

International Cooperation 1 JICA Training Course on Conservation and Wise Use of Wetland

From May 17 to June 29, 2010, KIWC welcomed trainees from Obihiro International Center of Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) for a group training course entitled Conservation and Wise Use of Wetlands in the Context of Implementing the Ramsar Convention and the Convention on Biological Diversity.

The aim of this course, which was held under the auspices of Ministry of the Environment, is to promote the conservation and wise use of wetlands. We received five participants working in related fields - including government officials in charge of natural conservation policies and nature conservation rangers - from India, Malaysia and the Philippines.

The training was held in four locations - Tokyo, Fujiyoshida City, Okinawa Prefecture and the Kushiro region in Hokkaido. The participants visited eco-tour destinations and environmental education facilities in these areas in addition to awareness-raising facilities and research institutions, thereby gaining insights into wetland conservation and wise use based on the philosophies of the Ramsar Convention and the CBD. Based on ideas drawn from these experiences, they then formulated project proposals and presented them on the last day of the training course.

During their stay in Japan, the participants also had a number of opportunities to interact with locals, including a home-visit program, and learned more about Japanese people and their lifestyles.



International Cooperation 2 JICA Training Course on Eco-tour

From September 6 to October 13, 2010, the JICA group training course on the "Sustainable Use of Natural and Cultural Resources (Eco-Tourism)" was held by KIWC as a host organization. The JICA Obihiro International Center was the administrative institution for this course and this year, the first year of the three-year term of training course, 8 middle-ranking administrative officers working for the state or local regions from 6 countries (Argentina, Kenya, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Uganda and Vietnam) who were involved in the management of natural parks or tourism promotion participated in the course.

The "Eco-tour", through which people can enjoy local nature and culture while considering environment, has recently been attracting attention especially in developing countries as one of the methods of regional development to utilize local nature and culture sustainably while conserving them. Participants could learn about eco-tourism from multiple aspects and spread their knowledge and increase experiences through lectures on the theory of eco-tourism and environment-related laws, tours and experience programs utilizing rich nature and existing industries such as fishery and dairy of the eastern Hokkaido, and case examples of environmental conservation utilizing spirits and techniques of flower arrangement in Kyoto.

During the training, participants had opportunities to meet with people of all ages through exchange programs with local residents by the cooperation of volunteer organizations of Kushiro, eco-tour experiences guided by elementary students, forums for exchanging opinions with university students who were learning eco-tourism in Kyoto.



A Ramsar site in Japan Series 19 ~Manko (Okinawa Prefecture)

Manko, located at the mouth of the Kokuba River which runs through Naha City in the southern part of the main island of Okinawa and the Noha River which flows along Tomigusuku City, is the largest tidal flat within the prefecture. It is located inland, 3km from the sea, surrounded by cities, strongly influenced by the range of the tide, and a mudflat with a maximum area of 47ha appears at low tide.

Naha Port, at the mouth of the river, was a departure point for trading ships with China and the name "Manko" was given by an imperial Chinese mission (envoy) from China who saw a grand stretch of the beautiful surface of the water in the mid-1600s.

On the west bank of Lake Manko, small-sized reed beds and mangrove forests (*Kandelia obovata*, *Rhizophora mucronata*, *Bruguiera gymnorhiza*, etc.) spread out. Manko, which is abundant in young fish unique to brackish-water regions of tidal flats as well as benthic organisms such as crabs and lobworms, is an important stopping point for water birds moving up and down the Japanese archipelago. Not only shorebirds such as the Pacific Golden Plover, Dunlin and Eurasian Curlew but also rare species including the Black-faced Spoonbill and Common Shelduck are commonly seen. Recently, however, the number of birds visiting there has drastically been decreasing, which is the most important issue in Manko. It may be greatly attributed to river channel fixation due to dredging against sediment inflow or for flood control by which sand deposition into the tidal flat was accelerated. Therefore, mangroves grew thickly there resulting in a decrease of tideland area and a change in benthic organisms, which are a source of food for birds, caused by a change in bottom sediment.

