

【Ikenotaira Wetland】

The Ikenotaira Wetland is a distinct alpine ecosystem cradled within the ancient volcanic crater of Mt. Sanbōgamine. Although located at a relatively low elevation of 2,000 meters, it is home to a diverse variety of high-altitude vegetation. In summer, over 100 flowering plant species cover Ikenotaira with their blossoms.

The wetland can be divided into several areas: the slopes surrounding the crater are largely forested; the northern ridgeline is predominantly covered with Japanese larch, and the southern slope has primeval stands of northern Japanese hemlock. In the crater's center, rain and snowmelt have accumulated over millennia to form a marshland scattered with peat hummocks, black crowberry, and patches of irises. To the southwest lies Kagami Pond, which on clear days reflects an image of the surrounding peaks. Round-leaved sundew, a carnivorous plant that traps insects with its sticky spines, grows near the pond. At the southeast corner of the wetland, where the crater rim has collapsed, clusters of lingonberry and bog bilberry shrubs attract several rare species of butterfly.

The larger animals in the area include the weasel-like stoat and the Japanese serow, which is sometimes described as a “goat-antelope.” Many songbirds inhabit the treetops, along with kites and buzzards. The wetland also contains two species of Japanese rat snake that are known to tunnel into the peat hummocks and lay their eggs.