

#1

Hosted by: Tokushima branch of the Wild Bird Society of Japan, Tokushima Nature Hike Club

Activity: Debriefing session on Ramsar COP10 in Korea

Date: January 24, 2009, PM 7:00

Reporter: Midori Yamauchi

Summary:

The Tokushima branch of the Wild Bird Society of Japan and the Tokushima Nature Hike Club held a debriefing session on the Ramsar COP10 on January 24, 2009.

Mr. Miyake, president of the Tokushima branch explained about the Ramsar Convention in his greeting speech underscoring the wise use of wetlands and announced that they are promoting activities aimed at the potential designation of Yoshino River estuary as a Ramsar Site.

Ms. Kimiko Matsumura reported on her 5 days of attending the Ramsar COP10. She said, "It was when I was disappointed at the low level of Japan's nature conservation status after living in U.K. for 10 years that I had the opportunity to attend the Ramsar COP10. It was an honor for me to be able to participate, and I learnt a lot. Since all the wetlands and seashores are protected in U.K., I really feel I have to raise people's awareness in Japan."

Regarding the World NGO Conference on Wetlands, Ms. Haruyo Wataya gave a presentation using photos.

Ms. Rieko Iguchi of Tokushima Nature Hike Club said she had a fiddler-crab-shaped hat during the Conference and spoke about "The Ramsar Convention and Yoshino River" and "The Common Issues between the Yoshino River Estuary in Japan and Nakdong River in South Korea."

At the end of the session, Mr. Miyake presented some photos: "The Ramsar Sites in South Korea," "Exhibition Booths" and "The atmosphere of the COP10." Many picturesque wetlands were shown.

The reporter believes that they have succeeded in conveying the enthusiastic atmosphere of the World NGO Conference on Wetlands and the Ramsar COP10.



#2

Hosted by: Niigata City

Activity: 13th Citizens' Bird-Watching Tour in Sakata

Date: January 25, 2009

Summary:

The 13th Sakata City Citizens' Bird-Watching Tour was held in Sakata Park (Akatsuka, Nishi Ward, Niigata City). 58 participants observed 47 kinds of wild birds including Swans and Teals.

In addition, a cultural festival was held at Sakata Water Bird and Wetland Center from January 23rd to March 1st. Photos and pictures were collected under the theme "Sakata's nature and human," which were displayed at the festival. The visitors enjoyed Sakata's attractions through various exhibits.



Bird-Watching



Swans and Teals



Kingfisher

#3

Hosted by: Akatsuka Citizen's Group Living with Sakata

Activity: Waterbird Watching Tour in Sakata

Date: February 1st, 2009

Reporter: Haruyuki Wakui

Summary:

A Waterbird Watching Tour was held in Sakata Park (Akatsuka, Nishi ward, Niigata City) on February 1st. It was organized by "Akatsuka Citizen's Group Living with Sakata" which is a local citizen's group conducting environmental conservation activities in Sakata. There were 15 participants looking for birds with their binoculars despite the windy weather.

At the opening ceremony, Mr. Yasuo Sato, a staff of Sakata Waterbird and Wetland Center, reported the ecology of swans in Sakata mentioning that 3,012 swans were observed on January 30th. He also commented as follows.

"Since the surrounding rice fields serve as feeding grounds for the birds, agriculture plays an important role in Sakata. We should examine why the fireflies and killifishes are disappearing from the viewpoint of biodiversity."

Participants then walked towards the bird watching house called “Katamidori.” Along the way, they came across a Kingfisher eating a fish atop a willow tree in the park. Participants admired the bird and pulled out their cameras hastily to take some shots.

At the bird watching house, they could not see Swans since they had already flown away, but were able to watch Mallards, Great Cormorants and Coots. After the walk, the participants headed back to Akatsuka Commerce Hall near the Sakata Waterbird and Wetland Center and warmed themselves up with sweet mild sake called 'Amazake' while viewing the lake.

