Information Sheet on Ramsar Wetlands (RIS)

Categories approved by Recommendation 4.7, as amended by Resolution VIII.13 of the Conference of the Contracting Parties.

Note for compilers:

1. The RIS should be completed in accordance with the attached *Explanatory Notes and Guidelines for completing the Information Sheet on Ramsar Wetlands*. Compilers are strongly advised to read this guidance before filling in the RIS.

2. Once completed, the RIS (and accompanying map(s)) should be submitted to the Ramsar Bureau. Compilers are strongly urged to provide an electronic (MS Word) copy of the RIS and, where possible, digital copies of maps.

1. Name and address of the compiler of this form:

Ms. Noriko MORIWAKE
Wildlife Division, Nature Conservation Bureau,
Ministry of the Environment
1-2-2 Kasumigaseki Chiyoda-ku Tokyo 100-8975, Japan
Telephone: +81-3-5521-8284
Facsimile: +81-3-3581-7090
E-mail: wildlife@env.go.jp

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DD MM YY

Designation date | Site Reference Number

2. Date this sheet was completed/updated:
8 November, 2005

3. Country: Japan

4. Name of the Ramsar site: Akkeshi-ko and Bekambeushi-shitsugen

5. Map of site included:
Refer to Annex III of the *Explanatory Note and Guidelines*, for detailed guidance on provision of suitable maps.

a) hard copy (required for inclusion of site in the Ramsar List): *yes* ■ -or- *no* □

b) digital (electronic) format (optional): *yes* ■ -or- *no* □

6. Geographical coordinates (latitude/longitude): 43°03'N 144°54'E

7. General location:
Include in which part of the country and which large administrative region(s), and the location of the nearest large town.

The site is located in the center of Akkeshi town (located approximately 40km east of Kushiro city), at the mouth of the Bekambeushi River, in eastern Hokkaido.

8. Elevation: (average and/or max. & min.) 0-20 m

9. Area: (in hectares) **5,277 ha** (extended 381 ha)

10. Overview:
Provide a short paragraph giving a summary description of the principal ecological characteristics and importance of the wetland.

Akkeshi-ko, a brackish water lake flown into by the Bekambeushi River, and Bekambeushi-shitsugen formed at the mouth of this river, is one of the leading primeval natural environment in Japan. Bekambeushi-shitsugen is composed of extensive fens and some bogs along the basin of Bekambeushi River. This site is known as the

largest passing winter area for Whooper Swan (*Cygnus cygnus*) in Japan, this is because this site is not frozen in the winter.

11. Ramsar Criteria:
Circle or underline each Criterion applied to the designation of the Ramsar site. See Annex II of the *Explanatory Notes and Guidelines* for the Criteria and guidelines for their application (adopted by Resolution VII.11).

1 • 2 • 3 • 4 • 5 • 6 • 7 • 8

12. Justification for the application of each Criterion listed in 11. above:
Provide justification for each Criterion in turn, clearly identifying to which Criterion the justification applies (see Annex II for guidance on acceptable forms of justification).

Ramsar Criterion 1: Bekanbeushi – shitsugen is one of the leading primeval natural lake in Japan.

Ramsar Criterion 2: This site is one of the important breeding sites for Japanese Crane (*Grus japonensis*), [MoE RDB Category:Vulnerable (VU*1), Domestic Endangered Species*2, Endangered IUCN Global Red List'04]. Every year more than 40 pairs breed in this site.

Ramsar Criterion 4: A part of the Akkeshi-ko surface is not frozen even in winter and 1,000 – 3,000 Whooper Swans (*Cygnus cygnus*) pass winter in this lake every year.

Ramsar Criterion 6: More than 80 (>10%) Japanese Cranes (*Grus japonensis*) breed in the site and also visit of 6,050 (10.08%) Whooper Swans (*Cygnus cygnus*) are recorded. The site regularly supports over 1% of the East Asian region population of Japanese Crane (*Grus japonensis*) (8) and Whooper Swan (*Cygnus cygnus*) (600).

Note: *1 Red List of Threatened Wildlife of Japan. Ministry of the Environment
*2 Designated under the Law for Conservation of Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (Species Conservation Law)

13. Biogeography (required when Criteria 1 and/or 3 and /or certain applications of Criterion 2 are applied to the designation):
Name the relevant biogeographic region that includes the Ramsar site, and identify the biogeographic regionalisation system that has been applied.

a) biogeographic region:
Japan

b) biogeographic regionalisation scheme (include reference citation):
Japan is recognized as single biogeographic region, because Japan is an island country which has unique and rich biota with many endemic species.

