

Oze

High Moor, Freshwater Lake

Geographical Coordinates: 36°53'N, 139°11'E / Altitude: 1,400-1,420m (Marshland area), 1,660m (Oze-numa), 2,356m (highest point) / Area: 8,711ha / Major Type of Wetland: High moor, freshwater lake / Designation: Special Protection Zone and Special Zone of National Park / Municipalities Involved: Hinoemata Village, Fukushima Prefecture, Katashina Village, Gunma Prefecture, Uonuma City, Niigata Prefecture / Ramsar Designation: November 2005 / Ramsar Criteria: 1



Ozegahara filled with blooming White Skunk Cabbage

General Overview:

A famous Japanese song quotes: “The coming of summer is a beautiful reminder of Oze and the sky far away...”, Oze is definitely one of the most well-known major wetlands of Japan with its rich and vast beauty.

Oze is the largest high moor in Japan, located 140km north of Tokyo, extending over the three prefectures of Gunma, Niigata, and Fukushima. Surrounded by 2,000m-class peaks such as Mt. Hiuchigatake and Mt. Shibutsu, Ozegahara Plateau is located in the western part of the flat basin at an altitude of 1,400m and Lake Oze-numa is to the east side at an altitude of 1,600m. Located in a snow belt, Oze is covered with over 4m of snow for more than half of the year. Consequently, the dead plants do not decay and thickly accumulate to form peat. The wetland develops from a low moor to an intermediate moor in accordance with the peat accumulation, and when the peat surface becomes higher than the water level, it becomes a high moor that is fed only by rainfall and fog with little nutrients. In 2007, the Oze area was separated from Nikkon National Park and designated as Oze National Park.

Ozegahara and Oze-numa:

Ozegahara is the largest high moor in Honshu, main island of Japan, covering an area of 849ha. It is rich in various wetland plants including *Carex middendorffii*, Cranberry, *Hemerocallis dumortieri* and White Skunk Cabbage.

Oze-numa is a dammed lake formed by the eruption of Mt. Hiuchigatake. The lake covers an area of 180ha with a shoreline of 9km. It hosts a number of rare plants including the endangered aquatic plant, *Chara globularis* var. *globularis*.

In addition to some trekking trails to Ozegahara and Oze-numa, there is a boardwalk in the wetland to afford visitors easy access to the country's best wetland landscape. There are two visitor centers in the east of Oze-numa and in the western part of Ozegahara as well as many mountain huts and accommodation facilities.

Efforts to Protect the Wetland:

As many tourists visit this area, various regulations and measures for conservation management have been put in place, such as restrictions on incoming motor vehicles, raising public awareness about garbage control, wastewater treatment for cottages and toilets, and restoring wetland vegetation.

Most of the lands in Ramsar sites in Japan are publicly-owned, including national properties. However, in Oze, an area of 6,277ha, accounting for 72% of the 8,711ha designated area, is owned by an electric company.

Originally, it was a land for dam construction for hydroelectric power generation, but the company called off the plan and agreed to conserve the wetland.

[White Skunk Cabbage (*Lysichiton camtschatcense*)] It is a plant in the family Araceae with a large white spathe (8-15 cm). It grows in colonies in wetlands and blooms when the snow thaws in spring as though announcing the coming of the season. This flower is a motif of a popular Japanese song and a symbol of Oze wetland.

Contact Information:

Hinoemata Village Office

<https://www.hinoemata.com/>

Uonuma City Office

<https://www.city.uonuma.niigata.jp/>

Katashina Village Office

<https://www.vill.katashina.gunma.jp/>

