

## Fish

### Sakhalin Taimen

Sakhalin taimen is a type of salmon. It is the largest freshwater fish in Japan and was first discovered in Hokkaido. Unlike other salmon, Sakhalin taimen is a long-lived species, with some living as long as fifteen or twenty years and measuring over one meter in length. In Ainu legend, Sakhalin taimen are powerful enough to attack Yezo shika deer or stop a river's flow. Their name includes the Kanji character for ogre, a reflection of the ancient belief that these fish are a savage animal.

In reality, Sakhalin taimen primarily eat aquatic insects and small fish. In the past, wild Sakhalin taimen also inhabited the Tohoku region of Japan. Today, Sakhalin taimen are rarely seen anywhere in Japan and have become extinct in the wild, even in Lake Akan. They are now being raised and released in an effort to re-establish the species.

### Kokanee Salmon

Kokanee salmon is a landlocked variety of sockeye salmon. Usually, sockeye salmon lay their eggs in rivers, after which the juveniles remain in the river for two to three years before making their way downstream to the ocean, where they take three to eight years to reach maturity. They then return to their birth river to spawn before dying. However, kokanee salmon are sockeye salmon that became trapped in Lake Akan due to volcanic eruptions that altered the land after the fish had swum upriver. They have now adapted to a life spent entirely in freshwater.

Kokanee salmon take approximately three years to reach adulthood. They lay their eggs in the clear waters of rivers, then die shortly after. Kokanee salmon from Lake Akan have been introduced to lakes across Japan for commercial fishing.

### Japanese Smelt

The Japanese smelt is a small fish of approximately ten centimeters in length. They mainly eat plankton and midge larvae and the like. They are extremely adaptable and inhabit various waterways including bays, lakes, and the lower reaches of rivers.

From January to March, visitors and locals alike can enjoy the rare sport of winter smelt fishing from atop the frozen Lake Akan. The smelt were introduced from Lake Abashiri on the northern coast of Hokkaido and have since become one of the most populous fish in the lake.