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Fauna and Flora in Kushiro Area

The average percentage of sunshine per years is less than 50% because the sea fog lies over the Kushiro area from spring to summer, and the warm index of this area is similar to that of the middle of Sakhalin. Reed-sedge marsh and sphagnum bog spread and the subarctic and alpine vegetation range on low land which is several meters above sea level. Kushiro marsh is well known habitat of Japanese crane *Grus japonensis* under the designated as a special natural monument. There are also habitats for an amphibian, Siberian salamander *Salamandrella keyserlingii*, which inhabits in the Russia and neighboring regions: the northern insects such as whiteface dragonfly *Leucorrhinia intermedia ijimai* and Subarctic damner *Aeschna subarctica*; and Sakhalin taimen *Hucho perryi*, the largest freshwater fish in Japan.



Pacific Ocean off Kushiro

In the east side of the Kushiro port, the rocky coast and rocky sea bed spread up to about 4.5 km offshore and about 40m in depth. On these rocky shore, seaweeds such as kelp grow thick. On the other hand in the west side of the port, the sandy beach and sandy seabed overspread on the continental shelf getting deeper up to 15-20km offshore. These areas are abundant in aquatic resources and are the main fishing ground for coastal fishery. From the depth of 200m, it becomes steep and forms a submarine canyon and a continental slope reaches up to a depth of 5,000m. Offshore Kushiro is the place where the cold and warm currents meet. The cold current is abundant in nutrition salt and teems with zooplankton and phytoplankton which are food for the sea creatures.



Kushiro City Museum is situated by Lake Harutori which has been designated as natural monument, habitat of scarlet crucian carp. The exterior of the building represents a Japanese Crane spreading its wings. The collections are made up of local history, natural history and geology and archaeology.

Information

Admissions

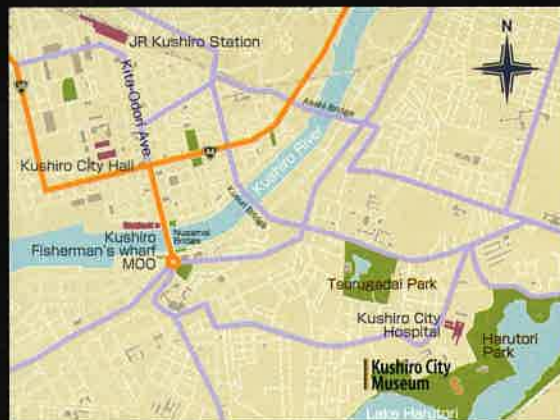
Adults : 480 yen

Hours

9:30-17:00 (last admission at 16:30)

Closed

Mondays, National Holidays, and year-end holidays (Dec.29-Jan.3)



Kushiro City Museum

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Geography of Kushiro Area

The oldest geologic formation which is seen in Kushiro is the Cretaceous formation around 70 million years ago.

In the Palaeogene around 35 million years ago, Urthoro formation which has more than 10 layers of coal, accumulated on the Cretaceous formation and formed the Kushiro coalfield. Then the coalfield was covered with the sea again and thick mud accumulated on the coalfield. This thick formation is called the Onbetsu formation. Volcanic activities began in the Neogene. The Neogene from 25 million years ago was the period when the prototype of the Kushiro area was formed. But the Neogene formation is not seen around Kushiro City because this specific area had been terrestrial for a long time. The Quaternary started 2 million years ago with the ice age. During warm interglacial, the sea proceeded into the east of Kushiro City and the Kushiro formation accumulated.



Kushiro in Modern Times

In the mid-17th century, a trading post of the Matsumae clan was opened in the estuaries of the Kushiro River and the trade between the Matsumae clan and Ainu people started. From the late 18th century, this place was called "Kusuri" and was a fishing base for herrings, kelp and salmons.

The development of resources and land as well as fishery was promoted by carrying out of timber and mining of coal, and

immigration of descendants of Samurai and farmers.

The construction of railways and a port, and the riparian works drew workers from many places and the town became larger. The town spread from the estuary of the Kushiro River up to the present railway station. The Nusamai bridge was completed and the system for water supply and drainage was made. The foundation of people's life was formed and the right bank of the Kushiro River which used to be wetlands became the center of the town.

Prehistoric Kushiro

The chronology of prehistoric Hokkaido consists of Palaeolithic, Jomon(8,000–2,000 years ago), Epi (post)-Jomon (2,000–1,200 years ago), Satsumon (1,200–700 years ago), and the period when chashi was erected (Ainu period). People in Hokkaido lived by hunting, fishing and gathering edible plants and received the grace of nature throughout the long prehistoric age. This is very different from the chronology of Honshu in which Yayoi came after Jomon followed by the ancient nation. The cultural area of northeastern Hokkaido was formed under the influence of the continent as well as that of Honshu. Examples are, the stone arrowhead (sekijinzoku) culture, which was introduced in the early Jomon-period. Many prehistoric people lived on the terrace surrounding the Kushiro marsh. The life style of the people can be speculated from about 500 historic relics.



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Ainu People : People of Sakorobe

The word 'Ainu' means 'human being' or 'men'. Most of the Ainu people lived in Hokkaido, some lived in Sakhalin, the Kurile Islands and northeastern Honshu by hunting, fishing and gathering plants. They also did farming in warm areas. The life of the Kushiro River and more than 10 villages were recorded along the river in the 19th century. One village normally consisted of 80 houses probably because they were forced to work for a fishery in Kushiro and they became a part of the Japanese economic structure. The Sakorobe is a heroic story which has been transmitted among the Ainu in eastern Hokkaido.



Japanese Crane, *Grus japonensis*

Grus japonensis is the only crane which breeds in Japan and lives as a resident in eastern Hokkaido. *Grus japonensis* had been designated as a natural monument, since 1935 and became a special natural monument in 1952. It is said that *Grus japonensis* lived all over Hokkaido and some migrated to Honshu in winter. Some were seen in the Tokyo area in the Edo era (16–19th century).

But presumably because of hunting and human immigration to Hokkaido and development of Hokkaido, the species was considered to be extinct in the late-Meiji era (early 20th century). In 1924, more than 10 cranes were found in the Kushiro marsh. The successful protection activities of feeding in winter since 1952 resulted in the increase of the population of about 1,800 in eastern Hokkaido.

