

Watarase-yusuichi

Low Moor, Artificial Wetland

Geographical Coordinates: 36°14'N, 139°41'E / Altitude: 8-23m / Area: 2861ha / Major Type of Wetland: Low moor, artificial wetland / Designation: National Wildlife Protection Area, River Area / Municipalities Involved: Koga City, Ibaraki Prefecture, Tochigi City, Oyama City and Nogi Town, Tochigi Prefecture, Itakura Town, Gunma Prefecture, Kazo City, Saitama Prefecture / Ramsar Designation: July 2012 / Ramsar Criteria: 1



Lake Yanaka-ko



An extensive reed bed



Eastern Marsh Harrier

General Overview:

Watarase-yusuichi is a retarding basin located roughly in the center of Kanto plains. It is a facility to store water for daily use and to retain the river overflow temporarily to prevent flooding in the river basin. The area has been afflicted by repeated heavy floods and still faces the risk of another flood even now.

During the Meiji period, approximately 100 years ago, contaminated water from the Ashio Copper Mine spilled out frequently at the time of floods and damaged a large area in the lower reaches of the rivers. As it became a big societal problem, the government decided to abolish a village called Yanaka to construct a retarding basin to control the flooding and mining pollution. This facility was built on the sacrifices of many people.

There are three regulating reservoirs enclosed by embankments. The reservoirs and the river beds are covered with one of the largest reed beds in Honshu, the main island of Japan.

A Rich Fauna and Flora:

The diverse wetland environment of

Watarase-yusuichi supports a habitat for many species. More than 700 plant species have been recorded here including over 50 species recognized in the red list of the Ministry of the Environment, such as *Ophioglossum namegatae* and *Viola raddeana*. One hundred and forty species of birds have been recorded. From spring to summer, it is a breeding ground for some grassland birds such as Great Reed Warblers and Zitting Cisticolas, while in winter, it is a wintering ground for thousands of ducks, many buntings and some Eastern Marsh Harriers which is cited as "endangered" in the red list of the Ministry of the Environment.

A Vital Point for Flood Control of the Tone River System:

The flood caused by Typhoon Kathleen in 1947 brought about catastrophic damage to many places in the Kanto Plains. In order to control such disasters, river improvements including the construction of upstream dams and river channels were carried out in many rivers such as the Tone River and the Watarase River. Watarase-yusuichi has an important role of flood

control along with a number of dams in the upstream of the Tone River, a primary river that runs through the Kanto plains. The excess flood water from the three rivers, Watarase-gawa, Omoi-gawa and Uzuma-gawa, is stored in this basin temporarily so as not to affect the trunk of the Tone river.

Wetland Conservation and Basic Plan for Restoration:

A Committee for Wetland Conservation and Restoration of Watarase-yusuichi was established in 2002 in order to improve the flood control function as well as to promote wetland conservation and restoration of this basin. The committee formulated a plan: "Basic Plan for Wetland Conservation and Restoration of Watarase-yusuichi" in 2010. The objective of this plan is restoring the deteriorated wetland environment by excavating the places afflicted by negative factors such as alien species to restore a habitat for diverse fauna and flora. Wetland conservation and restoration in this area is going to be promoted based on this plan while taking consideration the conservation of the existing good environment and improvement of the flood control function.

Contact Information:

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