

Mikata-goko

Brackish Lake

Geographical Coordinates: 35°33'N, 135°52'E / Altitude: 0m / Area: 1,110ha / Major Type of Wetland: Brackish lake / Designation: Special Zone of Quasi-National Park / Municipalities Involved: Wakasa Town and Mihama Town, Fukui Prefecture / Ramsar Designation: November 2005 / Ramsar Criteria: 7, 8



Aerial view of Mikata-goko from the south

General Overview:

Mikata-goko is located in central Japan on a rias coastline facing Wakasa Bay of the Japan Sea. It is a cluster of five large and small lakes with a variety of aquatic ecosystems, surrounded by gently sloping hills, one of which is Mt. Baijo at an altitude of 395m. Although the five lakes are connected by waterways, a variety of fish, including freshwater, brackish water, and migratory species can be found here due to variations in salinity, area size, and depth. Many of them are endemic to Japan.

The lakes of Mikata-goko are also referred to as “the lakes of five colors” because they appear slightly different colors depending on the quality of water.

Diverse Lake Characters:

Lake Mikata, which is furthest from the ocean, is a freshwater lake. Rivers flow into this lake from the south. Moreover, it is the shallowest of the five lakes, with an average depth of 1.3m. Additionally, it is a habitat for freshwater species including Piscivorous chub, *Carassius buergeri subsp.2*, *Cyprinus carpio*, *Gnathopogon elongates elongates*, Japanese Smelt, and eel.

Meanwhile, Lake Suigetsu is the largest lake covering 400ha and is connected to Lake Mikata. The maximum depth of this brackish lake is 34m. Two other lakes, Lake Suga and Lake Kugushi, are also brackish,

however their salinity increases in the order of Suigetsu, Suga, and Kugushi. During high tide, sea water flows directly into Lake Kugushi, and the salinity of this lake becomes extremely high. Lake Suigetsu and Kugushi are connected by the Urami River, a river that was constructed artificially more than 300 years ago.

Lake Hiruga is a genuine salt lake. It has the smallest area (92ha) but the greatest depth (14m). It is a habitat for many marine fish species such as the Dotted Gizzard Shad, Japanese Shad, Round Herring and Japanese Halfbeak. It is connected to Lake Suigetsu by a tunnel constructed approximately 200 years ago.

Thus, Mikata-goko comprises five different lakes of different water types in which a variety of fish species have been identified. The lakes are particularly important for Japanese endemic species, such as the Piscivorous Chub and the Striped Bitterling. Many tourists visit the area throughout the year to enjoy the scenic beauty of five lakes from the summit of Mt. Baijo, boat cruises on the lakes, and marine products from the Japan Sea.

[Piscivorous Chub (*Opsariichthys uncirostris*)] Piscivorous Chub is a carp endemic to Japan with a length of 20-28cm. It is an aggressive fish that uses its great speed to prey on smaller fish. This fish was initially found



Piscivorous Chub

only in Mikata-goko and Biwa-ko. Mikata-goko is a unique native habitat for this fish. The fish species in Mikata-goko also differ in the number of scales from those in Biwa-ko, suggesting that Mikata-goko is valuable as an important local population.

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