

## Hizen Kashima-higata

## Tidal Flat

Geographical Coordinates: 33°6'N, 130°7'E / Altitude: -2.5–1m / Area:57ha/ Major Type of Wetland: Tidal flat / Designation: Special Protection Area of National Wildlife Protection Area / Municipalities Involved: Kashima City, Saga Prefecture / Ramsar Designation: May 2015 / Ramsar Criteria: 2, 4, 6 / EAAFP Flyway Network Sitey



Jumping Great Blue-spotted Mudskipper



Foraging Great Blue-spotted Mudskipper  
(Photo by Y. Nakamura)

### General Overview

Hizen Kashima-higata is a tidal mudflat on the western coast of Ariake Sea. It has developed at the estuaries of the Shiota River and the Kashima River flowing through southern Saga Prefecture. This mudflat is situated at the narrowest end of the counterclockwise tidal current of Ariake Sea, and faces the Higashiyoka-higata on the northernmost shore of the sea. Among the earth and sand flowing into Ariake Sea, large sand grains will settle down on the bottom first and small particles of mud will be carried away by the tidal current for a long distance. In this way, sandy tidal flats like Arao-higata developed on the eastern coast of the sea and a muddy tidal flat developed especially in Hizen Kashima-higata in the western shore of the sea.

This tidal flat has rich resources including some fish (Great Blue-spotted Mudskipper, Warasubo: *Odontamblyopus lacepedii*, *Acanthogobius hasta*), a shellfish (*Barnea dilatata*) and Fiddler Crab. It is visited by a large number of migratory birds such as Saunders's Gull, Whimbrel, Black-faced Spoonbill and Common Shelduck, and is an important stopover and wintering site for shorebirds.

### Traditional Fishing Practices Unique to the Mudflat

Hizen Kashima-higata is a mudflat of fine clayish sediments that sometimes reach several dozen meters deep. Compared to the sandy mudflat which is easy to walk on, it is extremely hard to walk on this boggy mudflat. In order to wade on it,



Aerial view of Hizen Kashima-higata from the northwest



Traditional fishing practice by "Gata ski" on a tidal mudflat (Photo by Y. Nakamura)

a tool called the "Gata ski" was invented in this area. It is a fishing tool unique to Ariake Sea. A fisher puts one of his knees on a board approximately 30cm wide and 2m long and kicks the mud with the other foot to go forward. It is a useful tool for traditional fishing such as "Mutsukake", "Subokaki" and "Takappo". Mutukake uses a long pole to hook mudskippers that crawl about on the mud. Subokaki is for fishing Warasubo, a unique fish to the bay. It uses a pole with a thin iron blade hook on the tip and involves probing for the fish hiding in the mud to hook it. Takappo sets a cylindrical trap in the nest hole in the mud. Local people have highly valued the products from the mudflat, such as mudskippers, Warasubo and various crabs since olden days.

### Wise use of the Mudflat

A mudflat is important not only for migratory birds but also for humans as a ground for food resources such as fish and laver, and for natural water purification. As mentioned above, the products from the mudflat have been loved and called "Maeumi-mon" by local people. In order to raise public awareness for the importance

of the mudflat, Kashima City organizes several bird watching events every year targeting local people including elementary school children. A sports event named "Gatalympic" is held in a place adjacent to this mudflat. It is a big event in the area attracting many people ranging from adults to children, who will learn about the mudflat while enjoying themselves covered with mud in the mudflat.

### Contact Information:

Kashima City Office  
<http://www.city.saga-kashima.lg.jp/>

