

Activity guide to the public awareness activities about migratory birds and wetlands:  
Holding an event and making a pamphlet

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BirdLife international Tokyo

BirdLife International Tokyo (hereafter referred to as "BirdLife Tokyo") created a pamphlet for public awareness and held an event on wetlands in cooperation with Saga City to raise public awareness of wetlands and migratory birds, and to strengthen collaborations among people involved in wetlands. In April 2021, we prepared and distributed pamphlets involved in wetlands and migratory birds, held a video seminar, and set up an exhibition booth to introduce wetlands at the "Shigichi Fes", which means Shorebirds Festival, held in Saga City.

In this activity guide, we summarize the contents of our activities, how we proceeded with them, the results, the challenges and the opportunities, to help to organize future events and activities related to wetlands and migratory birds in other areas.

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## **1. Backgrounds, Objectives and Outline of the Activities**

### **1.1. Backgrounds and objectives**

Migratory waterbirds species have rapidly declined due to habitat loss and degradation. For the conservation of these species, we have to protect their habitats along the entire migratory route (flyway), including breeding grounds where they raise their young, stopover sites where they rest and feed during migration, and wintering grounds where they pass the winter. The East Asian-Australasian Flyway (hereinafter referred to as "EAAF") is a flyway that extends from eastern Russia and Alaska to East and Southeast Asia, Australia and New Zealand, including Japan. This flyway harbours many waterbirds species, but many of them are endangered now. There is an international framework called the East Asian-Australasian Flyway Partnership (EAAFP), which promotes activities and initiatives to protect migratory waterbirds, their habitat and the livelihoods of people dependent upon them. Currently, more than 140 wetlands within the EAAF have been identified as an internationally important wetland for migratory waterbirds and included in the Flyway Site Network of EAAFP. Thus, in order to protect wetlands and the migratory waterbirds that inhabit them, it is important to work together across the flyway and strengthen the connections between wetlands, but such efforts and systems are lacking. Therefore, in this project, we held an event in collaboration with several wetlands designated as a Flyway Network Site, to promote cooperation and exchange among wetlands and regions.

Wetlands are not only important habitats for migratory waterbirds, but also provide us with benefits through the food and water supply, water purification, and reduction of damage from natural disasters. In order to promote wetland conservation, it is important to raise the interest of many people, not just a few enthusiasts, and it is necessary to work with various stakeholders to engage the entire community in activities. Therefore, we made an opportunity for many people to learn about migratory birds and wetlands by making promotional and educational materials on wetlands and holding exhibition booths and a video lecture to introduce wetlands in each region, their benefit, and migratory birds that live in wetlands. The goal is to connect people involved in wetland conservation with people who are not familiar with wetlands and build a cooperative system to promote the conservation and sustainable use of wetlands.

### **1.2. Outlines**

Higashiyoka Tidal Flat, located in Saga City, Saga Prefecture, is part of the tidal flats of the Ariake Sea and is included in the EAAFP's Flyway Network Site, and also

registered as a Ramsar Convention wetland. The Higashiyoka Tidal Flat is one of the remaining habitats for shorebirds to visit in Japan, and many migratory waterbirds including shorebirds visit the tidal flat during their migration in spring and autumn, and the wintering season. In October 2020, the visitor centre "Higasasu" opened and has communicated the value and attractions of the Higashiyoka Tidal Flat and served as a base for various activities such as tourism, learning and exchange.

In addition, since 2019, an event called "Shigichi Fes", which means Shorebirds Festival, has been held in April or May, when many shorebirds can be observed on their migration (the event was cancelled in 2020 due to the Covid-19 pandemic). The event is organized by Saga City, Saga Branch of Wild Bird Society of Japan, and Saga Wild Bird Society, with the cooperation of the Laboratory of Environment of Shallow and Tidal Flat, Faculty of Agriculture, Saga University and Shigi-no-Ongaeshi Rice (Environmental-friendly rice made near the tidal flat) Project Promotion Council. In the event, various activities are conducted, such as bird-watching, crafts and other hands-on events, exhibition booth, and sales of the Shigi no Ongaeshi Rice.

BirdLife Tokyo, in cooperation with Saga City, conducted the following activities at "the Shigichi Fest 2021 in Higashiyoka-higata" to raise public awareness about wetlands and migratory birds, and to promote cooperation among local communities.

- (1) Preparation and distribution of pamphlets to raise awareness about wetlands and migratory birds
- (2) Conducting a video seminar and establishing an exhibition booth to introduce wetlands at the event (Shigichi Fest)

Due to the influence of the Covid-19 pandemic, we had to shrink the scale of the "Shigichi Fest 2021 in Higashiyoka-higata". For this reason, we decided to cancel activities such as bird-watching and crafts, and change the method of conducting other activities to prevent too many people from gathering and to reduce the risk of infection.

