Celestial Paradise Biota

Around the center of Daisetsuzan, there is a vast plateau-like topography that expands at an elevation of 1,400-1,800m such as Takanegahara, Goshikigahara, Numanohe, and Koyanegahara. The area adorned with flower gardens, or the scenery of glistening marshes in the wetland is called “Kamuiintara,” or God’s playground. These are pyroclastic plateaus where materials released by large-scale volcanic activities accumulated heavily.

Unique Animals Inhabiting the High Mountains

Animals that can be seen only in very limited regions or only here inhabit the alpine zone of Daisetsuzan. The Japanese Pika lives in the cold, rocky environment of Daisetsuzan, Hidaka Mountain Range, Khatani Mountains, and Akan Mountain Range. Also, butterflies such as Evermann’s Pammassian (Pamassus evermanni) and Freja’s Fritillary (Classiana freja asahidakeana), live nowhere else in Japan but in Daisetsuzan. The same species or those closely related to above species inhabit areas near the Arctic such as northern Asia and Alaska. They were formerly widely distributed during the period when Hokkaido was colder, but now remain only in cold regions such as high mountains, due to global warming. These kinds of organisms are known as “relicts.”

Birds of the Alpine Zone

The bird that characterizes the alpine zone of Daisetsuzan is the Pine Grosbeak (Pinicola enucleator). The Pine Grosbeak is a bird that inhabits coniferous forests of the subalpine zone. In Japan, they migrate mainly to Hokkaido as regular winter birds. However, they have been observed in areas where Creeping Pine forests grow on the high mountains of Hokkaido such as Daisetsuzan, the Hidaka Mountains, Mount Rausu, and Mount Rishiri during summer. Its breeding has been confirmed in Daisetsuzan. In addition, the Siberian Rubythroat (Luscinia calliope), Spotted Nutcracker (Nucifraga caryocatactes), and Olive-backed Pipit (Anthus hodgsoni) can be seen in the alpine zone.

Diverse Clusters of Alpine Plants

On Daisetsuzan with such an expansive alpine zone, various clusters of alpine plants have developed according to their topography and weather conditions. The alpine zone on Daisetsuzan is established beyond an elevation of 1,700-1,800m. There are over 250 species of plants known to be growing in this area and colorful scenery is created by the mixture of the Creeping Pine (Pinus pumila) and these flower gardens. These clusters of plants can be categorized based on their environment.

The Bleeding Heart (Dicentra peregrina) and Boreal Sagebrush (Artemisia arctica var. villosa) grow on rocky lands. Clusters of shrubs such as Chiishimatsugaki (Bryanthus gmelini) and Alpine Azalea (Loiseleuria procumbens) grow in windy lands where canopies cannot grow. The Creeping Pine (Pinus pumila) grows on ridge lines at areas of low snowfall. White Anemone (Anemone narcissiflora var. sachalinensis), the Blue Mountain Heather (Phyllodoce caerulea), Wild Geranium (Geranium eriostemon), and others grow at areas of high snowfall and humidity. The Alaskan Mountain Heather (Phyllodoce alpina), Alaskan Aven (Sexteria pentapetala), and others grow on snowy patch. In marshes of the wetland plants such as the Bogbean (Menyanthes trifoliata) can be seen. There are many rare species as well; endemic species of Daisetsuzan such as Jinyokisumine (Viola alliariifolia) and Hoshibasuruppu (Lagottia yessoensis); and species with limited distribution such as the Rishiri Geranium (Geranium japonicum) can be also seen.

Japanese Pika

Eversmann’s Pammassian (Pamassus evermanni)

Freja’s Fritillary (Classiana freja asahidakeana)

Chinese Matsugaki (Bryanthus gmelini)

Boreal Sagebrush (Artemisia arctica var. villosa)

Blue Mountain Heather (Phyllodoce caerulea)