

# Mikata-goko

## Brackish Lake

Geographical Coordinates: 35°33'N, 135°52'E / Altitude: 0m / Area: 1110ha / Major Type of Wetland: Brackish lakes / Designation: Special Zone of Quasi-National Park / Municipalities Involved: Wakasa Town and Mihama Town, Fukui Prefecture / Ramsar Designation: November 2005



Aerial view of Mikata-goko from the south

### Principal Features:

Mikata-goko is located in the central Japan on a rias coastline facing Wakasa Bay of Japan Sea. It is a cluster of five, large and small lakes with different types of aquatic ecosystem, surrounded by gradual hills including Mt. Baijo of 395m. Although the five lakes are connected by waterways, variety of fishes includes freshwater, brackish water and migratory species due to difference in salinity content, area size, and depth. Many fish species are endemic to Japan.

Mikata-goko lakes are also called "the lakes of five colors" as the different water quality of lakes show different colors of water respectively.

### Diversity of lakes:

Mikata Lake, the most distant lake from the ocean, is a freshwater lake. Rivers flow into the lake and its depth is the shallowest among 5 lakes with the average depth of 1.3m. The freshwater species such as piscivorous chub, carp, roach, smelt and eel inhabit the area.

Suigetsu Lake connected to Mikata Lake is the largest lake covering 400ha. It is a brackish lake where freshwater and salt water mix. The deepest point is 34m. Two other lakes of Suga Lake and Kugushi Lake are also brackish lake, but the salinity increases in the order of Suigetsu, Suga, then Kugushi. As the

sea water from Japan Sea flows into these lakes during high tide, the salinity becomes really high. Suigetsu and Kugushi Lakes are connected by Urami River, artificially constructed more than 300 years ago.

Hiruga Lake is a lake completely salinized. Its area is the smallest at 92ha, but has the deepest depth of 14m. Many marine fish species such as gizzard shad, round herring and halfbeak inhabit the lake. It is connected with Suigetsu Lake with a tunnel ducted about 200 years ago.

In this manner, Mikata-goko consists of five different lakes of different water types, where a variety of fishes can be identified. The lakes are especially invaluable for the Japanese indigenous species of piscivorous chub, minnow and bitterling.

The coastline of Japan Sea in Mikata-goko area thrives in fishery and all-year-round tourism for sightseeing and gourmet seafood.

**[Piscivorous Chub *Opsariichthys uncirostris*]** Piscivorous Chub is a carp fish endemic to Japan which grows to 20-28cm in size. It is an aggressive fish eater attacking smaller fish with extreme speed. This fish was originally found only in Mikata-goko and Biwa-ko. Since Mikata-goko offers a unique and



Piscivorous Chub

rare habitat for Piscivorous Chub to exist naturally, and the Biwa-ko species differ in terms of number of scales, it is deemed an important habitat to support the species' local population.

### Contact Information:

Wakasa Town Office

<http://www.town.fukui-wakasa.lg.jp/>

Mihama Town Office

<http://www.wakasamihama.jp/>

