

# Hongze Lake

Hóngzé Hú 洪泽湖

**Hongze Lake is China's fourth-largest freshwater lake. Located in the Huai River valley, Jiangsu Province, it is an important stopover site and winter habitat for many species of migratory birds. Hongze is also renowned for its aquaculture products.**

**H**ongze (vast marsh) Lake, China's fourth-largest freshwater lake, is located in the Huai River valley in the western part of Jiangsu Province in eastern China. The lake covers an area of 2,069 square kilometers; the deepest spot in the lake is 5.5 meters, and the surface elevation is 12.25 meters above sea level. Of several rivers flowing into the lake from the west the largest is the Huai, which continues south to join the Yangzi (Chang) River.

The lake assumed its present size in 1194 when the Huang (Yellow) River changed course and no longer provided an outlet for the Huai River, which flowed into Hongze Lake instead. With no other natural outlet the Huai River frequently flooded the lake and the surrounding area, and canals were dug linking Hongze Lake to the Grand Canal, which runs north-south on the plains 20 kilometers to the east. A canal also connects the lake to the East China Sea 160 kilometers to the east. Dams, sluice locks, and embankments have been constructed to control floods and permit the rivers to replenish the water table of the lake. The largest dam, the Sanhe Dam (three rivers), is located where the

Huai flows into Hongze Lake. Along the eastern shore is a 67-kilometer-long stone embankment. The fields of the coastal plains of Jiangsu Province are irrigated with water from Hongze Lake, and the lake is used for hydro-power generation.

Because of its location in a transition zone between a warm temperate and a subtropical climate, the lake is rich in aquatic plants and animals and is one of China's principal lakes for freshwater fish farming. Aquaculture products farmed for domestic use and export include whitebait, perch, eel, Chinese mitten crab, and shrimps as well as water chestnuts and lotus. Hongze Lake is an important stopover site and winter habitat for 143 species



of migratory birds, nine of which, such as the red-crested crane, the gray crane, and the great bustard, are protected by an international convention signed by China. In 2006 the Chinese State Counsel approved the Hongze Lake Wetland National Nature Reserve in Sihong, which covers 16.7 square kilometers of the northwestern shore. The Hongze Lake area is also home to some oil activity, which is a danger to the environment. In 2003 the Huai River flooded the lake, and more than 250 oil wells were waterlogged. A new threat to the environment was added during a drought in 2000–2001 when the water table of Hongze Lake dropped drastically. The western part of the lake became unnavigable as the water table dropped by 2 centimeters a day for a prolonged period of time.

Today Hongze Lake has become a tourist attraction because of its scenery and seafood; the latter attracts many visitors to the annual Golden Autumn Crab Gourmet Festival.

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### Further Reading

- Qin Boqiang. (Ed.) (2008). *Lake Taihu, China: Dynamics and environmental change*. (Monographiae Biologicae). New York: Springer.
- Pietz, D. (2002). *Engineering the state: The Huai River and reconstruction in Nationalist China, 1927–37*. New York: Routledge.

Fish cannot survive in absolutely clear water.

水至清则无鱼

Shuǐ zhì qīng zé wú yú

