

Tofutsu-ko

Geographical Coordinates: 43°56'N, 144°24'E / Altitude: 1m / Area: 900ha / Major Type of Wetland: Brackish lake / Designation: Special Protection Area of National Wildlife Protection Area, Special Area of Quasi National Park / Municipalities Involved: Abashiri City and Koshimizu Town, Hokkaido Prefecture / Ramsar Designation: November 2005 / Ramsar Criteria: 1, 2, 3, 5, 6

Brackish Lake



Full view of Tofutsu-ko



Flocks of Bean Goose, Greater White-fronted Goose and other birds

General Overview:

Along the coast of the Sea of Okhotsk, from Cape Soya, the northernmost cape in Japan, to Shiretoko Peninsula, a world heritage site, there are a number of lakes, marshes, and lagoons of various sizes such as Kutcharo-ko, Komuke-ko, Saroma-ko, Notoro-ko, Abashiri-ko, and Tofutsu-ko. Tofutsu-ko lies in the southernmost part of this area. The name of this lagoon comes from the indigenous Ainu word "Toptut", which means "the mouth of lake". This lagoon was isolated from the sea by a sand hill that developed from sandbanks and has a small outlet to the sea at the north-western end. The lagoon has a perimeter of 27km and covers an area of approximately 900ha. It is a shallow lake with an average depth of 1.1m, and a maximum depth of 2.5m. This lagoon is an excellent environment for migratory birds, who often stop over or even winter here.

Tofutsu-ko is an important habitat for more than 60,000 ducks and geese, supporting more than 1% of the East Asian population of Bean Goose, Whooper Swan,

Wigeon, Smew and Red-breasted Merganser (as of 2005). White-tailed Sea-eagle (some resident) and Steller's Sea-eagle also spend their winter here, while several pairs of Japanese Crane have been spotted breeding.

A salt marsh has developed in the low areas of the shore, as well as aquatic communities such as Seaside Arrowgrass, Marsh Arrowgrass and Common Glasswort. The freshwater marsh is covered with wetland plant communities such as reed, sedge and alder. The lake is a good fishing ground for shrimps and oysters because the dense water plant communities of *Zostera nana* in the lake support a good habitat for fish. The fishermen also practice fishery resource management like young fish releasing and self-imposed control.

Koshimizu Wild Flower Garden:

The wetland plant community that stretches the length of 8km, with an area of 275ha, on the sand hill between Tofutsu-ko and the Sea of Okhotsk is called "Koshimizu Wild Flower Garden". Wild flowers like the Japanese Rose are in bloom from



Tofutsu-ko and Mt. Shari



View of Tofutsu-ko from the east

spring to autumn, attracting many tourists to visit this natural garden and enjoy the beautiful landscape of the lagoon. To sustain its sound ecological conditions, controlled burning of dead grass is carried out every spring before the flowers bloom.

[Bean Goose] Approximately 85cm in length, its body is dark brown with a white tail, with a splash of orange near the tip of its bill. They are migratory birds that fly to lakes, marshes, riverbeds, rice paddies, and grasslands in the spring and fall, and spend their winters in Izu-numa in Miyagi Prefecture and other places via Tofutsu-ko from its breeding ground in Kamchatka. They have also been designated as a national natural monument and a rare species on the Red List of the Ministry of the Environment, Japan. A similar species of Greater White-fronted Goose can sometimes be spotted mingling with a flock of Bean Goose.

Contact Information:

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