

Gensei Marsh

Gensei Marsh is located west of the *jigoku* hot springs. Designated a natural monument in 1928, the marsh is one of Japan's rarest landscapes, a biodiversity hot spot, and an excellent example of ecological succession.

Scientific analysis has shown that Gensei Marsh used to resemble the barren landscape of Unzen's *jigoku* hot springs. However, over thousands of years the hot springs have slowly shifted west. The area under the marsh has cooled, causing a vibrant ecosystem to emerge in a place where 1,500 years ago almost nothing could grow.

First, as conditions improved, sphagnum (peat moss) quickly covered the whole area. Today, the marsh is home to a wide variety of plants, from flowering Japanese azaleas to insect-eating sundews and rabbit-ear irises. Unfortunately, the water level has dropped, possibly due to climate change, so a century from now the marsh may look completely different.
