

Report on WWD2013 in Biwa-ko, Nagahama City, Shiga Pref., Japan
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http://www.biwa.ne.jp/~nio/eng/index_e.html

Lake Biwa (Biwa-ko) is the largest lake in Japan. It was designated as a Ramsar Site in 1993. In 2008, Nishino-ko which is a marshy lake attached to Biwa-ko was added to the site. On 3rd February, in the meeting in Kohoku (Northern Lake Biwa), we celebrated the 20th anniversary of Lake Biwa Ramsar Site as an activity for WWD2013. 20 year's history of Lake Biwa Ramsar Site is deeply related to WWD2013's theme "Wetland and Water Management".

[Details]

(1)The meeting was hosted by Biwa-ko Waterfowl & Wetland Center (BWWC), and Kohoku-Wild Birds-Center (KWBC), supported by Biwa-ko Wetland Study Group (BWSG)
<http://www.biwa.ne.jp/~nio/ramsar/projen.htm> on 3rd February (from 9:30 to 14:00).



Photo 1 The entrance of BWWC

The entrance of BWWC looks like a face of Little Grebe. Little Grebe is the symbol bird of Biwa-ko. Building on the right is KWBC that has birding facilities for watching waterfowls in Biwa-ko.

(2)Opening Speech Masakatsu Kimura (Director of BWWC & KWBC)

(3) Bird-watching for waterfowls

At first, Nobuo Murakami gave some quizzes about Ramsar Convention to the audience. Those questions were "Is the Ramsar Convention aimed for protecting waterfowls?" "Is only a range of Ramsar Site an object of conserving by the Convention?" Both answers were No.

He pointed out how important observing wetlands were. Mountains, rivers, rice paddies, and lakes are all connected to water, and parts of wetland ecosystem. Waterfowls are good and important indicators to measure how healthy wetlands are.

After the quiz, we were birding for about one hour around the Center, and observed 38 species of birds including geese, swans, and ducks(Photo 2).



Photo 2 Birding around the Center



- ←2013 20th anniversary of Lake Biwa Ramsar site !
- ←2012 Ramsar COP11 at Romania
- ←2011 Ramsar WWD2011 40th anniversary of the Convention
United Nations Decade on Biodiversity (2011 ~)
- ←2011 03/11 Great East Japan Earthquake
- ←2010 CBD COP10 Nagoya, Japan Aichi BD Targets
- ←2008 Ramsar COP10 at Korea
Nishino-ko added
(1999 Tomohiro & Souich born)
- ←1993 Ramsar COP5 at Kushiro, Japan, Lake Biwa registered
- ←1992 Rio Summit Agenda 21
FCCC(Climate Change)+CBD
- ←1987 Brundtland Commission [Our Common Future]
- ←1986 Chernobyl disaster
- ←1980 Japan joined to Ramsar Convention
Kushiro-shitsugen registered
(1976 Satoru born)
- ←1971 2nd Feb. Ramsar Convention adopted
Environmental Agency Japan established (1969 Jun born)
- ←1962 Rachel Carson [Silent Spring]
(1942 Nobuo born, 1947 Hisashi born)

Fig.1 Importance to understand the history of International Environmental Conventions
 In order to close a zipper, we have to do it from the beginning. It cannot be closed at the middle of it. We tend to focus on a recent progress of conventions. Like a zipper, we have to follow the history of conventions from the beginning in order to have a correct understanding.

(4) Talk about 20-year history of Lake Biwa Ramsar Site by Nobuo Murakami & his son, Satoru

At first, coordinator Hisashi Sugawa introduced brief history of many international environmental conventions including Ramsar Convention. It is important to understand the history of these conventions. All of them are acting towards sustainable use of earth environment. Our wetlands conservation activities have to be handed over to the next generation (Figure 1).

Nobuo Murakami keeps working on local wetlands conservation as a natural science teacher. He talked about two activities that went well.

First one is introducing of water plants in town of Juri (Juri-cho), Nagahama city, Shiga prefecture. There are many flowing wells (Artesian aquifer) at lakeshore region around Lake Biwa. A large quantity of pure water is flowing out from the wells in Juri-cho. Townspeople had not realized it. They got rid of any kinds of water plants, when they cleaned ditches. Water plants “*Ranunculus aquatilis*” can be grown in only pure water streams. Murakami planted them in Juri-cho. Townspeople enjoy beautiful white flowers of the water plant (Photo 3).



