

## Lake Akan

### Ecosystem

Lake Akan is the third largest lake within Akan-Mashu National Park. It is a designated Wetland of International Importance under the terms of the Ramsar Convention. The lake is a natural habitat of Marimo, a rare freshwater algae that can grow into spheres up to 30cm wide. The Marimo of Lake Akan are designated as a National Special Natural Monument, and removing them from the lake or even touching them is strictly prohibited. The Marimo Exhibition Center on Churui Island, accessible by sightseeing cruise boat, allows visitors to learn more about this mysterious organism. The lake is also home to two types of large freshwater fish, Sakhalin taimen, and kokanee salmon. Unfortunately, in addition to these native residents, the invasive Signal crayfish species has also flourished. They compete with Japanese native crayfish which are now at risk of extinction, and also consume rare shellfish and aquatic plants. For those interested in fishing, the catching of these invasive crayfish is permitted at Lake Akan.

The dense forest of Yezo spruce and Sakhalin fir that surrounds Lake Akan is inhabited by brown bears, Yezo shika deer, black woodpeckers, white-tailed eagles, and many other wild animals.

### Activities

Each year around October, the forest blazes with vibrant autumnal colors. In winter the water freezes, and it is possible to walk on top of the lake's surface (snowshoes are available from the Akankohan Eco-museum Center for visitors). Beginning in January are snowmobiling and ice fishing: try your hand at catching Japanese smelt through holes cut in the lake's frozen surface.