

## Kabukuri-numa and the surrounding rice paddies Freshwater Lake, Rice Paddy

Geographical Coordinates: 38°38'N, 141°06'E / Altitude: 5.7m / Area: 423ha / Major Type of Wetland: Freshwater lake (dammed lake), low moor, rice paddy / Designation: Special Protection Area of National Wildlife Protection Area / Municipalities Involved: Kurihara City, Tome City and Osaki City, Miyagi Prefecture / Ramsar Designation: November 2005 / Ramsar Criteria: 5, 6 / EAAFP Flyway Network Site



Bean Geese



White-fronted Geese



Geese taking off from Kabukuri-numa

### General Overview:

The Ramsar site includes the Kabukuri-numa flood controlling basin and the surrounding rice paddies that are closely linked to each other. They are situated in the river basin of the Hasama River, a tributary of the Kitakami River, in northern Miyagi Prefecture in northern Honshu, the largest island of Japan. Kabukuri-numa currently has an area of 150ha, but the lake used to be a 1,000ha dammed lake in the Kitakami Plains, a floodplain of the Kitakami River, before the lake was reclaimed to be rice paddies. However, as the area suffered from repeated river overflows and floods, it was returned to the current state of the lake.

The lake has a typical gradation of plant communities found in lowland wetlands, from Manchurian Wild Rice to reeds and then to willows. In addition, rare plant species such as *Penthorum chinense* and *Monochoria korsakowii* are also found here.

### Wintering Grounds for Ducks and Geese:

Kabukuri-numa is a shallow lake with

an average depth of 0.5m. There are almost no trees around the lake and it is surrounded by vast rice paddies. These characteristics make for ideal wintering grounds for migratory birds. Every year in winter, over 30,000 ducks and geese visit the area to winter. The area is the largest wintering ground for the large geese such as White-fronted Goose. The population exceeds 1% of the species' population in East Asia.

In order to maintain the ecological character of this wintering ground, local people are engaged in various efforts such as water management, cleanup, channel maintenance, and water quality improvement. One of the most notable is the "Fuyumizu-tambo" namely "winter flooded rice paddy", a practice to flood the rice paddies that had usually been left dry in winter. This practice is gaining attention as a new role of rice paddies to conserve the wetland and biodiversity.

In order to support the efforts, there are some programs to raise local awareness.

For example, an 'Environmental Education Zone' was established in the eastern part of this lake and regular education programs for children are conducted. There are two more Ramsar lakes in the neighborhood of this lake such as Izu-numa and Uchi-numa in the north, and Kejo-numa in the west. Each lake is a good wintering site for waterfowl and the birds travel back and forth between those lakes.

**["Fuyumizu-tambo"]** Following the autumn harvest of rice, a selected number of rice paddies surrounding the lake are flooded throughout winter. These grounds not only provide good habitat for ducks and geese to roost, feed, and rest, but also the bird droppings become a good fertilizer for rice and the water in the paddies significantly control the intrusion of weeds and insects. As a result, the farmers can produce high quality rice without chemicals, and the rice is sold at a premium price in the market.

### Contact Information:

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