

## **Shirakumo Pond**

The name Shirakumo, which can be translated as “white cloud,” is likely a reference to the way the pond reflects the sky on a clear day. Originally this side of the pond was a place for religious ceremonies, as evidenced by the stone washbasin and sacred Japanese cypress trees nearby. Although it looks natural, the pond is manmade; it was built around 400 years ago to store water for farm irrigation. Today, Shirakumo Pond is surrounded by a fully outfitted campground with tent sites, toilets, cooking facilities, a recreational open space, and boat rentals.

To protect the carp that live in Shirakumo Pond, swimming in the pond is not allowed. In the forest, you may see wild birds such as the narcissus flycatcher (*Ficedula narcissina*), which is identifiable by its bright yellow breast, and the Japanese pygmy woodpecker (*Yungipicus kizuki*), whose call resembles a buzz more than a song. The nut-bearing shrubs along the shores of the pond are particularly plentiful—in summer, be on the lookout for their delicate flowers, and in autumn, for their bright fruits, which draw birds and other animals from around the area.

The hike up nearby Mt. Kinugasa (870 m), one of the easiest in Unzen, rewards those who make the trek with a spectacular view of Unzen Onsen Town, the Unzen volcano cluster, and Tachibana Bay.