

Miyajima

Geographical Coordinates: 34°14'N, 132°17'E / Altitude: 0-80m / Area: 142ha / Major Type of Wetland: Sand beach, salt marsh, river / Designation: Special Zone of National Park, Special Historical Sites, Special Places of Scenic Beauty / Municipalities Involved: Hatsukaichi City, Hiroshima Prefecture / Ramsar Designation: July 2012 / Ramsar Criteria: 2, 9



Designated coastal wetland of Miyajima

General Overview:

Miyajima (Itsukushima) is situated in the northwestern part of Hiroshima Bay along the coast of the Seto Inland Sea. It is a roughly rectangular island with a length of 10.5km, width of 3.5km, and an area spanning 3,020ha.

As the primeval forest around the peak of Mt. Misen (535m), the highest peak in the island, represents a typical forest habitat in the warm temperate zone of Japan, it is designated as a National Natural Monument. The Itsukushima Shrine embodies traditional Japanese religion's concept of divinity in nature, displaying perfect harmony between natural and artificial beauty. The shrine was designated as a UNESCO World Heritage Site together with Mt. Misen in the background, which is revered as the place from where the gods descend.

A Valuable Natural Coastline in the Seto Inland Sea:

The Ramsar site covers the south western coast of Miyajima Island. Although more than 60% of the Inland Sea's coast is artificial or semi-artificial, the coastline here has been kept intact without any artificial construction. It is a valuable natural coast featuring the original natural environment of the Seto Inland Sea. The coastline is conserved by the good balance of sand inflow and outflow. The gushing water from the hills mixes with the seawater at the time of spring tide to form a tidal marsh. The vegetation here consists of two typical plant communities: one is the

coastal plant community dominated by *Vitex rotundifolia* developed at the sand beach, which flourishes despite the sea water, and the other is the marshy grassland community dominated by *Cladium chinense* developed at the inland side with low salinity. Another plant community of *Potentilla riparia* var. *miyajimensis*, a variety endemic to Miyajima, is found at the edge of the forest.

A Habitat for a Rare Dragonfly, *Orthetrum poecilops miyajimaensis*:

The coastal marsh is a habitat for *Orthetrum poecilops miyajimaensis*, a subspecies of a dragonfly endemic to Miyajima. This dragonfly does not lay eggs in the upstream freshwater area but breeds only in brackish water in the tidal marsh where the larvae of other dragonfly species cannot survive. Apart from Miyajima, this species is only found in China.

A local committee named the “Coordination Committee for Protection and Management of *Orthetrum poecilops miyajimaensis*” is leading the conservation work for this precious dragonfly. The work includes monitoring, conducting survey, removing sand sediments around the marsh, and expanding water channels. In order to protect the species from extinction due to habitat loss caused by some negative influences such as typhoons, people are also conducting risk diversification to establish a new habitat in some other marshes in the island.

Local Industry and the Ramsar Site:

Miyajima is also famous for its local oyster cuisine. The sea around the Ramsar site

Sand Beach, Salt Marsh



Orthetrum poecilops miyajimaensis (larva)



Orthetrum poecilops miyajimaensis (adult)



The Itsukushima Shrine

is excellent for oyster aquaculture, with a long history that dates back to 300 years. This is due to the nutrient-rich water flowing from the primeval forest of Miyajima.

Contact Information:

Hatsukaichi City Office

<http://www.city.hatsukaichi.hiroshima.jp/>