“Sakata Wild Bird Club” was established with an aim to rediscover Sakata’s charm through bird watching. As a weekly event, they take a walk around the park and pick up litter. Participants in the bird watching tour were invited to become new members of the club.



#4

Hosted by: Biwako Ramsar Network*

(*An organization consisting of 15 cities and villages along Biwa-ko and Shiga Prefecture.)

Activity: The 16th Biwa-ko Waterbird-watching Tour -- In Celebration of the Inclusion of Nishino-ko

Date: January 30-February 1, 2009

Summary:

The Biwa-ko Waterbird-watching Tour is an annual event being held at several places on Biwa-ko's lakeshore simultaneously on the occasion of the World Wetlands Day since 1993. This year's event was the 16th event, which celebrated the expansion of Biwa-ko's designated area to include Nishino-ko during the COP10. The tour took place at nine locations, including Otsu City, Higashiomi City, Kusatsu City, Hikone City, Nagahama City, Kohoku Town, Takashima City (two locations) and the newly added Nishino-ko.

Guided by a waterbird specialist, participants learned about waterbirds, Biwa-ko's environment and the Ramsar Convention through lectures and quizzes. After that, they went on a waterbird-watching tour. About 250 people participated in the activities, including families who have never done bird-watching before as well as bird lovers.



#5

Hosted by: NPO Wetland Nakaikemi

Activity: Winds of Nakaikemi

Date: From January 30 to February 5, 2009

Reporter: Susumu Sasaki

Venue: Shopping center in Tsuruga City, Fukui Prefecture

Summary:

An exhibition was held to introduce Nakaikemi wetland, which has one of the world's greatest peat layers (about 40 meters thick and 120,000 years' worth) with rich biodiversity. About 80 posters were put up on the 10-meter-long wall to inform the public of the characteristics of Nakaikemi wetland, which the mayor of Tsuruga City expressed his will to designate as a Ramsar site.

A quiz using photos of Nakaikemi's animals and plants was held to entertain the children and their parents. Other displays include sceneries of wise use of wetlands, illustrations of boring cores of peat layers and aerial photos. The "Ramsar corner" was set up which displayed materials related to the Ramsar Convention as well as handouts. English posters about Nakaikemi used at Ramsar COP10 in Korea were also displayed.

Since the exhibition was held in a city shopping center, it attracted a wide range of people. It was featured by one TV station and 6 newspapers.



#6

Hosted by: NPO Wetland Nakaikemi

Activity: Nature Walk "From Downstream to Upstream of Nakaikemi"

Date: February 1, 2009

Reporter: Susumu Sasaki

Venue: Nakaikemi Wetland, Tsuruga City, Fukui Prefecture

Summary:

The event, held a day before the World Wetlands Day, was a walk through the wetland to observe the connection of water based on this year's theme.

Nakaikemi is surrounded by "Satoyama" (a Japanese term applied to the border zone or area among the foot of mountain and arable flat land) and has no river to flow in. Since the route provides easy access to public transportation, the participants got on a bus to the entrance of Nakaikemi. The walk started at Kinome riverbank where the water runs from the wetland. They measured electric conductivity of the water at some points and headed for the riverhead.

It was during the Japanese brown frogs' spawning season and their beautiful singing voice could be heard. An egg batch was found along the way. The stream in the wetland is an unlined artificial ditch which is about 500 meters long.

They also examined how the national highway bypass road is making an impact on the wetland's water quality. The electric conductivity of the water was measured on both sides of the road that runs along the mountain skirts at the west of the wetland. There was a big difference between the two figures.

At the end of the walk, they confirmed the water source was the seepage from three valleys of Mt. Tezutsuyama located at the west of the wetland.



