

Furen-ko and Shunkuni-tai

Geographical Coordinates: 43°17'N, 145°21'E / Altitude: 1m / Area: 6139ha /

Major Type of Wetland: Brackish lake, seagrass/seaweed bed, sandbar, low moor, tidal flat / Designation: Special Protection Zone of National Wildlife Protection Area / Municipalities Involved: Nemuro City and Betsukai Town, Hokkaido Prefecture / Ramsar Designation: November 2005 / Ramsar Criteria: 1, 2, 3, 5, 6 / EAAFP Flyway Network Site

Brackish Lake, Seagrass/Seaweed Bed, Sandbar



Shunkuni-tai

General Overview:

Furen-ko is a lagoon that used to be a part of the sea. It was developed at the base of Hokkaido's Nemuro peninsula, at the northeastern end of Japan. Two sandbars, Shunkuni-tai, extending from the south, and Hashirikotan, extending from the north, separate Furen-ko from the Okhotsk Sea, but Furen-ko is connected to the sea by two outlets. Furen-ko extends 20km from east to west with a circumference of 65km and an area of 5,600ha. It is a shallow lake with a depth of 11m and a large tidal flat on its shore. At the estuary of the Furen River, one of 13 rivers flowing into Furen-ko, the salt marshes have developed, forming a vast and unique landscape.

Shunkuni-tai is a sand dune formed by sand carried by the ocean currents and is shaped like a lid to prevent Furen-ko from flowing into the sea. It consists of three rows formed in a different era between 3,000 and 1,500 years ago, covering an area of 600ha and 8km in length, with a range of landscapes that include sand dunes, grasslands, forests, salt marshes and tidal flats. In particular, Sakhalin Spruce (*Picea glehnii*) forest is unique in the world as the forests which form on the sand.

A Habitat for a Variety of Birds:

Furen-ko's significant ecosystem diversity includes approximately 280 species of birds including shorebirds, swans, and geese. The lagoon is their resting spot during the long migration. It is also one of the most popular places for bird-

watchers to observe rare species such as the White-tailed Sea-eagle, Steller's Sea-eagle, Black Woodpecker, Blakiston's Fish Owl and Japanese Crane, attracting both domestic and international visitors all the year round. There are some facilities for visitors such as the Shunkuni-tai Nature Center and nature observation trails.

Warmth Index:

The Nemuro Peninsula has the lowest warmth index in Japan. A warmth index is a year's total of the difference between 5 and the average temperature of each month that exceeds 5 degrees C. It indicates the correlation between plant distribution and the temperature of an area. The Nemuro Peninsula is cold throughout the year because of the influence of fogs formed by sea currents in summer as well as the drift ice in winter. Such environmental conditions have shaped the unique and diverse landscape of Furen-ko.

[White-tailed Sea-eagle (*Haliaeetus albicilla*)] The large eagle has a brown body and a pale brown head with a yellow bill and legs. It measures 80cm in length and has a 2m wingspan. A small number of them breed mainly in eastern and northern Hokkaido. Many birds from Russia and the Far East visit Hokkaido in winter.

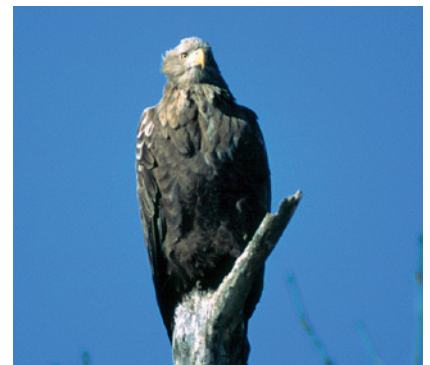
Contact Information:

Nemuro City Office

<http://www.city.nemuro.hokkaido.jp/>

Betsukai Town Office

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White-tailed Sea-eagle



Sakhalin Spruce forest (Photo by M. Okada)