Photo 3 Baikamo (submerged water plants with beautiful white flowers)

Second one is about Yogo-cho, where Nobuo lived in. The mayor of Yogo tried to invite a repository plan for nuclear wastes in 2006, in order to obtain subsidy. Murakami was able to stop it helped by the majority of townspeople who signed up petition. Yogo-ko (lake of Yoko) is a source of Lake Biwa. The population around the Lake Biwa and Yodo-river basin is huge. Those residents had a big concern, and more than 20,000 people sent petition.

After Fukushima nuclear plant accident in March 2011, the case of Yogo-cho was televised nationally. That gives us an opportunity to think about what we really should do about nuclear wastes.

The number of people interested in attractive creature livings in wetlands increased. But younger generation interested in wetlands is few. Nobuo thinks it is important to educate younger generation to understand values of wetlands.

Satoru, Nobuo Murakami's son, talked about his personal story growing up as a child of conservator. He also talked about the history of NPO "Blue Lake Biwa" that he is now working as the representative director.

When Satoru was young, his father introduced freshwater fishes and waterfowls. He got immediately interested in not only creatures but also nature at whole. He started studying the ecology, and wetlands conservation.

NPO "Blue Lake Biwa" (BLB) was started by people who involved "Non-Phosphorus Soap Movement." In 1977, there was Red Tide in Lake Biwa. Red Tide is discoloration of a body of water by abnormal number of plankton. Plankton proliferated and accumulated rapidly in the water because of large amount of phosphorus. Phosphorus was contained in synthetic detergent drained from domestic sewages. The group of people promoted a usage of soap which doesn't contain phosphorus. After BLB took over the movement, it expanded their activities like the followings:

- Group purchase of soap made from used cooking oil from household.
- Group purchase of wood and the rice products in Lake Biwa basin,
- House reforming; a rainwater tank, a firewood stove

In 1992, Municipal Government of Shiga Prefectural enacted the reed beds conservation ordinance. It started the activity for conserving wetlands ecosystem in the lakeshore of Lake Biwa. In 1993, it was registered as a Ramsar site. Lake Biwa is important as aquatic resources for 15 million people living in the lower basin of the Lake. The 20th anniversary of Lake Biwa Ramsar Site should be celebrated not only by Shiga, but also by many people of Lake Biwa & Yodo river basin (Figure 2) including Osaka & Kyoto City.



Figure 2 Lake Biwa & Yodo-river basin

(5) Report on KODOMO Ramsar International Wetlands Workshop

At first, Jun Ueda explained about KODOMO(Children) Ramsar Projects that Ramsar Center Japan are promoting.

Tomohiro Tomioka, and Souichi Ueda (1st Grader of Junior Highschool) joined the ESD-KODOMO(Children) Ramsar International Wetlands Workshop in Nakhon Sawan, Thailand (11-13, January 2013). They reported their experience at Workshop. Bung Boraphet is the largest freshwater

swamp in Thailand. Two children observed freshwater plants, waterfowls in the lake, and conservation activities at the lake with other children came from all over the world. Then they discussed in group about what was the most important point of conserving the lake. Each group presented their conclusion of the discussion. (Photo 4)



Photo 4 In the KODOMO Ramsar Workshop in Thailand, they presented about Lake Biwa

(6) Closing Speech Jun Ueda

Ueda introduced the corner of WWD2013 in Kohoku-Wild Birds-Center (Photo5), and the website (http://www.biwa.ne.jp/~nio/eng/index_e.html). On that site, you can read this report, and reports of WWD2011&2012 in Kohoku..

(7) Sending an yell to 20th anniversary of Lake Biwa Ramsar Site

To watch the video that all of the participants around a birthday cake are shouting “Congratulations on 20th anniversary of Lake Biwa Ramsar Site!” in Japanese, and in English (Photo6), go to the following YouTube site.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cKd63las2II>

We had a tea party afterwards. We enjoyed tea with candies came out from a Birthday Cake made by a cardboard box. Also, rice bowls made of Sekihan (that is special festive rice, rice boiled with red beans), oranges were served.



Photo 5 WWD2013 corner in Kohoku-Wild Birds-Center



Photo 6 All of the participants around a birthday cake are shouting “Congratulations on 20th anniversary of Lake Biwa Ramsar Site ! ” in Japanese, and in English. Go to the following YouTube site. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cKd63las2II>