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National Parks in Japan 1



Rishiri-Rebun-Sarobetsu National Park

Flower blooming in Rishiri-Rebun-Sarobetsu National Park

The Rishiri Poppy  
*Papaver fauriei*



Drawing by Ajiro Nihashi

The Rishiri Poppy is the only poppy species that grows in the wild in Japan. It can be found only in the rocky areas of the alpine zone on Mount Rishiri. It grows several stems of about 20cm long, and at each tip opens a pale yellow flower of about 3cm in diameter in July.

● Wakkanai Ranger Office for Nature Conservation

5-6-1 Suehiro, Wakkanai Joint Government Building, Wakkanai, Hokkaido, 097-8527  
Phone: 0162-33-1100 Fax: 0162-33-1101

● Sarobetsu Visitor Center

Kamisarobetsu, Toyotomi-cho, Teshio-gun, Hokkaido, 098-4100  
Phone: 090-3113-0299

● Horonobe Visitor Center

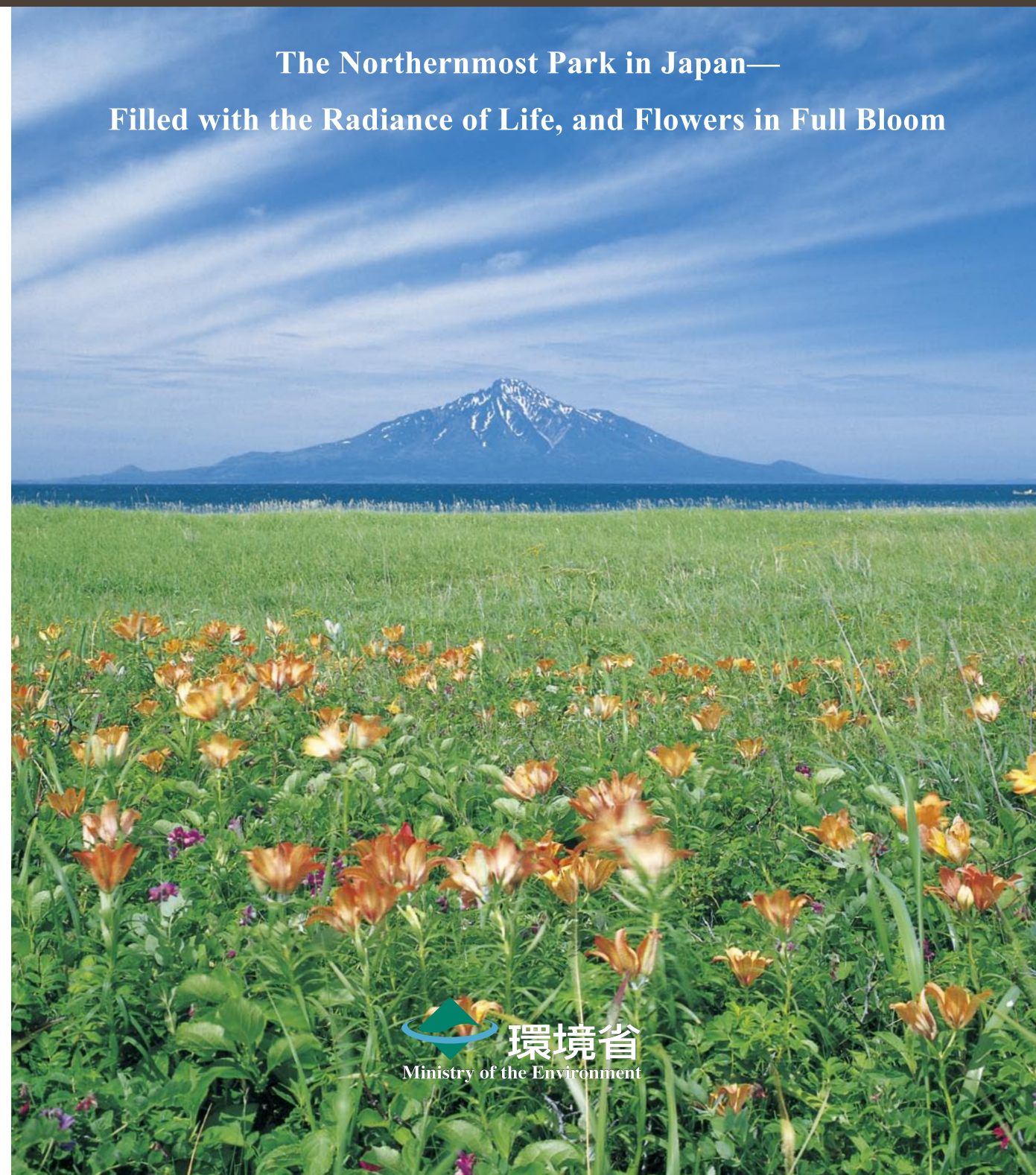
Shimonuma, Horonobe-cho, Teshio-gun, Hokkaido, 098-3228  
Phone: 01632-5-2077

利尻礼文サロベツ国立公園

# Rishiri-Rebun-Sarobetsu National Park

The Northernmost Park in Japan—

Filled with the Radiance of Life, and Flowers in Full Bloom

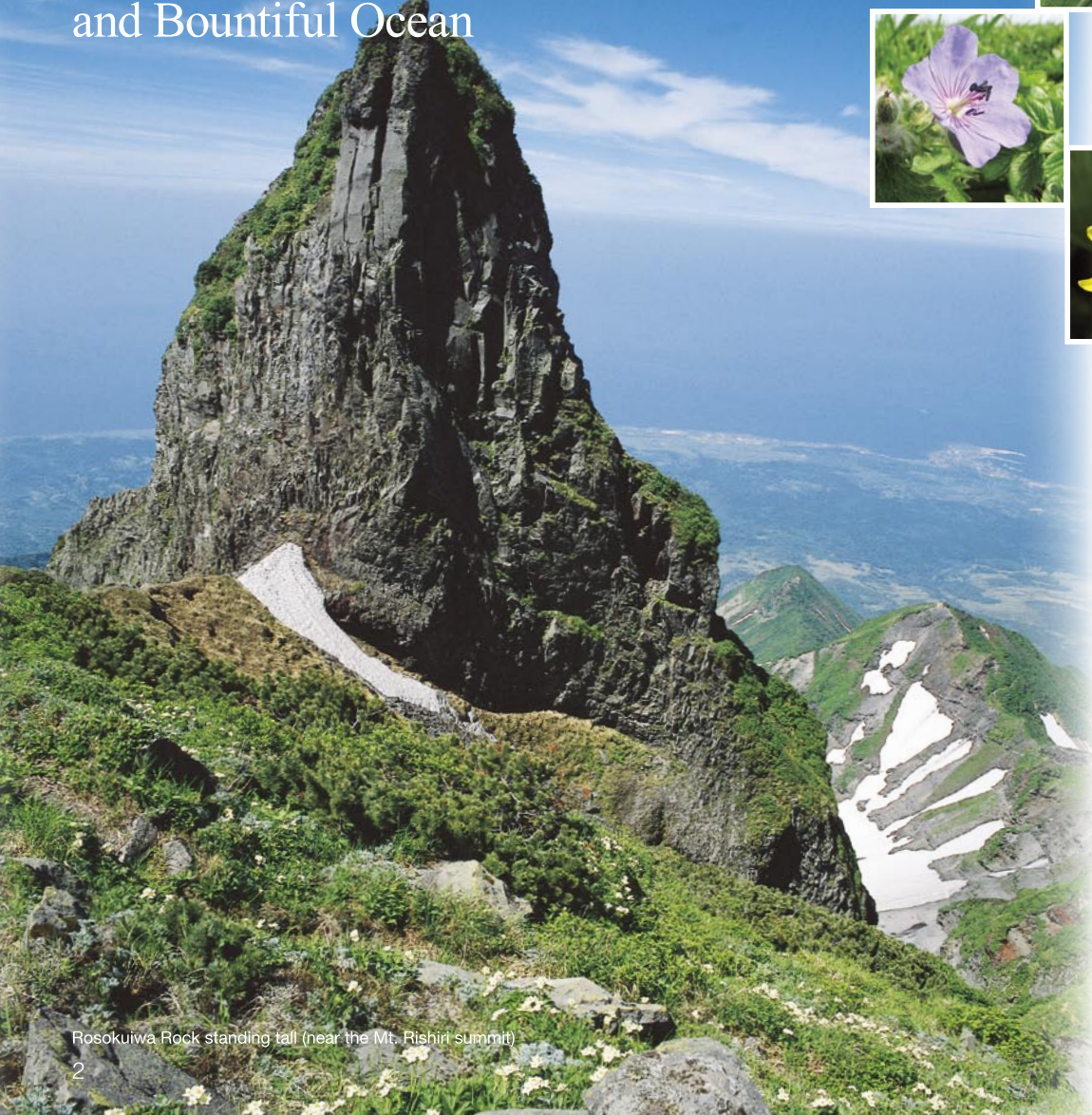
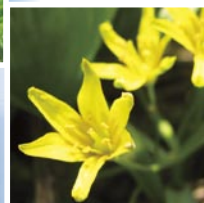






Sarobetsu Plain with Daylilies in bloom

## Islands and Plain at the Northern Extremity of Hokkaido: Magnificent Flower Gardens and Bountiful Ocean



Rosokuiwa Rock standing tall (near the Mt. Rishiri summit)



A high mountain rising out of the ocean surface, gently curving hills, an expansive plain...  
From the brief spring to summer, this national park is covered with flowers.

