

Birds of Mt. Daisen

More than the changing leaves or the songs of insects, the passing seasons on Mt. Daisen are marked by the comings-and-goings of birds. The mountain serves as a habitat for around 160 bird species, including both year-round residents and migrant species that are attracted by food during the breeding season. The forest of Japanese beech and Japanese oak, which ranges from 800 meters to 1,400 meters in elevation, hosts the majority of these species. The forest floor is thickly covered with shrubs that provide both shelter and a food source that lasts well into the winter months.

As soon as the snowmelt begins in March, many non-migratory species—particularly members of the tit family—are already active. Rooftops near the Daisen Museum of Nature and History are a frequent perch for Japanese wagtails (*Motacilla grandis*) and meadow buntings (*Emberiza cioides*). Just down the road, Daisenji Bridge is a gathering place for the vocal flocks of Asian house martins (*Delichon dasypus*) that build their nests on the bridge girders in late March.

By late May, two representative birds of summer have arrived: the blue-and-white flycatcher (*Cyanoptila cyanomelana*) and the narcissus flycatcher (*Ficedula narcissina*). Numerous cuckoo species are also present, sometimes taking advantage of inattentive meadow buntings (*Emberiza cioides*) and eastern crowned leaf warblers (*Phylloscopus coronatus*) by laying their own eggs in the other birds' nests. By autumn, many species have begun to gather in huge flocks, with those like the long-tailed tit (*Aegithalos caudatus*) and dusky thrush (*Turdus eunomus*) collecting in the treetops to search for food. Even during Daisen's harsh winters, these noisy gatherings can be seen below the ski lifts.