

Joint declaration to restore biodiversity-rich tidal flats and wetlands in Osaka Bay

We, environmental protection organizations, make the following declaration in order to achieve "nature positive" by halting and reversing the loss of biodiversity in the coastal areas that connect land and sea.

We urge the relevant authorities to:

1. Protect the natural environment that exists along the Osaka Bay coast and preserve it for future generations by creating a protected nature area.
2. Select unused land or under-utilized land as candidate sites for nature restoration in already developed and deteriorated bay areas, and quickly restore natural beaches, tidal flats, and wetland environments.
3. Give the highest priority to biodiversity restoration when reclaiming land from the sea or coast, and create wetlands and tidal flats at least as large as the developed area.

We declare that we will take every opportunity to spread the "nature positive" philosophy, expand opportunities for collaboration and cooperation with organizations such as government, companies, NGOs, private organizations and citizens, and pool our wisdom to restore the biodiversity-rich tidal flats and wetlands along the Osaka Bay coast.

[Explanation of purpose]

1) What is "nature positive"?

Nature Positive, which has been set as a mission for 2030 to achieve a “society in harmony with nature”, refers to the concept of not only protecting nature but also transforming society and the economy as a whole, to contribute to biodiversity conservation and put nature on a path to recovery (“The National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP) of Japan 2023-2030”).

In addition, the Kunming-Montreal Biodiversity Framework (GBF) (December 2022) sets a “30-by-30 target” to effectively conserve at least 30% of land and sea as healthy ecosystems by 2030 as one way to realize nature positive. In Japan, we are making efforts to expand protected areas by utilizing national parks and the Nationally Certified Sustainably Managed Natural Sites.

In Osaka Prefecture, the current protected area (the actual area designated by ordinances and other regulations) accounts for about 24.6% of the prefecture's total land area. However, in the bay area, only about 1% of the total length of Osaka’s coastline is currently covered by natural beaches, so drastic efforts will be necessary to halt the loss of biodiversity and restore it.

2) Significance of preserving coastal ecosystems

Shorebirds and plovers, which serve as indicators of the health of coastal ecosystems, have been reported to be declining worldwide. The number of individuals migrating to Japan has also decreased significantly. One of the major reasons for this is thought to be the loss of their habitats, such as tidal flats and wetlands. Migratory waterbirds have lost their habitats to development, and have survived by using alternative sites such as waterside areas under reclamation. However, these environments are unstable.

The Osaka Bay area is an important stopover point on the East Asia-Australia Flyway. Conserving the habitats of migratory birds will help maintain a major international migratory route and also lead to the conservation of biodiversity in the Asian region.

In addition, protecting shorebirds and plovers also means conserving the natural environment such as wetlands and tidal flats, which in turn means protecting the rich biodiversity of these regions. Protecting shorebirds not only protects the natural environment of their stopover sites, such as wetlands and foreshores, but also protects the region's biodiversity. Furthermore, the natural coastal environment creates wind paths, reduces heat islanding, and serves as a place to interact with nature and for environmental education. Therefore, conserving these areas also contributes to protecting valuable environments for humans.

3) The potential of Osaka Bay area

Osaka Bay, located at the eastern end of the Seto Inland Sea, has long been called "the sea of Naniwa (fish garden)" because of its rich biodiversity, from which we have benefited. For a long time, it has also served as a stopover point for migratory waterfowl such as snipes and plovers, as well as a wintering site.

More than 50 years ago, many snipes and plovers migrated to the wetlands during reclamation work, and local citizens stepped up to protect the area. As a result, the Nanko Bird Sanctuary was created. This wild bird park is one of the nation's pioneering examples of an artificial tidal flat created for migratory birds. For this reason, it has been selected as a "Rank A Biodiversity Hotspot" by Osaka Prefecture, along with nearby Yumeshima Island.

4) The current critical situation

Yumeshima, the site of the 2025 Osaka-Kansai Expo, has been the largest migration site in Osaka Bay for migratory birds such as little terns and shorebirds for over 20 years. Even during the construction work for the Expo, from May 2023 to September 2024, 71 bird species, including 51 red-listed species, have been confirmed in the few remaining wetlands. However, this site will have its surface solidified and used as an artificial pond called "Connected Sea" during the Expo. When the Expo is over, it is expected to be completely reclaimed by the city of Osaka.

The disappearance of migration sites in Osaka Bay, along a large-scale migratory route, will accelerate the extinction of shorebirds passing through Japan. In Osaka, while the city is supposedly aiming for a "future society for our lives", migratory birds are about to lose another precious habitat without any consideration for the conservation and maintenance of biodiversity. This also means that we are about to lose a valuable asset, a biodiversity hotspot, which is completely contrary to the philosophy of "nature positive".

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Nature Conservation Society of Osaka

Wild Bird Society of Japan, Osaka Branch

Wild Bird Society of Japan

The Nature Conservation Society of Japan

Bird Research (NPO) (expectation)

World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) Japan(expectation)

(in no particular order)

There are many supporting organizations