Hiking through flower gardens (Rebun Island, the west coast)



# Rishiri-Rebun-Sarobetsu National Park

## Rebun Island

### A Floating Garland of Flowers

In contrast to Rishiri Island, Rebun is a low, plateau-like island. The broad, smooth grassland is a treasury for alpine plants including numerous rare species. Sheer cliffs extend along the west side.



## Rishiri Island

### A Magnificent Peak at the Northern Extremity

Mount Rishiri is positioned at the center of Rishiri Island. It is a beautiful sight—viewed both from up close, as well as from Rebun Island or the Sarobetsu Plain, where it can be seen hurtling upward from the surface of the ocean. For this reason, the mountain's scenery is the centerpiece of this national park. There are many rare plants both here and on Rebun Island.



## The Sarobetsu Plain

### Grasslands Extending to the Horizon

The Sarobetsu Plain is comprised of Japan's largest high moor located at lowlands. Thickets on the sand dunes stretch along the coast, retaining a primeval appearance. The Penkenuma and Pankenuma Swamps provide irreplaceable rest stops for birds migrating across the ocean.

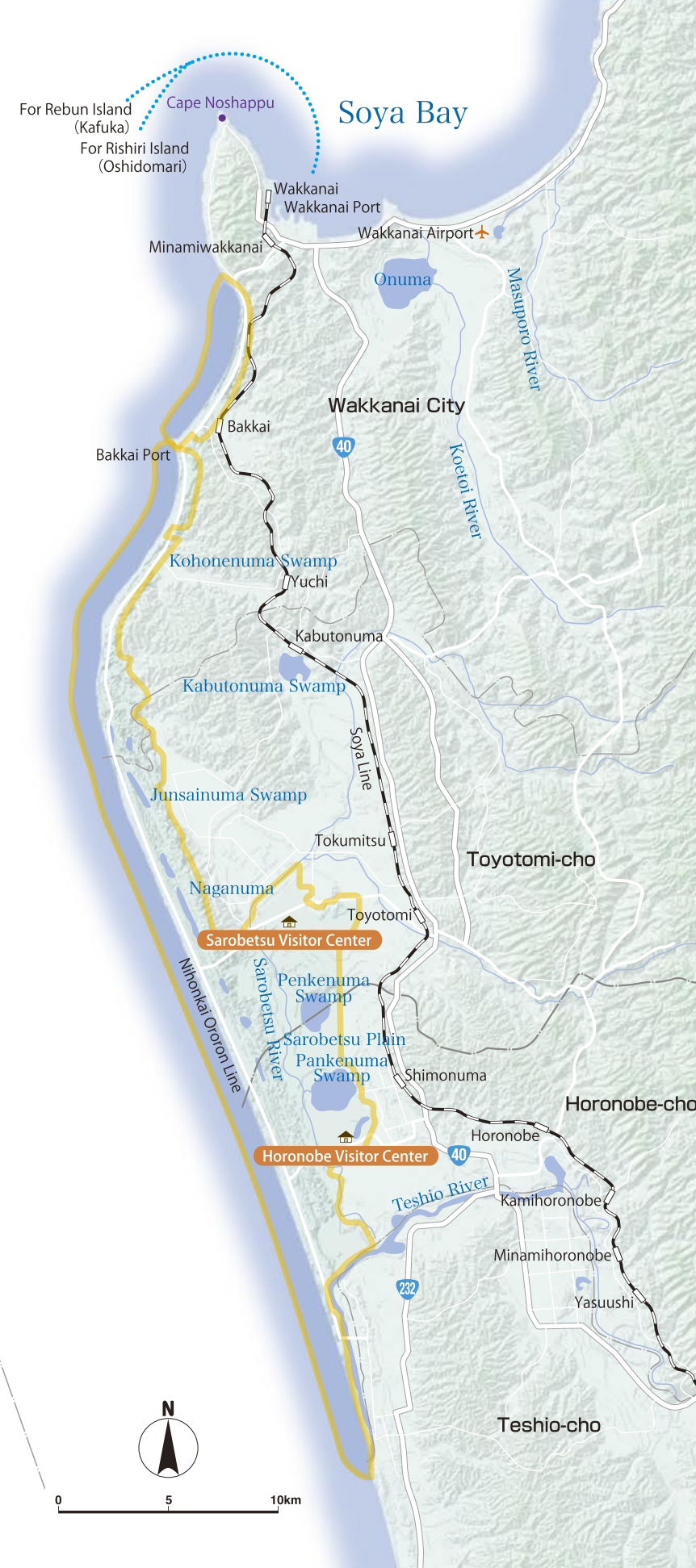


## Access to the Park

There are flights from Tokyo, Nagoya, Osaka, and Sapporo to Wakkanai, and from Sapporo to Rishiri. Also, Japan Railway operates a limited express train line to Wakkanai from Sapporo. Ocean liners operate from Wakkanai to both Rishiri and Rebun Islands.



## Rishiri-Rebun-Sarobetsu National Park





# Rishiri Island —an Independent Peak on the Ocean

## A Volcanic Island Rising Out of the Ocean

Rishiri Island is a roughly circular island of about 60km in circumference. It is located approximately 20km off the coast of Wakkanai City. The island is formed around Mount Rishiri.

Mount Rishiri, at an elevation of 1,721m, is a volcano that emerged about 200,000 years ago and ceased activity about 7,000 years ago. With its long skirt and conical shape, the mountain resembles Mount Fuji. However, because of the sharp crags projecting upward from its slender ridges and deep valleys cutting down through them, the summit area has a rather rugged appearance. Most of the streams have dried up, and there are many springs at the base. There are a few parasitic volcanoes at the base, as well as ponds and wetlands, including Himenuma Swamp and Otadomarinuma Swamp.

### Unique Climate of the Island

Rishiri Island, projecting upward from the ocean surface, has a unique climate. It is generally windy, especially near the summit. However, in the lowlands, there are times when strong winds blow on one side of the island while there is no wind on the other, and times when one side is covered by thick fog but the sky is clear on the other.

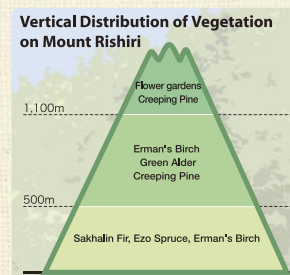
Mount Rishiri soars in the ocean

A view of Mount Rishiri from Otadomarinuma Swamp

### Column

#### The Remarkable Vertical Distribution of Vegetation and the Descending Alpine Zone

It is easy to determine the change in vegetation relative to the elevation on Mount Rishiri, due to its special characteristic of being an independent peak. There are coastal grasslands on the small plain, but once you climb a little higher, needleleaf forests prevail with a mixture of broadleaf trees including the Sakhalin Fir (*Abies sachalinensis*) and the Erman's Birch (*Betula ermanii*). Thickets of the Sakhalin Fir and the Green Alder (*Alnus viridis maximowiczii*) are present beyond an elevation of about 500m, and some Creeping Pines (*Pinus pumila*) begin to appear as well. The Creeping Pine and flower gardens of alpine plants extend upward from an elevation of about 1,100m. Compared to other mountains, the elevation at which Creeping Pine begins is significantly lower on Mount Rishiri (at an elevation of about 2,400m in central Honshu and about 1,800m on Daisetsuzan in central Hokkaido). This is due to the fact that it is located further north, and that it is an independent peak surrounded by the ocean with harsh climatic conditions.

