

Watarase-yusuichi

Low Moor, Artificial Wetland

Geographical Coordinates: 36°14'N, 139°41'E / Altitude: 8-23m / Area: 2,861ha / Major Type of Wetland: Low moor, artificial wetland / Designation: National Wildlife Protection Area, River Area / Municipalities Involved: Koga City, Ibaraki Prefecture, Tochigi City, Oyama City and Nogi Town, Tochigi Prefecture, Itakura Town, Gunma Prefecture, Kazo City, Saitama Prefecture / Ramsar Designation: July 2012 / Ramsar Criteria: 1



Lake Yanaka-ko



An extensive reed bed



Circus spilonotus spilonotus

General Overview:

Watarase-yusuichi is a retarding basin located roughly in the center of the Kanto Plain. It is a facility to store water for daily use and to temporarily retain the river overflow to prevent flooding in the river basin. The area has been afflicted by repeated heavy floods and still faces flood risk.

During the Meiji period, approximately 100 years ago, contaminated water from the Ashio Copper Mine frequently spilled out during floods and damaged a large area in the lower reaches of the rivers. This became a big societal problem. Thus, the government decided to abolish a village called Yanaka to construct a retarding basin to control the flooding and mining pollution. As such, this facility was built on the sacrifices of many people.

There are three regulating reservoirs enclosed by embankments. The reservoirs and the riverbeds are covered with one of the largest reed beds in Honshu, the main island of Japan.

A Rich Fauna and Flora:

The diverse wetland environment of Wat-

arase-yusuichi supports a habitat for many species. More than 700 plant species have been recorded here, including over 50 that are recognized in the red list of the Ministry of the Environment, such as *Ophioglossum namegatae* and *Viola raddeana*. One hundred and forty bird species have also been recorded. From spring to summer, it is a breeding ground for some grassland birds such as *Acrocephalus orientalis* and *Cisticola juncidis*, while in winter, it is a wintering ground for thousands of ducks, many buntings and some *Circus spilonotus spilonotus* that is cited as "endangered" in the red list of the Ministry of the Environment. In recent years, efforts have also been made to settle *Ciconia boyciana*, that is listed as "critically endangered" on the list.

A Vital Point for Flood Control of the Tone River System:

The flood caused by Typhoon Kathleen in 1947 brought about catastrophic damage to many areas in the Kanto Plain. To control such disasters, river improvements including the construction of upstream dams and river channels were carried out

in many rivers such as the Tone River and the Watarase River. Watarase-yusuichi has an important role in flood control along with a number of dams in the upstream of the Tone River, a primary river that runs through the Kanto Plain. The excess flood water from the three rivers, Watarase River, Omoi River and Uzuma River, is stored in this basin temporarily so as not to affect the trunk of the Tone river.

Wetland Conservation and Basic Plan for Restoration:

A Committee for Wetland Conservation and Restoration of Watarase-yusuichi was established in 2002 to improve the flood control function and to promote wetland conservation and restoration of this basin. The committee formulated a "Basic Plan for Wetland Conservation and Restoration of Watarase-yusuichi" in 2010 and revised it in 2018. The plan aims to restore the deteriorated wetland environment by excavating the places afflicted by negative factors, such as alien species to restore a habitat for diverse fauna and flora. Currently, wetland conservation and restoration in this area is promoted based on this plan while considering the conservation of the existing good environment and improvement of the flood control function.

Contact Information:

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