

Surfers for Wetlands



Why We Need to Protect the Kabukuri-numa Wetlands?



What and Where are the Kabukuri-numa Wetlands?

Kabukuri-numa is a wetland located along the Kitakamigawa River system in Miyagi Prefecture in Japan. Kabukuri-numa wetland is 150 hectares, which is for the most part covered with reed and Indian rice and embraced by rice paddies that were once part of the wetland.

Why are the Kabukuri-numa Wetlands so Important?

Kabukuri-numa has a diverse environment of marshes and open water and is high in biodiversity; it is particularly important as one of Japan's foremost wintering sites for wild geese. Waterbirds such as geese, swans and ducks use these wetlands in winter. In all, there are 126 species of wetland-dependent birds and 93 "terrestrial" species attesting to the site's diversity. Many of these birds are endangered, including six "Natural Treasure" species, and 42 species included in the "Red List of Japan."

What is Threatening the Kabukuri-numa Wetlands?

Since the 1900s, the Kabukuri-numa wetlands were converted into rice paddies. The rice paddies are kept dry in the winter, which eliminates their wetland value. This has seriously impacted many wetland-dependent species, driving some to extinction. The Japanese Crested Ibis and the White Stork are both extinct in the wild in Japan. According to a Geographical Survey Institute, 61% of Japan's wetlands disappeared during the last century.

A proposal to dredge the Kabukuri-numa wetlands became an opportunity for stakeholders to initiate a movement towards wetland protection and co-existence of wildlife with agriculture. Landholders agreed to re-convert of 50 hectares of paddy fields back to wetlands in 1998. As a result, the number of geese using Kabukuri-numa as a roosting site increased, illustrating that the restoration augmented the site's wildlife carrying capacity. Farmers and others cooperated to implement a winter-flooding regime for nearby cultivated paddies.

What Can You Do to Help?

Support the Kabukuri Wetlands Club, which is a local NGO in Japan that move ahead with the projects such as marsh preservation, wetlands restoration, symbiosis between geese and agriculture and environmental education. Visit their website at: www2.odn.ne.jp/kgwa/kabukuri/kabukuri_e/kwc.htm



For more information visit www surfersforwetlands.org



@surfers4wetland