

Izu-numa and Uchi-numa

Freshwater Lake

Geographical Coordinates: 38°43'N, 141°06'E / Altitude: 6m / Area: 559ha / Major Type of Wetland: Freshwater lake / Designation: Special Protection Area of National Wildlife Protection Area / Municipalities Involved: Kurihara City and Tome City, Miyagi Prefecture / Ramsar Designation: September 1985 / Ramsar Criteria: 2, 3



Manchurian Wild Rice growing around Izu-numa

Planting of Manchurian Wild Rice

Lotus flowers in Uchi-numa

General Overview:

Izu-numa and Uchi-numa are two interconnected freshwater lakes lying in an alluvial plain of Hasama River, a tributary of Kitakami River running through northwestern Miyagi Prefecture. The surrounding area is covered mostly with rice paddies, giving way to hills (elevation 30-50m) to the south, west and north.

The area was previously a flood plain where the Kitakami and Hasama rivers met. From the 1930's, the vast, swampy area began to be reclaimed to develop rice paddies, and thus became one of the major rice croplands in northeastern Japan. Although a part of Izu-numa and Uchi-numa was reclaimed as well, approximately half of the original lake area still remains and functions as an irrigation pond and a reservoir for flood control. The water of the two lakes is approximately 1m deep and is regulated by a sluice in the east of Izu-numa.

Wintering Ground for Migratory Birds:

Because the area has little snowfall and the lakes do not freeze even in midwinter, it serves as a wintering ground for a large number of migratory birds. Surrounded by extensive rice paddies that serve as feeding

grounds for birds, the site is one of the largest wintering grounds in Japan, where over 80% of White-fronted Goose, as well as the Whooper Swan and Tundra Swan wintering in Japan visit.

Abundant Aquatic Vegetation:

Izu-numa and Uchi-numa are shallow lakes with a maximum depth of 1.6m. The area abounds in aquatic vegetation including reeds, Manchurian Wild Rice, lotus and water chestnuts. Approximately 700 species of plant are recorded in the lakes and surrounding areas. It is particularly well-known for its community of Manchurian Wild Rice. In summer, pretty lotus flowers cover the surface of the ponds. During the lotus festival held every year, many visitors enjoy the fragrance and charm of the flowers in boats.

[Manchurian Wild Rice *Zizania latifolia*]

A perennial grass similar to reeds in appearance, it forms communities in areas such as swamps and riverbeds. With a height of 1-3m, its rhizome is an important food source for swans. It also contributes to water purification. At Izu-numa and Uchi-numa, planting Manchurian Wild Rice over an area of 10ha is conducted every year

by locals. The group operating the project is called "Makomo Gundan" which means, "Activists for Manchurian Wild Rice". At the center of this activity is the Izu-numa and Uchi-numa Sanctuary Center.

Contact Information:

Izu-numa and Uchi-numa Sanctuary Center
<http://www7.ocn.ne.jp/~izunuma/>



Izu-numa (left) and Uchi-numa

