

The Plants of the Kushiro Wetlands

The 28,788 hectares comprising the Kushiro Wetlands are surrounded by primeval forest. More than 700 plant species grow within the wetlands. Many grow only in the Kushiro Wetlands, and some are surviving species from the last ice age.

Plants of the fens and bogs

The permanently wet fen areas are fed by groundwater, and are covered by reed grasses and sedges. The sphagnum bog, which is watered by frequent rainfall, supports forests of alder trees (*Alnus japonica*) and alpine and cold-climate plants. Water arum (*Calla palustris*), a small variety of calla lily, and the feathery white flowers of bogbean (*Menyanthes trifoliata*) bloom throughout the wetlands in summer.

Peat formation

Due to the cold, wet conditions, dead vegetation forms layers of peat rather than decomposing completely. The peat within the Kushiro Wetlands started forming some 3,000 years ago. With time, as it is compressed by layers of sediment, this peat will eventually turn into coal. This is how the coal deposits in the Kushiro area, which are mined to this day, formed over millions of years.