



◀ Hooded and white-naped cranes wintering in Arasaki.

If Japan does take a lead, she will do so with a concept of environmentalism and conservation sometimes subtly, sometimes vastly different from that in the western mind, with the emphasis on technological advancement and development of the human environment – an environment with its focus on energy conservation, water purification, sewage treatment, and industrial pollution emission control. All these are worthy, and essential, in terms of global reduction of human impact, yet they are vastly different from the emphasis westerners place on species, habitat and ecosystem conservation and maintenance.



For all its locally perceived “shortage” of land, Japan’s post-war development has been of low-rise suburban sprawl which has consumed enormous areas of both productive agricultural land and large areas of once-rich wildlife habitat.

state and the breeding success of the cranes remains poor. I doubt that they will grasp the atmosphere of powerful negativity towards local NGOs held in Japanese government circles, nor the fact that public opinion is largely ignored. They may also miss the fact that the role of development in Japan has been and remains paramount. Discussion and emphasis on sustainable development and “wise use” could play straight into Japanese hands here as they divert it to their own economic ends, particularly because “wise use” seems to defy definition, even by the Ramsar Bureau, leaving it open to enormous abuses.

NEW ZEALAND has five Ramsar sites totaling 38,000 ha and, as a member of the convention, we will be sending a representative to next month’s conference. However, New Zealand’s recent record on wetlands is poor. In 1991 in a breach of its Ramsar obligations the current government allowed Landcorp to sell 1,100 hectares of the internationally significant Kaimaumau swamp in Northland, containing the largest resident number of threatened species of any wetland in New Zealand, to developers. The government’s action has forced Forest and Bird, at considerable cost, to take out a heritage order for the wetland.