

Mammals of Dewa Sanzan

Dewa Sanzan's diverse environments, made up of mountains, forests, wetlands, and streams, are all part of Bandai Asahi National Park. These protected and welcoming habitats are home to a wide variety of mammals.

The Asiatic black bear, which can weigh as much as 200 kilograms, is the largest mammal in the area. They spend most of the year foraging in the forest for fruit and nuts before hibernating throughout winter. Although these bears generally avoid humans and are rarely aggressive, they can be very protective of their cubs. Hikers should carry a bear bell to help avoid unexpected encounters. The sound alerts bears to the presence of humans, and they will usually keep their distance. If you come across a bear at close range, avoid startling it with sudden movements and slowly back away.

A large population of giant flying squirrels inhabits the beech forests around the foothills of Mt. Gassan and in the cedar forests of Mt. Haguro. These nocturnal animals live in tree hollows, usually abandoned woodpecker nests. By spreading the membrane of their forelegs and hind legs, they can glide through the air up to 200 meters when hunting for insects, nuts, fruit, and seeds.

The slopes of Dewa Sanzan are home to the Japanese serow (*Capricornis crispus*), a goat-antelope that can scale mountains with speed and agility. This animal is a symbol of Japan and is protected as a Special Natural Monument.

Other mammals that live in the area include stoats (also called short-tailed weasels), Japanese martens (*Martes melampus*), the native Tohoku hare, foxes, bats, and various rodents. Raccoon dogs called *tanuki* (*Nyctereutes procyonoides viverrinus*), an important figure in Japanese folklore as a trickster, are also common.