

Hotokenuma

Low Moor

Geographical Coordinates: 40°49'N, 141°22'E / Altitude: 0-10m / Area: 222ha / Major Type of Wetland: Low moor / Designation: Special Protection Area of National Wildlife Protection Area / Municipalities Involved: Misawa City, Aomori Prefecture / Ramsar Designation: November 2005 / Ramsar Criteria: 2



Aerial view of Hotokenuma



Reed bed in Hotokenuma

General Overview:

Mutsu-Ogawara Lakes are located on the Pacific Ocean coast at the base of Shimokita Peninsula in Aomori prefecture at the northernmost end of Honshu Island. In this area pockmarked with large and small lakes, an area of reclaimed land of Hotokenuma lies nestled between the largest lake, Ogawara-ko, and coastal sand dunes.

Hotokenuma, originally a lagoon connected to Ogawara-ko, was reclaimed to develop agricultural lands in a reclamation project that began in 1963. Although a small part of the 700ha reclaimed land was actually converted to rice paddies, most of the work was suspended due to policy changes involving rice acreage reduction. Consequently, the area remained untouched as a public land owned by Misawa City, and gradually became a marshland dominated by reeds.

However, the reclamation plan was not

called off and appropriate management of the area has been carried out, including forced drainage and controlled reed burning in spring. The local climate with cool summers also helps to maintain a unique natural environment with short grasses. It is a breeding habitat for grassland birds now and some eagles are observed here as well.

Breeding of Japanese Marsh Warbler:

Hotokenuma was successfully brought to the public attention when some Japanese Marsh Warblers were found breeding in this area. Although the Japanese Marsh Warbler was identified as a new species in family Sylviidae in 1884, it had been considered to be a "phantom bird" because there was no information about the breeding habitat and ecology of this bird. This incident has prompted the local community to be actively involved in protection and conservation of this wetland as an important breeding



Japanese Marsh Warbler (photo by I. Ando)

ground of Japanese Marsh Warblers.

[Japanese Marsh Warbler *Megalurus pryeri*] A small, reddish-brown bird with white eyebrows, averaging 14 cm in length, it is found only in parts of Japan and China, with the estimated total population being around 2500. It prefers grasslands such as reed beds, and has been sighted only in limited locations in Japan. The population in Hotokenuma is estimated at around 1000. The bird is known for its sharp chirp as it soars over the territory.

Contact Information:

Misawa City Office

<http://www.net.pref.aomori.jp/misawa/>