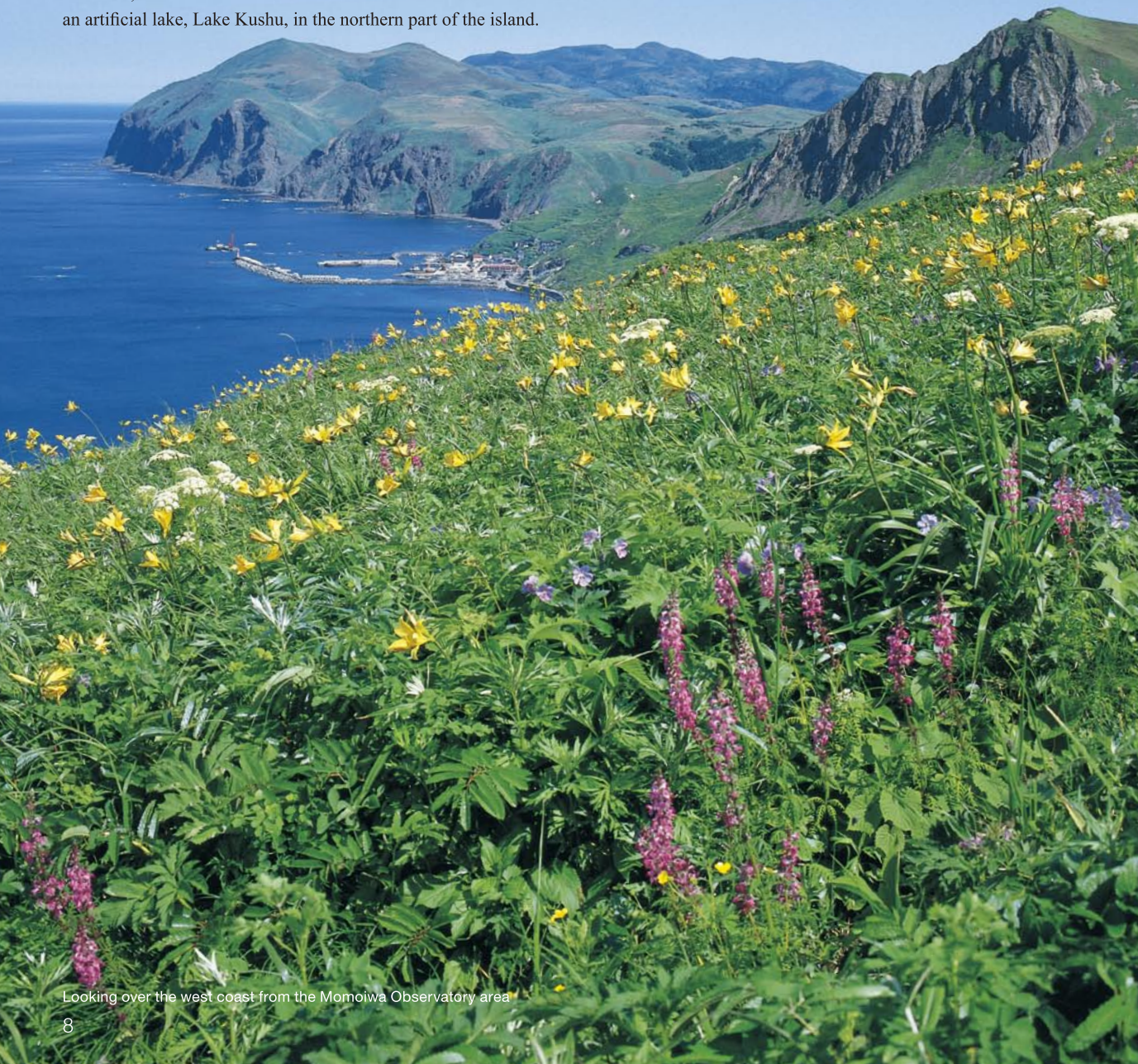




# Island of Flowers, Rebun Island

## The Contrast Between Smooth Terrain and Sea Cliffs

Rebun Island is located about 8km northwest of Rishiri Island, only about 5km from east to west, but stretching about 20km from north to south. In contrast to Rishiri Island, it is a long, narrow non-volcanic island. Overall, it is hilly and its highest point is Mount Rebun with an elevation of 490m. Cliffs predominate on the west coast. However, the east side slopes gently toward the coast, and thus communities are concentrated here. There is an artificial lake, Lake Kushu, in the northern part of the island.



Looking over the west coast from the Momoiwa Observatory area

## Alpine Plant Community Appearing from the Coastline

Plants typically found in cold regions and alpine plants appear even at sea level since the island is not only under cold climatic conditions, but is also geologically old, and has not been invaded by plants from warmer climates. This is why the Island is called the floating island of flowers. A few forests still exist, but this was not the case in the olden days. Many forests were destroyed by bushfires, and many trees cut down for fuel during the peak period of Pacific Herring (*Clupea pallasii*) fishing. Many of the historic forests have turned into fields of bamboo grass since the forests could not regenerate due to the harsh climatic conditions.

## The Difference Between the East and West Coasts

Since Rebun Island is a long, narrow island, there is a striking difference between the east and west sides. Seasonal winds are strong in the winter and sea cliffs prevail on the west coast. A variety of flowers bloom in the expansive grasslands on the slope above the cliffs, where no snow accumulates due to the strong winds. On the east coast, where the seasonal winds are not as strong as the west coast people live in small communities. Expansive fields of bamboo grass populate the terraces on the slope.

Narcissus-flowered Anemone



Miyama Columbine



The west coast with the Woolly Geranium in bloom



Rebun Island viewed from the southern sky

### Column

## Endemic Plants of Rishiri and Rebun Islands

On Rishiri and Rebun Islands, isolated in the ocean, many endemic plants can be found that have evolved uniquely over the long history. Species endemic to Rishiri Island include the Rishiri Poppy (*Papaver fauriei*) and the Moran Gold Cup (*Trollius riederianus* var. *pulcher*). Those endemic to Rebun Island include the Rebun Globeflower (*Trollius ledebouri*), the Rebun Lady's Slipper Orchid (*Cypripedium macranthum* var. *rebunense*), and Rebusuyukiso (*Leontopodium discolor*). In addition, there are numerous species with very limited distribution in Japan, such as the Rebun Primrose (*Primula modesta* var. *matumurae*).



- 1 Rishiri Poppy
- 2 Rebun Lady's Slipper Orchid
- 3 Rebusuyukiso (*Leontopodium discolor*)
- 4 Rebun Globeflower
- 5 Rebun Primrose



1



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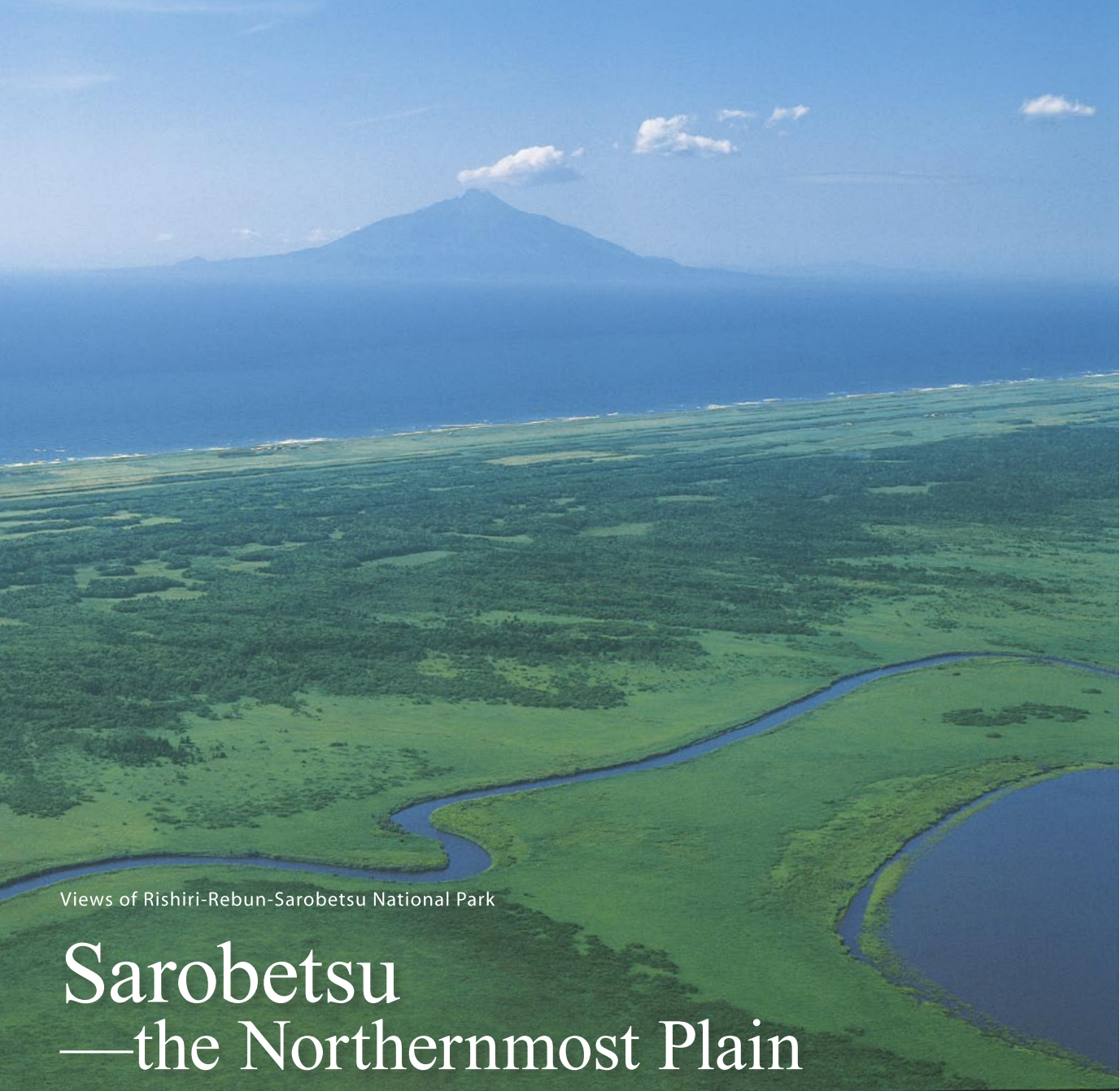
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Views of Rishiri-Rebun-Sarobetsu National Park

