

# Hizen Kashima-higata

## Tidal Flat

Geographical Coordinates: 33°6'N, 130°7'E / Altitude: -2.5–1m / Area:57ha / Major Type of Wetland: Tidal flat / Designation: Special Protection Area of National Wildlife Protection Area / Municipalities Involved: Kashima City, Saga Prefecture / Ramsar Designation: May 2015 / Ramsar Criteria: 2, 4, 6 / EAAFP Flyway Network Site



Jumping Great Blue-spotted Mudskipper



Foraging Great Blue-spotted Mudskipper  
(Photo by Y. Nakamura)

### General Overview

Hizen Kashima-higata is a tidal mudflat on the western coast of the Ariake Sea. It has developed at the estuaries of the Shiota River and the Kashima River flowing through southern Saga Prefecture. This mudflat is situated at the narrowest end of the counterclockwise tidal current of the Ariake Sea, and faces the Higashiyoka-higata on the northernmost shore of the sea. When the earth and sand flow into the Ariake Sea, large sand grains settle to the seabed and small particles of mud get carried far away by the tidal current. In this way, sandy tidal flats such as Arao-higata have formed on the east coast of the Ariake Sea while muddy tidal flats have developed especially in Hizen Kashima-higata located on the west coast of the Ariake Sea.

This tidal flat has rich resources including some fishes Great Blue-spotted Mudskipper, *Odontamblyopus lacepedii*, *Acanthogobius hasta* and Fiddler Crab. It is visited by a large number of migratory birds such as Saunders's Gull, Whimbrel, Black-faced Spoonbill and Common Shelduck, and is an important stopover and wintering site for shorebirds.

### Traditional Fishing Practices Unique to the Mudflat

Hizen Kashima-higata is a mudflat with dozens of meters of fine clayish sediment in deep areas. Compared to the sandy mudflats which are crispy and easy to walk on, it is hard to walk on because your feet get stuck in mud. To solve this problem, a tool called a "Gataski" was invented in this area. It is a fishing tool unique to the Ariake Sea.



Traditional fishing practice by "Gata ski" on a tidal mudflat (Photo by Y. Nakamura)



Aerial view of Hizen Kashima-higata from the northwest

A fisher puts one of his knees on a board approximately 30cm wide and 2m long and kicks the mud with the other foot to go forward. It is a useful tool for traditional fishing such as "Mutsukake", "Subokaki" and "Takappo". Mutsukake uses a long pole to hook mudskippers crawling on the mud. Subokaki is for fishing *Odontamblyopus lacepedii*, a fish endemic to the bay. A pole with a thin iron blade hook at the tip is used to probe and hook fish hiding in the mud. Takappo sets a cylindrical trap in the nest hole in the mud.

### Wise use of the Mudflat

A mudflat is not only important for migratory birds, but also adds significant value to people's lives as a habitat for fish and shellfish, as a production site for seaweed, and because of its natural water purification function. As mentioned above, the products from the mudflat have been loved and called "Maeumi-mon" by the local people. In order to raise public awareness about the importance of the mudflat, Kashima City organizes several bird watching events every year targeting local people

including elementary school children. A sports event named "Gatalympic" is held in a place adjacent to this mudflat. It is a big event in the area attracting many, from adults to children, who learn about the mudflat while enjoying being covered with mud in the mudflat.

### Contact Information:

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<http://www.city.saga-kashima.lg.jp/>

