

Two lakes used for flood control and irrigation. Locals plant Manchurian wild rice, a food source for wintering swans

Izu-numa and Uchi-numa

Freshwater Lake

Geographical Coordinates: 38°43'N, 141°06'E / Altitude: 7m / Area: 559ha / Major Type of Wetland: Freshwater lake / Designation: Special Protection Area of National Wildlife Protection Area / Municipalities Involved: Kurihara City and Tome City, Miyagi Prefecture / Ramsar Designation: September 1985



Manchurian wild rice growing around Izu-numa

Planting of Manchurian wild rice

Lotus blossom

Principal Features:

Izu-numa and Uchi-numa are two interconnected freshwater lakes lying in an alluvial plain of Hasama River, a tributary of Kitakami River running through northwest Miyagi Prefecture. The surrounding area is covered mostly with rice paddies, giving way to hills (elevation 30-50m) to the south, west and north.

The area was previously a flood plain where the Kitakami and Hasama rivers met. From the 1930's, the vast, swampy area began to be reclaimed to develop rice paddies, and thus became one of the major rice croplands in northeastern Japan. Although a part of Izu-numa and Uchi-numa was reclaimed as well, approximately half of the past lake area still remains and functions as an irrigation pond and a reservoir for controlling floodwater.

Wintering Ground for Migratory Birds:

Because the area has scarce snowfall and the ponds do not freeze even in midwinter, it serves as a wintering ground for a large number of migratory birds. Surrounded by extensive rice paddies that can feed birds, the site is one

of the largest wintering grounds in Japan, where over 80% of White-fronted Goose, as well as the Whooper Swan and Tundra Swan wintering in Japan visit.

Abundant Aquatic Vegetation:

Izu-numa and Uchi-numa are shallow lakes with a maximum depth of 1.6m. The area abounds in aquatic vegetation including reeds, Manchurian wild rice, lotus, water chestnut. Approximately 700 species of vegetation are recorded at the ponds and surrounding areas. It is particularly well-known for its community of Manchurian wild rice.

In summer, pretty lotus flowers cover the surface of the ponds. During the lotus festival held every year, many visitors enjoy the fragrance and charm of the flowers in boats.

[Manchurian wild rice *Zizania latifolia*] A perennial grass similar to reeds in appearance, it forms communities in areas such as swamps and riverbanks. With a height of 1-3m, its rhizome is an important food source for swans. It also contributes to water purification. At Izu-numa and Uchi-numa, planting of Manchurian wild rice over an area of 10ha is conducted every year by locals.

The group operating the project is called "Makomo Gundan" which means, "Activists for Manchurian wild rice". At the center of this activity is the Izu-numa and Uchi-numa Sanctuary Center.

Contact Information:

Sanctuary Center of Izunuma-Uchinuma in Miyagi Prefecture
<http://www7.ocn.ne.jp/~izunuma/>



Izu-numa (left) and Uchi-numa