As part of the government-designated Manko national protection area conservation project, partial mangroves are currently being removed to expand space for water birds. This is because as a result of cutting down mangroves on a trial basis, it was confirmed that water birds have gradually been returning. Since the mangroves in Manko is afforestation, it is considered that controls are needed.

One of the future challenges is to consider how to continuously manage mangroves and interact with them, and make rules for utilization after the conservation project led by Ministry of the Environment(MOE).

Moreover, cooperation with wetlands in the prefecture (the Kerama Islands marine area, Nagura Amparu, and Stream Wetland in Kumejima Island) and the nurturing of children, the bearers of the next generation, are also important issues for Manko Waterbird and Wetland Center which is jointly administrated by the MOE, Okinawa Prefecture and Tomigusuku City.

We hope that the government, the prefecture and the city work together to conserve nature environments in Lake Man in order to hand it over to future generations.

(Text and pictures: Environment Conservation Dept., Naha City Office)



Logging monitoring field next to the waterbird center



KIWC newsletter

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Kushiro International Wetland Centre (KIWC) is a regional network designed to use diversified regional facilities and human resources based in the Kushiro area in Hokkaido, which is endowed with nature. It is actively promoting public awareness and international cooperation activities for community-based wetland conservation.

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***** 2011 is the 40th anniversary of Ramsar Convention *****

Events Commemorating the 30th Anniversary of the Registration of Kushiro-shitsugen as a Ramsar Site

In 2010, various organizations such as administrative agencies and NGOs carried out many commemorative projects in the local area to mark the 30th anniversary of Kushiro-shitsugen Wetland's designation under the Ramsar Convention. KIWC also looked back on 30 years of relationships between people and Kushiro-shitsugen through surveys and events from the standpoint of biodiversity and wise use, and thought with the people about how to relate to the wetland in the future.

The KIWC's commemorative events were implemented with funding from Hokkaido Environment Foundation based on donations from Asahi Breweries' Asahi Super Dry "Tasty! For Tomorrow!" project campaign.

Commemorating Event 1 "Wetland Treasure Box"

The event titled "Wetland Treasure Box" was held on December 19, 2010 co-hosted by Kushiro Regional Office for Nature Conservation of the Ministry of Environment and NHK Kushiro Broadcasting Station. Deeming Kushiro-shitsugen to be a "box full of treasures" of the region, the purpose of this event was to offer an opportunity to think about what is needed to hand over Kushiro-shitsugen to the following generations.

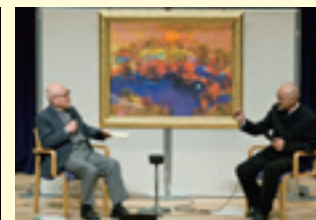
At Kushiro Citizens Cultural Hall, there were exhibitions introducing activities for conservation and wise use of Kushiro-shitsugen by 28 organizations. The following symposium was also held.

Symposium "Kushiro-shitsugen Flying into the Future"

- ☆Lecture "Ramsar Convention and Kushiro-shitsugen"
Lecturer: Yoshihiro Natori (Senior Fellow, UNU-IAS*)
- ☆Talk "Restoration of Kushiro-shitsugen—for the children of future"
Speaker: Tatsuichi Tsujii (President, Hokkaido Environment Foundation / Chairman, KIWC Technical Committee)
Hisashi Shinsho (Environment Facilitator / KIWC Senior Technical Committee Member)
- ☆Presentation on Kushiro-shitsugen Nature Restoration by students
Presenters: Hokkaido Shibecha High School
Junior Eco Club Kushiro
Ayami Kawamura (Hokkaido Kushiro Koryo High School)
- ☆Panel discussion by student presenters
Coordinator: Tadaichi Takahashi (former Professor, Hokkaido University of Education
Kushiro Campus)
Advisors: Yoshihiro Natori, Tatsuichi Tsujii, Hisashi Shinsho,
Takuma Segawa (Teacher, Hokkaido Shibecha High School)
Seiji Sasaki (Representative, Junior Eco Club Kushiro)