14. Physical features of the site:
Describe, as appropriate, the geology, geomorphology; origins - natural or artificial; hydrology; soil type; water quality; water depth, water permanence; fluctuations in water level; tidal variations; downstream area; general climate, etc.

Akkeshi-ko, a brackish water lake, receives water from Bekambeushi River and is connected with the sea by a narrow channel. The depth of the lake is 11 meters at the deepest point and is surrounded by wetlands and plateaus. Bekambeushi-shitsugen was developed at the floodplain along the slowly winding Bekambeushi River. It is mainly composed of fens (of reeds and sedge) and partially bogs around its center. Salt marshes develop along the shorelines.

15. Physical features of the catchment area: Describe the surface area, general geology and geomorphological features, general soil types, general land use, and climate (including climate type).

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16. Hydrological values:
Describe the functions and values of the wetland in groundwater recharge, flood control, sediment trapping, shoreline stabilization, etc.

The Lake maintains the balance of underground water and functions to control floods. It also contributes to maintenance of water quality.

Bekambeushi–shitsugen maintains the quality of Bekambeushi River, keeps the balance of underground water and functions to control floods. It also maintains and controls water quality in its ecological system.

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17. Wetland Types

a) presence:
Circle or underline the applicable codes for the wetland types of the Ramsar "Classification System for Wetland Type" present in the Ramsar site. Descriptions of each wetland type code are provided in Annex I of the *Explanatory Notes & Guidelines*.

Marine/coastal: A • B • C • D • E • F • G • H • I • J • K • Zk(a)

Inland: L • M • N • O • P • Q • R • Sp • Ss • Tp Ts • U • Va •
Vt • W • Xf • Xp • Y • Zg • Zk(b)

Human-made: 1 • 2 • 3 • 4 • 5 • 6 • 7 • 8 • 9 • Zk(c)

b) dominance:
List the wetland types identified in a) above in order of their dominance (by area) in the Ramsar site, starting with the wetland type with the largest area.
J-Sp-F-H-M-W-U-Xf

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18. General ecological features:
Provide further description, as appropriate, of the main habitats, vegetation types, plant and animal communities present in the Ramsar site.

Salt marsh vegetation is partially distributed around Akkeshi Lake. Bekambeushi mire is typical of fens of extensive reed, sedge, and alder community. Bogs have developed in the central area of the mire as well. Bekambeushi mire supports a fishery of oysters and clams in Akkeshi Lake. Important flora species include Crowberry/Gaoko-ran (*Empetrum nigrum*), Labrador-tea/Iso-tsutsuji (*Ledum palustre*), Peat Moss/Mizu-goke (*Sphagnum* spp.), Yachi-tsutsuji (*Chamaedaphne calyculata*) and Iwa-nogariyasu (*Calamagrostis canadensis*).

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19. Noteworthy flora:
Provide additional information on particular species and why they are noteworthy (expanding as necessary on information provided in 12. Justification for the application of the Criteria) indicating, e.g., which species/communities are unique, rare, endangered or biogeographically important, etc. *Do not include here taxonomic lists of species present – these may be supplied as supplementary information to the RIS.*

This site is the habitat of follows Noteworthy flora,

- Glasswort/Akkeshi-sou (*Salicornia europaea*)(endangered species (EN)*1)
- Community of Peat moss/Mizu-goke (Sphagnum)(rare community) composed of Bog moss/O-mizugoke (*Sphagnum palustre* L.) (endangered species(CR+EN)*1)
- Yachi-tsutsuji (*Chamaedaphne calyculata*) (endangered species(EN)*1) etc.

Note: *1 Red List of Threatened Wildlife of Japan. Ministry of the Environment

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20. Noteworthy fauna:

Provide additional information on particular species and why they are noteworthy (expanding as necessary on information provided in 12. Justification for the application of the Criteria) indicating, e.g., which species/communities are unique, rare, endangered or biogeographically important, etc., including count data. *Do not include here taxonomic lists of species present – these may be supplied as supplementary information to the RIS.*

This site is the habitat of follows Noteworthy fauna,

- Whooper Swan (*Cygnus cygnus*) (This site is the largest passing the winter area for Whooper Swan (*Cygnus cygnus*) in Japan.)
- White-tailed Eagle (*Haliaeetus albicilla*) (Endangered species(EN)*)
- Japanese Crane (*Grus japonensis*) (Endangered species(VU)*1)
- Grey-headed Woodpecker (*Picus canus*) (Rare species because Hokkaido is the only habitat for them in Japan.)
- Ezo squirrel (*Sciurus vulgaris orientis*) (Rare species; this is the sub species of *Sciurus vulgaris* and Hokkaido is the only habitat of them in Japan.) etc.