## **2. Activities**

### **2.1 Public awareness pamphlet**

We made an awareness-raising pamphlet focusing on wetlands, migratory birds that live in wetlands, and the benefits of wetlands. The pamphlet focuses on the benefits of wetlands such as providing water and food to us, as well as introduces wetlands and migratory waterbirds. By making such a pamphlet, we aimed to make people who are not familiar with the natural environment more interested in wetlands and their

benefits. In addition, by introducing the wetlands of several regions where initiatives that make use of the benefits of wetlands are implemented, we aimed to get readers interested in wetlands and initiatives in each wetland, and at the same time, promote collaboration among regions through making this pamphlet.



Fig. 1. The front and back covers of the pamphlet about wetlands.

The contents of the pamphlet include basic information about wetlands, the benefits of wetlands, migratory waterbirds and their migration routes, and introductions of three wetlands in Japan and the efforts made in these wetlands. We tried to make the pamphlet easy to read and understand, even for those who are not familiar with wetlands and migratory birds. In addition, we tried to make people feel familiar and interested in wetlands and migratory birds by introducing the benefits of wetlands (food and water supply, disaster damage reduction, etc.) and regions that are promoting specific efforts to utilize wetlands and their benefits.

In addition to the Higashiyoka Tidal Flat (Saga City, Saga Prefecture), we selected Yashiro (Shunan City, Yamaguchi Prefecture) and Kabukuri-numa and Kejyo-numa (Osaki City, Miyagi Prefecture) as a wetland designated EAAFP Flyway Network Site in Japan. These wetlands, the living things such as migratory birds that live there, and the efforts to utilize the wetlands were introduced in the pamphlet. Three wetlands are making efforts to conserve biodiversity by utilizing wetlands like rice fields, including

the production of the environmental-friendly-farming rice ("Shigi no Ongaeshi Rice": Saga City, and "Fuyu-mizu Tambo Rice": Osaki City), and actively making use of wetlands and migratory birds that live in wetlands in environmental education. The wetlands are also important habitats for migratory waterbirds. A large number of shorebirds visit the Higashiyoka Tidal Flat, while Yashiro is the wintering site for one crane species, the Hooded Crane, and the Kabukuri-numa and Kejyo-numa are home to a large number of geese like the White-fronted Goose and other ducks. Each wetland participates in different species group network (shorebird, crane and Anatidae). Therefore, by introducing the wetlands in the three areas, we aimed to introduce some of the efforts of each of the three species groups that represent the Flyway Network Sites in Japan.

Making the pamphlet, firstly BirdLife Tokyo considered the plan of the pamphlet contents and then discussed the contents with local government officials in Saga City, Shunan City, and Osaki City. After that, we commissioned a designer to design the pamphlet and revised the contents, text, and illustrations with the designer. We commissioned Ikimono Palette (<http://www.eonet.ne.jp/~flowers/ikimono/>), which designs using nature and living things as motifs. The specific schedule is described in Section 3. Time Schedule.

We printed 2,000 copies of the completed pamphlet and distributed them on the day of the festival. We also printed and distributed copies each to Osaki City and Shunan City, as well as to each of the other Flyway Network Site in Japan. An English version was also created and distributed in the same way so that it can be used by people from other countries and people involved in overseas wetlands, including the Flyway Network Sites in foreign countries. In addition to the distribution of printed copies, we also made PDF files available on BirdLife Tokyo and other web pages for people to use freely.

## **2.2 Activities at the event**

In addition to distributing the above-mentioned pamphlet, we (1) held a video seminar titled "Story of Wetlands and Migratory Birds" and (2) set up an exhibition booth to introduce wetlands and wetland-based initiatives as follows, at the "Shigichi Fest 2021 in Higashiyoka Tidal Flat" held on Thursday, April 29, 2021.

### **(1) Video seminar "Story of Wetlands and Migratory Birds"**

When we first planned the activity, we planned to have the participants gather in the lecture room of the Higashiyoka Visitor Center (Higasasu) and give an onsite lecture for the participants. However, due to the Covid-19 pandemic, we had to shrike the scale of

the event, so we also changed the form of the lecture from the original plan. We decided to cancel the real-time face-to-face lectures and asked each lecturer to record their lecture in advance and play the lecture movie in the lecture room on the day of the event.

The content of the lecture and the lecturer were selected with the cooperation of Saga City and the Japan Bird Research Association and are summarized in Table 1 below.