# Sarobetsu —the Northernmost Plain

The view of Sarobetsu Plain from above

## One of the Most Valuable Large Wetlands Remaining in Japan

Sarobetsu Wetland formerly stretched 27km north to south, and 8km east to west, its area reaching 14,600ha, ranking third after Ishikari Peatland and Kushiro Wetland in terms of total area in Hokkaido. However, development in the wetland has progressed since the mid-1960s, and the area has now been reduced to about 6,700ha. However, it is one of the few representative wetlands remaining in Japan, along with Kushiro Wetland and Ozegahara of Oze National Park, and is Japan's largest high moor located at lowlands.



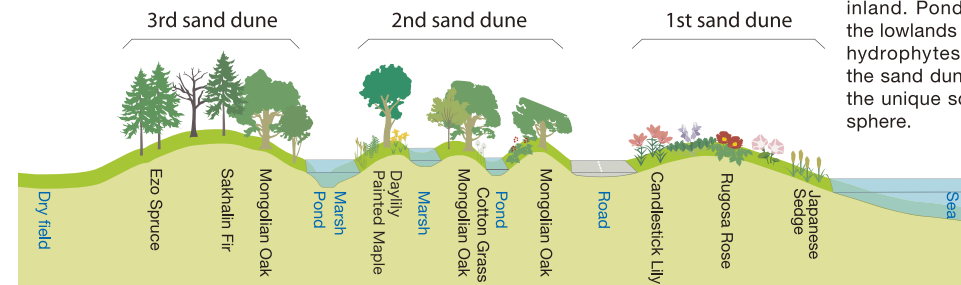
Extensive Sarobetsu Plain

## Organisms of the Wetland

Animals such as the Ezo Deer (*Cervus yezoensis*) and the Eurasian Least Shrew (*Sorex minutissimus hawkeri*), as well as numerous bird species, including the Yellow Wagtail (*Motacilla flava*), the African Stonechat (*Saxicola torquata*), and the Long-tailed Rosefinch (*Uragus sibiricus*) inhabit Sarobetsu Plain and the entire zone of sand dune thickets along the coast. The Japanese Crane (*Grus japonensis*), formerly only inhabiting eastern Hokkaido, has been nesting in Sarobetsu since 2004. Also, rare raptor species can be seen, including the White-tailed Eagle (*Haliaeetus albicilla*) and the Western Marsh Harrier (*Circus aeruginosus*) as well as reptiles such as the Common Lizard (*Zootoca vivipara*), which are distributed only in northern Hokkaido.



Sand dune thickets



Cross-sectional view of sand dune thickets

## Column

## The History of Wetland Development and Efforts to Restore Nature

Sarobetsu Wetland with its cold climate, had been thought to be unsuitable for agricultural use. Peat was mined at one section during the reclamation of Hokkaido from the late 19th century to the early 20th century, but the development of agricultural land was limited mostly to the dry hills surrounding the wetland.

Settlement by repatriates took place after the Second World War, and large-scale integrated development projects were carried out in the 1960s, including the Sarobetsu drainage ditch. At this time, the value of the wetland, which had been considered useless till then, was reconsidered and the opportunity for conservation increased. Subsequently the principal section of the wetland was incorporated into the national park in 1974. Due to development projects so far, effects have been seen such as the dehydration of the wetland through the excavation of drainage channels, invasion of bamboo grass, and environmental changes caused by the influx of sand into lakes. For this reason, efforts to restore nature have begun, aiming to regenerate wetland where traces of peat mining remain, and to prevent the lowering of the water level in the wetland.

## Coastal Ecosystem Preserved

A few sets of sand dunes run parallel to the shoreline on the coast of Sarobetsu. Many parts of the coast remain natural and vegetation linking the ocean and the land are intact. Beach plants such as the Rugosa Rose (*Rosa rugosa*) and American Dunegrass (*Elymus mollis*) grow on the coast. Short thickets of Mongolian Oak (*Quercus mongolica*) are present in the sand dunes facing the coast, with branches facing landward due to strong winds and with uniform heights as if they had been pruned. There are thickets of the Sakhalin Fir (*Abies sachalinensis*) with a mix of the Painted Maple (*Acer mono var. glabrum*) on the interior sand dunes and the height of the trees increases as you go further inland. Ponds and wetlands are present in the lowlands between the sand dunes, where hydrophytes grow. Overall, the thickets on the sand dunes are virtually undisturbed and the unique scenery is rich in primeval atmosphere.



Banks to prevent the lowering of the wetland water level



The remains of peat mining site seen from above



# 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.



### 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 (*Cephus 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.

Harbor Seal



### The Taiga Bean Goose

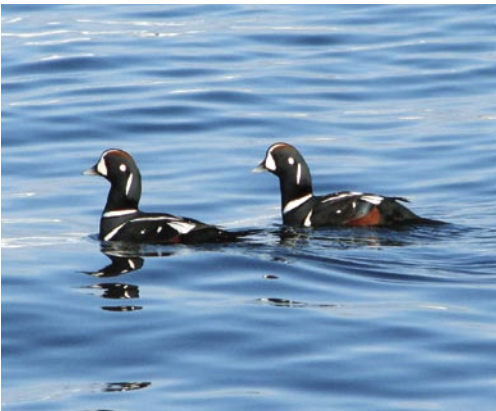
The bean goose is a large goose, and its two subspecies—the Tundra Bean Goose (*Anser serrirostris serrirostris*) and the Taiga Bean Goose (*Anser fabalis middendorffii*)— both visit Japan. The Taiga Bean Goose breeds in Kamchatka Peninsula migrates to Japan along roughly the same route as the swans, 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.

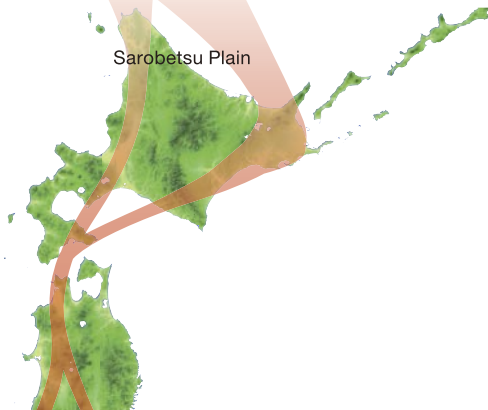


Harlequin Duck

### 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



# Human Life with the Ocean



## Kombu (seaweed) and Sea Urchin Harvesting

There are various fisheries in this oceanic area, which is blessed with abundant marine resources. Fishing is the principal industry on both Rishiri and Rebun Islands, and harvesting kombu seaweed and sea urchins is prevalent in the coastal sea.

Kombu is a large seaweed that is used extensively in Japanese cuisine. There are about 15 types of kombu that are used, and Rishiri Kombu (*Laminaria ochotensis*) is harvested in this area. August to October is the peak period for harvesting kombu. It is collected using small boats with special fishing tools including one called makka, dried on the shore and then processed. Two sea urchin species, Ezobafun-uni (*Strongylocentrotus intermedius*) and Kitamurasaki-uni (*Strongylocentrotus nudus*) are harvested from spring to fall.

Harvesting kombu in the fruitful ocean



Drying kombu



Harvesting sea urchin



Harvesting kombu

## Cleaning up the Coast to Conserve the Bountiful Ocean

Presently, a large amount of litter has been drifting ashore in Japan. These materials ruin the beautiful scenery and furthermore, many of them negatively affect the coastal ecosystem, including non-biodegradable materials such as PET bottles and harmful materials such as broken glass.

