Onneto River (溫根別川) flows into the shallow tidal Onneto Lake (溫根沼), surrounded by ancient Sakhalin spruce forests. Often shrouded in moody coastal fog, the quiet groves next to the lake and river are draped with moss. White-tailed eagles watch paddlers with a nonchalant caution, while boisterous red-crested cranes pick at the shallows on the lake-edge. This route requires some careful consultation with the tides, but rewards with one of the more varied paddling routes in the area.

LOCATION
Onneto River flows into Onneto Lake just west of Nemuro City in far-eastern Hokkaido.

Put-in location: Put in at the one-lane concrete bridge over the Nishi-rokuban-sawa River (西6番沢川). There’s a small turning bay a bit further on from the bridge with enough room for two cars to park. Note that the forestry road to the put in is bit overgrown in parts, and there’s limited mobile phone coverage in the area — we recommend downloading maps in advance to find your way.

Take-out location: Take out just before Onneto-ohashi Bridge (溫根沼大橋) on the right side of the channel. There’s a nice pebbly beach to pull up on, and a high-tension powerline tower where canoes can be stashed behind for the shuttle. Take care when crossing the main channel, particularly at the change of tides – we clocked almost 10km/h without paddling in the middle of it, quite the tidal current.

GENERAL NOTES
We’d not expected this route to be anything particularly special, but it turned out being one of our favourites in the far eastern marsh-lands in Hokkaido. The bicycle shuttle along the gravel road through the Sakhalin spruce forest, covered in moss both on the trees and on the forest floor, was breathtaking. The view of the forest from the water was equally as gorgeous, with the added bonus of a variety of bird life. This route is, arguably, its best in dense fog. While the fog makes the final channel crossing rather nerve-wracking (make sure you’ve got your maps pre-loaded for GPS navigation), the forest is quite breathtaking as it slowly unfolds out of the mist.

Tides: This is very much a high-tide only route. The put-in we’ve indicated here becomes impossible in low tide, as does much of the lake-shore paddling. Check the Nemuro tides here and ideally be on the water a couple of hours ahead of high tide to be on the safe side.

Midges: We’ve never seen so many no-see-um midges in Hokkaido than at the put-in of this route. Cover up well, and use plenty of insect repellent. Once on the water we were fine.

ROUTE TIMING AND NOTES
The majority of this route is flat-water paddling, so it’s best to allow about three hours, including time to sit and watch the wildlife along the way.

The put-in is a bit awkward, requiring a bit of grass-whacking, but once on the water, paddle downstream on the minor creek to the main Onneto River. The paddle upstream to the road-closed bridge was pleasant, and we’d probably do it again – you get up close to the beautiful Sakhalin spruce forests. Turn around at the bridge, and head downstream. If you’ve timed things well for anything other than low tide, you’ll have your pick of route north along the lake. We hugged the left-hand shoreline, and enjoyed close encounters with eagles, red-crested cranes, and diving ducks.

At about 8.5km on the GPS track, start a long diagonal traverse across the main channel. At about two hours shy of low tide, the out-flow was strong enough that we’d be very wary of crossing the channel at right-angles. Capsize in that channel would likely result in a very long swim, mostly with the current, into the fishing port beyond the bridge.

TRANSPORT
By car! There’s room at the take-out for a couple of cars, on the Nemuro side of Onneto-ohashi Bridge. ‘There’s less room at the put-in, but there is a small turn-around bay on a bend in the gravel forestry road suitable for a couple of cars just beyond the concrete bridge. As mentioned above, the forestry road to the put in is rough and a bit overgrown in places.

Public transport: The put-in is not accessible by public transport.

SAFETY NOTES
The main concern for this route is timing the tides. Getting stuck halfway at low tide will greatly complicate access to the take-out point, and may require paddlers to paddle the channel out to the fishing port (i.e., into the sea). Only attempt the route with plenty of high-water time under your belt. Also note that while the southern end of the lake, as well as Onneto River is accessible in a couple of places via road, there is next to no traffic on these forestry roads. Paddlers need to be self-sufficient, and preferably carry some means of emergency communication such as a satellite messenger (cellular coverage is patchy at the southern end of the route).

ONSEN NEARBY
If you’re headed back to Nemuro, try the Mina-to-ya sento (public bath in Nemuro (みなと湯), 450yen).
**PRINTING INSTRUCTIONS**

**STEP 1**
Load your printer with A3 printer paper (297mm x 420mm). If you've only got Tabloid or Ledger size (279mm x 432 mm), just follow the instructions below. You'll achieve an accurate scale, but the map will be clipped a little at the top and bottom.

**STEP 2**
Open the print window by clicking on File > Print (or hitting Ctrl + P on your keyboard).

**STEP 3**
Make sure “Actual Size” is selected.

**STEP 4**
For double-sided printing, select “Print on both sides of paper”.

**STEP 5**
For best results, select the highest quality print option available on your printer (settings will vary).

**STEP 6**
You won’t need this instructions page, so just select the pages that don’t include this instruction sheet.

**STEP 7**
Click “Print”.

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**ORIGAMI INSTRUCTIONS**

1. Title

2. Map

3. Legend

4. Stairway

5. Text

6. Title

7. Title