Table 1. The titles, lecturer and contents of lecture seminar “Story of Wetlands and Migratory Birds”.

	Title	Lecturer	Contents
1	Shorebirds are birds like this	Mr Toshifumi Moriya (Japan Bird Research Association)	Basic information and characteristics of shorebirds, including representative species and their habitats.
2	Shorebirds Migration	Mr Yasuhiro Nakamura (Arao-higata Waterfowl and Wetland Center)	Introduction of characteristics of shorebirds migration, the environment that supports the migration and movie of shorebirds that visit the Ariake Sea.
3	Tidal flats in Japan	Mr Toshifumi Moriya	Introduction of tidal flats that support shorebirds, the characteristics of tidal flats and the benefits of tidal flats in Japan.
4	Ariake Sea – 3 Ramsar Convention Wetlands.	Ms Sayaka Nakamura (Saga Prefecture Branch of the Wild Bird Society of Japan)	The attractiveness of three Ramsar Convention wetlands in the Ariake Sea (Higashiyoka Tidal Flat, Hizen Kashima Tidal Flat, and Arao Tidal Flat) and what to look for when visiting them
5	Today and conservation of shorebirds	Mr Toshifumi Moriya	Shorebird’s survey, its results and the conservation

The video seminar was so well received that we delivery it not only on the day of the event but also for about a month after the event in the lecture room of the visitor centre so that visitors could freely watch it. The movies were also made available to the public on YouTube so that they could be watched by the general public.

You can watch the movies here:

[https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PLOa1eQqmygroWPm\\_VzvwwBBE31BM2kZw9y](https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PLOa1eQqmygroWPm_VzvwwBBE31BM2kZw9y)



Fig. 2. Visitors watching the video seminar in the lecture room at the Visitor Center on the day of Shigichi Fest.

(2) Exhibition booth to introduce the wetlands and wetland-based initiatives

Initially, we had planned to hold a product exhibition selling local specialities of each wetland and region (especially agricultural products related to wetlands) to attract more visitors and increase the interest of many people in wetlands and their benefits. However, due to the spread of the Covid-19, it has become difficult to visit other regions and therefore sell local products. So instead of holding a product exhibition, we decided to set up an exhibition booth to introduce each wetland and local initiatives involved in each wetland. We set up panels and desks in the visitor centre and placed posters and pamphlets for visitors to browse through and take home. We also used VR goggles owned by each local government so that visitors could experience the atmosphere of the wetland more realistically. Saga City secured a space for us to display the exhibition booth, and prepared desks and panels for us. We also asked Shunan City and Osaki City to prepare posters and pamphlets.



Fig. 3. The exhibition booth on the day of the event.  
A visitor experiencing a VR image with VR goggles (right).

### 3. Time Schedule

The time schedule of the activities is summarized in Table 2. We had a meeting with the officials of Saga City to discuss the details of the activity in November 2020 and then started to prepare the pamphlet. We collaborated with three local governments including Saga City and the designer and prepared the pamphlet for distribution on the day of the event. As for the contents on the day of the event, after discussing with the officials of Saga City once in November 2020, we started preparing in earnest in March 2021 when the event officially decided to be held. In March, we reexamined the details of our activities, and then proceeded with them in consultation with local governments and the Japan Bird Research Association, taking into consideration the influence of the Covid-19 pandemic. This year's activities faced some challenges, such as the fact that we could not take enough time to prepare for the event due to the uncertain prospects of holding the event because of this pandemic.

Table 2. Activities schedule.

	Activities		
Month. Year	General activities	Make the pamphlet	Hold the event (Shigichi Fest)
Jun 2020	Consider the activity		
Jul 2020	Consult with Saga City officials		
Aug 2020			
Sep 2020			
Oct 2020	Launch the project in earnest		
Nov 2020	Consult and discuss with Saga City officials		
Dec 2020		Consider the pamphlet contents	
Jan 2021		Consult with local government officials Gather materials like pictures	Consult with local government officials

Activities			
Month. Year	General activities	Make the pamphlet	Hold the event (Shigichi Fest)
Feb 2021		Consult with the designer Gather materials like pictures and text	
Mar 2021		Make the pamphlet, discuss with the designer and local government officials	Consider the detailed activities (exhibition booth contents and seminar contents) and consult with local government officials Prepare the video seminar
Apr 2021		Complete design and print the pamphlet Distribute it at the event	Consider the exhibition booth contents, prepare and send posters and other materials to be exhibited Prepare the video seminar (requests for the lecturer, and making the movie) Hold the event (29 <sup>th</sup> April)
May 2021	Make an activity handbook	Translate and make an English version	Summarize the event
Jun 2021	Make an activity book and translate it into English	Translate and make an English version	
Jul 2021	Make an activity book and translate it into English	Translate and make an English version	

#### 4. Achievements

It rained on the morning of the event day, so there were not many visitors. However, the weather recovered in the afternoon, and in the end, more than 300 people visited the visitor centre. It is hoped that many people became interested in wetlands and migratory waterbirds by picking up pamphlets and looking at displays about the Higashiyoka Tidal Flat and other wetlands and activities at each wetland. In addition, we expect that communicating the appeal of wetlands, tidal flats in the Ariake Sea and shorebirds species through the video seminar have made many people more interested in them.



