

## **Plants and Animals of the Lake Onneto and Mt. Meakan Area**

### ***Meakan-kinbai (Potentilla miyabei Makino)* (メアカンキンバイ)**

The *Meakan-kinbai* is a rare alpine plant that grows on the sunny slopes of Mt. Meakan, with a blooming season from June to July. The plant was first discovered on Mt. Meakan but also grows in other alpine areas of Akan. The word *kinbai* means “gold plum,” and refers to the plant’s yellow flowers, which resemble plum blossoms. This endemic Hokkaido plant is an endangered species.

### ***Meakan-fusuma (Arenaria merckiioides Maxim.)* (メアカンフスマ)**

The *Meakan-fusuma* is a perennial plant that grows on Mt. Meakan and in areas of the Shiretoko Peninsula in eastern Hokkaido. When the plant blooms in June, it carpets the ground with tiny white flowers, attracting butterflies and other insects. *Meakan-fusuma* grows in large numbers in the alpine meadow between Mt. Meakan and Mt. Akanfuji. It is an endangered species.

### **Mountain Harebell (*Campanula lasiocarpa*) (イワギキョウ)**

The mountain harebell has delicate, bell-shaped purple flowers and grows in sandy gravel beds along alpine belts, primarily in central and northern Honshu and on islands north of Hokkaido. It blooms from June to August.

### **Japanese Crowberry (*Empetrum nigrum var. japonicum*) (ガンコウラン)**

The Japanese crowberry commonly grows in heaths in Europe and North America, but in Japan it grows mainly on the alpine belt along the seacoast stretching from eastern to northern Hokkaido. The plant is recognizable by its pitch-black berries. Crowberries are edible but very bitter, and usually cooked for use in jams and juices. The indigenous Ainu people of Hokkaido used crowberry juice for dye making and cooking, and for medicinal purposes.

### **Hakusan Rhododendron (*Rhododendron brachycarpum*) (ハクサンシャクナゲ)**

The Hakusan rhododendron (also known as Hakusan *shakunage*) is a member of the

Ericaceae family, and can be found in the northern part of Honshu and throughout Hokkaido. It blooms from mid-June to mid-July and is recognizable by its white branches and large-petaled flowers, which are bunched in groups of five to fifteen. The Hakusan rhododendron can be seen around Lake Onneto in Akan-Mashu National Park.

### **Labrador Tea (*Ledum palustre* var. *diversipilosum*) (イソツツジ)**

The Labrador tea plant is a hardy relative of the rhododendron that can be found in central and northern Honshu, Hokkaido, and on islands north of Japan. It commonly grows along rock-strewn slopes and wetlands, and can grow even in the presence of volcanic gases, which are too harsh for other plants to tolerate. The Labrador tea plant blooms with small white flowers from June to July. The indigenous Ainu people of northern Japan used the plant's leaves for making tea or to smoke as tobacco.

### **Bunchberry (*Cornus canadensis*) (ゴゼンタチバナ)**

The bunchberry plant is a member of the dogwood family that blooms from June to July. It can be identified by a single four-petaled white flower surrounded by a ring of green leaves. In fall, the leaves change to a fiery red. The indigenous Ainu people were known to eat bunchberries, and depending on the region, some used the berries in a soup to relieve stomach pain.

### **Brown Bear (*Ursus arctos yesonensis*) (ヒグマ)**

The brown bear, a large bear species known in North America as the “grizzly bear,” is found in Japan only in Hokkaido. The bears are very active from spring to the beginning of winter, and hibernate in burrows and caves during the winter season. Although many people have an image of brown bears catching salmon, this omnivorous species prefers to eat vegetation such as leaves and fruit. Brown bears in Hokkaido were greatly revered by the indigenous Ainu people.

### **Siberian Chipmunk (*Tamias sibiricus lineatus*) (エゾシマリス)**

The Siberian chipmunk inhabits a range of areas from valleys to alpine belts. It hibernates in tree hollows and underground during the winter season. The Siberian chipmunk's diet primarily consists of insects, shellfish, and bird eggs. The indigenous Ainu people called

these chipmunks *kasekurkur*, meaning “one with a line down its back.”

### **Hokkaido Squirrel (*Sciurus vulgaris orientis*) (エゾリス)**

The Hokkaido squirrel is the most common species of squirrel found in the lowlands of Hokkaido. These squirrels do not hibernate and can be seen throughout the year. Their fur changes color depending on the season: in summer, it is reddish orange, while in winter, it changes to grey or light brown with patches of white under the chin and on the belly.

### **Hokkaido Sable (*Martes zibellina brachyura*) (エゾクロテン)**

The Hokkaido sable is a member of the weasel family. Sables are active primarily in the afternoon and evening, but they are very cautious animals and therefore difficult to spot. They can sometimes be seen sitting up on their hind legs, a position they adopt to survey the surrounding area for danger. The Hokkaido sable was once commonly found all over Hokkaido, but the population has decreased significantly because of excessive hunting for its fur, and the species is now endangered.