

Oze

High Moor, Freshwater Lake

Geographical Coordinates: 36°53'N, 139°11'E / Altitude: 1400-1420m (Marshland area), 1665m (Oze-numa), 2356m (highest point) / Area: 8711ha / Major Type of Wetland: High moors, freshwater lakes / Designation: Special Protection Zone and Special Zone of National Park / Municipalities Involved: Hinoemata Village, Fukushima Pref. ; Uonuma City, Niigata Pref. ; Katashina Village, Gunma Pref. / Ramsar Designation: November 2005



Ozegahara filled with blooming white skunk cabbages

Principal Features:

"Coming of the summer is a beautiful reminder of the Oze and the sky far away...", as quoted in this famous Japanese song, Oze is definitely the most well-known and typical wetlands of Japan with its rich and vast beauty of wetland vegetation.

Oze is the largest of high moors in Japan, located 140km north of Tokyo, spreading across three prefectures of Gunma, Niigata, and Fukushima. Surrounded by 2000m-class peaks of Hiuchigatake and Shibutsusan, Ozegahara is located in the western part of the flat basin at the altitude of 1400m and Oze-numa is in the eastern side at the altitude of 1600m.

As Oze is in a snowbelt exceeding three meters of snowfall every year, the area gets snowed in for more than half of the year. Consequently, the vegetation does not decay and thickly accumulates as peat. Low moor gradually developed into intermediate moor, and later when the ground level bulged, it became high moor with low nutrient intake just from rainfall and fog.

Ozegahara and Oze-numa:

Ozegahara is the Japan's largest high moor, covering 760ha. It is rich in various wetland vegetation including *Carex mollicula*, *Vaccinium oxycoccus*, *Eriophorum vaginatum*, and *Hemerocallis midendorffii* var. *esculenta*.

Oze-numa was banked up by Mt. Hi-

chigatake's eruption. With its periphery extending 6km, the wetland covers the area of 160ha. Even endangered aquatic plants like *Chara globularis* var. *globularis* can be seen in abundance.

To appreciate the Japan's most beautiful wetland landscape, a trail path to Ozegahara and Oze-numa is well-maintained with board walks installed over marshlands. Moreover, various regulations and conservation activities have been put into place such as restrictions of incoming motor vehicles, bringing back garbage, treating wastewater from mountain cottages and toilets, and restoring wetland vegetation. The Visitor Centers play an important role in public awareness building and education for tourists.

Private Land:

Ramsar sites in Japan are mostly public owned lands including national properties. Oze is quite exceptional, where 6277ha amounting to 72% of the designated 8711ha, is listed as a private property of an electric company which expressed understanding for environmental protection and wetland conservation to aban-

don the dam development plan for hydro-electric power generation.

[White Skunk Cabbage *Lysichiton camtschatcense*] An Araceae plant with white, large spathes (8-15cm). They grow in colonies in wetlands, blooming around the time of thaw to announce coming of the spring. The flower has become a symbol of Oze.

Contact Information:

Hinoemata Village Office

<http://www.hinoemata.com/>

Katashina Village Office

<http://www.vill.katashina.gunma.jp/>

Uonuma City Office

<http://www.city.uonuma.niigata.jp/>

