

Sarobetsu-genya

Moor, Freshwater Lake

Geographical Coordinates: 45°03'N, 141°42'E / Altitude: 3-7m / Area: 2560ha / Major Type of Wetland: High moor, intermediate moor, low moor, freshwater lake / Designation: Special Protection Zone of National Wildlife Protection Area; Special Protection Zone and Special Zone of National Park / Municipalities Involved: Horonobe Town, Toyotomi Town, Hokkaido Prefecture / Ramsar Designation: November 2005 / Ramsar Criteria: 1, 3, 6



Sarobetsu-genya and flowers (inset)

General Overview:

Sarobetsu-genya is a vast peatland located approximately 40km south of Wakkanai City, the northernmost city in Japan. The Ramsar site covers an area of 2560ha in the central area of this wetland including a high moor. Although it used to be a huge wetland stretching 8km from east to west and 27km from north to south covering an area of 14,600ha, the wetland shrunk rapidly due to large-scale development undertaken since 1960's. Nevertheless, it still represent one of the largest high moors in the plains in Japan, owing to the minimal influence from the Sarobetsu river that skirts around the marshland, resulting in little water level fluctuation and a poor supply of nutrients: a favorable condition for developing high moor.

The wetland is separated from the Sea of Japan by the sand dune that runs from north to south in the west. It has several high moors in the middle, surrounded by an intermediate moor and low moor in a concentric fashion. There are some ponds and lakes in the south, including Panke-numa and Penke-numa. This wetland used to be a big coastal lagoon before it was isolated from the sea by the development of sand dunes about 4000 years ago.

Colorful Wetland Vegetation:

From spring to autumn, Sarobetsu-genya is covered with colorful flora with more than 100 species of plants including Cranberry, Hare's Tail Cotton Grass, Bog Rosemary and Broad Dwarf Day-lily. Boardwalks are laid down in Sarobetsu Wildflower Garden and Panke-numa to allow a closer look at the beautiful flowers. Visitor centers are established in the north and south. The visitor center in the south has an observatory providing a panoramic 360-degree view of Sarobetsu-genya.

Stopover Site for Migratory Birds:

The two lakes in this wetland are important habitats for breeding waterfowls and migratory birds. They constantly support 1% of the species' population of Middendorf's Bean Goose, and Tundra Swan in East Asia. The wetland is one of the few breeding grounds for Yellow-breasted Bunting as well.

Wetland Restoration:

A part of this wetland has become dry because of river improvement and declining ground water level, allowing a rapid spread of bamboo grass. Therefore, a wetland restoration project has begun.

[High Moor] A high moor is formed by peat accumulation through a succession from a low and intermediate moor. The

land surface in a high moor is higher than the surface water level and it is fed only by rainwater and sea mist with poor nutrients. Sphagnum dominates the land, and unique plant communities develop including dwarf ericaceous bush, insectivorous plants such as *Drosera rotundifolia* and small sedges, that can survive poor nutrition and excessive moisture.

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