

## Sarobetsu-genya

## Moor, Freshwater Lake

Geographical Coordinates: 45°03'N, 141°42'E / Altitude: 3-7m / Area: 2,560ha / Major Type of Wetland: High moor, intermediate moor, low moor, freshwater lake / Designation: Special Protection Zone of National Wildlife Protection Area; Special Protection Zone and Special Zone of National Park / Municipalities Involved: Horonobe Town, Toyotomi Town, Hokkaido Prefecture / Ramsar Designation: November 2005 / Ramsar Criteria: 1, 3, 6 / EAAFP Flyway Network Site



Sarobetsu-genya and *Hemerocallis dumortieri*

### General Overview:

Sarobetsu-genya is a vast peatland located approximately 40km south of Wakkanai City, the northernmost city in Japan. The Ramsar Site covers an area of 2,560ha, with its central part including a high moor. Although it used to be a large wetland area stretching 8km from east to west and 27km from north to south with a total area of 14,600ha, it has shrunk rapidly due to the large-scale development that began in the 1960's. Nevertheless, it still represents one of the largest high moors in Japan. Owing to minimal influence from the Sarobetsu River, which skirts the marshland, the water level fluctuation is low and the supply of nutrients is poor — both favorable conditions for the development of high moors.

The wetlands are separated from the Sea of Japan by the sand dune running from north to south in the western area. There are several high moors in the middle, surrounded by an intermediate and a low moor in a concentric fashion. There are some ponds and lakes to the south, including Panke-numa and Penke-numa. The wetlands used to be a big coastal lagoon before they were isolated from the sea by the development of sand dunes about 6,000 years ago.

### Colorful Wetland Vegetation:

From spring to autumn, Sarobetsu-genya is covered with more than 100 species including Cranberry, Hare's Tail Cotton Grass, Bog Rosemary and *Hemerocallis dumortieri*. Boardwalks have been laid down around the Sarobetsu Wetland Center in the north and the Horonobe Visitor Center in the south, allowing a closer look of those beautiful flowers.

### Stopover Site for Migratory Birds:

The two lakes in this wetland are important habitats for breeding waterfowls and migrating birds. They consistently support 1% of the East Asian population of Midden-dorf's Bean Goose, and Tundra Swan. The wetland is one of the few breeding grounds for Yellow-breasted Bunting as well.

### Kami-sarobetsu Nature Restoration Project:

In parts of the Sarobetsu-genya, various human activities such as farmland reclamation and river improvement have caused a decline in the groundwater level as well as land subsidence. These have resulted in the aridification of the wetland, and moreover the invasion of bamboo grass has also caused a reduction of the high moors. Therefore, nature restoration efforts are underway to resolve issues such as the loss and degradation of the wetland and to make it compatible with agriculture.

**[High Moor]** A high moor is formed by successive peat accumulation from a low and intermediate moor. As the accumulation of peat progresses further following the development of low-rise and intermediate marshes, the ground surface rises and becomes an oligotrophic high moor that is created only by rainwater, such as precipitation and sea fog. Sphagnum dominates the land, while unique plant communities that can survive poor nutrition and excessive moisture like the dwarf ericaceous bush and insectivorous plants such as *Drosera rotundifolia* and small sedges develop here.

### Contact Information:

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