

## **Wetlands of Jododaira**

Wetlands and mixed groves of deciduous and evergreen trees cover large sections of the Jododaira Plateau, at an elevation of some 1,600 meters. The wetlands provide habitats for diverse flora and fauna, including migratory birds and rare subalpine plants. During the rainy season (mid-June to late July), wildflowers bloom throughout the wetlands, including bright-pink fringed galax, tussock cottongrass, and clusters of light-pink Hakusan rhododendron. Nature trails around the wetlands begin at the Jododaira Visitor Center, with routes taking from 20 minutes to 5 hours.

### *Jododaira Wetlands*

Much of the vegetation that grows in the Jododaira Wetlands (1,580 m) is virgin growth that has developed since the eruption of Mt. Issaikyo in 1893. Low-growing Japanese white pines dot the marshland, along with mosses and subalpine vegetation. Migratory birds make the wetlands their home in the summer months, and animals such as hares, martens, and stoats can be found year-round.

Visitors can get a close look at the distinctive vegetation and ecology of the Jododaira Wetlands from the boardwalk trail (around 20 minutes), beginning at the Jododaira Visitor Center. Some sections are wheelchair accessible.

### *Sugadaira Wetlands*

A variety of subalpine plants grow in this small wetland area near the northern edge of Kamanuma Pond. In summer, native purple-petaled *miyamarindo* (*Gentiana nipponica*) flowers bloom throughout the area. The Sugadaira Wetlands (1,766 m) can be reached in around 40 minutes from the Jododaira Wetlands.

### *Ubagahara Wetlands*

In late May and early June, tussock cottongrass produces white tufts, and the light-pink blossoms of the Japanese alpine cherry bloom. Small white-petaled Aleutian avens shrubs flower in June and July, and the bog bilberry blossoms with light-pink flowers in July and August. The Ubagahara Wetlands (1,778 m) are on the southwestern side of Kamanuma Pond, with the Sugadaira Wetlands to the northeast. It takes around 1 hour to reach Ubagahara from the Jododaira Visitor Center.

### *Yajidaira Wetlands*

These isolated wetlands are encircled by mountains and bordered by a virgin forest of Maries' fir (*Abies mariesii*). They are home to abundant subalpine flora, and in autumn, the grasses of the wetlands turn striking shades of orange and gold.

The hike to Yajidaira (1,504 m) is about an hour from Ubagahara, along a rough forested trail. The route to the boardwalks around the wetlands crosses a river and requires some rock hopping. During the rainy season or after heavy rains, the water level can be too high to cross. The round trip from the Jododaira Visitor Center takes about 5 hours and is recommended only for experienced hikers.

#### *Keibadaira Wetlands*

Many types of native subalpine plants thrive in the Keibadaira Wetlands (1,690 m), which are sustained by groundwater flowing from Mt. Higashi-Azuma (1,975 m). Flowers bloom from spring to autumn and include pink-petaled fringed galax in June, and purple *ezorindo* (*Gentiana triflora* var. *japonica*) in September.

It takes about 1 hour to reach the wetlands from the summit of Mt. Higashi-Azuma, or 30 minutes from the Torikodaira trailhead along the Bandai-Azuma Skyline.

#### *Torikodaira Wetlands*

A coniferous forest of Sakhalin spruce, Sakhalin fir, and Maries' fir surrounds Torikodaira (1,606 m), a small marsh located at the foot of Mt. Takayama (1,804 m). Look for blossoming Aleutian avens in June, marked by small white petals with a yellow center. Once every several years, in June and July, large numbers of *kobai keiso* (*Veratrum stamineum* var. *gladrum*) bloom all at the same time, carpeting the wetlands with white flowers on meter-long stems.

The wetlands can be reached via a short trail from the Torikodaira parking area on the Bandai-Azuma Skyline, or via a 2-kilometer trail from Usagidaira.

#### *Tsugadaira Wetlands*

Erman's birches line the path to the Tsugadaira Wetlands (1,658 m), a 20-minute walk from the Usagidaira parking lot. In June, creeping dogwood and snakeberry flower with white blossoms close to the ground. The wetlands are home to one of the biggest colonies of *kobai keiso*, which appears here once every several years in June and July.