

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 moor, freshwater lake / Designation: Special Protection Zone and Special Zone of National Park / Municipalities Involved: Hinoemata Village, Fukushima Prefecture, Katashina Village, Gunma Prefecture, Uonuma City, Niigata Prefecture / Ramsar Designation: November 2005 / Ramsar Criteria: 1



Ozegahara filled with blooming White Skunk Cabbages

General Overview:

“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 one of the most well-known major wetlands of Japan with its rich and vast beauty.

Oze is the largest high moor in Japan, located 140km north of Tokyo, extending over the three prefectures of Gunma, Niigata, and Fukushima. Surrounded by 2000m class peaks such as Hiuchigatake and Shibutsusan, Ozegahara Plateau is located in the western part of the flat basin at an altitude of 1400m and Lake Oze-numa is in the eastern side at an altitude of 1600m.

As Oze is located in a snow belt, it is covered with snow of over 4m in depth for more than half of the year. Consequently, the dead plants do not decay and accumulate thickly to form peat. The wetland develops from a low moor to an intermediate moor in accordance with the peat accumulation, and when the peat surface becomes higher than the water level, it becomes a high moor that is fed only by rainfall and fog with little nutrients.

Ozegahara and Oze-numa:

Ozegahara is Japan's largest high moor, covering an area of 760ha. It is rich in various wetland plants including *Carex middendorffii*, Cranberry, Broad Dwarf Day-lily and White Skunk Cabbage.

Oze-numa is a dammed lake formed by the eruption of Mt. Hiuchigatake. The lake

covers an area of 160ha with a shoreline of 9km. It has a number of rare plants including the endangered aquatic plant, *Chara globularis var. globularis*.

In addition to some trekking trails to Ozegahara and Oze-numa, there is a boardwalk in the wetland to afford the visitors an easy access to the country's best wetland landscape. There are two visitor centers in the east of Oze-numa and in the western part of Ozegahara as well as many mountain huts and accommodation facilities.

Efforts to Protect the Wetland:

Because many tourists visit this area, various regulations and measures for conservation management have been put into place, such as restrictions of incoming motor vehicles, raising public awareness including garbage control, wastewater treatment for cottages and toilets, and restoring wetland vegetation.

Most of the lands in Ramsar sites in Japan are public owned, including national properties. However in Oze, an area of 6277ha, accounting for 72% out of the 8711ha designated area, is the private property of an electric company. Originally, it was a land for dam con-

struction for hydroelectric power generation, but the company called off the plan and agreed to conserve the wetland.

[White Skunk Cabbage *Lysichiton camtschatcense*] It is a plant in the family Araceae with a large white spathe (8-15 cm). It grows in colonies in wetlands and blooms when the snow thaws in spring as though announcing the coming of the spring. This flower is a motif of a popular Japanese song and became a symbol of Oze wetland.

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