



Introduction and the effects  
of visitor control system  
in the World Natural Heritage  
**SHIRETOKO**

15 Nov. 2013

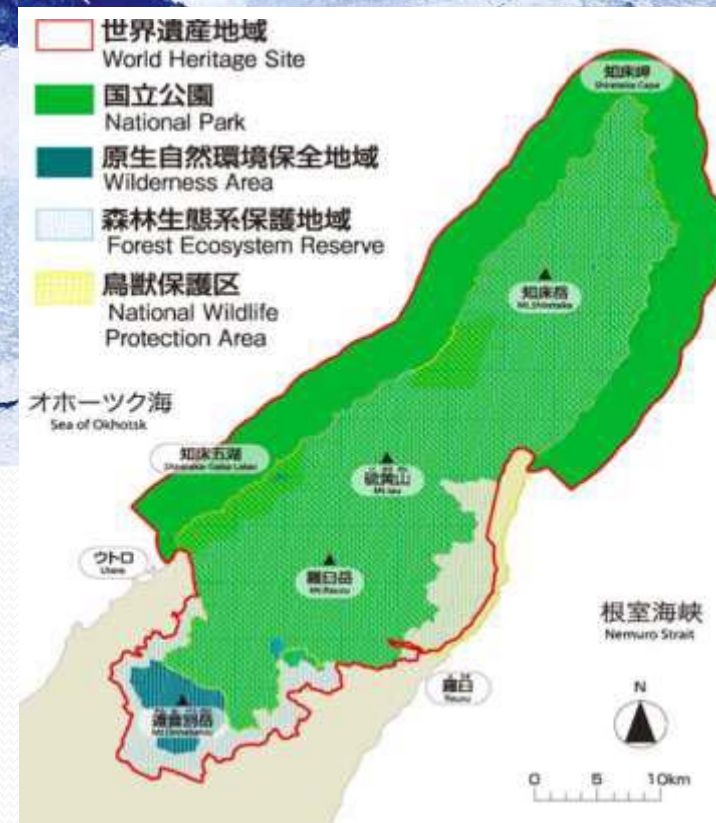
UTORO Ranger Office  
Ministry of the Environment  
Akimichi MATSUNAGA

Hokkaido

# The Outline of SHIRETOKO, World Natural Heritage Site

- Date of inscription: 17 Jul.2005
- Location: Northern latitude of 44 degrees  
(Shari-cho/Rausu-cho, Hokkaido)
- Total area: approx. 71,100ha  
Land area: approx. 48,700ha  
Marine area: approx. 22,400ha

