

## Insects in Kikuchi Gorge

Diverse plant life and an abundance of fresh water sources make Kikuchi Gorge a favorable environment for a wide variety of insects. Among the more than 1,000 species thought to live in the gorge, the following are relatively easy to spot along the riverside walking paths.

The small ***Celastrina sugitanii* butterfly** (*Sugitani rurishijimi*) can be seen around puddles near the river between March and May. Its wings are dark blue on the top side and whitish-gray with small black dots on the underside.

Between May and July, flowers in the gorge entice butterflies such as the **Japanese flash** (*torafu shijimi*), whose upperwings are deep blue while the underwings are adorned with tiger-like spots of orange and black and a white and brown stripe pattern, and the **white admiral** (*ichimonjicho*), distinguished by the stark white bands on its dark-brown wings.

From April to around July, several kinds of broad-winged damselflies can be spotted flying over the rapids, preying on tiny aquatic insects. ***Mnais pruinosa*** (*asahina kawatonbo*) is about 5 centimeters long with an emerald-green body and wings that vary in color from a bright orange to a barely visible gray, whereas ***Mnais costalis*** (*nihon kawatonbo*) has slightly darker, orange-brown wings on a metallic-blue body.

Later in summer, puddles and small riverside pools attract the **alpine black swallowtail** (*miyama karasuageha*), a large butterfly with a wingspan of around 12 centimeters. Its upperwings are black and covered with iridescent blue or green scales.