visited Kushiro.

2023 Nine birdwatchers organized by the Port Stephens Sister Cities Committee visited Kushiro and joined local residents for birdwatching activities. A Japan–Australia symposium on migratory birds was also held.

Technical Committee Research Themes

1995	Ecotourism in Wetlands
1996–1997	Environmental Survey of River Ice Floes and Springs
1998–2000	Environmental Education Using the Wetlands of Eastern Hokkaido as a Field
2001–2003	Attempts to Restore and Rehabilitate Wetlands and Their Environments
2004–2006	Public Relations, Education and Awareness-Raising for Wetland Conservation and Wise Use
2007–2009	Research on Invasive Alien Species Affecting Wetland Ecosystems
2010	Publication of the Awareness-Raising Booklet on Invasive Alien Species, The Story of Mink
2010–2012	Community-Based Restoration of Aquatic Environments from a Biodiversity Perspective
2013–2015	Wetlands and Their Benefits to Local Communities
2016–2018	Wise Use of Wetland Resources
2019–2024	Climate Change and Monitoring, Sustainable Development and Wise Use, and Promotion of Environmental Education (Themes Updated)

Winter Wetland Eco-tour to Celebrate World Wetlands Day

Date	Wetland Eco-tour / The theme of the Wetland Day	Activities	Partici-pants
24 January 2004	Wetland Eco-tour aboard the SL Fuyu-no-Shitsugen-go Steam Train "From the mountains to the sea - Wetlands at work for us"	•Ride the SL Fuyu-no-Shitsugen-go steam train •Observe the wetland around Kushiro-shitsugen Station and Hosooka Visitors Lounge (alder trees and animal tracks) •Make snow crystals	14
29 January 2005	Winter Wetland Watching Tour Supported by the Foundation of River & Watershed Environment Management (River Improvement Fund) "There's wealth in wetland diversity - don't lose it!"	•Ride the SL Fuyu-no-Shitsugen-go steam train •Observe animal tracks around Toro Station and Lake Toro Ecomuseum Center (EMC) •Tour the EMC and learn about nature restoration projects •Observe the ice on Lake Toro and make snow crystals •Make windmills from scrap wood	15
25 February 2006	Winter Wetland Eco-tour "Livelihoods at Risk"	•Explore the area around Onnenai Visitor Center •Observe the wetland on cross-country skis •Make snow crystals	9
03 February 2007	Winter Eco-tour 2007 "Fish for tomorrow?"	•Ride the SL Fuyu-no-Shitsugen-go steam train •Explore Lake Toro	23
02 February 2008	Winter Eco-tour 2008 "Healthy Wetlands, Healthy People"	•Ride the SL Fuyu-no-Shitsugen-go steam train •Track animals and observe springs at Lake Shirarutoro	19
31 January 2009	Winter Eco-tour 2009 "River basins and their management"	•Ride the SL Fuyu-no-Shitsugen-go steam train •Observe nature at Lake Toro •Fish for wakasagi (Japanese smelt)	16
31 January 2010	Winter Eco-tour 2010 "Wetlands, biodiversity and climate change"	•Observe nature along the shores of Lake Akan •Take part in indoor activities at Marimo Hall / Akankohan Ecomuseum Center	26
29 January 2011	Winter Eco-tour 2011 " Wetlands and forests"	•Ride the SL Fuyu-no-Shitsugen-go steam train •Enjoy the winter forest and wetland	24
02 February 2012	Winter Eco-tour 2012 "Wetlands and tourism"	•Ride the SL Fuyu-no-Shitsugen-go steam train •Walk along the shores of Lake Shirarutoro and observe nature	24
02 February 2013	Winter Eco-tour 2013 "Wetlands and water management"	•Walk on the frozen surface of Lake Toro •Observe ice, snow and springs •Taste wakasagi (Japanese smelt)	20
01 February 2014	Winter Eco-tour 2014 "Wetlands and agriculture"	•Try shelling corn in Tsurui Village	18
	Not held "Wetlands for our Future"		
30 January 2016	Winter Eco-tour 2016 "Wetlands for our Future: Sustainable Livelihoods"	•Explore Lake Toro •Observe frost flowers, animal tracks and wakasagi (Japanese smelt) •The walk around the Numaoro River was cancelled due to a blizzard	16
04 February 2017	Winter Eco-tour 2017 "Wetlands for Disaster Risk Reduction"	•Walk on the frozen surface of Lake Takkobu •Observe nature around Hosooka Visitors Lounge	24
03 February 2018	Winter Eco-tour 2018 "Wetlands for a sustainable urban future"	•Walk around Lake Toro •Take part in workshops at Motomura House Pal and Lakeside Toro	20
02 February 2019	Winter Eco-tour 2019 "Wetlands and Climate Change"	•Take an eco-tour to experience and learn about nature in the winter wetland •Observe nature around the Onnenai River and visit Onnenai Visitor Center	20
01 February 2020	Winter Eco-tour 2020 "Wetlands & Biodiversity"	•Ride the SL Fuyu-no-Shitsugen-go steam train •Visit the Nihonmatsu viewpoint and observe geological strata	17
06 February 2021	Winter Eco-tour 2021 "Water and Wetlands"	•Observe bokke (bubbling mud vents) along the shores of Lake Akan	7
	Winter Eco-tour 2022 "Wetlands Action for People and Nature"	•Cancelled due to the spread of COVID-19	
04 February 2023	Winter Eco-tour 2023 "Wetland Restoration"	•Trek through the snow and ice of Kiritappu Wetland •Observe nature around Kiritappu Wetland Center	17
03 February 2024	Winter Eco-tour 2024 "Wetlands and Human Wellbeing"	•Explore the wonders of Akkeshi's nature and its bounty: visit Akkeshi Waterfowl Observation Center and Akkeshi Town Oyster Seedling Center to learn how the natural environment of Akkeshi-Ko and Bekambeushi Wetland is connected to local industries.	24

