

## **The Winter Forest**

Tohoku, the northern part of Japan's main island of Honshu, is one of the snowiest places in the world. The heavy snowfalls can exceed 150 centimeters, and they are one of the reasons for the proliferation of beech forests in the region. Beech trees are flexible and capable of withstanding the weight of heavy snow without breaking, while oak trees, for example, are likely to break under the pressure. Snow cover also ensures a high survival rate for the nuts that fall in a hairy fruit from the mother tree. The snow helps maintain the level of humidity in the nuts and hides them from foraging animals. Beech nuts are eaten by many wild creatures, from bears to squirrels, and are especially favored by mice. In areas with less snowfall the nuts are less protected, and most are eaten or die over the winter.