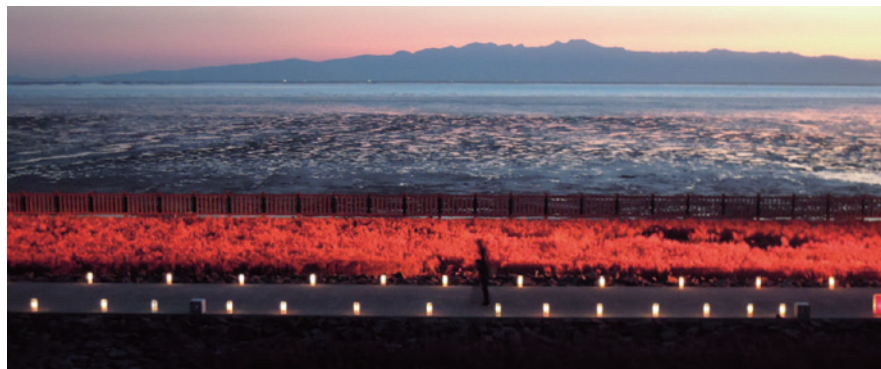


## Higashiyoka-higata

Geographical Coordinates: 33°10'N, 103°15'E / Altitude: -2.5–1m / Area: 218ha / Major Type of Wetland: Tidal flat / Designation: Special Protection Area of National Wildlife Protection Area / Municipalities Involved: Saga City, Saga Prefecture / Ramsar Designation: May 2015 / Ramsar Criteria: 2, 4, 6



Aerial view of Higashiyoka-higata



A colony of *Suaeda japonica* in beautiful autumn red

### General Overview:

Higashiyoka-higata is a tidal mudflat located at the northern most shore of the Ariake Sea. It is an extensive tidal flat in the south of Higashiyoka Kantaku (Daiju area), a reclaimed land area in Saga City. Moreover, it is a land between the Honshoe River and the Hattae River to the west of Saga Airport. It is a habitat for a large number of representative benthos of the Ariake Sea, such as Great Blue-spotted Mudskipper, a fish species: *Odontamblyopus lacepedii* and Fiddler Crab. Traditional fishing methods specific to this region, such as Takappo and Mutsukake, are still practiced.

### Ariake Sea:

The Ariake Sea is an inland sea surrounded by Kumamoto, Fukuoka, Saga and Nagasaki Prefectures. It has the largest tidal variation (max. 6m) in Japan. Even though it is an approximately 100km long highly enclosed narrow inland sea. Large amounts of nutrient-rich sand are flowed from the rivers, rolled up and circulated counterclockwise by the tidal force, deposited by still seawater at high tide and left

behind at low tide to form mudflats. The Ariake Sea is an indispensable environment as it accounts for 40% of tidal flat area existing in Japan.

### One of the Largest Habitats for Migratory Birds:

Higashiyoka-higata is one of the major stopover and wintering sites for migratory waterbirds in Japan, including some endangered species such as Saunders's Gull, Black-faced Spoonbill and Far Eastern Curlew. According to the record of shorebird count for Monitoring Site 1,000, a survey conducted by the Ministry of the Environment, Japan, the tidal flat boasts the largest population of shorebirds in Japan, with as many as 14,763 migratory shorebirds counted in the spring of 2020.

The Higashiyoka-kaigan Observation Deck on the sea embankment offers a view of a large colony of *Suaeda japonica*, in beautiful autumn red color, with the extensive tidal flat in the background. The walking trail along the seashore is a good place to observe countless living organisms such as crabs and mudskippers at low

## Tidal Flat



Important habitat for migratory shorebirds (Photo by H. Yatsuki)



Higasasu Higashiyoka-higata Visitor Center

tide. It is a breathtaking experience to see thousands of shorebirds flying toward the wetland and forage in search of food on the mudflat during the migration season in spring and autumn.

### Conservation Efforts for the Tidal Flat

Due to its location at the far end of the Ariake Sea, a large amount of garbage is washed ashore after typhoons and heavy rainfall. Local volunteer groups regularly clean up this debris, and citizens and businesses collaborate for conservation activities. The "Ramsar Club" has approximately 30 members, including elementary and junior high school students and adults, who are dedicated to actively surveying the species in the mudflat and environmental learning as their club activities. It is expected that the members will become leaders in nature conservation in the future.

### Contact Information:

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