Note: *1 Red List of Threatened Wildlife of Japan. Ministry of the Environment

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21. Social and cultural values:

e.g., fisheries production, forestry, religious importance, archaeological sites, social relations with the wetland, etc. Distinguish between historical/archaeological/religious significance and current socio-economic values.

The area around this site is home for "AINU" (native or first people of Hokkaido) the first information about these people dates back to around 6,000 years ago. Now, still there are ruins or stone tools which are a subject of archaeological excavation.

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22. Land tenure/ownership:

(a) within the Ramsar site:

Owned by the National Government	1,765ha
Owned by Akkeshi Town (public lake)	3,228ha
Privately owned land	284ha

(b) in the surrounding area: It is difficult to identify, since land tenures are too complicated.
National land, private land

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23. Current land (including water) use:

(a) within the Ramsar site: Akkeshi-ko—Fishery, aquaculture
Bukambeushi-shitsugen—forestry

(b) in the surroundings/catchment: forestry, aquaculture, fishery

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24. Factors (past, present or potential) adversely affecting the site's ecological character, including changes in land (including water) use and development projects:

(a) within the Ramsar site: none
(b) in the surrounding area: none

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25. Conservation measures taken:

List national category and legal status of protected areas, including boundary relationships with the Ramsar site; management practices; whether an officially approved management plan exists and whether it is being implemented.

The entire area is designated as the special protection area of a National Wildlife Protection Area and the Special Area of the Akkeshi Prefectural Natural Park. Akkeshi Town is purchasing pieces of private land around the site (2,100 ha as of 1997). Also, the Town has purchased 519 ha in cooperation with NGOs.

To protect fisheries resources, citizens' group primarily consisting of fishermen, are planting trees upstream. The Town also plants trees for wetland conservation with residents' participation.

26. Conservation measures proposed but not yet implemented:
e.g. management plan in preparation; official proposal as a legally protected area, etc.

None

27. Current scientific research and facilities:
e.g., details of current research projects, including biodiversity monitoring; existence of a field research station, etc.

Research on habitat condition of *Grus japonensis*.
Research on condition of bogs.
A foundation for academic research in Akkeshi-ko and Bekanbeushi-shitsugen was established by Akkeshi town in 1997. It has funded 40 research projects by 2001.

28. Current conservation education:
e.g. visitors' centre, observation hides and nature trails, information booklets, facilities for school visits, etc.

The Ministry of the Environment constructed Akkeshi Waterfown Observation Center in 1995; the Akkeshi Town is responsible for administration and management of the Center.

29. Current recreation and tourism:
State if the wetland is used for recreation/tourism; indicate type(s) and their frequency/intensity.

From May to October, 9km-stretch of Bekanbeushi River is used as a canoe course; the Town operates three canoe stations. In 2002, from May to October, some 344 canoes (May: 53, Jun.:18, Jul.: 64, Aug.:93, Sep.:46, Oct.:70) used these stations. When the river surface is frozen (from late December to early March), fishing on ice is popular.

30. Jurisdiction:
Include territorial, e.g. state/region, and functional/sectoral, e.g. Dept of Agriculture/Dept. of Environment, etc.

Territorial: Akkeshi Town, Hokaido
Functional: Ministry of the Environment

31. Management authority:
Provide the name and address of the local office(s) of the agency(ies) or organisation(s) directly responsible for managing the wetland. Wherever possible provide also the title and/or name of the person or persons in this office with responsibility for the wetland.

Kushiro Wildlife Branch, East Hokkaido Regional Office for Nature Conservation,
Nature Conservation Bureau, Ministry of the Environment
Hokuto 2-2101, Kushiro city, Hokkaido 084-0922, JAPAN
Telephone:+81-154-56-2345
Facsimile:+81-154-56-2267

32. Bibliographical references:
scientific/technical references only. If biogeographic regionalisation scheme applied (see 13 above), list full reference citation for the scheme.

- The Report on the Annual Census of Waterfowls (ANATIDAE) in January. Ministry of the Environment, Japan

- Threatened Wildlife of Japan – Red Data Book 2nd ed. –Aves. Ministry of the Environment, Japan. 2002
- "Excellent Natural Areas." Natural Environment Investigation Report. Hokkaido. 1992.
- Report of the Overall Investigation of Prefectural Natural Parks, Akkeshi Prefectural Natural Park. Hokkaido. 1986.
- BirdLife International 2004. *Grus japonensis*. In: IUCN 2004. *2004 IUCN Red List of Threatened Species*.