

Animal Life of the Tanigawa Mountain Range: the Food Chain

The Tanigawa Mountain Range is inhabited by a variety of plants and animals who eat and are eaten by each other, forming a continuous cycle of predation called a food chain. Golden eagles are at the top of this food chain. Their prey includes Japanese hares, copper pheasants, snakes, and other animals, but they have no natural predators themselves. They hunt in the high-altitude meadows and shrublands in the summer, and in the deciduous forests during winter. Because of the wide-ranging territories occupied by the eagles and the variety of animals they eat, the number of golden eagles can be used as a gauge for the overall health of the ecosystem. Species that function in this way are called “umbrella species.”