

Hirokawara

This wide, shallow section of the gorge teems with life. The many pools along the river are the habitat of frogs, small salamanders, and water insects, whereas the relatively still water underneath the bridge is a haven for *yamame* (landlocked *masu* salmon), one of the only two species of fish living in Kikuchi Gorge. Also occasionally visible from the bridge, particularly in the upstream direction, are green tufts of *kawanori*, a type of edible algae that grows in rivers. *Kawanori* has been part of the local diet since antiquity, and algae harvested from Kikuchi Gorge was once considered a delicacy. The daimyo lord of the Kumamoto domain would present local *kawanori* as a gift to the shogun during the Edo period (1603–1867). The plant is increasingly rare these days; Kikuchi Gorge is one of the few places where it still grows.