

Fishing on the Fujikoto and Kasuge Rivers

The waters of the Fujikoto and Kasuge Rivers originate in the pristine mountain forests of Shirakami Sanchi. Water from the region is known for its purity and softness, and is bottled and sold under the brand name Shirakami Sansui. Resident anglers claim that the clear water makes fish caught in the two rivers especially delicious, and a good-natured rivalry exists between advocates of fish from one river versus the other.

Both the Fujikoto and Kasuge Rivers are famous spots for catching sweetfish, known in Japanese as *ayu*. Sweetfish from the Kasuge were presented to Emperor Meiji (1852–1912) when he visited in 1881, further boosting the area's reputation.

Sweetfish migrate between the ocean and freshwater breeding grounds. Both rivers are connected to the Yoneshiro River, which drains into the Sea of Japan. The Fujikoto has no dams or other barriers to hamper their migration, but the construction of Subari Dam in 1970 limits sweetfish to the lower reaches of the Kasuge.

Char, a collective term for fish in the *Salvelinus* genus, are known as *iwana* in Japanese. Prized for their taste, char live in the colder, rockier, faster-flowing upper reaches of the Fujikoto. Although they also inhabit the upper Kasuge, fishing north of Subari Dam is largely prohibited. Cherry trout (*yamame*), also called *sakura masu* (literally “cherry-blossom trout”) because of their pink flesh, can be caught both mid-river and on the lower Fujikoto just before it meets the Yoneshiro River. Sweetfish are found in the lower reaches of the Kasuge, and in the middle and lower areas of the Fujikoto.

Permits

Permits for fishing on the Kasuge and Fujikoto fall into four categories:

- 1) Sweetfish: July 1 to October 31
- 2) Common carp, crucian carp, and Japanese dace: year-round
- 3) Fishing in the mountain streams and upper tributaries of the Fujikoto, all species: March 21 to September 20
- 4) Cherry trout: June 1 to August 31

Permits for the first three categories each cost ¥1,000 per day or ¥6,000 annually. Permits for cherry trout cost ¥3,500 per day or ¥15,000 annually. Permits are available from fishing supply stores or other shops around Fujisato.