

Even with a thick blanket of snow covering the ground, the forest in winter is full of life. Despite the cold temperatures and lack of food, a look around will reveal all sorts of paw prints dancing across the snow's surface.

At this time of year, the Japanese serow—like the Japanese marten (*ten*) making its way through the snow in the diorama—depends on its dense winter coat of fur to keep it warm and toasty as it stands for hours on the lookout. Even though the serow of Towada are used to the cold, they are probably already hoping that spring will come around again soon.

### **Remains of Chewed Young Beech**

Have a look at the branch in the photo. Doesn't it look like it's been cut with a sharp instrument? Well, it wasn't a blade that sliced the branch. The culprit was actually a Japanese hare. Using their sharp front teeth, Japanese hares slice off the tips of branches in their hunt for winter food. In the cold, snowy months, their fur changes color to white in order to camouflage themselves in the snow. Their eating habits change as well, with tough tree bark added to the menu. The soft fur on the soles of their feet helps hares navigate the wintry landscape without sinking deep into the snow.

### **The Winter Survival of Japanese Aucuba**

*Aucuba japonica var. borealis* is a variety of Japanese aucuba shrub (*aoki*) that has adapted to a northern climate. Although evergreen, this northern variety is smaller than its warm climate cousin; with thin, flexible trunk and branches that bend and don't break under loads of heavy snow. Other similarly cold-adapted trees like these can also be found growing in beech forests.