Photograph: Yoshihiko SHIGA

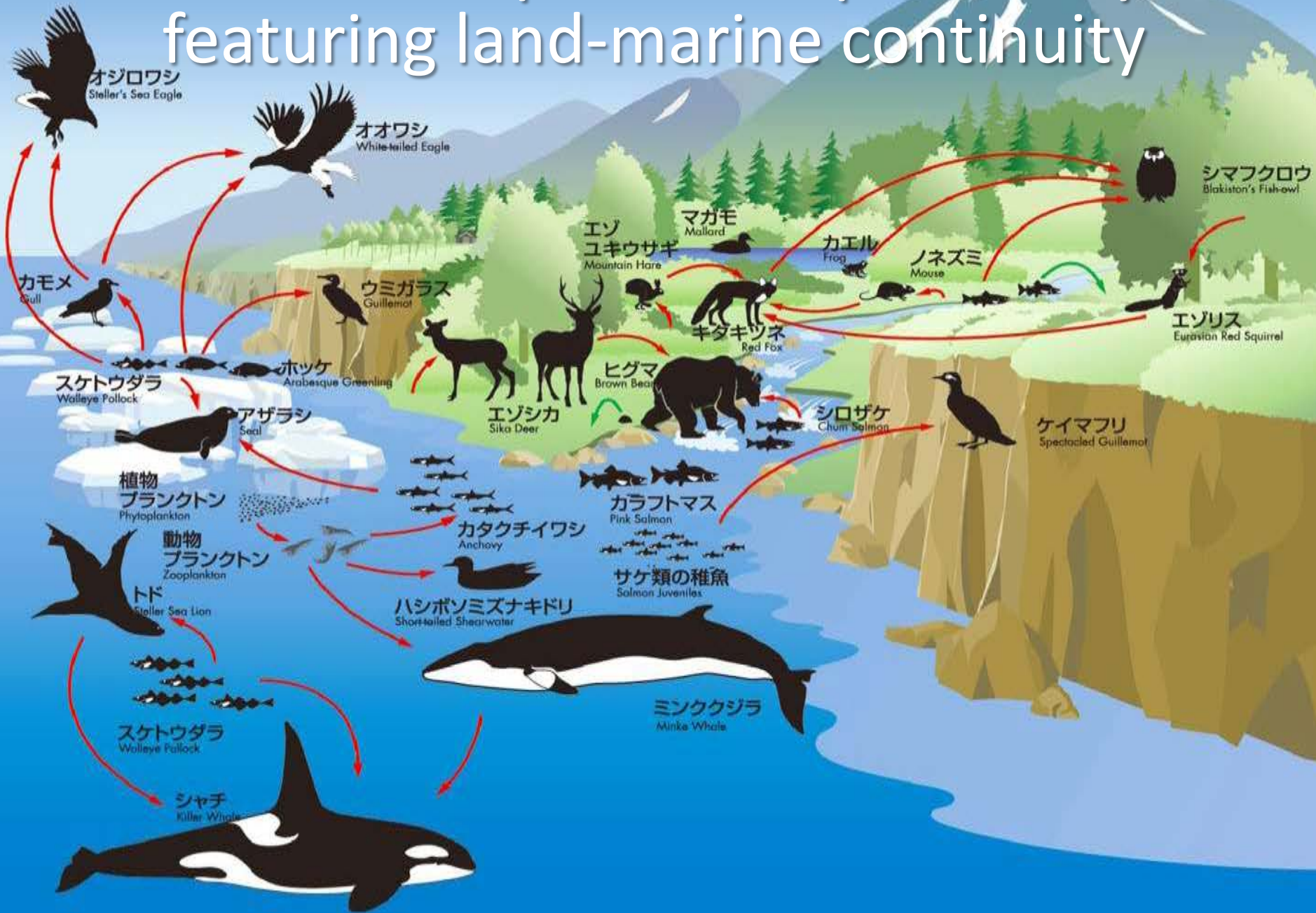


- Criteria for Listing as a World Natural Heritage Site:  
Ecosystem, biodiversity

Prominent example of complex ecosystem featuring land-marine continuity, whereby drift ice appearing at the lowest latitude in the northern hemisphere can be seen.

Characterized by diverse natural environment and wildlife of both southern and northern origins. Important for the conservation of international rare species, such as Blakiston's fish owl and white-tailed eagle

# Prominent example of complex ecosystem featuring land-marine continuity





## 知床五湖 / Shiretoko Five Lakes

- The most popular tourist destination in Shiretoko area with 400,000 to 500,000 visitors a year.
- The area is rich in wetland plants such as skunk cabbage and is an important habitat for wild animals such as the brown bear.



# Problems in the past concerning the use of ground pathway

## ① Loss of tranquility

Filled with many visitors at particular time on the particular days, it presented the bustle of a big city.



# Problems in the past concerning the use of ground pathway

## ② Disruption to the vegetation due to overcrowding



Visitors step off the pathway due to overcrowding.