#7

Hosted by: Kushiro International Wetland Center

Activity: World Wetland Day "Winter Eco-tour 2009"

Date: January 31, 2009

Reporter: Kushiro International Wetland Center

Summary:

To mark this year's World Wetlands Day, local people went on a tour hosted by Kushiro International Wetland Center to experience the nature at midwinter in Lake Toro in Kushiro-shitsugen, Hokkaido.

Participants got on the winter-only steam locomotive that runs along the eastern side of the wetland, viewed the Kushiro River from downstream to midstream and arrived at Lake Toro, which is connected to Kushiro River by its tributary.

At Lake Toro, participants learned about how the lake was formed by observing the terrace on the lakeside or the sedimentary soil using a soil probe. They also guessed the behavior of Red squirrels and Ezo red foxes from the footprints on the snow and tried ice fishing Japanese smelt. Presentations were made by members of the local fisheries cooperative about the ecology of the Japanese smelt, its relationship with the river and lake environments and fisheries practiced in the wetlands.

At the end of the tour, the host explained about the World Wetlands Day along with a quiz about the outline of the Ramsar Convention.

16 people ranging from elementary school students to elderly people in their 80s as well as staff members joined the tour and enjoyed exploring the wetland at sub-zero temperature.



Eco-tour along the lakeside



Quizzing about the Ramsar Convention

#8

Hosted by: Hamatonbetsu Town

Activity: Walking on Kutcharo-ko and making snow statues

Date: February 1, 2009

Summary:

The participants and organizers walked on Kutcharo-ko, looked for wild animals' footprints on the snow and watched the waterbirds and eagles that pass the winter on the lake. They also examined thickness of the ice.



For lunch, lake prawns and Japanese smelts caught in the lake were served. The participants made snow statues of ducks and swans in front of the Waterfowl Observatory.

About 30 people in and around the town enjoyed the midwinter Kutcharo-ko.

#9

Hosted by: Save Awase Higata Association

Activity: World Wetland Day "Launching a Leaf-boat in Awase Tidal Flat"

Date: February 1, 2009

Summary:

A World Wetlands Day event called "Launching a Leaf-boat in Awase Tidal Flat" was held at Awase tidal flat in Okinawa on February 1, 2009.

Participants gathered in the morning to make leaf-boats out of light galangal (*Alpinia zerumbet*) leaves as they used to do as children. They enjoyed the fun as if they were kids again.

Then they got on a canoe to launch the leaf-boats timed to the ebb with the wish to preserve the wetlands. Usually it is cold in February even in Okinawa, but it was sunny, warm and just right on that day.

#10

Hosted by: Manko Waterbird and Wetland Center

Activity: Panel Exhibition

Date: February 3 to March 3, 2009

Summary:

A panel exhibition to introduce the natural environment of four Ramsar sites in Okinawa Prefecture was held from February 3 to March 3 2009 at Manko Waterbird and Wetland Center.

#11

Hosted by: Manko Waterbird and Wetland Center

Activity: Manko Special Nature Observation Tour

Date: February 8, 2009

Summary:

The Manko Special Nature Observation Tour was held on February 8 2009 as a World Wetlands Day event. There were 41 participants, which were divided into 2 groups: the Bird-watching group and the mangrove tour group. Guided by members of Okinawa Wild Bird Society and Naha City's "Forest House Min Min," the participants enjoyed walking through the tideland and mangrove wetland while watching the wild birds.



#12

Hosted by: Nakaumi Waterbird International Exchange Fund Foundation

Activity: Children's Ramsar Club at Yonago Waterbirds Sanctuary "Let's Think About Connectedness of Wetland Life"

Date: February 8, 2009, 10:00-15:30

Summary:

An event for children to think about the connectedness of wetland life was held at Yonago Waterbirds Sanctuary. 22 people, including elementary and junior high school children as well as their parents participated in the program.

First the participants had an orientation of the event at Yonago Waterbirds Sanctuary Nature Center. They were divided into three groups and went out to observe the wetland creatures. After lunch, they returned to the Nature Center to make a diagram of the food web. Then they made *Senryus* (humorous poems) of the creatures. Ceremonial photos were taken at the end of the program.



