

Tengu Falls

Eight meters high, Tengu Falls is one of the largest and loudest waterfalls in Kikuchi Gorge. There is now an unobstructed view of the falls from the bridge over the Ryugabuchi pool, but in the past, the staircase-like waterfall was largely obscured by a dense thicket—an environment thought ideal for *tengu*. These legendary long-nosed, goblin-like creatures are associated with mountain asceticism. Centuries ago, the falls are thought to have been part of a training ground for devotees of the syncretic religious tradition of Shugendo, who would retreat into the wilderness for long periods in pursuit of spiritual discipline. Believers engaged in ascetic practice in the nearby mountains would occasionally stop by Tengu Falls to purify themselves in the cold water.