

A Network of Organisms

Bountiful Northern Ocean and the Blessing of the Tsushima Warm Current

The Soya Warm Current flows through the ocean in this region. It branches off the Tsushima Warm Current, which originates in the East China Sea and flows northward through the Sea of Japan. A variety of organisms live here since the water is relatively shallow, being located on the continental shelf.



Harbor Seal

Inhabitation by Sea Lions, True Seals, and Seabirds

In the winter, species of true seals such as the Harbor Seal (*Phoca vitulina*), as well as the Steller Sea Lion (*Eumetopias jubatus*) migrates to the oceanic areas of the park. Occasionally, the Northern Fur Seal (*Callorhinus ursinus*) are also seen. The Black-tailed Gull (*Larus crassirostris*) and the Slaty-backed Gull (*Larus schistisagus*) on Rishiri Island, and the Spectacled Guillemot (*Cepphus carbo*) on Todoshima Island (off the northern tip of Rebun Island), all breed during the summer season. In addition, you can sometimes encounter flocks of the Red-necked Phalarope (*Phalaropus lobatus*) and the Christmas Island Shearwater (*Puffinus nativitatis*) in the middle of their migration.



The Taiga Bean Goose

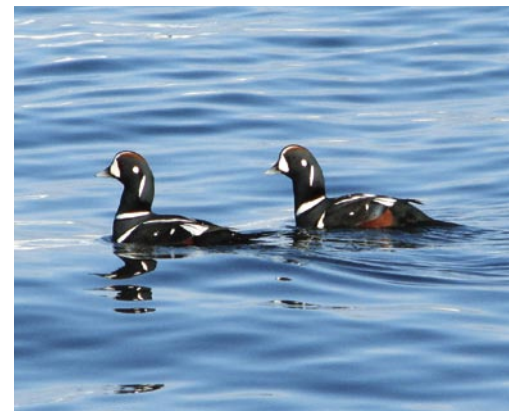
The bean goose is a large goose, and its two subspecies—the Tundra Bean Goose (*Anser serrirostris serrirostris*) and the Taiga Bean Goose (*Anser fabalis middendorffii*)— both visit Japan. The Taiga Bean Goose breeds in Kamchatka Peninsula migrates to Japan along roughly the same route as the swans, flying from Kamchatka to northern Hokkaido via Sakhalin, and then heading south along the west coast of Hokkaido to Honshu.



Tundra Swan

Swan's Migration

There are two species of swans that visit Japan periodically: the Whooper Swan (*Cygnus cygnus*) and the Tundra Swan (*Cygnus columbianus*). The Whooper Swan breeds in the Siberian taiga and travels from Sakhalin primarily through eastern Hokkaido, and then heads south along the Pacific coast. The Tundra Swan breeds further north in the tundra, flies to northern Hokkaido from Sakhalin, and rests in the Sarobetsu Plain and at Lake Kutcharo on the Okhotsk coast. Then it heads south along Teshio River, Ishikari River, and their tributaries on the west coast of Hokkaido, flies over Lake Utonai in Tomakomai and crosses over to Honshu where it passes the winter. These birds take the same route northward to return to their breeding grounds in the spring.



Harlequin Duck

Stopover Point for Migratory Birds

Sarobetsu Plain overlaps with the migration routes of many migratory birds, and thus is an important location for rest and nourishment. For this reason, the main part of the Sarobetsu Plain was included in The Ramsar List of Wetlands of International Importance for conservation in 2005. In addition, numerous winter birds including the Harlequin Duck (*Histrionicus histrionicus*) visit the waters in the vicinity.

Major migration routes of geese and swans



Greater White-fronted Goose