* Institute of Advanced Studies, United Nations University

(Titles omitted)



Despite end-of-the-year rush and deplorable roads due to accumulated snow, approx. 300 local residents participated. Not only government institutions but many private entities set up booths and displayed panels and exhibits introducing their activities which were attracting many visitors. The exhibition gave them an opportunity to exchange information each other.

In the symposium, Mr. Yoshihiro Natori introduced the background of the conservation of Kushiro-shitsugen, then Dr. Tatsuichi Tsujii and Mr. Hisashi Shinsho had a talk on the utilization of the wetland for the future and proposed fresh ideas such as utilization of balloons and wetland exploration. Next, local students from elementary to high schools made presentations about what they felt through study of water clarification using wetland plants, extermination of alien species as well as the exchange activities between children of other Ramsar sites, and about a way of interacting with wetland.

At the site, a variety of events were held such as a mini live show of local popular duo "HEAT VOICE" for a wetland campaign song, introduction of works of the master painter, Mr. Eisho Sasaki who is renowned as the "Artist of Wetland", display of a big air photo map of Kushiro-shitsugen and sales of wetland-related goods. The site was like a "treasure box", true to its event name.



Commemorating Event 2 Public Participation Survey on the Restored River Environment 2010

First Survey in Summer

On July 24, 2010, KIWC conducted an environmental survey involving locals in Kushiro-shitsugen's Kayanuma District in the town of Shibecha. The area is one of the sites for the Kushiro-shitsugen Wetland's ongoing nature restoration project.

The aim of the survey was to raise interest in the wetland among locals and deepen their understanding of the nature restoration project. 28 people participated.

During the investigation, Mr. Hisashi Shinsho (KIWC Senior Technical Committee Member), Mr. Tsutomu Hariu (Curator, Kushiro City Museum/KIWC TC Member), Ms. Yachiyo Takashima (KIWC TC Member) and Mr. Shigeharu Terui (Representative, Environment Grasp Promotion Network/KIWC TC member) served as instructors, and the participants investigated aquatic life, vegetation, and soil composition of the bank and shallow on the 1.3km sections including the restored meander channel. Their work confirmed the state of piles of sediment carried by floodwater from upstream and the growth of different plants according to the severity of flooding.

They also discussed changes that the straightening work had brought to the natural environment of the river and its surrounding areas, and considered the environmental effects expected from the restoration of the old channel.



Kushiro River Meander Restoration

Part of the middle reaches of the Kushiro River that runs through Kayanuma District at the northern end of Kushiro-shitsugen National Park was straightened for the purposes of flood control and land utilization in the 1980s. Kushiro-shitsugen was designated as a Ramsar site in 1980, and as a national park in 1987. Since then, people's interest shifted from development to conservation of nature. It was also around this time that problems such as aridification and changes in vegetation became noticeable in the central part of the wetland, which are believed to have been caused by sediment inflow due to the straightening of the river.

In response to rapid environmental changes of Kushiro-shitsugen, Kushiro Shitsugen Nature Restoration Council was established in 2003 and the nature restoration project participated in by the government and the private sector started in earnest. As part of the project, construction started in 2007 to move approximately 2 km of the straightened part of the Kushiro River to its original flow path, and in February 2010, the old river meander was restored.



Second Survey in Autumn

Following the survey conducted in this summer, a citizen participatory environmental survey was held on September 25, 2010.

27 people ranged in age from elementary and junior high school students to elderly participated in the survey. They were divided into three groups to board canoes and conducted soil investigation and riparian nature environment observation on the 5.5km sections from meander channel which was restored to downstream basin.



