

A shallow inner bay that has one of the largest Eelgrass beds in Japan. A paradise for migratory birds

## Notsuke-hanto and Notsuke-wan

### Seagrass/Seaweed Bed, Salt Marsh, Sandspit

Geographical Coordinates: 43°34'N, 145°16'E / Altitude: 0-10m / Area: 6053ha / Major

Type of Wetland: Shallow marine waters, tidal flats, seagrass/seaweed beds, salt marshes, low moors, sandspits / Designation: Special Protection Area of National Wildlife Protection Area / Municipalities Involved: Betsukai Town and Shibetsu Town, Hokkaido Prefecture / Ramsar Designation: November 2005



Notsuke-hanto



Left: Redshank *Tringa totanus* Right: Brent Goose *Branta bernicla* (Photo by K. Fujii)

#### Principal Features:

Notsuke-hanto is a hook-shaped peninsula jutting into the Nemuro Strait between Nemuro Peninsula and Shiretoko Peninsula, both located in the easternmost edge of Hokkaido. It is the largest sandspit in Japan with 28km length, formed of sand sediments brought by tidal streams running through the Nemuro Channel between the peninsula and Kunashiri Island. Flat sand beaches and marshes at almost sea level have formed unique landscapes of withered trees called "Todowara" and "Narawara". Forests of trees such as Sakhalin Fir now stand lifeless due to subsidence and seawater wash.

In contrast to a linear outline of the open sea coast, the curved inner bay holds rugged tidal flats spreading salt marshlands at its complex shoreline. Since the area remains intact embracing diverse wetland environment, it is a significant stopover for more than 20,000 migratory birds every spring and autumn. In particular, each number of Grey-tailed Tattler *Heteroscelus brevipes*, Whooper Swan *Cygnus Cygnus*, Brent Goose *Branta bernicla*, Wigeon *Anas penelope*, Scaup *Aythya marila*, and Common Goldeneye

*Bucephala clangula* accounts for more than 1% of the respective local population. Also, breeding of Redshank *Tringa totanus* has been observed in the area.

#### Inner Bay; Rich Fishery:

Notsuke-wan is the inner bay surrounded by the peninsula of Notsuke-hanto. The bay is 4.3km wide at its mouth, and its area is approx. 5700ha. The max. depth at the mouth of the bay is 4m. For the most part of the bay, the depth is less than 1m. One of the largest seagrass beds develop here, where roles as a nursery and spawning ground for various fisheries. It functions as an important reservoir for fishing resources. In Notsuke-wan, the major catch in seagrass beds is Hokkai Shrimp *Pandalus kessleri*. In summer and autumn, prawns fishing is carried out by small fishing boats called "Utasebune" with three-cornered sails. Engines cannot be used because of the shallow sea. An elegant view of the sailboats drifting with wind is one of the seasonal features of Notsuke-wan.

Hokkai Shrimp is protected by the local fishermen's cooperative to strictly regulate its open season and catch, managing this limited marine resource

as one of the best practice in wise use of fishery in wetlands of Japan.

**[Seagrass/Seaweed Bed]** An area for seagrass and seaweed growing at the sea bottom near the coast. A community of benthic seagrass and seaweed such as Kelp (*Laminaria* and *Sargassum*) and Eelgrass *Zostera marina* provides an important habitat for various marine wildlife. Eelgrass *Zostera marina* would often grow on sand and mud sediments of inner bay.

#### Contact Information:

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