

A unique landscape of a large sandspit with withered trees. A shallow inner bay with extensive Eelgrass beds

## Notsuke-hanto and Notsuke-wan

Geographical Coordinates: 43°34'N, 145°16'E / Altitude: 0-10m / Area: 6,053ha /

Major Type of Wetland: Shallow marine water, tidal flat, seagrass/seaweed bed, salt marsh, low moor, sandspit / Designation: Special Protection Area of National Wildlife Protection Area / Municipalities Involved: Betsukai Town and Shibetsu Town, Hokkaido Prefecture / Ramsar Designation: November 2005 / Ramsar Criteria: 1, 2, 5, 6 / EAAFP Flyway Network Site

## Seagrass/Seaweed Bed, Salt Marsh, Sandspit



Notsuke-hanto



Left: Redshank, Right: Brent Goose (Photo by K. Fujii)

### General Overview:

Notsuke-hanto is a hook-shaped peninsula jutting into the Nemuro Strait between the Nemuro and Shiretoko Peninsulas in eastern Hokkaido. With a length of 26 km, it is Japan's longest sand spit, formed by tidal currents moving through the Nemuro Strait between the peninsula and Kunashiri Island. There are distinct landscapes of withered trees called "Todowara" and "Narawara" formed by the flat sand beaches and marshes almost as high as the sea level. The subsidence and seawater wash have devastated the forests of trees such as Sakhalin Fir (*Abies sachalinensis*).

In contrast to the straight coastline of the open sea, the inner bay is curvy and contains a variety of protruding tidal flats and marshlands. It is a significant stop-over point for more than 20,000 migratory birds in the spring and fall because of its rich natural wetland environment. In particular, Grey-tailed Tattler, Whooper Swan, Brent Goose, Wigeon, Scaup, and Common Goldeneye contribute 1% of each of their population in East Asia. Moreover, breeding of Redshank has been observed in the area.

### Inner Bay is a Rich Fishing Ground:

The Notsuke-hanto peninsula surrounds the inner bay of Notsuke-wan. The bay's mouth is 4.3km wide, with an area of about 5,700ha.

Notsuke-wan is a shallow bay with a maximum depth of 4m at the mouth and a depth of less than 1m for most of its area. The bay has one of the largest seagrass beds in Japan. The seagrass bed of Eelgrass (*Zostera marina*) is a rich repository of fishery resources since it is an excellent spawning and nursery ground for various fish and shellfish. The main catch in the seagrass bed of Notsuke-wan is Hokkai Shrimp (*Pandalus latirostris*). Shrimp fishing is done in the summer and fall using small fishing boats called utasebune with three-cornered sails. As the bay is too shallow, boats with engines cannot be used. One of the seasonal attractions in Notsuke-wan is the elegant view of sailing boats drifting in the wind.

Hokkai Shrimp is a scarce marine resource; hence, the local fishermen's cooperative closely regulates the fishing season and catch size. It is a good example of wise use of the wetland.

**[Seagrass/Seaweed Bed]** It is an underwater area with dense seagrass and seaweed communities such as Kelp and Eelgrass. It is an essential habitat for various marine life and a productive ground for marine resources. A seagrass bed of Eelgrass has formed on the sand and silt sediments of the inner bay. The extensive seagrass beds of Eelgrass are found at the bay of Notsuke-wan and Mutsu Bay in Aomori prefecture in northern Honshu.

### Contact Information:

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