

Sarobetsu-genya

Moor, Freshwater Lake

Geographical Coordinates: 45°03'N, 141°42'E / Altitude: 3-7m / Area: 2560ha / Major Type of Wetland: High moors, intermediate moors, low moors, freshwater lakes / 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 Pref. / Ramsar Designation: November 2005



Sarobetsu-genya and flowers (inset)

Principal Features:

Sarobetsu-genya is a vast peatland of designated 2560ha, located approx. 40 km south of Wakkanai City in the northern tip of Hokkaido. Although the marshland wilderness had once spread over 14,600ha, in the area 8km east-west and 27km north-south, it has rapidly shrunk with large-scale developments undertaken since 1960's. Nevertheless, it still represents one of the largest high moors formed in flatlands in Japan, owing to minimum impact of the Sarobetsu River circumventing around the marshland along with limited water level fluctuation and poor supply of nutrients. Those provide an ideal condition in forming high moors.

Sarobetsu-genya is separated from the Sea of Japan by the sand dune in the west. There are several high moors in the middle, surrounded by intermediate moor and low moor in a concentric circle formation. There are ponds and small lakes in the south, including Penke-numa and Panke-numa, formed as a result of land formation since the time Sarobetsu-genya was big lagoon separated from the sea by the development of sand dunes about 4000 years ago.

Colorful Wetland Vegetation:

From spring to autumn, Sarobetsu-genya is covered with more than 100 spe-

cies of colorful flora including Small cranberry *Oxycoccus quadripetalus*, Hare's tail cotton grass *Eriophorum vaginatum*, Bog rosemary *Andromeda polifolia*, and Broad dwarf day-lily *Hemerocallis esculenta*. Boardwalks are laid down in Sarobetsu Wildflower Garden and Panke-numa to allow a closer look at pretty flowers. Visitor centers are established at the north and south, the latter with a panoramic lookout for visitors to see a 360-degree view of Sarobetsu-genya.

Stopover for Migratory Birds:

Penke-numa and Panke-numa are important breeding grounds for waterfowls as well as stopover sites for migratory birds. Each accommodates Middendorf's Bean Goose and Tundra Swan, accounting for 1 % of the respective local population in East Asia. The area is also one of the few breeding ground for Yellow-breasted Bunting *Emberiza aureola*.

Wetland Restoration:

Over the years, the drop in the groundwater level and river improvement development has caused some parts of the Sarobetsu-genya to become dry, allowing a rapid spread of low bamboo grass to cover the area at an alarming rate. Therefore, nature restoration project is conducted by relevant ministries for restoration of the wetlands.

[High Moor] As peat sediment develops, forming low moor and subsequent intermediate moor, gradually the ground level is raised to form high moor where nutrients become extremely poor with mere supply from rainwater and sea mist. Sphagnum dominates the land, and only the communities of plants that can survive with poor nutrition and excessive moisture can be found. The low ericaceous bush or carnivorous plants such as *Drosera rotundifolia*, and small sedges are some of them.

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