

Yonago Waterbird Sanctuary

For centuries, migrating waterbirds have roosted in the natural wetlands along Lake Nakaumi for the winter. Land-reclamation projects along the lake in the post–World War II period gradually eliminated large areas of wetlands, leading local residents to call for conservation of waterbird habitats. The Yonago Waterbird Sanctuary, which opened in 1995, is a step in this direction. Each year, the sanctuary is visited by over 10,000 birds from more than 100 species. These include tundra swans, common shelducks, spoonbills, and white-fronted geese migrating in the autumn and winter, while spot-billed ducks, warblers, little grebes, and others breed here in the spring and summer.

User-Friendly Facilities

The Yonago Waterbird Sanctuary is technically an artificial wetland, and a 1-meter-deep pond surrounded by beds of reeds occupies most of its 28 hectares. It has a large wooden Nature Center with floor-to-ceiling glass windows overlooking the pond. There are about 30 telescopes that can be used free of charge to get a close view of the birds. Other features include an audiovisual room, educational exhibitions, and displays about local wildlife and ecology. Visitors can also use digital microscopes to examine feathers, insects, and other items. There is a small library, and specialized staff are on hand to answer questions and point out things of interest. An octagonal exhibition room contains taxidermy specimens of many species of wild geese. Outdoor paths and viewing areas allow visitors to get closer to certain species. The facility holds regular hands-on learning activities for both children and adults, and welcomes school classes on a regular basis.

The Nakaumi Waterbirds International Exchange Fund Foundation, funded by Yonago City and Tottori Prefecture, engages in active international exchange with experts and communities around the world, sharing the insight and experience gained over the years. A strong local volunteer movement encourages local residents to participate in the environmental management of the sanctuary.