

Inhabitants of the Rivers and Streams

Thriving in a Tough Environment

The steep valleys of the Minami Alps are a challenging environment for creatures that live along waterways. The riverbanks rise straight up from the edge of the water, making access difficult for both people and animals. However, this does have a positive side, as the streams and rivers have been largely left undeveloped.

A large number of amphibians make their home in the streams of the Minami Alps, such as the Akaishi salamander (*akaishi sansho uo*; *Hynobius katoi*) and Japanese clawed salamander (*Hakone sansho uo*; *Onychodactylus japonicus*). The Montane brown frog (*yama akagaeru*; *Rana ornativentris*), *kajika* frog (*kajikagaeru*; *Buergeria buergeri*) and the Japanese common toad (*azuma hikigaeru*; *Bufo japonicus*) can also be spotted along the banks.

The fish that live in the mountain streams have evolved to survive in waterways that are sometimes only a few centimeters deep, although in the northern area of the Minami Alps there are many thriving fly-fishing streams.

The most common resident is the white-spotted char (*iwana*; *Salvelinus leucomaenis*). Anglers are also likely to come across the red-spotted salmon (*amago*; *Oncorhynchus masou macrostomus*) and the Japanese fluvial sculpin (*kajika*; *Cottus pollux*), a small, bottom-dwelling fish endemic to Japan. Especially lucky anglers might catch a *Yamato iwana* (*Salvelinus leucomaenis japonicus*), a subspecies of white-spotted char found only in central Japan. Slightly darker than other species of local char, its distinguishing features are white and red spots that do not fade with age.

As fishing areas tend to be in narrow valleys, people prefer shorter, reel-less *tenkara* rods to Western-style fly rods. Some fishing here is catch-and-release, to preserve and protect the native fish, and in certain areas fishing is prohibited.