The locals periodically clean up the coast in the park, removing the garbage on the shore.



Local residents cleaning the beach

Motochi Beach

### Column

## An Extension of Okhotsk's Culture

A culture represented on Satsumon earthenware developed in Hokkaido and the northern Tohoku region between the 7th and 10th centuries. Around this time, a distinct cultural sphere common to southern Chishima and Sakhalin existed on the coastal areas of Hokkaido along the Sea of Okhotsk and the northern Sea of Japan, including Rishiri and Rebun Islands.

This Okhotsk culture roughly overlaps with the region where there is drift ice. The people in this region had their own cultural earthenware, created well-developed bone tools, whaled, hunted true seals, domesticated dogs and pigs, and cultivated assorted grains. They are also thought to have had interactions with the people of Russian Far East.

The Okhotsk culture was absorbed by the Satsumon culture and vanished between the 11th and 12th centuries. The Moyoro shell midden in Abashiri City is well known as an historical ruin. Relics from this period, such as bone tools and bone figures have been unearthed in this region, which includes the Matawakka ruins on Rishiri Island and the Kafukai ruins on Rebun Island.





# Welcome to Rishiri-Rebun-Sarobetsu National Park

The precious nature of Rishiri-Rebun-Sarobetsu National Park, which has survived severe climate condition, is very beautiful, but also sensitive and fragile. When visiting this national park, it is requested that you follow the park's rules and guidelines in order not to damage the precious nature in the park.

## Guidelines for Hiking in Rishiri-Rebun-Sarobetsu National Park

Both in Rishiri and Rebun Islands, numerous endemic and/or rare plants grow. When you are looking at the scenery of the flower gardens underfoot, please make sure to stay on the walkways. Picking and removing plants are prohibited. Remember the common to take nothing but photographs.

Please do not go off the wooden walkways in the wetland, where even a footstep can damage the vegetation, and it takes a long time for it to recover.

When mountaineering on Mount Rishiri, be especially careful not to go off the trails, or erosion along the trails will get worse which may lead to their collapse. You are requested to follow the three "Rishiri Rules" below:

Take your rubbish home!

Please take your rubbish out of the park with you. It is unpleasant for anyone to see litter and trash. Also, discarded food may change wild animals' behavior, and contaminated water may affect the vegetation. Taking trash back home with you is an easy task. Please do so.

### Rishiri Rules (Rules for Mountaineering on Mount Rishiri)

#### 1 Please use portable toilets.

Portable toilets can be purchased at local inns. There are booths specifically set up for this purpose on mountain trails, and collection booths are located at the trail-heads.



#### 2 If you use a climbing stick, please cover its tip.

The sharp tip of a climbing stick can dig up soil that crumbles easily, promoting a collapse. If you use a climbing stick, please cover its tip with a rubber cap.



#### 3 Please do not sit or step on plants.

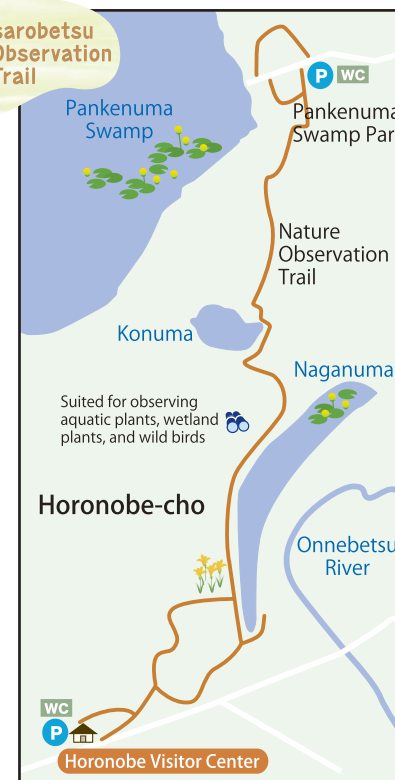
In order to protect the plants and minimize soil erosion, please stay on the walkways.

### Efforts to Restore the Mountain Trails in Mount Rishiri

Red soil called scoria is prevalent in Mount Rishiri. Scoria is very fragile and the mountain trails that have lost vegetation by the treading of mountaineers are easily eroded by the rain flow or snow runoff. Especially in the upper section of Mount Rishiri, some parts of mountain trails have seriously caved in or collapsed due to the erosion. Local mountaineers and organizations concerned have been working together to restore these mountain trails through many attempts. While you enjoy the wonderful nature of Mount Rishiri in mountaineering, please take your steps carefully reminding yourself of the fragility of the mountain trails.



### Shimosarobetsu Nature Observation Trail



In this park, there are two visitor centers, both in the Sarobetsu Wetland. When you visit the park, you should stop by the visitor center. There are displays on the nature as well as the history of the region. You can obtain the latest information from the resident staff, as well as discover the wonder of the wetlands through the nature observation programs provided there.

### The Sarobetsu Visitor Center

The Sarobetsu Visitor Center is located in the central area of Kamisarobetsu Wetland, on the way to Wakasakanai from JR Toyotomi station. There are displays on the formation of the Sarobetsu Plain and the structure of the wetland, and you can get an unbroken view of the wetland from the second floor. You can also observe plants and the birds from the wooden walkways running through the wetland.



Kamisarobetsu, Toyotomi-cho, Teshio-gun, Hokkaido, 098-4100  
Phone: 090-3113-0299  
Open: From May until October 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.



### The Horonobe Visitor Center

The Horonobe Visitor Center is located in Shimosarobetsu Wetland, near Pankenuma Swamp. There are displays on Sarobetsu Plain and its diverse plants and animals. You can get a grand view from the second floor. There are also wooden walkways through Naganuma to Pankenuma Swamp from which you can observe birds, wetland, and aquatic plants.



Shimonuma, Horonobe-cho, Teshio-gun, Hokkaido, 098-3228  
Phone: 01632-5-2077  
Open: From May until October 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.







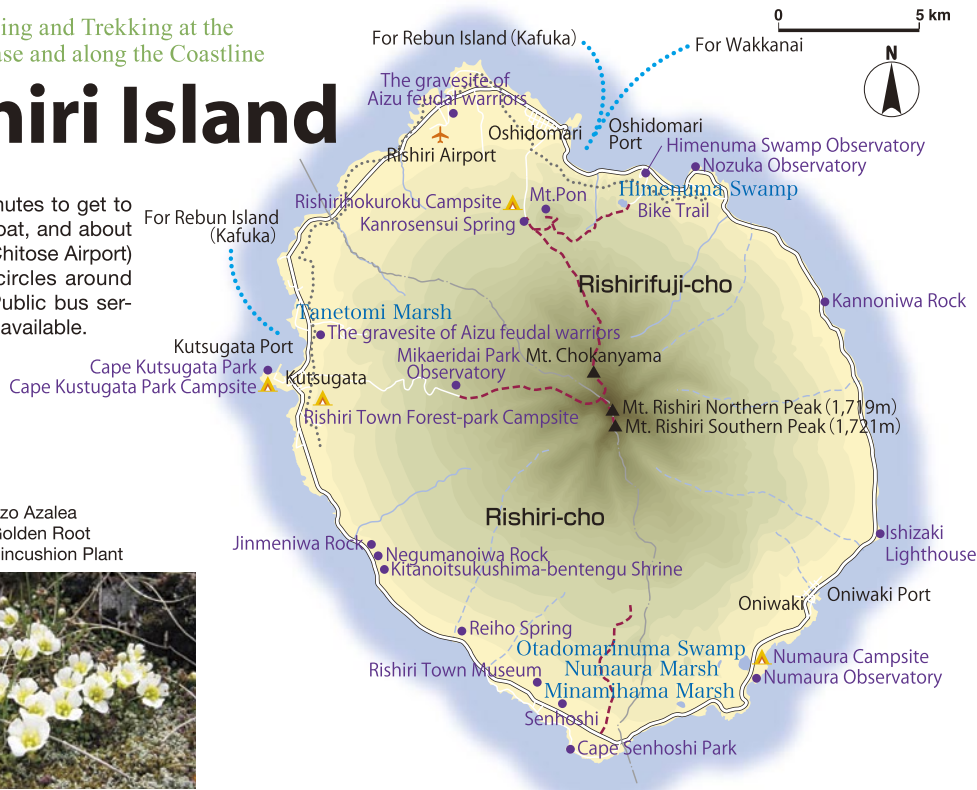
Mountaineering and Trekking at the Mountain Base and along the Coastline

# Rishiri Island

It takes about 1 hour and 40 minutes to get to Oshidomari from Wakkanai by boat, and about 50 minutes from Sapporo (New Chitose Airport) by plane. There is a road that circles around the island along the coastline. Public bus service and tours by coach are also available.



