

# Tateyama Midagahara and Dainichidaira

## Alpine Wetland, Ravine, Waterfall

Geographical Coordinates: 36°34.5'N, 137°32'E / Altitude: 1040-2120m / Area: 574ha / Major Type of Wetland: Alpine wetland (snow patch grassland), ravine, waterfall/ Designation: Special Protection Zone of National Park / Municipalities Involved: Tateyama Town, Toyama Prefecture / Ramsar Designation: July 2012 / Ramsar Criteria: 1

### General Overview:

The Ramsar site, Tateyama Midagahara and Dainichidaira in Tateyama town in Toyama Prefecture, is located at an altitude of 1040 - 2120m in a mountain range in the central part of Honshu. It consists of flat snow patch grassland and the Shomyo Ravine & Waterfall that boast abundant quantity of water. The area belongs to subarctic humid climate with a large annual precipitation as much as 5000-6000mm, average snow accumulation of 5m and continuous snow cover duration of approximately 200 days from mid November to late June.

Tateyama Midagahara and Dainichidaira stretch over the gently sloping lava plateau formed by the past volcanic activity. It has a unique open landscape of wet alpine fellfield or wind-swept field, with approximately 1,000 small ponds called "Gaki-no-ta" scattered in a wetland shaped by cold climate, heavy snow, abundant water and strong wind. The Shomyo Waterfall has the largest drop in Japan, gathering the water from the wetland and rushing down the cliff. The area around Tateyama Midagahara and Dainichidaira in Tateyama Mountain Range is a part of Chubu-Sangaku National Park and the Shomyo Waterfall is designated as National Place of Scenic Beauty and as a National Natural Monument.

### Flora and Fauna in Midagahara:

Tateyama Midagahara and Dainichidaira present typical mire vegetation consisting of *Carex blepharicarpa*, *Rhynchospora yasudana* and *Moliniopsis japonica* with the hierarchy composed only by herbaceous species. Besides the above mentioned, *Nephrophyllidium crista-galli*, Common Sundew *Drosera rotundifolia* L. *Aletris foliata*, *Shortia soldanelloides f. alpines* grow well along with many endangered species such as Arctic Butterfly Orchid *Platanthera hyperborean* and Poor Sedge *Carex paupercula*. Communities of *Scirpus hondensis* are found in the ponds, and fellfield shrubs including *Pinus x hakkodensis* and *Rhododendron tchshonoskii subsp. trinerve* are found on a slightly elevated area, along with the species such as Maries' Fir *Abies mariessi* and Butterfly Maple *Acer tchshonoskii* with a partial invasion of Dwarf-bamboo *Sasa kurilensis*.

As for the birds, besides the Common cuckoo *Cuculus canorus* and Meadow Bunting *Emberiza cioides* corresponding to the grassland and the environment of forest



View of Midagahara (Photo by T. Sato)

edge in summer, it is a wintering habitat for the endangered Ptarmigans *Lagopus muta*.

### Mountain Worship and Tourism:

Mt. Tateyama has been revered by people for a long period of time as one of the "Three Holy Mountains" in Japan along with Mt. Fujisan and Mt. Hakusan. This mountain was considered to be an embodiment of heaven and hell.

The name of "Gaki-no-ta", the plateau with numerous ponds, also comes from Buddhism. It was believed to be a place for rice planting by the hungry ghosts fallen into hell. Shomyo Waterfall is said to be named after the roar of the waterfall that sounded like the chanting of Buddhist sutra. The fall is one of the good examples of nature worship in Mt. Tateyama.

The Tateyama-Kurobe Alpine Route connects Tateyama town in Toyama Prefecture and Omachi town in Nagano Prefecture, and it provides an easy access by public transportations to Murodo-daira at an altitude of 2450m. Many people visit the area along the route to enjoy nature watching, nature learning and trekking. There are some board walks in Midagahara where more than 50,000 tourists visit every year. Nature interpretations by local guides are available here. It is easy to go to the Shomyo Waterfall by car and visitors can enjoy the magnificent landscape of the waterfall with the largest drop in Japan just in front of them. On the other hand, Dainichidaira is a place for mountain climbers be-



Shomyo Waterfall (Photo by M. Ota)

cause it is a part of a trekking course to Mt. Dainichidake, and it is necessary to stay in the mountain hut to trek the area.

### The Water of the Shomyo River for Drinking:

The Shomyo Waterfall pours into the Shomyo River then into the Joganji River, and the water is used for drinking in the area. Moreover, snowfall and rainfall precipitated in the catchment area penetrate into the underground. The water springs out at Tateyama Station, the gateway of the Tateyama-Kurobe Alpine Route. The mild sweet water is sold as drinking bottled water.

### Contact Information:

Tateyama Town Office  
<http://www.town.tateyama.toyama.jp/>

