

## Miyajima

Geographical Coordinates: 34°14'N, 132°17'E / Altitude: 0-80m / Area: 142ha / Major Type of Wetland: Sand beach, salt marsh, river / Designation: Special Zone of National Park, Special Historical Sites, Special Places of Scenic Beauty / Municipalities Involved: Hatsukaichi City, Hiroshima Prefecture / Ramsar Designation: July 2012 / Ramsar Criteria: 2, 9

## Sand Beach, Salt Marsh



Designated coastal wetland of Miyajima

### General Overview:

Miyajima (Itsukushima) is situated in the north western part of Hiroshima Bay along the coast of the Seto Inland Sea. It is a roughly rectangular island with a length of 10.5km, a width of 3.5km and an area of 30.2 km<sup>2</sup>.

As the primeval forest around the peak of Mt. Misen (530m), the highest peak in the island, represents a typical forest habitat in the warm temperate zone in Japan, it is designated as a National Natural Monument. The Itsukushima Shrine embodies traditional Japanese religion's finding of divinity in nature and shows an excellent harmony of natural beauty and artificial beauty. The shrine was designated as a UNESCO World Heritage Site together with Mt. Misen in the background, which is revered as a place for the gods to descend.

### A Valuable Natural Coastline in the Seto Inland Sea:

The Ramsar site covers the south western coast of Miyajima Island. Although more than 60% of the coast of the Inland Sea has been converted to artificial or semi-artificial coast, the coastline here has been kept intact without any artificial construction. It is a valuable natural coast featuring the original natural environment of the Seto Inland Sea. The coastline is conserved by the good balance of sand inflow and outflow. The gushing water from the hills mixes with the seawater at the time of spring tide to form a tidal marsh. The vegetation here consists of two typical plant communities. One of them is the coastal plant community dominated

by *Vitex rotundifolia* developed at the sand beach easily affected by sea water, and the other is the marshy grassland community dominated by *Cladium chinense* Nees developed at the inland side with low salinity. A plant community with *Rosaceae Potentilla riparia*, a variety endemic to Miyajima, is found at the edge of the wood as well.

### A Habitat for a Rare Dragonfly, *Orthetrum poecilops miyajimaensis*:

The coastal marsh is a habitat for *Orthetrum poecilops miyajimaensis*, a subspecies of dragonfly endemic to Miyajima. This dragonfly does not lay eggs in the upstream freshwater area but breeds only in this brackish water area in the tidal marsh where the larvae of other dragonfly species cannot survive. Except for Miyajima, this species is found only in China in the world.

A local committee named the “Coordination Committee for Protection and Management of *Orthetrum poecilops*” is leading the conservation work for this precious dragonfly. The work includes monitoring survey, removal of sand sediments around the marsh and expansion of water channels. In order to protect the species from extinction due to a habitat loss caused by some negative influences such as typhoons, people are also conducting risk diversification to establish a new habitat in some other marshes in the island.

### Local Industry and the Ramsar Site:

Miyajima is also famous for the local oyster cuisines. The sea around the Ramsar site is a good ground for oyster aquaculture with a history of 300 years.



The Itsukushima Shrine



*Orthetrum poecilops miyajimaensis* (larva)



*Orthetrum poecilops miyajimaensis* (adult)

This is due to the nutrient-rich water flowing from the primeval forest of Miyajima.

### Contact Information:

Hatsukaichi City Office  
<http://www.city.hatsukaichi.hiroshima.jp/>

