

【Yunomaru-Takamine Highland Wildlife】

The forest and wetland ecosystems of the Yunomaru-Takamine Highland support several animal species rarely found outside of remote, high-altitude locations. These include the Japanese serow (*Capricornis crispus*), a shaggy-haired animal in the bovid family. In the mid-twentieth century, serows were hunted nearly to extinction, but they were made a protected species in 1955, and since then their populations have slowly recovered. In winter, the serow's split-hoofed tracks, which resemble those of deer, are often visible in the snow. Other animals of the highland include weasel-like stoats, golden eagles, spotted nutcrackers, and Japanese buzzards.

Many highland insect species depend on Yunomaru-Takamine Highland's unique ecosystem of low-elevation alpine vegetation. The caterpillars of several high-altitude butterflies, for example, feed only on specific plants, so areas like the Ikenotaira Wetland and the azalea fields near Mount Yunomaru are precious habitats for them. In summer, dozens of butterfly species flit among the blossoms, making these areas popular with wildlife photographers. The rarest of these species—each designated a Natural Monument—are *Colias palaeno* (the moorland clouded yellow), *Erebia niphonica* (a brown and orange butterfly of the satyrinae family), and *Aporia hippia japonica* (a black-veined, white-winged butterfly of the pierid family). Two species, *C. palaeno* and *E. niphonica*, are classified as near-threatened, and *A. h. japonica* is endangered in Nagano Prefecture.