Under the direction of KIWC Senior Technical Committee member, Mr. Hisashi Shinsho, they landed on a sandbar and measured the size to compare with the previous one, and from sedimentary components they guessed sediment inflow conditions in the past. And all the participants tried guessing prospective changes of the sandbar in the future. From the canoes, they could also observe gradually-changing tree species of the riparian forest and landscapes on both banks as well as wild animals such as a flock of Bean Geese (*Anser fabalis middendorffii*) and fully enjoyed the nature of the wetland in autumn.

After returning from the canoe tour, at Lake Toro Eco-Museum Center, they reviewed the survey and made a handmade "nature information map" in which what they found or discovered in the tour were written.

Commemorating Event 3 Creation of a chronological table on the Kushiro-shitsugen Wetland

KIWC created a chronological table on Kushiro Shitsugen from the Edo Era to the present as "history of Kushiro-shitsugen", and displayed it at the site of the event named "Wetland Treasure Box" held on December 19, 2010.

Approx. 130 historical events were recorded on three banners, 150cm long and 70cm width, and you can learn about the overall background of the development, flood control and conservation of Kushiro-shitsugen and the Kushiro River.

KIWC Technical Committee Launch of New Activity

KIWC has organized a technical committee of experts to promote conservation and wise use of wetlands, and has been conducting research studies setting an individual theme every three years in order to create a database through research and monitoring, and to provide technical guidance regarding wetland management.

Advanced water restoration efforts are underway in Japan, including the Kushiro-shitsugen Wetland Nature Restoration Project in the Kushiro region. With the FY2010-2012 theme of "resident participatory water environment restoration from the viewpoint of biodiversity," 10 committee members led by Chairman Dr. Tatsuichi Tsujii conduct verification of ideal methods for restoring the environment in terms of biodiversity. At the same time, they have started activities centering on case studies on active participation of local residents in the project, which is essential to continue long-standing efforts such as this, and methods for its enlightenment/awareness-raising.

In 2010, on June 10 prior to the public participation survey, which was planned by KIWC as a case study of the environmental survey, at Kushiro River meander restoration site, 21 people including committee members held an on-site study meeting and discussed the content and implementation methods of survey in terms of data collection and enlightenment/awareness-raising.

There were concrete pieces of advice and suggestions about survey items and methods from committee members in succession, based on which citizens' environmental surveys were conducted in July and in September of the same year.



Public Awareness 1 "Winter Eco-Tour 2011" to Celebrate World Wetlands Day

To celebrate World Wetlands Day (February 2 every year), the "Winter Eco-Tour 2011" was carried out for local residents on January 29, 2011. A total of 24 people including five children at kindergarten and elementary school rode on the Steam Locomotive train, and visited "Kushiro-shitsugen Station" in Hosooka in Kushiro Town.

The party strolled in the alder stand and marshy land around the station guided by environment facilitator Mr. Hisashi Shinsho, who also serves as a KIWC Senior Technical Committee member, and enjoyed nature in the winter, observing such natural phenomena as spring water, plants surviving in winter and animal footprints. Since plants grow thickly and the ground is submerged around this area during the season of greenery, it is accessible only in midwinter when the ground surface freezes. For this reason, not only children but also elderly participants felt like they were on an exploring expedition, walking around a wetland covered with dazzling white snow under the blue sky.

The theme of the 2011 World Wetlands Day was "forests for water and wetlands," and the relationship between forests and wetlands was actually confirmed by the participants with their own eyes, such as water from the forest around the wetland flowing in to moisten the ground, and influent water and earth and sand from around the wetland deeply related to the growth of plants in the wetland. After a lunch break at Hosooka Visitors' Lounge, the participants tried making "Wood postcards" under the guidance of Mr. Hisashi Watanabe (director of the Lounge). That is a Hokkaido shaped board on which you can carve illustrations and messages with a chisel. Each of the participants carved their memories of the tour on their cards, to make it a one-of-a-kind souvenir.

