

# Hinuma Lake: Sustainable Livelihoods in Practice

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Japan



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The recently designated Ramsar site of **Hinuma Lake**, exemplifies how the sustainable management of the local population is preserving the rich flora and fauna of the area, maintaining the livelihoods of those who depend on the lake for income.

The brackish waters of the lake, created by the merging of seawater and freshwater, provide an excellent source of clams. The harvesting of these is still done using gentle conventional methods, a 12mm grill attached to a 'scooper', rather than the more modern machines which damage the lake bed. This method still provides up to 100kg of clam daily which can then be sold on for around 1000 yen/kg.

The number of days fishing allowed is also limited to 5 per week (weekdays only) and there are careful regulations of the number of fisherman allowed to use the lake, kept to 240. Such sustainable methods maintain the continuing balance of the area, and the consistent availability of the principle food source of the wintering Scaup continues to bring them to the lake - estimated at around 5000 individuals annually which accounts for more than 1% of its population in East Asia.

This approach to sustainable livelihoods is also reflected in the eel catchers, bundles of bamboo sticks dangled in mid-air which the eels (on average 23 cm or longer in length) use as shelter and get trapped. Single hooks are also used to scoop the eels from the mud, with both methods allowing for 1 ton of eel to be harvested every year without impacting on the lake.



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The Mayor of Ibaraki Town, Norio Kobayashi, who has led the Council for Ramsar designation with the support by the Mayors of neighbour towns Takaaki Kotani and Yasuhei Onizawa, have undertaken detailed discussions with the local communities, briefing 89 community leaders on the benefits of Ramsar designation and how the wise use principle can help sustain the long term health of the lake through such activities as sustainable livelihoods.

Such sustainable farming activities preserve the lake as a habitat for many species, including the nationally endangered four-spot midget damselfly and Steller's sea eagle as well as more than 88 species of birds. Which is a great relief for the birdwatchers, which are hoping to

develop the eco-tourism potential of the area.

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