

Onuma

Freshwater Lake

Geographical Coordinates: 41°59'N, 140°40'E / Altitude: 130m / Area: 1,236ha / 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 southwestern Hokkaido. Mt. Komagatake is an active volcano and lakes were formed when it erupted in 1640 causing lava to block the flow of the rivers. The Ramsar site includes three lakes namely Onuma, Konuma, and Junsainuma with surface areas of 616ha, 484ha, and 136ha respectively.

Some rivers flow into 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 a 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 at the bottom of the lakes. They are lava boulders formed by the volcanic eruption. There are more than 120 islets of various sizes in Lake Onuma and Lake Konuma. The beautiful landscape of the lakes with these islets and gently sloped Mt. Komagatake makes it seem like a magnificent Japanese garden. Visitors can appreciate this scenery from many places such as a 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 the historic Hakodate City, in Hokkaido. The natural environment in the park has been cherished by local people like their own gardens. This area is 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 Common Moorhen, Common Coot, Water Rail and ducks. From December to March when the lakes freeze over, many visitors 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 Nanae Town Onuma Nature Center.

Rich Fauna and Flora:

The area was designated as a prefectural park in 1922 and the first quasi national park in Hokkaido in 1958. Furthermore, this site was designated as a wildlife protection area under prefectural management in 1952. As a result, the natural environment has been well protected to ensure 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. Bird species include Steller's Sea-eagle, Northern Gos-

hawk, Black Woodpecker, Japanese Quail, and Ruddy Kingfisher. The plant species here include *Nuphar pumilum*, *Sparganium erectum* and *Utricularia australis*. Several insects, including Horned Dung Beetle, are also found here.

Water Shield, Japanese Smelt and Dairy Farming:

Junsainuma is not used as much for tourism as the Onuma side. The natural condition of this lake is intact and people harvest 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, cook them in the traditional way, and sell them to tourists. 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

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