

Fossilized Leaves

Konoha ishi (literally, “stone leaves”) are fossilized leaves found in the dry bed of Shiobara’s former caldera lake. Fossils of perfectly preserved freshwater fish and small animals have also been found here. The trees and animals that inhabit the forest today are largely identical to the ancient flora and fauna of the lake region. Some of the fossilized leaves perfectly match the leaves of modern chestnut and beech trees.

The leaves and dead animals that sank into the soft lakebed were soon covered by fine sediment, encasing them in a low-oxygen environment that protected them from microbes that break down organic matter. As a result, many of these fossils retain minute details, such as the individual hairs of a mouse’s fur. Volcanic activity later lifted the lakebed, and the lake slowly drained away. The Hoki River gradually cut into the layers of sediment, exposing the fossils and *konoha ishi*.