

Retrospective Statements of Outstanding Universal Value  
(Draft)

Shiretoko

Government of Japan  
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## Retrospective Statement of Outstanding Universal Value Shiretoko

### Brief synthesis

Located in the northeast of Hokkaido, Shiretoko is one of the richest integrated ecosystems in the world and comprises part of the Shiretoko Peninsula, which protrudes into the Sea of Okhotsk and its surrounding marine areas.

The key feature of Shiretoko is the interaction between and high productivity of the marine and terrestrial ecosystems with unique seasonal sea ice characteristics. The supply of nutrient-rich intermediate water resulting from the formation of sea ice in the Sea of Okhotsk allows successive primary trophic productions including blooms of phytoplankton in early spring, which underpins Shiretoko's marine ecosystem. This in turn sustains the food sources for terrestrial species including the brown bear and the Blakiston's fish-owl through salmonid species swimming upstream to spawn. The terrestrial ecosystem has various types of virgin vegetation reflecting the complex topography and weather conditions, and serves as a habitat for a rich and diverse range of fauna and flora including endangered and endemic species such as *Viola kitamiana*.

**Criterion (ix):** Shiretoko provides an outstanding example of the interaction of marine and terrestrial ecosystems as well as extraordinary ecosystem productivity, largely influenced by the formation of seasonal sea ice at the lowest latitude in the northern hemisphere.

**Criterion (x):** Shiretoko has particular importance for a number of marine and terrestrial species. These include a number of endangered and endemic species, such as the Blakiston's fish-owl and the plant species *Viola kitamiana*. The site is globally important for a number of salmonid species and for a number of marine mammals, including the Steller sea lion and a number of cetacean species. The site has significance as a habitat for globally threatened sea birds and is a globally important area for migratory birds.

### Integrity

The property covers 71,100 ha in area and embraces all of the conserved areas of the integrated ecosystem comprising an extremely rich marine ecosystem and virgin terrestrial ecosystem. Accordingly, the property is of sufficient size to ensure the long-term conservation of the ecosystems and biodiversity. The marine boundaries are 3 km from the shoreline, corresponding to a 200 m depth. This means that the property encompasses the key marine ecological area for marine biodiversity. Fishery, a vitally important industry in the region, has been sustainably undertaken in the area for a period of time. The terrestrial boundaries protect key features on the land, from the coastline to the mountain peaks 1,600 m high. Most of the terrestrial area is in a natural or semi-natural condition.

## Protection and management requirements

Most of the terrestrial area of the property lies within the national forest owned and managed by the national government. The property is designated in the following protected areas: Onnebetsudake Wilderness Area, Shiretoko National Park, Shiretoko National Wildlife Protection Area, and Shiretoko Forest Ecosystem Reserve. Each of these designations represents a system to protect Japan's rich natural environment and has strict legal restrictions on development and other activities. In addition, rare species found in the property, such as the Steller's sea eagle, white-tailed eagle, and Blakiston's fish-owl, are designated and legally protected as National Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora or as Natural Monuments. As for the marine area, it is designated as a National Park and resources there are managed in accordance with, among others, the Regulation of Sea Fisheries Adjustment in Hokkaido based on the Fisheries Law.

The Ministry of the Environment, the Forestry Agency, the Agency for Cultural Affairs, and the Hokkaido prefectural government, which are responsible for their respective systems related to the conservation and administration of the property, developed the Management Plan for the Shiretoko World Natural Heritage Site for the smooth management of these multi-tiered protected areas and species, and the property is managed as a unit based on this plan.

In addition, relevant government agencies and local governments established the Shiretoko World Natural Heritage Site Regional Liaison Committee to promote conservation management of the property through effective collaboration and cooperation with the local community. Also, the Shiretoko World Natural Heritage Site Scientific Council, consisting of scientists and experts, was established and is promoting adaptive conservation management of the property that reflects scientific knowledge.

In light of the suggestions by the IUCN during its evaluation mission (2004) and recommendations in decision 29COM 8B.6 for the inscription of Shiretoko on the World Heritage List (2005), working groups have been established under the Scientific Council to consider, based on scientific evidence, such issues as the impact of the fishery industry on marine ecosystems, the impact of river constructions including dams on salmon migration, the impact of excess tourism, and the impact on vegetation of grazing pressure of the overpopulation of sika deer. Measures to these issues are being taken reflecting the views and opinions of local stakeholders. After the inscription, the Sika Deer Management Plan in the Shiretoko Peninsula was established to address sika deer issues, and the Multiple Use Integrated Marine Management Plan for Shiretoko World Natural Heritage Site was developed on the basis of fisheries-related laws and autonomous management by fishermen. On top of these, the revised Management Plan for the Shiretoko World Natural Heritage Site (2009) was formulated to integrate all individual plans, responding to the recommendations made by the reactive monitoring mission (2008). Furthermore, efforts are being taken to understand the condition of the ecosystem in the neighboring areas of Japan and the Russian Federation through cooperative efforts with Russia under the bilateral "Cooperation Program between the Government of Japan and the Government of the Russian Federation in the neighboring areas of the two states on the Study, Conservation and Rational/Sustainable Use of Ecosystems" signed in 2009. Moreover, based on advice from the Scientific Council, monitoring activities have been also underway to respond to unexpected impacts on the property, such as natural environment changes due to climate change.

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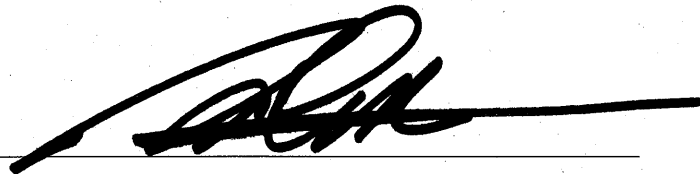
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