

Furen-ko and Shunkuni-tai

Geographical Coordinates: 43°17'N, 145°21'E / Altitude: 1m / Area: 6139ha /

Major Type of Wetland: Brackish lake, seagrass/seaweed bed, sandbar, low moor, tidal flat / Designation: Special Protection Zone of National Wildlife Protection Area / Municipalities Involved: Nemuro City and Betsukai Town, Hokkaido Prefecture / Ramsar Designation: November 2005 / Ramsar Criteria: 1, 2, 3, 5, 6

Brackish Lake, Seagrass/Seaweed Bed, Sandbar



Shunkuni-tai

General Overview:

Furen-ko is a lagoon that used to be a part of the sea, developed on the base of the Nemuro peninsula of Hokkaido, at the northeastern end of Japan. The sandbars of Shunkuni-tai extend from the south, and those of Hashirikotan stretch from the north separating Okhotsk Sea and Furen-ko. The lake is connected to the sea via two outlets. Furen-ko extends 20km from east to west with a circumference of 65km and an area of 5600ha. It is a shallow lake with a depth of 11m and a large tidal flat on its shore. Among the 13 rivers flowing into Furen-ko, the estuary of the Furen River in particular has developed into a salt marsh forming a vast unique landscape.

Shunkuni-tai is something like a lid on Furen-ko lagoon. It consists of three rows of sand dunes formed with sands carried from sea currents. Each sand dune was formed in different eras between 3000 and 1500 years ago. This is a habitat for a wide variety of wildlife with an area of 600ha extending as long as 8km to embrace sand dunes, grasslands, forests, salt marshes, and tidal flats. In particular, the Sakhalin Spruce *Picea glehnii* forest on the sand dunes has attracted international attention for its uniqueness.

A Habitat for a Variety of Birds:

Furen-ko's amazing ecosystem diversity includes approximately 280 species of birds including shorebirds, swans and geese. The lagoon is their resting spot during the long migration. It is also one of the most popular places for birdwatchers

to observe rare species such as the White-tailed Sea Eagle, Steller's Sea Eagle, Black Woodpecker, Blakiston's Fish Owl and Japanese Cranes attracting both domestic and international visitors all the year round. There are some facilities for visitors such as Shunkuni-tai Nature Center and nature observation trails.

Warmth Index:

The Nemuro Peninsula has the lowest warmth index in Japan. A warmth index is a year's total of the difference between 5 and the average temperature of each month that exceeds 5 degrees C. It indicates the correlation between plant distribution and the temperature of an area. The Nemuro Peninsula is cold throughout the year because of the influence of fogs formed by sea currents in summer as well as the drift ice in winter. Such environmental conditions shaped the unique and diverse landscape of Furen-ko.

[White-tailed Eagle *Haliaeetus albicilla*]

The large eagle has a brown body and a pale brown head with a yellow bill and legs. It measures 80cm in length with a 2m wingspan. A small number of them breed mainly in eastern and northern Hokkaido. Many birds from Russia and the Far East visit Hokkaido in winter.

Contact Information:

Nemuro City Office
<http://www.city.nemuro.hokkaido.jp/>
Betsukai Town Office
<http://betsukai.jp/>



White-tailed Sea Eagle



Sakhalin Spruce forest (Photo by M. Okada)