Fig. 4. The entrance to the visitor centre on the day of Shigichi Fest (left).  
Visitors looking at the exhibition booth (right).

In addition to organizing the event, making the pamphlet and delivering the video seminar, we believe that these activities have provided us with an opportunity to start initiatives that can be applied to future activities at the Flyway Network Sites and in other areas. Our activities focused not only on wetlands and the migratory birds that use them but also on the benefits of wetlands. Making the pamphlet and exhibition booth enabled us to provide an opportunity for people who are not familiar with wetlands to become interested in them. It is hoped that this pamphlet and other materials will be utilized to have more and more people participate in activities related to wetlands and stimulate activities working with multiple stakeholders.

In addition, we were able to conduct activities that connected multiple regions, including Saga City, Shunan City, and Osaki City. In order to conserve migratory birds, it is necessary to conserve their entire migration route, including breeding grounds, wintering grounds, and resting grounds. Therefore, many countries and regions need to work together to conserve migratory birds and their habitats. With this activity as a step

toward cooperation, it is hoped that collaborative activities between the three local governments and activities involving other regions become more active and that the conservation of migratory birds and their habitats will be further advanced.

## **5. Challenges and Opportunities**

We would like to summarize the challenges of our activities and what we think is important in order to promote more meaningful activities in the future.

The first point is to hold a product exhibition. When we first started planning this activity, we planned to sell local specialities (especially rice, seaweed and sake, which are the benefits of the wetlands), but due to the pandemic of Covid-19, we were not able to hold a product exhibition. In recent years, the production of agricultural products that consider biodiversity conservation and the development and sale of processed products that use these agricultural products have been promoted in many places. There are more and more agricultural products that consider wetlands and species depending on a wetland, such as "Shigi no Ongaeshi Rice" produced in Saga City and "Fuyumizu Tambo Rice" and "Sasamusubi" produced in Osaki City. The number of agricultural products and foods that are friendly to wildlife and their habitats is increasing, and such products let us enjoy the benefits of the wetlands with a greater sense of reality. By promoting these products, even people who do not know much about wetlands and migratory birds may visit wetlands and also become interested in them and their conservation. Although we could not sell local specialities this time only introduced them through pamphlets and posters, we hope to hold product exhibitions and sell agricultural products and goods related to wetlands from various regions in the future to expand the number of people involved in wetland and migratory bird conservation.

Secondly, it is important to maintain and develop the cooperation and connections that have been established this time. In the tidal flats around the Ariake Sea (Higashiyoka Tidal Flat in Saga City, Hizen Kashima Tidal Flat in Kashima City, and Arao Tidal Flat in Arao City, Kumamoto Prefecture), three tidal flats have been working together to build a cooperative relationship, but there have not been many collaborative efforts among the Flyway Network Sites in Japan. This time, we were able to promote collaborative efforts among the Higashiyoka Tidal Flat in Saga City, Yashiro in Shunan City, and Kabukuri-numa and Kajyo-numa in Osaki City, and we believe that it is necessary to maintain this kind of collaboration in the future, as well as to make such connections in other areas. It is necessary to continue to provide support and build a system that will allow to maintain and develop our collaboration system. It is also important to build a system that will

make it easier for local government officials and local NGO officials to carry out their collaborative activities.

In this event, we focused on the three species group in EAAFP (Crane, Anatidae and shorebirds) and conducted activities in cooperation with the three regions. We believe that it has been effective in focusing on the three species groups that are the targets of the EAAFP. However, there are not many migratory waterbirds that are common to all three wetlands. In order to promote more close collaborative efforts in the future, it is expected that activities focusing on common waterbirds in areas where these migratory waterbirds visit will allow us to feel more connected between wetlands and regions and achieve greater results. In addition, although the activities this time were conducted only at the Flyway Network Sites in Japan, strengthening not only the connection between the site in Japan but also the sites in the foreign countries would make us enable to further develop activities that can disseminate the appeal of wetlands and migration.

## **6. Contact**

If you have any inquiries or questions regarding this activity, please feel free to contact us at the following contact information.

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