# Problems in the past concerning the use of ground pathway

## ③ Risks arising from the encounter with brown bears

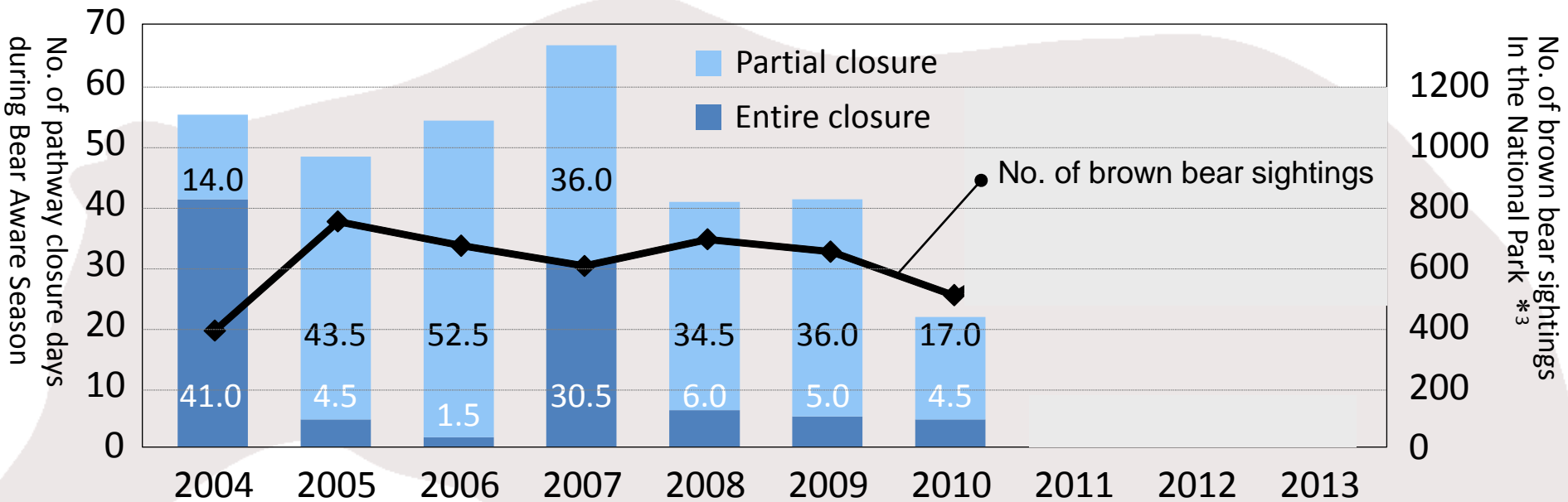
Unspecified large number of visitors exposed to the risk of an unexpected encounter with brown bears.

Left-behind food or feeding may attract brown bears and also cause disruption of the ecosystem.



# Change of the number of days when ground pathway was closed during Bear Aware Season

\*1  
\*2



<Notes>

- \*1 Bear aware season means the 83 days between 10<sup>th</sup> May and 31<sup>st</sup> July when brown bears make frequent appearances.
- \*2 Closure days solely due to bear's appearance are counted on a half-day basis.
- \*3 Annual No. of brown bear sighting in Shari Town only.

**Closure on more than half of the days during this period**

**➡ Unreliable tourist site**





# Revise of the entire usability design for the Shiretoko Five Lakes

-Two new ways of walking in the midst of nature-

**高架木道** (2010~)

## Elevated wooden path

A step-free route with electric fences to deter brown bears.

