

# Onuma

## Freshwater Lake

Geographical Coordinates: 41°59'N, 140°40'E / Altitude: 130m / Area: 1236ha / Major Type of Wetland: Freshwater lake / Designation: Special Zone of Quasi National Park / Municipalities Involved: Nanae Town, Hokkaido Prefecture / Ramsar Designation: July 2012 / Ramsar Criteria: 1



Onuma and Mt. Komagatake in summer

### General Overview:

Lake Onuma is a freshwater lake located at an altitude of 130m on the southern slope of Mt. Komagatake in the eastern side of Oshima Peninsula in south-western Hokkaido. Mt. Komagatake is an active volcano and the lakes were formed by a great eruption of it in 1640 when the rivers were dammed up by the erupted lava. The Ramsar site includes three lakes namely Onuma, Konuma and Junsainuma with surface areas of 616ha, 484ha and 36ha respectively.

Some rivers flow in the area from the west and south, and a river flows out in the east. The water level of the lakes is regulated to retain the water in the lakes because the water is used for electric power generation and irrigation for agriculture. The lakes can be compared to dishes on a plateau because they are shallow with an average depth of 3-6m and the maximum depth of 13m.

### A Landscape of Forest, Lakes and Volcano:

The most distinctive feature of this wetland is the unique landscape of islets called "nagareyama" in Japanese. The pretty green islets are the emerged tips of huge rocks sitting on the bottom of the lakes. They are lava boulders formed by the volcanic eruption. There are more than 120 islets in various sizes in Lake Onuma and Konuma. The beautiful landscape of the lakes with these islets and gently sloped Mt. Komagatake looks like a magnificent Japanese garden. Visitors can appreciate this scenery from many places such as the train window and lakeside road. The picturesque landscape is the

greatest asset of this Ramsar site.

Onuma Quasi National Park is situated 25km north of Hakodate City, a historic city in Hokkaido. The natural environment in the park has been cherished by local people like their own gardens. This area is considered to be an important resource for tourism, attracting more than 2 million visitors worldwide every year.

From spring to autumn, visitors can enjoy sightseeing on boats as well as boating, canoeing, camping, forest walking and bird watching. A deciduous broad-leaf forest with Japanese Beech stretches along the shore and the area is a good habitat for many birds including forest birds and water birds such as moorhens, coots, water rails and ducks. From December to March when the lakes freeze over, many people visit here to enjoy ice fishing. The transportation and accommodation here is very convenient. The area has good tourist facilities including restaurants and information centers such as Onuma International Communication Plaza and Park Information Onuma.

### Rich Fauna and Flora:

The area was designated as a prefectural park in 1922 and as the first quasi national park in Hokkaido in 1958. Furthermore, this site was designated as the first wildlife protection area under prefectural management in 1952. As a result, the natural environment has been protected very well to support a good habitat for diverse wildlife. This area is a staging point for the birds that migrate between Hokkaido and Honshu, the mainland of Japan. A number of rare species are found here. The plant

species here includes *Nuphar japonicum*, *Sparganium erectum* and *Utricularia aurea*, bird species includes Steller's Sea Eagle, Northern Goshawk, Black Woodpecker, Common Quail, Ruddy Kingfisher, and Insects includes Horned Dung Beetle.

### Water Shield, Japanese Smelt and Dairy Farming:

Out of the three lakes, Junsainuma is not used for tourism. The natural condition of this lake is intact and people harvest the Water Shield *Brasenia schreberi*, an edible water plant called "Junsai". The name of this lake comes from this plant. Fishermen catch Japanese Smelt and shrimps in Onuma and sell them to the tourists after cooking them in a traditional way. The area around the lakes is a major dairy farming district providing good milk products such as fresh milk and cheese. There are also some spas in this area.

### Contact Information:

Nanae Town Office  
<http://www.town.nanae.hokkaido.jp/>

