

Animal Life of the Tanigawa Mountain Range: Mammals, Birds, Reptiles, and Amphibians

The Minakami area comprises a mountain zone (700–1,600 m) and a subalpine zone (1,600 m and above). This environment supports a variety of mammals, such as the Asian black bear, Japanese serow, and Japanese macaque, as well as many species of both migratory and sedentary birds.

Although the mountain range scarcely exceeds 2,000 meters in height, the heavy snowfall and strong winds at the higher elevations support several alpine species. Mt. Tanigawadake is home to alpine passerines (“perching birds”), including the alpine accentors and Japanese accentors that live in the rocky cliffs above the tree line. Lower down the mountain, tree-dwelling birds such as the eye-catching Narcissus flycatcher and Japanese flycatcher live in the beech forests. After the beeches die, pygmy woodpeckers and Eurasian nuthatches build nests in their trunks. The brilliantly colored common kingfisher and strikingly plumed crested kingfisher can be spotted along the river’s edge.

Of the native reptile species, visitors should watch for venomous snake species such as the Japanese pit viper (*mamushi*) and tiger keelback (*yamakagashi*). The amphibians native to the area include two species that have been designated Special Natural Monuments: the Tohoku salamander and the forest green tree frog.