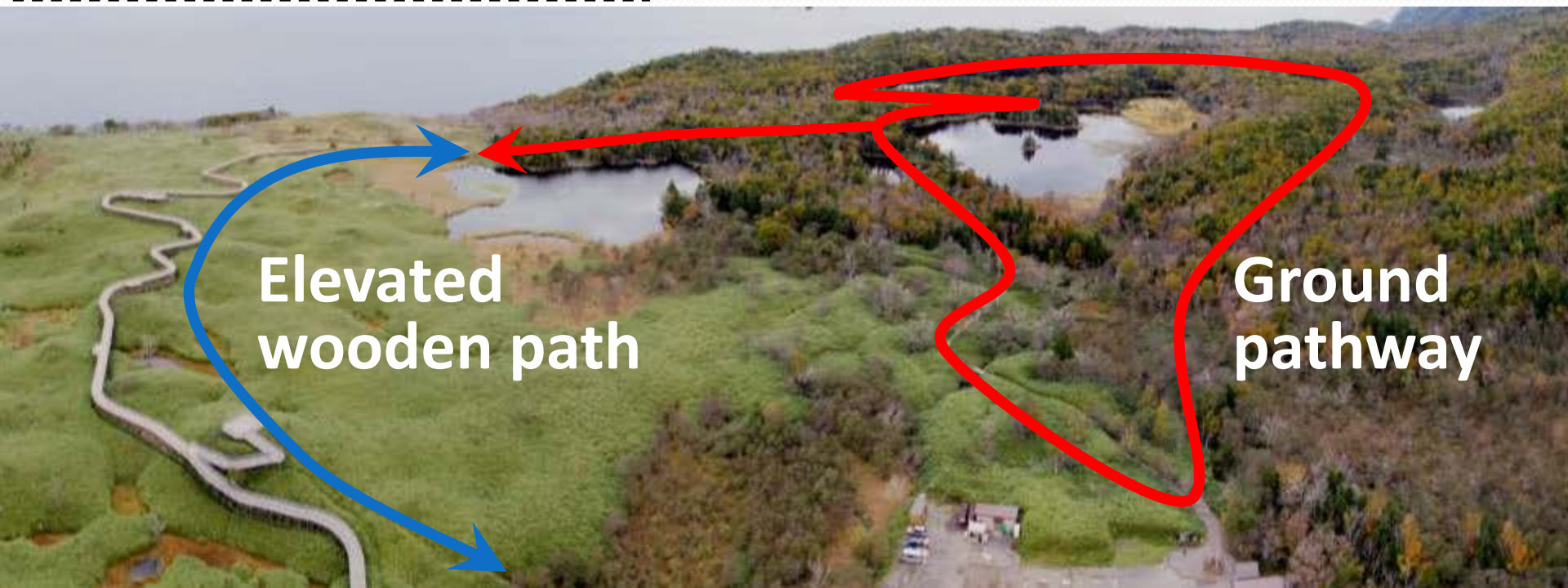
→It can be used in safety by anyone anytime.

**地上遊歩道** (利用調整地区制度、2011~)

## Ground pathway (Regulated Utilization Area System)

This route involves a risk of encountering bears. Utilization is regulated for safety.

→An eco-friendly way to enjoy the pristine wilderness in quiet atmosphere while minimizing the risk of encountering bears.



# Rules for using the ground pathway (as of 2011)

## **Bear aware season** (10 May – 31 Jul.)

A period during which bears become active.



## **Vegetation protection season**

(15 Apr.- 9 May and 1 Aug.- 20 Oct.)

A period during which the risk of encountering bears is low. It falls mostly in the high tourist season.



11 visitors / group  
8 groups on the pathway at any one time  
Up to 300 visitors a day

Must be accompanied by registered guide

Guide fee: Approx. ¥5,000 including a ¥500 handling fee per adult

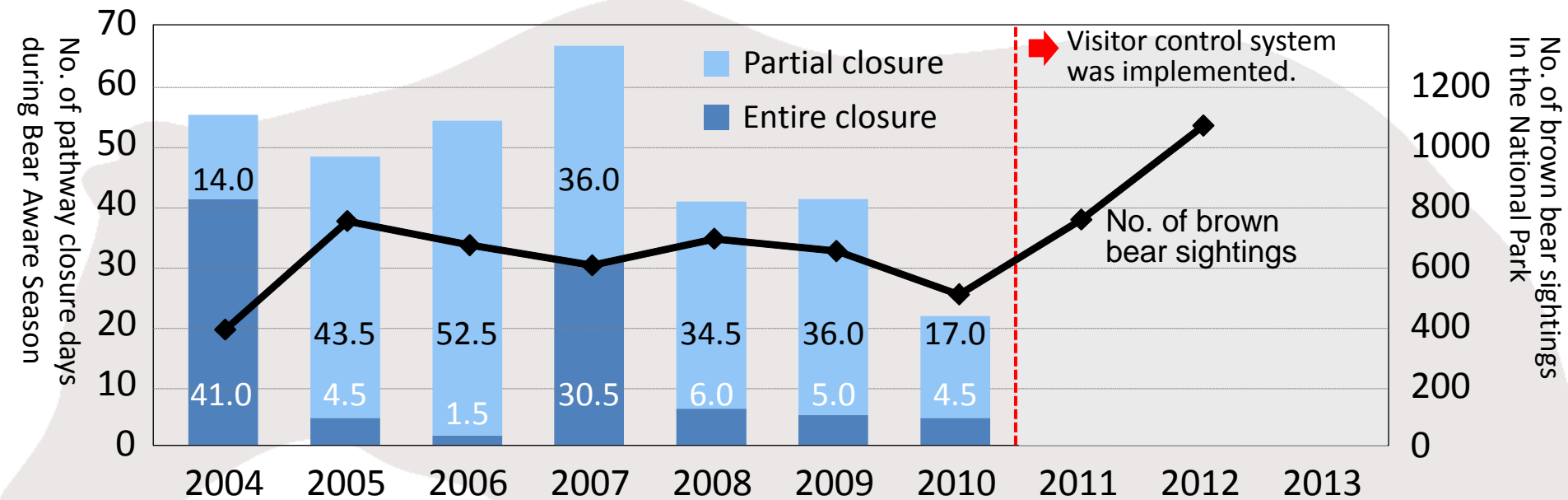
Up to 50 visitors can enter the pathway every 10 minutes (300 visitors /hour)  
Up to 3,000 visitors a day