#13

Hosted by: Nakaumi Waterbird International Exchange Fund Foundation

Activity: World Wetlands Day Event "Let's Make Color Clay Models of Wetland Creatures!"

Date: February 15, 2009, 13:30-16:15

Summary:

Participants gathered at Yonago Waterbird Sanctuary Nature Center and first had a session to think about how the wetland creatures are connected (food web). They pasted cards with pictures of wetland creatures on a whiteboard and drew in arrows to indicate each creature's position in the food web. Next, they observed waterbirds in the sanctuary with telescopes and small creatures in the tank. After returning to the center, they made miniature models of wetland creatures with color clay. Ceremonial photos were taken at the end of the program.

18 people including 11 elementary school children and 7 parents participated in the event.



#14

Hosted by: Merry Companions of Akiyoshidai Plateau

Activity: Tour of the Springs in Akiyoshidai Plateau and Map Making

Date: February 14, 2009, 9:00am-4:00pm

Summary:

17 people joined a tour of Akiyoshidai's springs and Nishiyama Mountain (398.9 meter elevation) located on the west side of Akiyoshidai Plateau.

Guided by the former curator of Akiyoshi-dai Museum of Natural History, participants went on a three-hour walk from a spring pond near Akiyoshidai Family Travel Village to Nishiyama Mountain. They learned about how to make a fire belt in preparation for prescribed burning and gathered information on fossils in the limestone and plants along the way.

After returning to Akiyoshidai Family Travel Village, they made a map of the course they walked. They also posted photos of the scenery and their comments on what they have seen on the map.

They are planning to make a pamphlet out of the map and information they have compiled to introduce the courses and observation points of Akiyoshidai Plateau to the tourists and visitors.



#15

Hosted by: Tohoku Regional Environment Office, Ministry of the Environment

Activity: Oyama Kami-ike and Shimo-ike Bird-Watching Tour

Date: February 14, 2009, 11:00-15:00

Summary:

Oyama Kami-ike and Shimo-ike are small and large freshwater ponds located in the western part of Tsuruoka City in Yamagata Prefecture. They became the first Ramsar site in the prefecture last October.

This year's first bird-watching tour was held at Shimo-ike lakeside co-hosted by

Chokainanroku and Haguro Ranger Offices for Nature Conservation under Tohoku Regional Environment Office, Ministry of the Environment.

Oyama district of Tsuruoka City, where Kami-ike and Shimo-ike are located, prospered as a famous sake brewing place in eastern Japan from the Edo period (like Nada in western Japan). There are currently four sake brewing families in operation sending fine sakes throughout the country.

Every year, Tsuruoka City holds a one-day event called "Oyama New Sake and Sake Brewery Festival" as a part of "Tsuruoka Winter Festival." People can go on a brewery hopping tour to have a taste of sake prepared through the winter. It is always crowded with people from in and out of the city or prefecture.

This bird-watching tour was a tie-up event with this sake brewery festival. 41 people visited Oura Bird House at Shimo-ike lakeside in spite of the strong wind and rain.

Many kinds of birds could be observed at this time of the year, such as Mallard, Spot-billed Duck, Pintail, Baikal Teal and Smew. There were also Great Cormorant, Grey Heron, Goshawk, White-tailed Eagle, Steller's Sea-Eagle, Sparrow Hawk and Peregrine Falcon.

Many of the participants in the bird-watching tour originally came for the festival and were from other prefectures (Tokyo, Niigata Prefecture, etc.). They were impressed by the richness of valuable nature well-preserved in rice paddy areas and natural recreation forests despite the proximity to residential areas.

The waterbirds were resting their wings on Shimo-ike while the raptorial birds circled the sky taking aim at their prey. Participants observed such facts of life in the nature at hand while listening to the explanation by local instructors and volunteer guides. They asked questions from time to time and observed through the telescope with interest.

