

## Forests of the National Park

### Ecosystem

Coniferous trees such as the Yezo spruce and Sakhalin fir make up approximately 70% of the forests of the Akan-Mashu National, while the remaining 30% is broadleaf trees, including Japanese oak, Japanese elm, Japanese linden, and painted maple. This unique mixture of plant life provides an abundant supply of food and a wide variety of habitats for wildlife. These forests are inhabited by Yezo shika deer, brown bears, Siberian flying squirrels, black woodpeckers, a multi-colored beetle called Ainukin-osamushi (*Carabus kolbei*), and many other wild animals found only in Hokkaido.

### Influence of Volcanic Activity

The forest floors have varying levels of acidity resulting from centuries of volcanic activity. In the early stages after an eruption, Sakhalin spruce thrives in acidic soil, and over time the soil's pH balance becomes more neutral as a result. This allows different types of plants to grow and the forest's cycle of regeneration to develop. Fallen leaves from the deciduous trees create mold on the forest floor, which fertilizes the ground and helps seedlings grow. Conifer trees also provide nutrients and benefit to the environment when they fall to the ground and decay, as moss develops, helping create a damp environment.

The forest at the base of Mt. Oakan consists mainly of Sakhalin fir and Yezo spruce, while communities of Sakhalin spruce are located on Mt. Meakan. Forests of Erman's birch can be found in the areas surrounding Mashu Caldera and Mt. Nishibestudake. Even within the same national park, various types of trees, a wide range of undergrowth vegetation, and many animal species combine to create a multitude of habitats.