

A brackish lake where oyster aquaculture is carried out. A wetland known for its pristine river and basin environments

Akkeshi-ko and Bekambeushi-shitsugen

**Brackish Lake,
Salt Marsh, River,
Low Moor**

Geographical Coordinates: 43°03'N, 144°54'E / Altitude: 0-20m / Area: 5277ha / Major Type of Wetland: Brackish lake, salt marsh, low moor, river / Designation: Special Protection Area of National Wildlife Protection Area / Municipalities Involved: Akkeshi Town, Hokkaido Prefecture / Ramsar Designation: June 1993



Bekambeushi River



Central area of Bekambeushi River basin (Photo by M. Okada)

Principal Features:

Flowing northwards in eastern Hokkaido is the 43km long Bekambeushi River, the most pristine major river unobstructed by humans in Japan. In its basin lies the 8300ha Bekambeushi-shitsugen and at its mouth the 3230ha Akkeshi-ko.

Situated between the larger Kiritappu-shitsugen and Kushiro-shitsugen, the largely inaccessible Bekambeushi-shitsugen remained undeveloped, thus retaining its natural character. Its pristine condition can be considered a rarity in Japan. In 1989, aerial satellite imaging revealed that 100ha of high moor remained completely untouched. Surrounding this area are low moors with their characteristic reed, sedge, and alder vegetation. Viewing these together clearly displays the natural transitional process of wetlands, thus making this area invaluable.

Paradise for Wild Birds:

Approximately 170 species of birds have been recorded in the area. As it does not completely freeze over in winter, Akkeshi-ko is an important wintering ground for the Whooper Swan *Cygnus cygnus*. In addition, almost 3000 Steller's Sea Eagles *Haliaeetus pelagicus* and White-tailed Sea Eagles *Haliaeetus albicilla* winter here. Akkeshi-ko is also an important habitat for the Japanese Crane. In 2005, a 381ha sanctuary for the Japanese Crane entrusted by the Wild Bird Society of Japan was added for Ramsar Convention designation. The area is a part of the Waterbird Site Network based on the Partnership for the East Asian-Australasian Flyway.

Wise Use of the Lake:

Akkeshi-ko, a brackish lake, and Akkeshi Bay, facing the Pacific Ocean, are rich in biodiversity and thus, have long been known by fishermen for its productive waters. Fishing is still one of the major industries in the area. In particular, aquaculture of oysters and clams of



Steller's Sea Eagle *Haliaeetus pelagicus*

high quality is carried out in Akkeshi-ko. In order to maintain its water environment, the local fishing cooperative plants trees every year in the catchment area.

[Steller's Sea Eagle *Haliaeetus pelagicus*] A black-brown eagle with white wing tips and tail, and a large yellow bill and legs. It is the largest eagle of the sea eagle species reaching lengths of about 90cm, and wingspans of 240cm. After breeding in the coastal areas of Polustrov Kamchatka and Sakhalin, it winters in Hokkaido, particularly in Shiretoko and eastern Hokkaido. It mainly feeds on fish.

Contact Information:

Akkeshi Town Office
<http://info.town.akkeshi.hokkaido.jp/pubsys/public/mu1/bin/index.rbz>