#16

Hosted by: Tsuruoka City, Oyama Tourist Association

Activity: Ramsar Site Registration Event: The 1st Oyama Kami-ike and Shimo-ike Photo Contest

Date: February 24 - 29, 2009 11:00 - 15:00

Summary:

To celebrate Oyama Kami-ike and Shimo-ike's designation as a Ramsar site and the World Wetlands Day, the 1st Oyama Kami-ike and Shimo-ike Photo Contest was held by Tsuruoka City and Oyama Tourist Association.

The theme was open as long as it had something to do with Kami-ike and Shimo-ike. Applications were accepted not only from citizens of Tsuruoka City but also from those living in other areas. As of February 25, there were 53 applicants and 169 photos.

While the images of the four seasons of Kami-ike and Shimo-ike or the migratory birds such as swans and ducks resting their wings were common subjects, innocent young children taking a

walk in the wetland were also caught by the camera.

The Yamagata Prefectural Governor Prize, Tohoku Regional Environment Office (the Ministry of the Environment) Prize, Tsuruoka City Mayor Prize and so on will be awarded to the best pictures, which will then be exhibited at major centers of Tsuruoka City.

#17

Hosted by: Noshiro City

Activity: 3rd Otomo-numa Forum

Date: February 15, 2009, 3:00pm-

Number of Participants: About 80

Program:

- Video of Otomo-numa (Noshiro Office of River and National Highway, Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism)
- Special Lecture "The Geese of North East Asia -- the Natural History and the Lives of the Peoples of North East Asia"
(Dr. Alexander V. Andreev, Institute of Biological Problems of the North, Russian Academy of Sciences)
- Special Lecture "Subspecies of Bean Goose (*Anser fabalis serrirostris*) and Middendorf's Bean Goose (*Anser fabalis middendorffii*)"
Lecture "Potentials and Issues of Conservation-Oriented Agriculture, focusing on Sado City's efforts in establishing a haven to coexist with Crested Ibis"
(Toshio Ikeuchi, Head Office of the "Foster A Goose Program")
- Panel Exhibition
"Integrated Learning by 3rd Grade Students of Noshiro 4th Public Elementary School"
"Photos of Otomo-numa by Otomo Nature Society"



Summary:

Dr. Andreev gave an academic lecture based on his 40 years' study of geese in Russia. He referred to the increase of geese in Europe and North America as compared with the decrease in Asia. Although recently there has been a slight increase in Asia, he concluded that it is necessary for members to share accurate information and carry out appropriate measures such as the establishment of wildlife reserves for preservation of geese.

Mr. Ikeuchi gave a lecture on the conservation-oriented agriculture focusing on Sado City's efforts to coexist with Crested Ibis. In Sado, a certification system for safe and secure rice production has been established cooperatively by the local government, Japan Agricultural Cooperatives, environmental protection groups and farmers. Although the price is comparatively high, the certified rice, which is traceable and safe, is accepted by the consumers. Another important point was that purchasing such rice contributes to the consumers' satisfaction as they feel they are participating in the conservation of Crested Ibis.

He also mentioned that it was a great loss for Otomo-numa for not being a Ramsar Site. If it was designated as a Ramsar Site, it would receive much attention, thus promote conservation-oriented agriculture as Osaki City (Miyagi Prefecture), which has two Ramsar Sites (Kabukuri-numa and the surrounding rice paddies and Kejo-numa). He hopes to see the rice cultivation around Otomo-numa take full advantage of its abundant rice fields and geese.

#18

Hosted by: Toyooka City and Council for Preservation of Oriental Storks' Habitat

Activity: KODOMO (Children) Ramsar Exchange Event in Toyooka City

Date: February 21 and 22, 2009

Summary:

The children from Nakaumi, Biwa-ko and Toyooka City who participated in KODOMO (children) Ramsar in Korea on the occasion of Ramsar COP10 gathered again to participate in "KODOMO (Children) Ramsar Exchange Event in Toyooka City."