- 1 Ezo Azalea
- 2 Golden Root
- 3 Pincushion Plant



Near the summit of Mount Rishiri

## Mount Rishiri (1,721m)

There are two trailheads, one situated at Oshidomari on the northern coast and another at Kutsugata on the western coast. Many visitors take the route from Oshidomari, where there is a harbor. Both routes require about 10 hours to ascend the mountain and return. You can enjoy the exceptional view from this independent peak on the ocean. However, you should be very careful of falling rocks and slipping on loose rocks since avalanches occur frequently, and scree fields and narrow ridges are prevalent near the summit. The trail is closed at the north peak, an elevation of 1,719m. Also, the Kutsugata route is for experienced mountaineers only since there are some dangerous areas from Mount Sanchozan upward. Please follow the Rishiri Rules to avoid harming the plants when climbing Mount Rishiri.



Clubmoss Mountain Heather and Ezo Azalea along the mountain trail



Viewing Oshidomari from the mountain trail

## Picturesque Scenery at the Mountain Base and along the Coastline

Himenuma and Otadomarinuma Swamps and several “pon” mountains (“pon” meaning “small” in Ainu), all located at the base of the mountain, are the remnants of explosive volcanic vents or parasitic volcanoes. Steep valleys starting at Mount Rishiri and forming wide deltas downstream indicate the intensity of erosion near the summit. The fact that the rain infiltrates the soil, and thus there are few rivers, is also a characteristic of this island. For this reason, there are numerous springs, including those located underwater on the shore, enriching the fishing area.

## Himenuma Swamp

Himenuma Swamp is the most prominent scenic area at the base of the mountain near Oshidomari Harbor. It has a tranquil atmosphere, being surrounded by primeval forests. From here you can get a good view of Mount Rishiri. From the wooden 800m walkway along the lakeshore, numerous forest birds, including the Black Woodpecker (*Dryocopus martius*) can be seen.

## Oshidomari Pon Mountain

You can get a view of the all of Mount Rishiri from Oshidomari Pon Mountain. There is a trekking trail starting from the Rishirihokuroku Campsite via the Pon mountain, leading to Himenuma Swamp. On the way, be sure to stop at Kanrosensui Spring, selected as one of the 100 best waters in Japan.

## Otadomarinuma Swamp

Otadomarinuma Swamp is situated in the southeast of the island surrounded by low hills on three sides. In contrast to Himenuma Swamp, Numaura Marsh, with many types of the Common Reed (*Phragmites australis*) and the Calamus (*Acorus calamus*), extends along the lakeshore. The sharp profile of Mount Rishiri, different from the one seen from Himenuma Swamp can be seen beyond a forest of Ezo Spruce (*Picea glehnii*). There is a wooden walkway at Minamihama Marsh, which is a high moor, situated about 2km to the west.



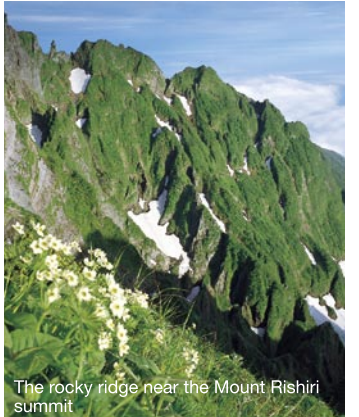
From Numaura Observatory to Mount Rishiri

## The Coast

Peculiar-shaped rocks formed by lava that poured into the sea can be seen in Cape Senhoshi at the southern tip of the island, and at Cape Kutsugata on the west coast. You can also enjoy nature watching on the sea shore. The view of Mount Rishiri is great as well.



Viewing Mount Rishiri from Senhoshi Coast



The rocky ridge near the Mount Rishiri summit



Flower garden of White Hellebore



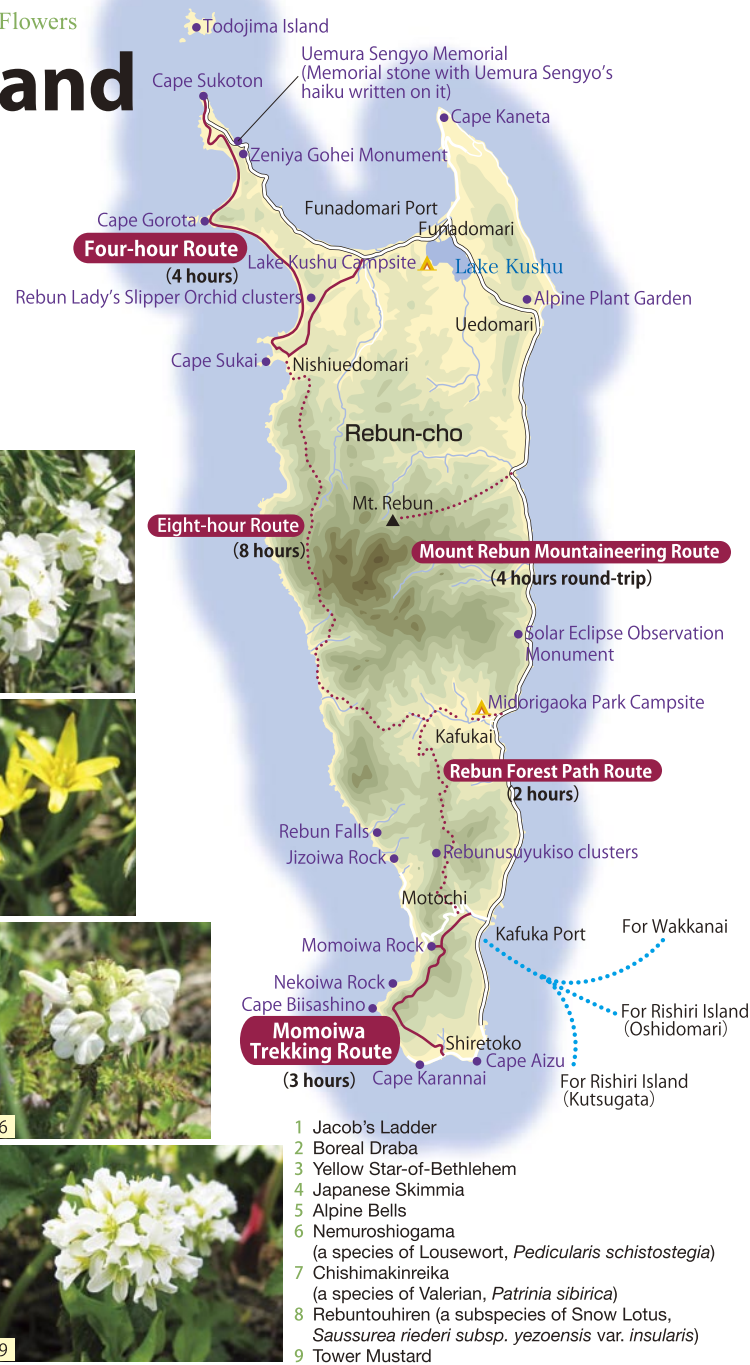


Trekking to Explore the Island of Flowers

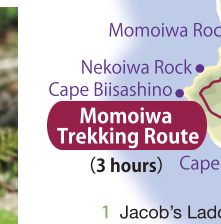
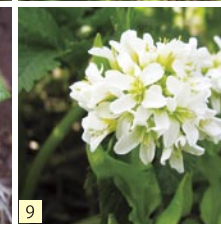
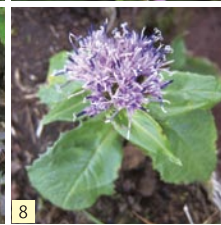
# Rebun Island

Although the most popular place on Rebun Island is the Momoiwa Rock area, there are other high-lights as well.

By boat it takes 1 hour and 55 minutes to get to Kafuka on Rebun Island from Wakkanai, and about 40 minutes from Oshidomari on Rishiri Island. Public bus service and tours by coach are available on the island, and you can go cycling as well.



## Flowers in Rebun Island



- 1 Jacob's Ladder
- 2 Boreal Draba
- 3 Yellow Star-of-Bethlehem
- 4 Japanese Skimmia
- 5 Alpine Bells
- 6 Nemuroshigama (a species of Lousewort, *Pedicularis schistostegia*)
- 7 Chishimakinreika (a species of Valerian, *Patrinia sibirica*)
- 8 Rebuntouhiren (a subspecies of Snow Lotus, *Saussurea riederi* subsp. *yezoensis* var. *insularis*)
- 9 Tower Mustard

## The Momoiwa Rock Trekking Course

Momoiwa is a rock shaped like a peach, and you can get a good view of it from the Momoiwa Observatory. Momoiwa was formed by the cooling of magma, and layers of cracks resembling the skin of an onion can be seen on the surface. From Kafuka you can ascend on foot up to Momoiwa Observatory. There is also a roadway up to the ranger house right before the observatory. Flower gardens extend down the entire western slope from Momoiwa Observatory to Motochi Lighthouse. The walkway extends down to Shiretoko at the southern tip of the island.



