

Life on the Yakehashiri Lava Flow

The hardened rock on the Yakehashiri Lava Flow appears at first glance devoid of life. A closer look reveals pioneer plants such as lichens and mosses, along with other plants capable of surviving at high latitudes. As this area has almost no soil, vegetation struggles to take root. The number of plants that have managed to establish themselves is small. The Yakehashiri Lava Flow allows for observation of the very first stages of a forest's development.

The Yakehashiri Lava Flow covers the northeast side of Mt. Yakushidake, the highest peak on Mt. Iwate's jagged crater. Designated a Special Natural Monument by the Japanese government, the lava flow is the result of a volcanic eruption that occurred in 1732. Lava erupted from five locations on the volcano, between 920 and 1,200 meters above sea level, creating a 3-kilometer-long flow.