



◀ Approximately 14,000 of the east Siberian breeding population of whooper swan migrate to Japan to winter in the northern parts of Honshu and in Hokkaido. Formerly abundant as far south as Tokyo it was killed for its down and quills so extensively last century that numbers were severely reduced. While hunting has since ceased and numbers have increased, it has not yet returned to its more southerly wintering areas.

drive for logging is being fuelled by Japanese and South Korean corporations whose activities will have serious impacts on the wetlands of the region and the many species dependent on them.

IN SPITE OF, or perhaps because of, her poor showing in the arena of wetland conservation, Japan, in particular Kushiro City located adjacent to Japan's largest remaining peat marsh, offered to host the next meeting of the

The natural ► meanderings of the rivers flowing through Kushiro's peat swamp – Japan's largest – hide the high levels of inflowing silt and pollution from surrounding development and agricultural land.



parties to the Ramsar Convention in June this year.

Promises made at the last meeting of the parties, that Japan would designate at least ten more sites now seem unlikely to be met. In fact rumours indicate that Japan may even fail to bring numbers up to ten. Perhaps then Kushiro is hosting the meeting despite Japan's stance. There is talk of local electioneering, of taking advantage of the meeting to boost the tourist potential of the area, and not, unfortunately, enough talk about boosting the environmental protection of Japanese wetlands. In June, however, all eyes will be focused on Japan and her apparent desire to take a firmer lead in Asia based not solely on economic might.

The Ramsar Convention is, however, something of a contradiction since it is the very governments promising to protect wetlands which are actually destroying them. In Japan alone government public works projects threaten 80 percent of the wetlands identified as of international importance. Will hosting the 1993 Ramsar conference set the stage for conscientious conservation action in Japan, or will it be a convenient smoke screen behind which unchanged destructive policies can hide?

What will delegates see at the 1993 meeting? They will certainly see an apparently pristine marsh and beautiful cranes, though the unseen hydrology of the marsh is actually in an endangered



Coastal "reclamation" Japanese style.