Momoiwa Observatory



Nekoia Rock viewed from Momoiwa Route



Flower gardens on Momoiwa Route

## A Four-hour Trekking Course and Lake Kushu

Cape Sukoton is at the northern tip of Rebun Island. From the south side, you can walk along the Edoya mountain trail and Cape Gorota, then go further along the coast to Cape Sukai, from which you can return through the vast flower garden of the Rebun Lady's Slipper Orchid (*Cypripedium macranthum* var. *rebunense*) to Hamanaka. The total trekking time is about 4 hours. The clear, blue ocean view from any point on the trail is superb. Gorota Beach is one of the few sandy beaches found on the west coast of the island.

Lake Kushu has an area of about 60ha, and is separated from the sea by sand dunes. On its south bank, there is a wetland where a wooden walkway is set up. The Asian Skunk Cabbage (*Lysichiton camtschatcense*) blooms in the spring, and the Kamchatka Lily (*Fritillaria camtschatcensis*) in the early summer. There is a campsite on the lakeshore.



Rebun Lady's Slipper Orchid



The observatory at Cape Sukoton



Berries of the Crowberry

## Mount Rebun

Mount Rebun has an elevation of 490m and is the highest peak on Rebun Island. Although the elevation is low, Mt. Rebun is covered with shrubby thickets of species such as the Creeping Pine and the Crowberry (*Empetrum nigrum* var. *japonicum*). In the entire summit area, the atmosphere is similar to that of the alpine zone of central Honshu. You can view all of Rebun Island from the summit, and can even see Sakhalin.



The four-hour route through continuous flower gardens

## The West Coast

Sea cliffs prevail on the west coast of the island, but it is difficult to view the whole coast from the land. However, a good view of Jizoiwa Rock and Nekoia Rock, along with Momoiwa Rock towering in the background can be seen at Motochi View Point. Sightseeing by sea kayaks is possible on days when the waves are gentle.



Viewing Momoiwa Rock from the ocean



Viewing the west coast (Cape Sukai and Cape Gorota)





Experience the Vastness of the Wetland

# Sarobetsu Plain

You can enter Sarobetsu Plain either from JR Toyotomi station or from Shimonuma station. By car, it is best to take National Route 40 or the Wakkanai Teshio Prefectural Road along the coast. Public bus runs from Toyotomi station to Wakasakanai on the coast.

- 1 Yellow Wagtail
- 2 African Stonechat
- 3 Black-browed Reed-warbler



## Wetland Observation Route

The wooden walkway in front of the Sarobetsu Visitor Center is constructed on an high moor. The thickness of accumulated peat reaches about 5-6m in this area. The full bloom of the Daylily (*Hemerocallis middendorffii* var. *esculenta*) in the summer season is the highlight of the beauty of the wetland. However, there are other plants unique to high moors including the Bog-rosemary (*Andromeda polifolia*), the Common Sundew (*Drosera rotundifolia*), and the Common Cranberry (*Vaccinium oxycoccus*), growing on the ground surface as though they were creeping. Also, birds that inhabit the grasslands such as the African Stonechat (*Saxicola torquata*) can be observed.

In addition, from the wooden walkway right in front of Horonobe Visitor Center, you can see wetland plants as well as aquatic plants such as the Least Water Lily (*Nuphar pumila*) and the Water Shield (*Brasenia schreberi*). Besides birds of the grasslands, many waterbirds gather at Naganuma, Penkenuma and Pankenuma Swamps, and farms nearby during the migration season.



Sarobetsu Wetland with Daylily in bloom

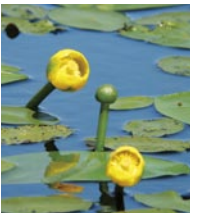


## The Topography of Coastal Sand Dunes and Wetlands



Serene swamps in sand dune thickets

Thickets on sand dunes extend between Sarobetsu Plain and the sea. A few rows of sand dunes extend 40km parallel to the coastline, and wetlands and small ponds continue in the lowlands between the sand dunes, creating scenery rarely seen anywhere else, allowing you to appreciate the profound primeval feel. You can enter the coastal forest area from Wakasakanai (among other places). However, hiring a local guide is recommended since you can easily get lost on the poorly marked walkways.



Least Water Lily

## Observation Points

There are many good view spots such as Yukuru and Wakasakanai on the Wakkanai Teshio Prefectural Road stretching along the coast of the Sea of Japan from Wakkanai. Although located outside of the national park, there are also observatories on National Route 40 on the inland side, including Miyanodai in Toyotomi-cho and Meizandai in Horonobe-cho.

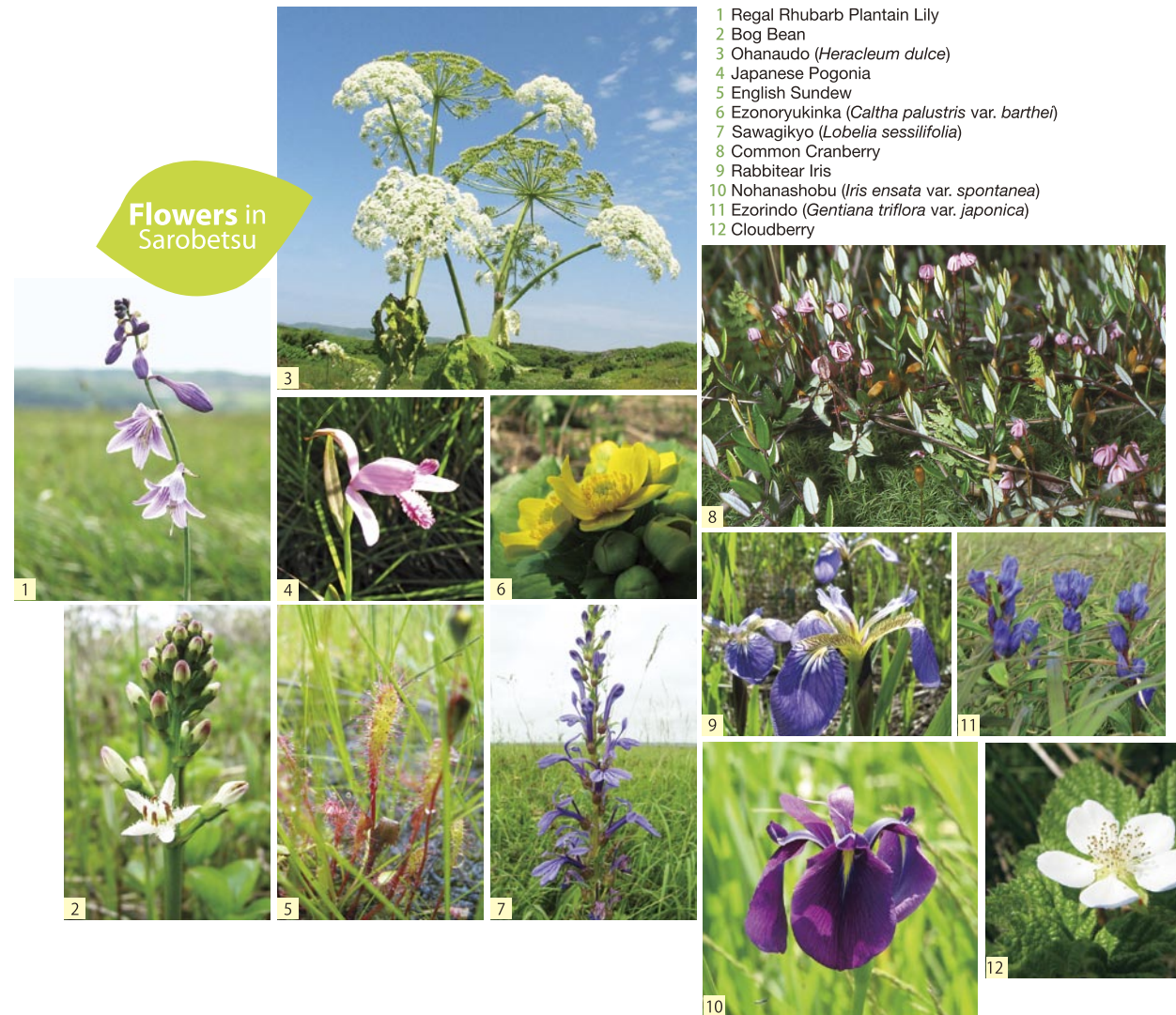


Yukuru Observation Point



Mount Rishiri from Sarobetsu Coast

## Flowers in Sarobetsu



- 1 Regal Rhubarb Plantain Lily
- 2 Bog Bean
- 3 Ohanaudo (*Heracleum dulce*)
- 4 Japanese Pogonia
- 5 English Sundew
- 6 Ezonoryukinka (*Caltha palustris* var. *barthel*)
- 7 Sawagikyo (*Lobelia sessilifolia*)
- 8 Common Cranberry
- 9 Rabbitear Iris
- 10 Nohanasashobu (*Iris ensata* var. *spontanea*)
- 11 Ezorindo (*Gentiana triflora* var. *japonica*)
- 12 Cloudberry



# Severe Winter of Sarobetsu Plain

## Experience the Severe Winter of the Furthest End

A large number of people visit this park during the spring and summer, but not many during the winter. There are still few people who snowshoe and cross-country ski in the area. However, nature observation programs are held even during the harshest part of winter. Owing to the Soya Warm Current, the minimum temperature does not drop as low as that of the inland areas. Even in the winter, the unique nature of Sarobetsu can be seen on mild days with soft winds.