—

Handling fee: ¥250 per adult

- Attending a lecture at the Shiretoko Five Lakes Field House is compulsory
- Bringing in live plants or animals is not permitted
- Not Feeding wild animals is not permitted
- Eating, cooking or smoking are not permitted
- Stepping off the pathway is not permitted
- In case of encountering a brown bear during the vegetation protection period, an escape measure, such as turning back, must be taken
- Visitors must keep to the designated route

# Change of the number of days when ground pathway was closed during Bear Aware Season



## <Notes>

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**A sharp decline in the pathway closure**

**➡ Transformed to a reliable tourist site**

# Comments from ground pathway users during bear aware season

Taken from post-tour questionnaires

I would like to join this tour again in a different season.

I learned a lot about an ecosystem where plants and animals co-exist. It made me realize the importance of bio-diversity.

I used to think that bears are fearsome animals. However, I changed my opinion while listening to the guide's commentary during the walking tour in the forest.

It made me fully understand, without imposing, the simple fact that preserving nature is important.

After seeing the safety precautions on the video I began the walk feeling nervous. Then, just as I was beginning to relax, there came a radio message warning us of a bear's presence. This gave me a first-hand experience of the wilderness.

There were so many things to see that I wondered if they were installed for tourists' benefit. We had this extraordinary space all to ourselves.

For the protection of tourists and nature, it is a good idea to have introduced this guided-tour system. I can also understand the need to control entry and that it costs to protect nature.

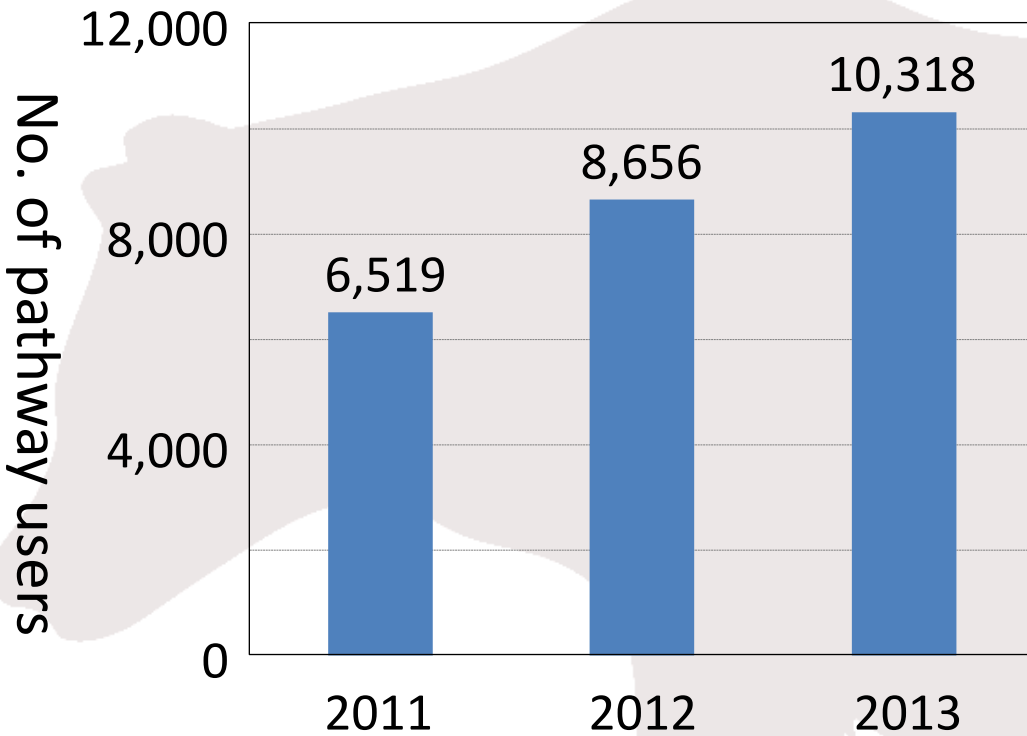
I'm not usually a fan of guided tours, and had this one not been mandatory, I probably would not have chosen it. But it was a terrific tour, made possible by our guide who was extremely knowledgeable, patient, and enthusiastic.