<Day One>

20 participants from Tottori and Shiga Prefectures, representing Nakaumi and Biwa-ko, respectively, visited the sites of Oriental Stork reintroduction and wetland conservation in Toyooka City. Mr. Matsushima, director of Eco Museum Center for Oriental White Stork, explained about their conservation activities at "Hyogo Prefectural Homeland for the Oriental White Stork." The children showed much interest and asked many questions, such as "How long does it take for them to grow?" and "What do they feed on?" They cheered when the released storks flew over their heads.

Then they visited Toshima wetland which was under maintenance work. The children helped release the fishes which had been caught and moved to another locale before the maintenance work. About 1,000 fishes were released including crucian carps, carps as large as 30-50 cm (around 11-20

inches) and Japanese common catfishes as large as 60 cm (around 24 inches). In the farthest part of the wetland, some storks swooped down and watched their activities.

There was a lecture concerning the development of the Toshima Wetland by Stork Wetland Network. They also exchanged views on such issues as the reason why they have to preserve wetlands and what they should do to continue their activities. The participants reacknowledged the significance of preservation and the hard work it requires.

At the end of the day, they visited the biotope on the riverside fallow rice paddy of Kayo district in the midstream of Maruyama River where three parent-child storks greeted them. They were surprised to learn there will be more than 15 ha of wetland added.

<Day Two>

On the 2nd day, the children's exchange event was held with 22 children from Toyooka City joining in.

First, a mysterious and humorous storyteller Mr. Chingensai Kanando told a story of "Hachigoro," a wild Oriental Stork in Toshima Wetland that had died two years before. It taught them about the meaning of life together with the storks, the history of reintroduction and the wonders of nature.

Next, the children of Nakaumi and Biwa-ko Ramsar sites introduced their activities and appealed the importance of preserving wetlands.

The children of Biwa-ko made a report about the first stork that came flying on February 18. They found out that it was one of the brood from Hachigoro's Toshima Wetland and were impressed how the nature is connected between the two distant areas.

The children from each site worked on the children's appeal together while they intermingled with each other and deepened exchanges. They posted messages about their thoughts on storks and nature along with their drawings and photos from the children's workshop in Korea on a large picture of the "Ramsar Stork." Then they presented the "Ramsar Stork" to the Toyooka City Mayor Mr. Nakagai with an appeal for the future.

Mr. Nakagai sent a message to the children in return, "If you delve deeper into preservation of wetlands in your local area, you will reach an underground water vein, which connects other regions as well. Let us take further action in each of our regions and work together into the future." At the closing of the event there were smiling faces everywhere. Those participating were saying to each other: "Let's meet at Biwa-ko next," "Please come to Nakaumi, too!" It made the organizers think nature and children are able to relate to each other beyond time and space.

#19

Hosted by: Network Association for Water Environment in Shimada River System's Forest, River and Sea, Suetake River System Sewage Purification Association

Activity: Bird-watching on Shimada River

Date: February 22, 2009, 1:00pm-3:00pm

Summary:

30 participants including local people and staff went on a bird-watching tour for this year's World Wetlands Day.

First, there was a lecture entitled "The River, Birds and People" at the Hikari City Regional Development Support Center. The participants were then taught how to use the binoculars and went bird-watching from Heisei Bridge to Hikari Ohashi Bridge on Shimada River.

19 species of birds were observed including the Great Cormorant, Spot-billed Duck, Teal, Osprey, Black Kite, Common Sandpiper, Herring Gull, Black-tailed Gull, White Wagtail, Japanese Wagtail, Brown-eared Bulbul, Dusky Thrush, Penduline Tit, Tree Sparrow, Gray Starling, Carrion Crow, Jungle Crow and the Rock Dove.

