

Mikata-goko

Brackish Lake

Geographical Coordinates: 35°33'N, 135°52'E / Altitude: 0m / Area: 1110ha / Major Type of Wetland: Brackish lake / Designation: Special Zone of Quasi-National Park / Municipalities Involved: Wakasa Town and Mihama Town, Fukui Prefecture / Ramsar Designation: November 2005 / Ramsar Criteria: 7, 8



Aerial view of Mikata-goko from the south

General Overview:

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 ecosystems, surrounded by gently sloped hills including Mt. Baijo with an altitude of 395m. Although the five lakes are connected each other by waterways, a variety of fish including freshwater, brackish water and migratory species is found here due to the differences in salinity, area size, and depth. Many of them are endemic to Japan.

The lakes of Mikata-goko are also called “the lakes of five colors” as the different water quality of lakes exhibits different colors of water.

Diverse Lake Characters:

Lake Mikata, the furthest lake from the ocean, is a freshwater lake. Rivers flow into the lake from the south and its depth is the shallowest among the 5 lakes with an average depth of 1.3m. It is a habitat for the freshwater species such as Piscivorous chub, carp, roach, smelt and eel.

Lake Suigetsu connected to Lake Mikata is the largest lake covering an area of 400ha. It is a brackish lake with a maximum depth of 34m. Two other lakes, Lake Suga and Lake Kugushi, are also brackish, but the salinity increases in the order of

Suigetsu, Suga, and Kugushi. The sea water flows directly into Lake Kugushi during high tide and the salinity of this lake becomes very high. Lake Suigetsu and Kugushi are connected by the Urami River, a river artificially constructed more than 300 years ago.

Lake Hiruga is a genuine salt lake. It has the smallest area at 92ha but has the deepest depth of 14m. It is a habitat for many marine fish species such as Dotted Gizzard Shad, Japanese Shad, Round Herring and Japanese Halfbeak. It is connected with Lake Suigetsu by a tunnel built about 200 years ago.

In this manner, Mikata-goko consists of five different lakes of different water types where a variety of fishes has been identified. The lakes are especially important for the endemic species of Japan such as Piscivorous Chub and Striped Bitterling. Many tourists visit the area year-round to enjoy the scenic beauty of five lakes from the peak of Mt. Baijo, boat cruises in the lakes and marine products from the Japan Sea.

[Piscivorous Chub *Opsariichthys uncirostris*] Piscivorous Chub is a carp endemic to Japan with a length of 20-28cm. It is an aggressive fish preying on small fish using its great speed. This fish was originally found only in Mikata-goko and Biwa-ko. Mikata-goko is a unique native habitat



Piscivorous Chub

for this fish. As the fish of this species in Biwa-ko are slightly different in some points such as the number of scales, the fish in Mikata-goko are considered to be an important local population.

Contact Information:

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