

Dragonfly Sanctuary Park

More than 60 species of dragonfly inhabit this dragonfly conservation area, which has an adjoining museum and aquarium. Visitors can stroll past ponds, flower fields, tree groves, and a rice paddy to see colorful and rare dragonflies up close. Seasonal flowers such as water lilies and irises add color to the ponds and are photogenic landing spots for the dragonflies. The park is open year-round, and adult dragonflies can be seen between March and December. An indoor aquarium showcases 300 species of fish from around the world and particularly from the Shimanto River, and an adjoining museum displays insect specimens from around the world.

Many species of dragonflies and damselflies live in the park, from Japan's largest dragonfly to the smallest. The *oniyanma* (*Anotogaster sieboldii*), the largest dragonfly in Japan, has a body length of around 10 centimeters. The orange-tailed midget (*Agriocnemis femina oryzae*) is one of the country's smallest at around 2 centimeters long and is characterized by powdery white markings on the head and thorax of the mature male.

The butterfly dragonfly or *cho-tonbo* (*Rhyothemis fuliginosa*) is notable for its large, iridescent blue wings. At first glance, it appears to flutter like a butterfly. These distinctive dragonflies skim across the ponds and fly around the park in summer. If the timing is right, visitors may see dragonflies and damselflies laying their eggs around the ponds, streams, and the rice paddy.

The rice paddy is a good example of ecologically friendly agriculture. The dragonflies feed off smaller insects, reducing the need for pesticides in the rice paddy. Some species of dragonfly are highly sensitive to environmental factors such as water quality and humidity. Visitors to the park can see the importance of dragonflies as natural sentinels of environmental change and the role they can play in maintaining freshwater biodiversity.