When you are in the Shiretoko Five Lakes area, it's a real pity to go home after only walking the wooden path. I would like to recommend this tour to people around me.

It's too long and a little expensive.

The System as well as the guided tour have been received favourably. The System is making a great contribution to the **brand value** of the Shiretoko Five Lakes area tour.

# Change of the number of ground pathway users during bear aware season



**The number of pathway users has increased annually over the three years.**

**➡ The System has taken root and the popularity of the tour is growing.**

# Disruption to vegetation and overcrowding during a high tourist season

## ① Application



## ② Lecture

(every 10 minute, for up to 50 visitors)



## ④ Enjoy the walk



## ③ Enter the pathway



**Thanks to the lecture, the number of visitors is evened out and good manners are ensured, avoiding the damage to vegetation and overcrowding.**

# Factors behind the successful implementation of the Controlled Use System

Usually, introductions of legal restrictions (especially on tourists) is met by opposition from the tourist industry.

In Shiretoko too, the tourist industry was not keen on the implementation of the System for fears that **newly procedure** and fees to use the pathway might leave a negative impression and put off tourists.



- **Repeated discussions** based on actual data
- **Well-prepared trial**
- **Collective wish** of the parties concerned to do something to revive the tourism in the Shiretoko Five Lakes area

# The objectives of the Controlled Use System in the Shiretoko Five Lakes area

- **Consistently reliable tourist destination**
- Creation of **highly value-added visitor experience** (an authentic eco-tour) and making it take root
- **Minimize the impact** of visitors **on the environment**
- **Minimize the risk of accidents** caused by encountering brown bears.
- **Flexible management and operation**  
(Improve the System and the tour according to the results of the monitoring survey)



<http://www.goko.go.jp/english>

[Home](#) | [Visitation rules](#) | [Elevated wooden path](#) | [Current weather](#) | [Access map](#) | [JAR](#)

### In Travel Agencies

**Important** Visitation rules at the Shiretoko goko lakes have changed.



There have been issues at the Shiretoko goko lakes such as encroachment on vegetation due to crowds and the danger of bears appearing, frequently causing the trails to be closed to visitors. New rules have been established to address these issues.

[Shiretoko goko lakes Visitation Rules](#)

Present situation of the Trail 2015/03/19 12:19 (Update time)

Access | Facilities



### Getting to the Shiretoko goko Lakes from Utsunomiyama

- Approx. 120m from Utsunomiyama (about 20 minutes by car)
- [Detailed information about the Shiretoko Goko Lakes](#)
- Season: Late April to Late November
- Open hours: 7:00 ~ 18:00
- Feeling hot + close at 18:00
- Parking Fee: Passenger car 1000, Bicycles 1000, Large bus 1000, Motorcycle 1000

### Getting to Utsunomiyama

- Approx. 90m from Utsunomiyama Airport
- Open hours: During the season (Shiretoko Goko)
- Season: 05m from Shiretoko Goko

Thanks for your attention.