

Amphibians and Reptiles in Kikuchi Gorge

River and damp forest environments coexist seamlessly in Kikuchi Gorge, making it an ideal habitat for animals such as salamanders and frogs. These are some of the amphibians and reptiles that inhabit the gorge.

The ***Hynobius oyamai* salamander** (*chikushibuchi sanshouo*) dwells on the forest floor and in clear streams throughout the gorge. It hides under rocks during the day and comes out only at night, to hunt for woodlice and other insects to feed on, making adult sightings rare. In summer, salamander younglings can be seen swimming in streams and pools where they hunt for aquatic insects.

The dark-brown **tago frog** (*tagogaeru*) is the most common frog in Kikuchi Gorge. About 5 centimeters long, it can often be seen near small pools by the river. Also a frequent sight is the **Japanese common toad** (*Nihon hikigaeru*), which can grow up to 18 centimeters long, making it the largest frog in Japan. Its black tadpoles can be spotted swimming in pools along the gorge's walking paths. The **kajika frog** (*kajikagaeru*) is noted for its whistle-like cry, used by male frogs to call on females during mating season from April to July.

The **akahara fire belly newt** (*akaharaimori*) is a small lizard-like salamander that lounges in pools and puddles near the river. It is distinguished by its red and black belly, with each individual having a slightly different pattern that remains almost unchanged throughout the newt's lifespan, which can be up to 25 years.