

Protecting the Park: Regulations and Conservation Efforts

The future of Myoko-Togakushi renzan National Park depends upon the cooperation and respect of the people who use it. Both visitors and long-term residents must respect the park rules to protect the natural beauty and diverse ecology of the park. The impact of a single person may seem small, but it can resound through entire ecosystems. Likewise, the work of one person to aid conservation efforts may tip the scales in favor of preserving a habitat or saving an endangered species.

Some threats to the park environment come not from humans, but from plant or animal species they have unwittingly introduced. In response, Myoko-Togakushi communities have launched numerous initiatives to combat and exterminate invasive species within the park. Through their efforts, fragile populations of native species and the equilibrium of park ecological zones are being protected.

Park Rules and Etiquette

- **Trash:** Please take out what you bring in. Litter is unsightly, and for some wildlife, deadly.
- **Paths:** Please stay on the footpaths or wooden walkways. Getting closer for that photograph may be tempting, but one step could destroy a rare species beneath your foot.
- **Fires:** Please refrain from smoking while hiking, and keep campfires within approved boundaries. Wildfires can cause catastrophic damage.
- **Collecting:** Please do not remove anything from the park. No plants, no animals, not a single stone.
- **Feeding:** Please do not feed the animals. It is natural to want to help, but this impairs their ability to survive independently.
- **Bicycle and Snowmobile Restrictions:** For the protection of park ecosystems and the safety of people on foot, the use of privately owned bicycles and snowmobiles is prohibited in certain areas. Please follow local guidelines.

The Problem with Invasive Species

Put simply, an invasive species is one that did not originally exist in an environment, but has entered because of deliberate or inadvertent actions by humans. Invasive species can often change habitats in adverse ways, such as introducing new diseases or parasites, disrupting food chains, and driving out native species. Many invasive species can survive outside their original habitats precisely because they are hardy, highly adaptive, or

fiercely competitive for resources—traits that give them an advantage over established species.

Invasive Species Removal Efforts

Officials and volunteers work tirelessly to halt the spread of harmful non-native species in the park. Invasive animals include red swamp crayfish and black bass, both of which compete against (and in some cases consume) the frogs and fish that share their habitats.

Invasive plant species are the target of numerous removal initiatives in the park. Yellow irises and cutleaf coneflowers, though beautiful, spread rampantly once introduced. Even worse, the coneflowers emit a substance that inhibits the growth of other plants around them. Both species propagate through their roots, and the digging required to remove them is labor-intensive and not always successful. Another problematic species is the white waterlily, which quickly covers the surface of ponds, lowering water quality and ruining the habitat for creatures that live there. Imori-ike Pond, long known for its mirror-like reflection of Mt. Myoko, is in constant danger of being covered over with waterlilies; volunteers work twice a year to dredge up and remove them.