

Akkeshi-ko and Bekambeushi-shitsugen

Geographical Coordinates: 43°03'N, 144°54'E / Altitude: 0-20m / Area: 5,277ha / Major Type of Wetland: Brackish lake, salt marsh, low moor, high moor, river / Designation: Special Protection Area of National Wildlife Protection Area / Municipalities Involved: Akkeshi Town, Hokkaido Prefecture / Ramsar Designation: June 1993 / Ramsar Criteria: 1, 2, 4, 6 / EAAFP Flyway Network Site

**Brackish Lake,
Salt Marsh,
River, Moor**



Bekambeushi River and its estuary



The high moor

General Overview:

The 43km-long Bekambeushi River, one of the most pristine major river in Japan due to its low history of human intervention, flows southwards through eastern Hokkaido. In its basin lies the 8,300ha Bekambeushi-shitsugen and at its mouth the 3,230ha Lake Akkeshi-ko.

Situated between the larger wetlands, Kiritappu-shitsugen and Kushiro-shitsugen, the largely inaccessible Bekambeushi-shitsugen remained undeveloped, thereby retaining its natural character. Its pristine condition can be considered a rarity in Japan. In 1989, satellite imaging revealed that approximately 110ha of high moor in the river basin remained completely untouched. Surrounding this area are low moors with their characteristic reed, sedge, and alder vegetation. This is an invaluable wetland that showcases the natural development of wetlands. As Lake Akkeshi-ko is a brackish water lake, plant communities associated with saline environments are found in some places in the salt marsh along the shore; these plants

include Common Glasswort, which has the Japanese name Akkeshi-so because it was first found in this lake, Akkeshi-ko.

Paradise for Wild Birds:

Approximately 240 species of birds have been recorded in the area. As it does not completely freeze in winter, Akkeshi-ko is an important wintering ground for Whooper Swan. In addition, almost 100 Steller's Sea-eagle and White-tailed Sea-eagle, winter here. Akkeshi-ko is also an important habitat for Japanese Crane. In 2005, a 381ha sanctuary for Japanese Crane that was entrusted to the Wild Bird Society of Japan was added to the Ramsar designation area.

Wise Use of the Lake:

As both Lake Akkeshi-ko and Akkeshi Bay on the coast of the Pacific Ocean are rich in biodiversity, they have long been known by fishermen for their productive waters, and fishing is still one of the major industries in the area. In particular, Akkeshi-ko is home to notable aquaculture of high-quality oysters and clams. In order to maintain its water environment, the local



Steller's Sea-eagle (*Haliaeetus pelagicus*)

town office leads an annual tree-planting effort in the catchment area.

[Steller's Sea-eagle (*Haliaeetus pelagicus*)]

Steller's Sea-eagle is a black-brown eagle with a white tail, white upper wing coverts, a large yellow bill and yellow legs. It is the largest among sea eagle species and has a body length of approximately 90cm and a wingspan of 240cm. After breeding in the coastal areas of Kamchatka, Magadan and Sakhalin in Russia, it winters in Hokkaido, particularly eastern Hokkaido. It mainly feeds on fish.

Contact Information:

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