

Kaze no Matsubara

In 1711, the citizens of Noshiro began planting Japanese black pine trees along the coast. The trees were intended to shelter their city from the strong, cold winds that gust inland from the Sea of Japan. The resulting woodland is now one of Japan's largest black pine forests, containing around 7 million trees. It spans 14 kilometers of coastline and extends up to a kilometer inland, covering 760 hectares.

Today, the forest is a city park known as Kaze no Matsubara, or "Pine Grove of the Wind." Many of the trees have bent under the wind's constant force and now lean away from the sea. In addition to strong winds, the trees of Kaze no Matsubara also helped protect Noshiro from a tsunami triggered by the 1983 Sea of Japan earthquake 100 kilometers offshore. The wave struck the trees first and was greatly weakened before it reached the city.

As well as black pines, the park contains more than 300 varieties of plants and flowers, including Japanese cherry trees, linden viburnum, rugosa roses, greater celandine, and autumn olive. The forest attracts many songbirds such as chestnut buntings, Daurian redstarts, narcissus flycatchers, and Japanese robins.

There are three trails around the park, though visitors may also roam freely. The 2-kilometer track is specifically designated for jogging, while the 6-kilometer path can be used for walking, running, or cycling. The 3.6-kilometer trail is called the Kenkō Zukuri no Michi (literally, a "path for building health") and has a springy woodchip surface designed for visitors with difficulty navigating uneven terrain.