

Akan-ko

Freshwater Lake

Geographical Coordinates: 43°27'N, 144°06'E / Altitude: 420m / Area: 1318ha / Major Type of Wetland: Freshwater lake (caldera lake) / Designation: Special Protection Zone and Special Zone of National Park / Municipalities Involved: Kushiro City, Hokkaido Prefecture / Ramsar Designation: November 2005 / Ramsar Criteria: 1



Marimo



Lake Akan-ko from the south



Lake Akan-ko and Mt. Oakandake at sunrise

General Overview:

Japan is known as the country of volcanoes. As represented by Mt. Fuji, Japan has a number of beautiful scenic areas formed by volcanoes. In fact, 2/3 of Japan's national parks have volcanoes. Akan National Park located in eastern Hokkaido, north of Kushiro-shitsugen and south of Tofutsu-ko and Lake Abashiri, also embraces two volcanoes called Meakandake (1499m) and Oakandake (1370m). The Akan National Park was designated as the second national park in Japan in 1934.

Akan-ko is a freshwater lake that lies between Meakandake and Oakandake at an altitude of 420m, with an area of about 1,300ha and a circumference of 25.9km. It is a caldera lake created by volcanic subsidence, with an average depth of 18m and a maximum depth of 45m. The mountains around the lake are covered by mixed forests of conifers such as Ezo Spruce and Sachalin Fir, and deciduous trees such as Japanese Oak, and Japanese Linden. Having adapted to the severe environment of high mountains, Creeping Cedar, and

Crowberry are found near the summit. In this manner, Akan-ko with its rich and diverse natural environment, creates a typical beautiful natural landscape of Japan.

The Protected Catchment Area:

The catchment area of Akan-ko is a 3900ha forest around the lake. The area had been under private ownership and forest management was conducted since the early 20th century. In 1983, a nature conservation foundation was established to protect and manage the entire watershed. The Akan-ko and the surrounding watershed has been home to 24 mammal species and 65 bird species including the large animals native to Hokkaido such as Eurasian Brown Bear, and Yezo Sika-deer, and endangered birds such as the Black Woodpecker.

Rare Aquatic Species:

A number of rare freshwater algae species such as *Nitella flexilis*, *Chara globularis*, and the well-known Marimo are found in Akan-ko. This lake is also an important habitat for fish such as Kokanee and the Japanese Huchen, the largest freshwater

fish in Japan.

[Marimo *Cladophora aegagropila*] Marimo is a freshwater algae that grows into a soft green velvety ball in Akan-ko. As it grows larger, the inside becomes hollow, crumbling into shreds when it exceeds 20cm in size, but eventually recovers the ball-shape after a long time.

Contact Information:

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