

A small lake situated in the Ishikari Plains that is visited by 50,000 White-fronted Geese in spring and autumn

Miyajima-numa

Freshwater Lake

Geographical Coordinates: 43°20'N, 141°43'E / Altitude: 13m / Area: 41ha / Type of Wetland: Freshwater lake / Designation: Special Protection Area of National Wildlife Protection Area / Municipality involved: Bibai City, Hokkaido Prefecture / Ramsar Designation: November 2002



Monitoring and research activities



Waterfowl blanket the water surface



White-fronted Geese of Miyajima-numa

Principal Features:

Miyajima-numa is a circular lake of 41ha found in Bibai City, which is 50km northeast of Hokkaido's largest city, Sapporo. Considered shallow with an average depth of 1.7m, the lake is little affected by irrigation (out-flow and in-flow), and thus is mainly fed by large amounts of melting snow, and rainfall.

West of the lake is the meandering Ishikari River. Historically, the river flooded numerous times, creating bends that were eventually cut off to form oxbow lakes, of which Miyajima-numa is one. As the region is one of the leading grain-producers of Hokkaido, the lake is periodically used for irrigation.

A Stopover for the White-fronted Goose:

Although once surrounded by natural forest, there are currently no trees around Miyajima-numa. Indeed, when standing on the lakeshore, one is offered an unobstructed full view of the lake. Reeds line the shore, while Manchurian wild rice and water chestnuts grow in its waters. Characterized by a vast water surface, and water grasses and rice paddies that serve as food sources, Miyajima-numa is an invaluable resource for migratory birds.

Every year in spring and autumn, waterfowl such as ducks, geese, and swans flock to Miyajima-numa in astounding numbers, and is thus considered an important stopover in Japan. For example, over 50,000 White-fronted Geese arrive

here, accounting for 1% and over of the species population of East Asia. Miyajima-numa, in addition to the southerly wintering sites of Izu-numa and Uchinuma, and Kabukuri-numa constitute important points in the lifecycles of these birds.

Restrictions on Lead Shot Use:

Prior to becoming a wildlife protection area, Miyajima-numa was an ideal hunting ground. However, starting in the late 1980's, large numbers of ducks and geese perished from acute lead poisoning caused by the ingestion of lead shot used in hunting. A major social issue ensued, resulting in the voluntary stopping of hunting. The national government soon restricted the use of lead shot, while promoting a switch to steel shot. Miyajima-numa was eventually designated a wildlife protection area, followed by Ramsar Convention designation in 2002.

[White-fronted Goose *Anser albifrons*]

A medium-sized goose of approximately 72cm in length. It is dark-brown with irregular, black stripes on its underbelly, and a white face. After breeding in northern tundra, they winter in Japan. They arrive in Japan en masse at Miyajima-numa in autumn, and pass through heading north in spring.

Contact Information:

Bibai City Office
<http://www.city.bibai.hokkaido.jp/>



A banded White-fronted Goose



Full view of Miyajima-numa