Although the tour was walking on the snowy ground on a day on which the temperature drops below 0°C, we received a lot of positive feedback from the participants. This tour, conducted at different places and with different themes every year, is so popular that the number of applicants reached the fixed number immediately after we started accepting applications this time as well. While working out ideas so that repeaters will be able to find something new each time, we will increase opportunities to visit the wetland with people from the local community.



Public Awareness 2 Participation in Wetland- and Biodiversity-related Meetings and Events, Lectures, etc.

Eco Life Fair 2010 - Blessings of Wetlands (sponsored by Ministry of the Environment)

The fair was held in Tokyo's Yoyogi Park on June 5 and 6, 2010. The Board of Municipalities Related to Japanese Ramsar Sites, Ramsar Center Japan and Wetlands International Japan (WIJ) ran a booth under the banner of Blessings of Wetlands: Tourism and Local Goods of Ramsar Sites. KIWC supplied the booth with posters, pamphlets, environmental education kits and other materials for distribution and display featuring the four local Ramsar sites in the Kushiro region.

Kushiro Eco-Fair 2010 in Kushiro Children's Museum (sponsored by Kushiro Eco-Fair Executive Committee)

This event was held in Kushiro Children's Museum Kodomo Yugakukan on June 5 and 6, 2010. Ms. Sayuri Saito, a Technical Officer of KIWC had a lecture titled "Alien in Kushiro-shitsugen". The lecture introduced the distribution and ecological information of American mink (*Mustela vison*) based on the survey KIWC held last year, and explained about the issues of alien species.



Waga-machi Festa 2010 (sponsored by Kushiro City, Kushiro Eco-Fair Executive Committee)

In this event held on September 23, 2010, at Kushiro Tourism and International Relations Center, there were exhibitions at booths by environment conservation groups and volunteer groups, an "Eco-karuta" card game tournament, attractions and various other activities. KIWC also had a booth for "paper plane in the shape of crane/swan" making experience, creatures of Kushiro-shitsugen card games and other exhibitions.

Interactive Fair for Biodiversity (sponsored by Aichi-Nagoya COP10 CBD Promotion Committee)

In parallel with the 10th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, held in October 2010 in Nagoya City, the exhibition was held from October 11 to 29 at a site adjacent to the conference hall. Other than introducing activities at the exhibition corner for Ramsar sites in Japan's Environment Ministry booth, KIWC exhibited the kits for paper planes in the shape of crane/swan at the booth introducing Hokkaido's NGO/NPO.



Symposium to Mark the 40th Anniversary of the Ramsar Convention (Sponsored by Ministry of the Environment)

KIWC participated in the "Symposium to Mark the 40th Anniversary of the Ramsar Convention" held on February 2, 2011 at United Nations University in Tokyo. Mr. Yoshihisa Kamiya, Vice Secretary General of KIWC participated in the symposium and introduced our projects for awareness raising for local residents on wetlands. KIWC also exhibited at the "Blessings of Wetlands Exhibition," held in parallel with the symposium, Japanese smelt tsukudani (preserved food boiled in sweetened soy sauce), bottled water of Lake Akan and other blessings of wetlands in the Kushiro region to promote them.

A Lecture and a Panel Exhibition on Kushiro-shitsugen (sponsored by the Silver City Tokiwadai Hills)

On March 6, 2011, KIWC Secretary General Mr. Yoshikatsu Kikuchi gave a lecture on "Nature of the Kushiro shitsugen and the Ramsar Convention" as part of the nature and culture course held by "Tokiwadai Hills," a private nursing home with assisted care in Kushiro City. At this day's gathering, the lecturer introduced the charm of Kushiro-shitsugen using pictures of the wetland, plants and animals, explained the Ramsar Convention, and thought about the importance of the wetland with the participants. Also in parallel with the lecture, about 20 sheets of panels introducing Kushiro-shitsugen and activities of KIWC were exhibited in the hall for the whole month of March.

