

Birds in Kikuchi Gorge

More than 60 species of birds reside in or visit Kikuchi Gorge throughout the year. Many of these avoid humans and stick to areas where few hikers tread. But it is still possible to catch a glimpse of the local birdlife and, especially in summer, hear the singing of several distinctive winged visitors.

Common birds living in trees around the Kikuchi River year-round include the **yamagara tit**, distinguished by its gray back and wings, chestnut-colored belly, and black and white head, the **shujukara tit**, which has a yellow-green back, blueish-gray wings, and a black head with white cheeks, and the light-brown and gray stubby-billed **enaga** or **long-tailed tit**. Often seen close to the water are the **gray wagtail** (*kisekirei*), whose back is gray but whose belly is a bright lemon yellow, and the black and white **crested kingfisher** (*yamasemi*), which grows up to 40 centimeters long and sports a prominent spiky crest on its head.

The song of migratory birds fills the gorge in late spring and summer. Among these is the vividly colored **blue-and-white flycatcher** (*oruri*), celebrated for its fluid, melodic song, and the **lesser cuckoo** (*hototogisu*), which utters a brief, four-part repeating phrase of “kwer-kwah-kwah-kurh.”

The gorge is much quieter in winter, when the **pale thrush** (*shirohara*), brown on the back and whitish on the belly with a gray and yellow bill, can be seen picking through the fallen leaves in search of food. The elegant **copper pheasant** (*yamadori*) may also be glimpsed between the bare trees.