

## The Fujikoto and Kasuge Rivers

The Fujikoto and Kasuge Rivers begin high in the mountains of Shirakami Sanchi—an area known for the purity and softness of its water—and are exceptionally clean. They converge at the center of the town of Fujisato. From there, their combined flow travels south to the city of Noshiro, where it meets the Yoneshiro River before emptying into the Sea of Japan.

The source of the 56.5-kilometer Fujikoto River is on Mt. Fujisato-Komagatake (1,158 m), a peak north of Fujisato that lies just outside the Shirakami Sanchi World Natural Heritage area. Numerous small tributaries flow into the Fujikoto as it makes its way through Daira Gorge and down to the flatlands of Fujisato.

The 36-kilometer Kasuge River originates on the slopes of Mt. Futatsumori (1,086 m). It is the only river in Akita with a drainage basin that lies entirely within the protected core zone of the Shirakami Sanchi World Natural Heritage Site. The Kasuge once flowed freely into town, but the construction of Subari Dam north of Fujisato in 1970 flooded the narrow valley that now holds Lake Subari, restricting the flow of the river.

Because of their excellent water quality and access to the ocean, the Fujikoto and Kasuge are famous for their sweetfish (*Plecoglossus altivelis*), a migratory species known as *ayu*. Both rivers support healthy *ayu* populations, although the Subari Dam limits *ayu* to the lower reaches of the Kasuge.

The Fujikoto and Kasuge are also well-known for char (*iwana*) and cherry trout (*yamame*) fishing. Permits are required on both rivers and can be obtained at fishing supply stores and other shops around town.

Additionally, the rivers are popular locations for “river trekking,” a warm-weather activity in which hikers traverse a gorge by walking along the bed of a river. The pursuit harks back to a time when people navigated the mountains of Shirakami Sanchi by rivers and streams due to a lack of footpaths.