

A unique landscape of a large sandspit with withered trees. A shallow inner bay with extensive Eelgrass beds

Notsuke-hanto and Notsuke-wan

Seagrass/Seaweed Bed, Salt Marsh, Sandspit

Geographical Coordinates: 43°34'N, 145°16'E / Altitude: 0-10m / Area: 6053ha /

Major Type of Wetland: Shallow marine water, tidal flat, seagrass/seaweed bed, salt marsh, low moor, sandspit / Designation: Special Protection Area of National Wildlife Protection Area / Municipalities Involved: Betsukai Town and Shibetsu Town, Hokkaido Prefecture / Ramsar Designation: November 2005 / Ramsar Criteria: 1, 2, 5, 6 / EAAFP Flyway Network Site



Notsuke-hanto



Left: Redshank, Right: Brent Goose (Photo by K. Fujii)

General Overview:

Notsuke-hanto is a hook-shaped peninsula jutting into the Nemuro Strait between Nemuro Peninsula and Shiretoko Peninsula in eastern Hokkaido. It is the largest sandspit in Japan with a length of 28km, formed with sand sediments brought by the tidal currents running through the Nemuro Strait between the peninsula and Kunashiri Island. There are some unique landscapes of withered trees called "Todowara" and "Narawara" formed by the flat sand beaches and marshes almost as high as the sea level. Forests of trees such as Sakhalin Fir *Abies sachalinensis*, now stand lifeless due to subsidence and seawater wash.

In contrast to a linear outline of the open sea coast, the curved inner bay holds a number of jugged tidal flats in various forms, with salt marshlands on the shoreline. Because of the diverse natural wetland environment, it is an important stopover site visited by more than 20,000 migratory birds every spring and autumn. In particular, the numbers of Grey-tailed Tattler, Whooper Swan, Brent Goose, Wigeon, Scaup, and Common Goldeneye accounts for 1% of the each species' population in East Asia. Moreover, breeding Redshanks

have been observed in the area.

Inner Bay is a Rich Fishing Ground:

Notsuke-wan is the inner bay surrounded by the peninsula of Notsuke-hanto. The mouth of the bay is 4.3km wide, and the bay covers an area of approximately 5700ha.

It is a shallow bay with a maximum depth of 4m at the mouth and a depth of less than 1m for most of its area. The bay has one of the largest seagrass beds in Japan. The seagrass bed of Eelgrass *Zostera marina* is a rich repository of fishery resources because it serves as a good spawning and nursery ground for various fish and shellfish. In Notsuke-wan, the major catch in the seagrass bed is Hokkai Shrimp *Pandalus latirostris*. In summer and autumn, shrimp fishing is conducted with small fishing boats called "Utasebune" with three-cornered sails. Engines cannot be used because the bay is too shallow. The elegant view of the sailing boats drifting in the wind is one of the seasonal features in Notsuke-wan.

Hokkai Shrimp is a limited marine resource and the local fishermen's cooperative regulates the fishing season and the amount of catch strictly. It is a good example of wise use of the wetland.

[Seagrass/Seaweed Bed] It is an un-

derwater area with dense seagrass and seaweed communities such as Kelp and Eelgrass. It is an important habitat for various marine life and a productive ground for marine resources. A seagrass bed of Eelgrass has developed on the sand and silt sediments of the inner bay. The extensive seagrass beds of Eelgrass are found at the bay of Notsuke-wan, and Mutsu Bay in Aomori prefecture in northern Honshu.

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