

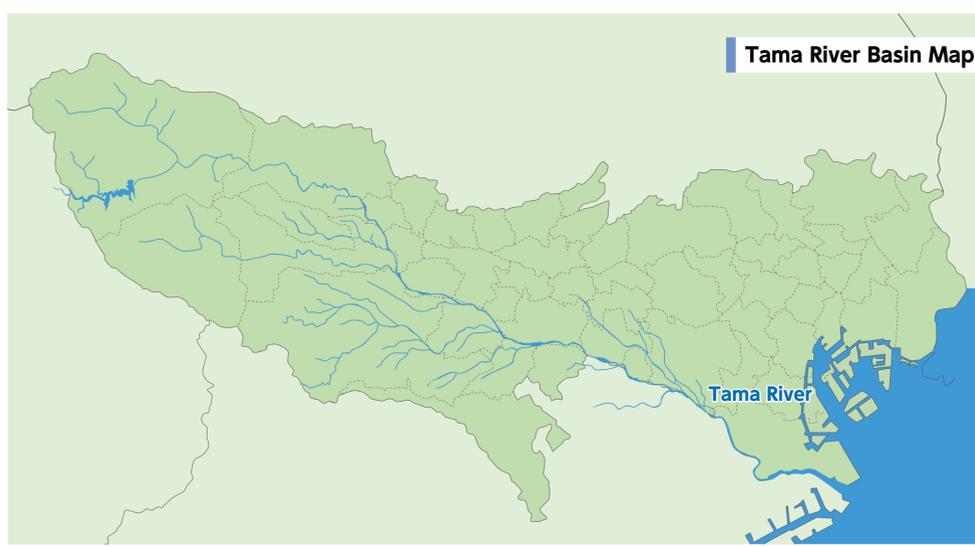
# Tama River

The Tama River is a Class A river with a total length of 138 km, flowing along the border between Tokyo and Kanagawa. Rising from Mt. Kasatori in Yamanashi Prefecture, and emptying into Tokyo Bay, the river basin covers a total of 1,240 km<sup>2</sup>. The river has played a key role in the development of Tokyo, such as by supplying drinking water throughout the city via the Tamagawa Aqueduct during the Edo period.

Upstream, the river flows through gorges where dense forests crowd the banks. Areas where the flow is gentle and lots of large boulders have tumbled into the stream make perfect hidey-holes for fish. One of the most easily spotted is the cherry salmon, with its characteristic blackish spots.

In the middle basin, about 40 km from the headwaters, the river broadens out, and we see islets in the stream covered with vegetation. For the little fish, the vegetation provides dark shadows, places to hide from predators. Here, we can see pale chub and dark chub. The wave dissipation blocks, sunk down to prevent river flooding, are home of large schools of fish. Here we can see that fish like black bass, which never used to live in Japan, have been released here and are breeding. The middle basin has a characteristic natural environment that has been affected by human lifestyles.

The lower reaches are where all sorts of flotsam arrive, like large pieces of driftwood. Tokyo Bay is close, so seawater flows in. This means a lot of saltwater fish like blackhead seabream and Japanese sea bass come up. The lower reaches are like a crossroads, where the river and sea meet.



## What creatures and plants can we see?

Upstream	
Cherry salmon (yamame)	When they grow, many individuals migrate to the sea, but there are also those that spend their entire lives in the river. These are called yamame or “landlocked cherry salmon.” They live in the colder waters upstream.
Sweetfish	When spring draws near, you can see them swimming up the Tama River heading upstream. They eat the moss on the rocks.



Cherry salmon



Sweetfish

Middle basin	
Carp	In fact, the carp that live in Tokyo Metropolis are those that have come from the continent or those hybridized with the introduced ones. Japan’s native carp species currently only lives in a few limited places, like Lake Biwa.
Smallmouth bass	This was released by humans, and has since become wild. There are concerns about its negative impact, like eating the fish that originally lived here.
Types of crucian carps	We now know that even familiar types of crucian carps have been released from outside Tokyo, or hybridized with other species.
Amur catfish	They like slow-moving rivers where silt accumulates. They lie in wait for their prey on the bottom.



Smallmouth bass



Amur catfish

Downstream	
Blackhead seabream	Living in the sea and in brackish water, this fish is an omnivore that eats crabs, seaweed, and even watermelons.
Japanese sea bass	These are carnivorous fish that eat other fish, shrimp, crabs, and so on. Large ones can be over a meter in length.
Japanese mitten crab	It is known for the fine hair that grow all over its body, including its pincers and legs, embodying its Japanese name, “algae crab.” It moves between the sea and river where it lives.



Blackhead seabream



Japanese mitten crab

## Protecting the Tama River

Starting with Japan’s economic boom in the 1960s, the river has been used to dump industrial and residential waste water, causing water pollution in the lower reaches and making it hard for plants and animals to live there.

The situation was greatly improved through waste water regulations and work on the sewerage system, and today, the Tama River is home to a rich diversity of wildlife, with more than 4,000\* species of plants and animals confirmed to live in its system.

However, at the same time, it is becoming clear that there are a range of human-caused problems such as illegal dumping and damage to the ecosystem caused by the release of non-native species.

Every one of us needs to correctly understand and act to protect the Tama River ecosystem and make it even better.



\*Source: MLIT, “List of Wildlife for National Census of Water Basins”