

## Yatsu-higata

## Tidal Flat

Geographical Coordinates: 35°40'N, 140°00'E / Altitude: 0m / Area: 40ha / Major Type of Wetland: Tidal flat / Designation: Special Protection Zone of National Wildlife Protection Area / Municipalities Involved: Narashino City, Chiba Prefecture / Ramsar Designation: June 1993 / Ramsar Criteria: 3



View of the Yatsu-higata



Left to right: Cleaning up of Yatsu-higata / Children's music concert / picture-story show

### General Overview:

Yatsu-higata is located approximately 2km inland of Tokyo Bay. It is a 40ha tidal flat of sand and mud. The bay once had an extensive tidal flat which was one of the largest in Japan. However, most of the area was reclaimed for factories, housing and roads in the process of rapid industrialization. Yatsu-higata is an exceptional tidal flat that has survived this process by active conservation efforts of a local community. The tidal flat resembles a swimming pool, enclosed by concrete walls on all sides. It is connected to Tokyo Bay via two channels on the western and eastern ends, through which the tidal water flows in. At high tide, the tidal flat is filled with sea water up to a depth of about one meter.

The site is a very important stopover area for migratory birds. Ten percent of the plovers and sandpipers migrating to Japan have been observed in this area. In 1996, Yatsu-higata was included in the Flyway Site Network under the Partnership for the East Asian-Australasian Flyway.

### A Tidal Flat Left in a Metropolis:

Yatsu-higata is situated only 30 minutes away from downtown Tokyo, between housing complexes, schools and an ex-

pressway. Locals appreciate and enjoy the site as a valuable natural environment remaining in an urban area. In 1994, the Yatsu-higata Nature Observation Center opened as a core facility for nature observation and environmental education. Around the center, observation stations and paths were prepared for public use. The center is used for nature conservation and environmental education as well as for bird watching, recreation and relaxation. A habitat conservation and management project for wildlife started from 2010 in order to improve the environment for birds.

### Local Participation in Conservation of the Tidal Flat:

Before it was designated as a Ramsar site, local people actively volunteered to clean-up this wetland. With the belief that local participation and cooperation is indispensable for wetland conservation, Narashino City is actively enrolling volunteers at the Yatsu-higata Nature Observation Center. Currently about 130 volunteers support the conservation and management of the tidal flat and the operation of the center. There also is a clean-up project involving local people.

**[Wetland Education]** The Yatsu-higata Nature Observation Center provides various environmental education programs in collaboration with elementary schools throughout Narashino City. The programs include plankton watching, picture-story show, music concerts and an exhibition of life size bird models. In addition, an exchange program with the Boondall Wetlands in Queensland, Australia was commenced in 1998 allowing students from both countries to exchange their experiences.

### Contact Information:

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