

Kushiro During World War II

Cities all over Japan came under attack from the allied forces during World War II. Women and children wore padded fabric air-raid hoods to protect them from falling debris and fire. One month before the end of the war, Grumman F6F Hellcat fighters flying from aircraft carriers of the United States Third Fleet launched air raids across Hokkaido. On July 14 and 15, 1945, the air raids targeted Kushiro among other cities in Hokkaido and northern Honshu.

During those two days Kushiro was attacked eight times. The main targets were factories, railroads, fishing boats, and schools. The heavy attack on the downtown area is believed to have been aimed at demoralizing the population. The Nusamai Bridge in downtown Kushiro was damaged but not destroyed. One of its Art Deco stone obelisks fell into the river (the top of the pillar is on display at the museum entrance), and its steel sides were strafed by machine-gun fire. A piece of steel plate from the bridge, over 10 millimeters thick and pierced with bullet holes, is on display at the museum. Over those two days, 193 people died and more than 500 were injured. Around 60 percent of the deaths were caused by fires resulting from the air raids.