Hiking in the snowfield



Rough-legged Buzzard

### Enjoy the Plain in the Winter

The weather in Sarobetsu during the coldest period is exceptionally severe. There are days when you cannot see anything because of blizzards obscuring the view and winds blowing snow around. The best time to enjoy Sarobetsu in the winter is on a mild, sunny day when the arrival of the spring can be felt. By taking a walk on the plain using snowshoes or cross-country skis, you can learn about animals' activity from their footprints in the snow. You can also recognize plants that withstand the winter. You may encounter the Common Redpoll (*Carduelis flammea*) and the Snow Bunting (*Plectrophenax nivalis*), which migrate to Sarobetsu in winter.



Enjoying cross-country skiing

### The View of Mount Rishiri in Sunny Weather after a Snowfall

Mount Rishiri in sunny weather after snowfall has a magnificent appearance different from that in the summer. Mount Rishiri can be seen from anywhere on the road running along the coastline of Sarobetsu, including Bakkai, Hamayuchi, and Wakasakanai. The Harbor Seal (*Phoca vitulina*) can be observed at Bakkai Fishing Port. Also there are various viewing spots on the Sarobetsu Plain. Come and find your favorite spot.



Common Redpoll



Clear weather after snowfall in Sarobetsu Plain





# The National Park Profile

The Japanese Islands -70% of the land is covered by forests and blessed with diverse biota from subarctic to subtropical zones. National park areas represent Japan's rich and beautiful nature. National Parks in Japan, founded in 1931, have a history of over 70 years. Presently, from Hokkaido to Ryukyu Islands, 29 areas have been designated national parks nationwide, amounting to 5% of land area of the country. National parks contain the nation's representative natural environments, and comprise the framework for preserving natural environments and biodiversity of Japan.

## National Park in Japan

- 1 Rishiri-Rebun-Sarobetsu
- 2 Shiretoko
- 3 Akan
- 4 Kushiro-Shitsugen
- 5 Daisetsuzan
- 6 Shikotsu-Toya
- 7 Towada-Hachimantai
- 8 Rikuchu-Kaigan
- 9 Bandai-Asahi
- 10 Nikko
- 11 Oze
- 12 Joshinetsu-Kogen
- 13 Chichibu-Tama-Kai
- 14 Ogasawara
- 15 Fuji-Hakone-Izu
- 16 Chubu-Sangaku
- 17 Hakusan
- 18 Minami Alps
- 19 Ise-Shima
- 20 Yoshino-Kumano
- 21 Sanin-Kaigan
- 22 Setonaikai
- 23 Daisen-Okii
- 24 Ashizuri-Uwakai
- 25 Saikai
- 26 Unzen-Amakusa
- 27 Aso-Kuju
- 28 Kirishima-Yaku
- 29 Iriomote-Ishigaki

National parks in Japan not only include primeval forests and wetlands, but also agricultural lands, communities and their surrounding nature, places that developed through the interactions of humans and nature, as well as historical and cultural scenery. They are also intended for recreation, tourism, and educational activities, emphasizing the symbiosis with regional communities.

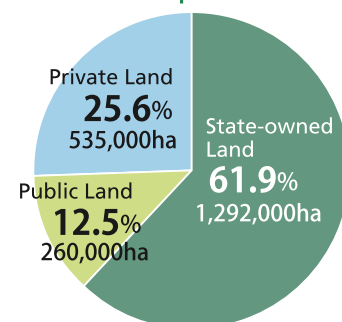
National parks in Japan are designated regardless of land ownership. Although enhancement of nature conservation has been considered, most of state-owned lands within parks

are managed and utilized for other purposes as well, such as forestry or river-coastal management. Thus on a cooperative basis, and the fostering of partnership with local communities and interest groups, the balance between conservation and sustainable use of natural resources is the foundation of national park management in Japan.

The management of national parks is carried out based on zoning. Park areas are divided into three zones according to their characteristics of the natural environment and scenery; the most strictly protected Special Protection Zone, the main component Special Zone, and the Ordinary Zone as a buffer. Activities that may affect the scenery such as cutting down trees or construction require permits from the authorities or a notification.

The management of national parks on site is carried out by the Regional Environment Office of the Ministry of the Environment, with the aid of local governments. National Park Rangers (The Nature Conservation Officers) are assigned at each park, making adjustments for development deals, maintenance of facilities, promoting public awareness, conducting interpretation, and closely monitoring the natural environment.

### Land Ownership



## National Parks in Hokkaido

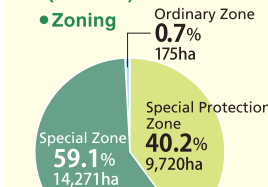


### 1 Rishiri-Rebun-Sarobetsu

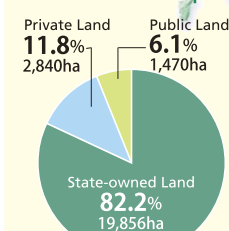
Designated on September 20, 1974 / Land area: 24,166 ha

The northernmost national park in Japan. Comprised of three areas; isolated peak Rishiri Island on the ocean, Rebun Island with endemic plants, and the magnificent Sarobetsu wetland extending from the mouth of Sarobetsu River. Its dynamic scenery and biota are its prominent features.

#### Total Visitors : 1,170,000 (in 2007)



#### Land Ownership



### 6 Shikotsu-Toya

Designated on May 16, 1949 / Land area: 99,473 ha

Principle attractions are the scenery created by caldera lakes and volcanoes, which continue to be very active, the park encompasses highly natural forests. Being close to the Hokkaido metropolitan area, it is popular as a recreational field due to its high accessibility.



### 3 Akan

Designated on December 4, 1934 / Land area: 90,481 ha

One of the most historical national parks in Japan. Primeval forests of Sakhalin Fir and Ezo Spruce, and lakes of various sizes shaped by volcanic activities are the core of its scenery. It is a park that lets you feel the intricacy of nature typical of Hokkaido. There are some volcanoes that are still active and hot springs at various places.

### 2 Shiretoko

Designated on June 1, 1964 / Land Area: 38,633 ha

The park area extends from the center to the tip of Shiretoko Peninsula. There are almost no human settlements, and thus pristine ecosystems in which sea and land have remained virtually untouched. It is the habitat of large wild animals such as the Brown Bear, the Steller's Sea Eagle, and the Northern Sea Lion. The area was designated a World Heritage Site in 2005.



### 4 Kushiro-Shitsugen

Designated on July 31, 1987 / Land Area: 26,861 ha

A relatively new national park, designated in 1987. Kushiro Shitsugen is the largest wetland in the country, expanding around the Kushiro River basin (with plants such as the sedges), it is a precious habitat for wild, endangered species such as the Red-crowned Crane and rare Japanese Huchen (Hucho perryi). It was included in the Ramsar List of Wetlands of International Importance in 1980.



### 5 Daisetsuzan

Designated on December 4, 1934 / Land area: 226,764 ha

With a total area 226,000ha, it is the largest national park in Japan. A chain of 2000m-class mountains, it is known as the "roof of Hokkaido". There are expansive clusters of alpine plants on the mountains. It is a highly primeval park, and home to various wild animals including the Brown Bear.



Photo: Takashi Unno, Toshiharu Ohashi, Masakazu Koike, Makoto Kobayashi, Eriko Komiyama, Katsuchi Sano, Tomoyuki Tachibana, Natsuhiko Morimoto, Masakazu Yagi, Ryoza Yamada, Takashi Hyakutake, Rebun-cho, Rishiri-cho, Japan Wildlife Research Center, Hokkaido Art Co.