

Goshikinuma Ponds

The Goshikinuma Ponds are a collection of around 30 ponds in the foothills of Mt. Bandai. They formed after Mt. Bandai erupted in 1888. The eruption triggered a landslide which dammed up rivers and valleys and destroyed the surrounding forests and villages. Community efforts helped to regenerate the forests and restore the natural environment.

The colorful ponds

The ponds have distinct coloration caused by volcanic sediments and mineral particles such as aluminum silicate, iron, copper, and manganese. Their colorful copper, blue, and green hues change subtly according to light conditions, shifts in sediment, reflections on the surface of the water, and other factors. A highly acidic crater lake called Akanuma (Copper Pond), high on the northern slopes of Mt. Bandai is thought to be the source of mineral-rich springs that feed some of the ponds. A 4-kilometer walking trail from the Urabandai Visitor Center to Lake Hibara passes many of the Goshikinuma Ponds. The level trail takes around 90 minutes one way.

Human efforts to restore the ecosystem

The landscape of Urabandai, including the Goshikinuma area, remained a barren wilderness for nearly 20 years after Mt. Bandai's eruption in 1888 covered it in ash, rock debris, and mudflows. Through government initiatives to promote reforestation, people could purchase land in the area at a preferential rate if they successfully rehabilitated its plant life. Merchant and environmentalist Endo Genmu (1863–1935) played a key role in reforesting the area. In 1917, he led a group to plant some 130,000 red pine saplings under the guidance of forestry professor Nakamura Yaroku (1855–1929). They later continued with cedar, sumac, maple, cherry, and more red pine. More than a century after the labors of Endo and his colleagues, the Goshikinuma Ponds are surrounded by dense forests that make up a thriving ecosystem of plant and animal life. Endo is commemorated with a memorial stone located between the ponds of Yanaginuma and Aonuma.