JICA Training Program Hosting Activities

Training Program	Implementation Period	Number of Courses	Total Number of Participants	Number of Participating Countries
Nature Conservation Management	1995 – 1999	5		
Conservation of Wetlands and Migratory Birds	1995 – 1999	5	37	15
Management for Eco-Tourism and Sustainable Use of Natural Park	1999 – 2009	12	64	25
Hokkaido Overseas Technical Trainee Acceptance Program	2000	1	1	1
Conservation, Restoration and Wise-use of Wetland Ecosystems and their Biological Diversity	2000 – 2008	9	67	34
Biodiversity Conservation and Wise Use of Ramsar Sites	2002	1	5	1
Conservation and Wise Use of Red-crowned Crane Habitats	2002	1	2	1
Policy Development Methods for the Wise Use of Natural Parks to Meet EU Standards	2003	1	1	1
Conservation of Black-necked Crane Habitats in Phobjikha Valley, Bhutan	2004 – 2006	3	8	1
The Human Resources Development Project for Water Resources	2004	1	3	1
The Project on the Coastal Wetland Conservation in Yucatan Peninsula	2006	1	2	1
Wetland Ecosystem Conservation and Community-based Nature Conservation in Mongolia	2006 – 2009	4	18	1
Anzali Wetland Ecological Management Project	2012	1	2	1
Conservation and Wise Use of Wetland in the context of implementing Ramsar Convention and CBD	2009 – 2011	3	13	4
Eco-tourism for Sustainable Use of Natural and Cultural Resources	2010 – 2015	7	58	34
Conservation and Sustainable Use of Biodiversity to the Wetland Ecosystems on Community Base	2012 – 2014	3	20	9
Sustainable use of wetland resources for local benefit	2015 – 2017	3	21	15
Follow-up Survey on Ecotourism Training	2016	1		
Eco-Tourism for Officials on Nature Conservation	2016 – 2024	9	59	28
Youth Training Program: Tourism Promotion in Local Communities	2018 – 2019	2	22	8
Ecosystem-based Disaster Risk Reduction and Sustainable Wetland Management	2021 – 2025	3	47	14
Nature-Based Solutions Utilizing Wetland Ecosystems (Towards Nature Positive Society)	2023 – 2025	3	20	8
Total		79	470	203



2012 Eco-tourism for Sustainable Use of Natural and Cultural Resources



2019 Eco-Tourism for Officials on Nature Conservation



2025 Nature-Based Solutions Utilizing Wetland Ecosystems

30 Years Since the Ramsar COP5 in Kushiro

Publication Date March 2024

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