

Taishō Pond

On the morning of June 6, 1915, Mt. Yake erupted. American geologist Sydney Powers wrote: “Explosions hurled out rocks, ashes, mud, steam, and smoke with a tremendous reverberation of sounds. Ashes fell at Kami-kochi and a large mass of mud and boulders slid down the steep slope into the valley below, damming the stream.”

From such violent beginnings, crystal-clear Taishō Pond was born. The sight of Mt. Yake and the Hotaka Mountain Range reflected in its pristine waters is one of the iconic views of Kamikōchi. A boardwalk leads to the pond from Kappa Bridge, making it easily accessible from the resort area. The route passes through wetlands and forest, and the trip takes approximately one hour each way. It is an excellent way to see the valley’s wildlife, which includes over 70 species of birds.

Despite Dr. Powers’ observation that “the stream is rapidly wearing down the obstructing [volcanic] debris, and in relatively few years only a marsh will remain,” over a century later Taishō Pond not only survives, but also serves an important role in renewable energy generation. At the west end of the lake, an intake pipe funnels water to the Kasumizawa Power Station near Sawando, which supplies hydroelectric power to the region.