

Akkeshi-ko and Bekambeushi-shitsugen

Geographical Coordinates: 43°03'N, 144°54'E / Altitude: 0-20m / Area: 5277ha / Major Type of Wetland: Brackish lake, salt marsh, low moor, high moor, river / Designation: Special Protection Area of National Wildlife Protection Area / Municipalities Involved: Akkeshi Town, Hokkaido Prefecture / Ramsar Designation: June 1993 / Ramsar Criteria: 1, 2, 4, 6

**Brackish Lake,
Salt Marsh,
River, Moor**



Bekambeushi River and Lake Akkeshi-ko



The high moor in the Bekambeushi River basin (Photo by M. Okada)



Steller's Sea Eagle *Haliaeetus pelagicus*

General Overview:

Flowing northwards in eastern Hokkaido is the 43km long Bekambeushi River, the most pristine major river in Japan due to the small amount of human intervention. In its basin lies the 8300ha Bekambeushi-shitsugen and at its mouth the 3,230ha Lake Akkeshi-ko.

Situated between the larger wetlands, Kiritappu-shitsugen and Kushiro-shitsugen, the largely inaccessible Bekambeushi-shitsugen remained undeveloped, thus retaining its natural character. Its pristine condition can be considered as a rarity in Japan. In 1989, satellite imaging revealed that 100ha of high moor remained completely untouched in the river basin. Surrounding this area are low moors with their characteristic reed, sedge, and alder vegetation. This is an invaluable wetland that displays the natural development of wetlands. As Lake Akkeshi-ko is a brackish water lake, plant communities of saline environment are found in some places in the salt marsh along the shore, including Common Glasswort which has the Japa-

nese name Akkeshi-so because it was first found in this lake, Akkeshi-ko.

Paradise for Wild Birds:

Approximately 200 species of birds have been recorded in the area. As it does not completely freeze over in winter, Akkeshi-ko is an important wintering ground for the Whooper Swans. In addition, almost 300 Steller's Sea Eagles and White-tailed Sea Eagles, winter here. Akkeshi-ko is also an important habitat for Japanese Cranes. In 2005, a 381ha sanctuary for the Japanese Crane entrusted to the Wild Bird Society of Japan was added to the Ramsar designation area. The area is included in the Flyway Site Network under the Partnership for the East Asian-Australasian Flyway.

Wise Use of the Lake:

Because both Lake Akkeshi-ko and Akkeshi Bay on the coast of Pacific Ocean are rich in biodiversity, they have long been known by fishermen for their productive waters. Fishing is still one of the major industries in the area. In particular, aquaculture of oysters and clams of high

quality is carried out in Akkeshi-ko. In order to maintain its water environment, the local fishing cooperative plants trees every year in the catchment area.

[Steller's Sea Eagle *Haliaeetus pelagicus*] It is a black-brown eagle with white tail, white upper wing coverts, large yellow bill and yellow legs. It is the largest among sea eagle species and has a body length of about 90cm and a wingspan of 240cm. After breeding in the coastal areas of Kamchatka and Sakhalin in Russia, it winters in Hokkaido, particularly in eastern Hokkaido. It mainly feeds on fish.

Contact Information:

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