

## **Birds on Yashima**

The birdlife on Yashima is both diverse and easy to observe. Seventy-nine species of birds have been spotted on and around the mountain, and more than 20 of these live in the area throughout the year. Yashima's steep cliffs and numerous observation points offer ample opportunities for bird-watching from above, as some of the most recognizable local species nest along the cliffs. These are some of the common types of birds seen on Yashima:

### *Osprey (Pandion haliaetus)*

The osprey is a large hawk that can grow more than 60 centimeters long and have a wingspan of 180 centimeters. It is distinguished by its white head and belly and deep brown wings. Feeding mostly on fish, it can be seen hovering over the coasts of Yashima and diving sharply when it spots prey. While still common, the osprey's numbers have dropped locally in recent years due to a dramatic decrease in the number of Japanese red pine trees growing on Yashima. Favored as nesting trees, the pines have fallen victim to an insect-spread disease called pine wilt.

### *Black kite (Milvus migrans)*

The other major bird of prey on Yashima, the black kite, is a scavenger that also feeds on small reptiles. It hardly flaps its wings when in flight, instead hovering and soaring on the columns of air that rise continuously along the mountain's steep slopes. Its body is brown, with the wings somewhat darker than the belly.

### *Japanese white-eye (Zosterops japonicus)*

Called *mejiro* ("white eye") in Japanese, this small bird has an olive-green back, wings, and head. Named for the white rings around the eyes, it feeds mainly on insects and nectar, and prefers to stay in trees rather than venturing down to the ground. The melodic song of the *mejiro* can often be heard in the morning.