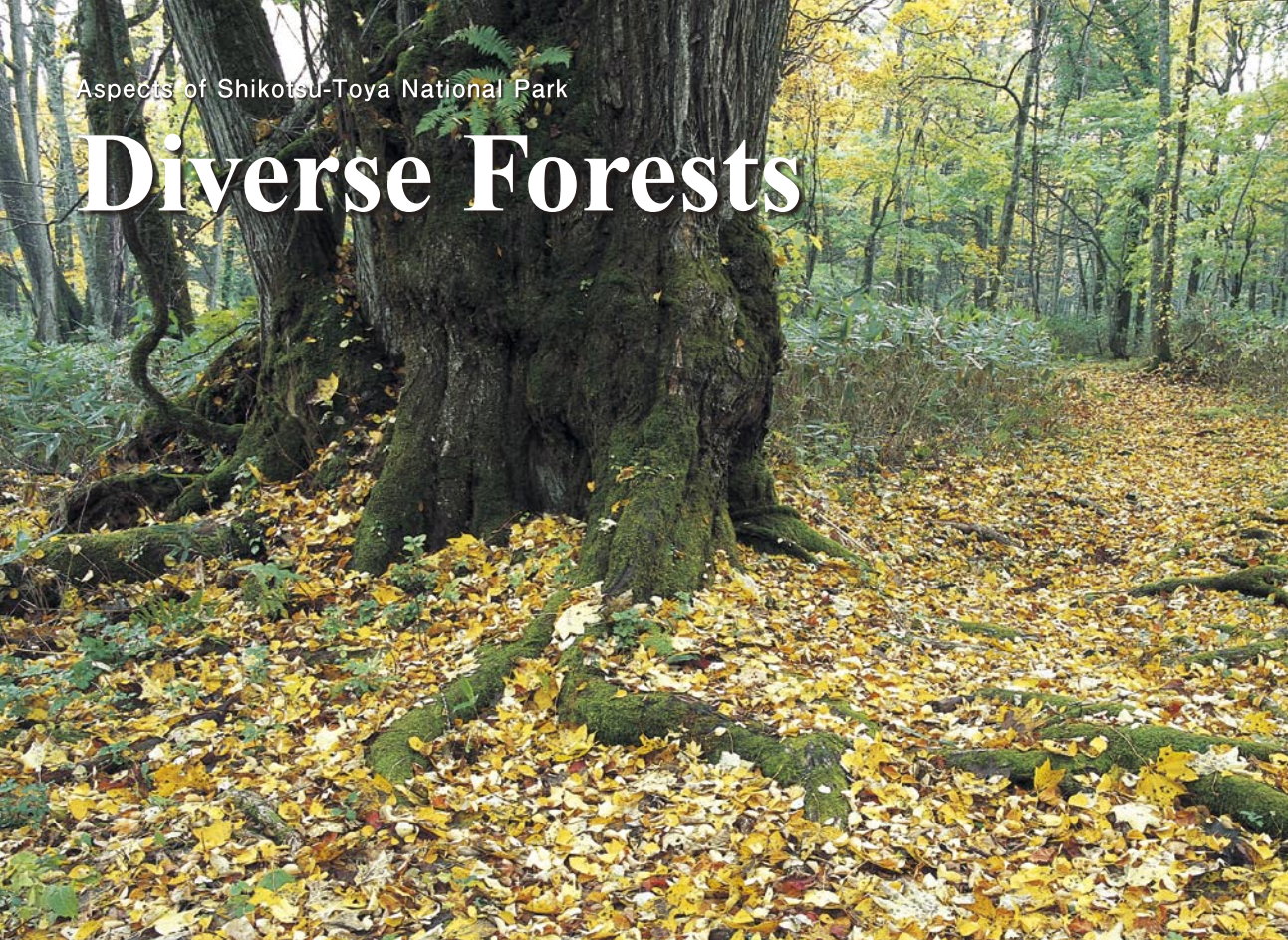


Diverse Forests



Mixed forest on the Shikotsu lakeshore

Forests around the Rim of the Shikotsu Caldera

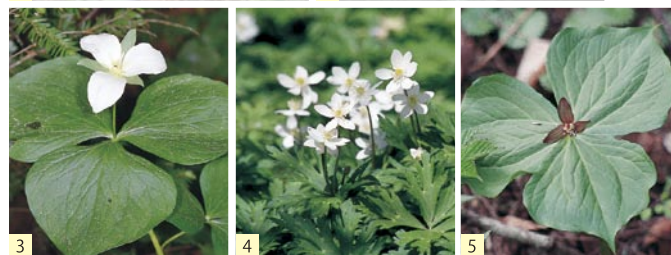
The mountainous area surrounding Lake Shikotsu is covered with rich forests. It is a mixed forest consisting primarily of Ezo Spruce, Sakhalin Fir, Mongolian Oak and Japanese Elm, and the upper region transitions to a more coniferous forest. Needle-leaf trees grow predominantly on Mount Fuppushi, which is dormant. However, on Mount Tarumae, which has been active since the late 17th century, forests are present only in elevations below 600m.

Forest Floor Plants of Early Spring

In Hokkaido, where winters are long, spring arrives without any warning. As if they cannot wait for the snow to melt away, the plants wake up all at once. Short-lived spring ephemeral plants flower and spread their seeds in the sunlight-filled forests before the trees' leaves come out. By the time tree leaves emerge and it gets dark within the forests, the ground plants are already gone. The growth period of spring plants is short, and many of them take several years to flower from the point of germination. Dogtooth Violet takes eight years, and Oobana-no-enreiso (*Trillium kamtschaticum*) takes over a decade.

Giant Tree Forest in Bifue

The forests around Lake Shikotsu sustained severe damage by a typhoon in 1954. However, around Bifue on the west bank of Lake Shikotsu, numerous large broadleaf trees such as Japanese Elm, Japanese Judas, Mongolian Oak, Japanese Linden, and Sennoki (*Kalopanax septemlobus*), still remain. This entire area is called the "Giant Tree Forest".



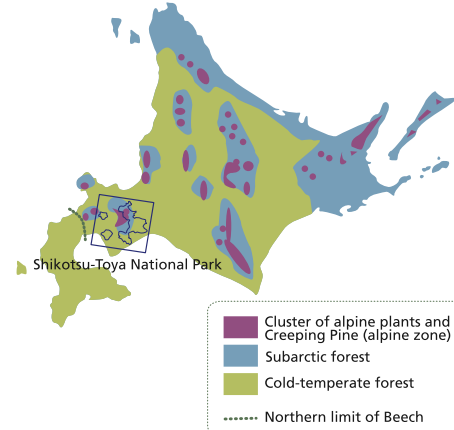
- 1 Corydalis ambigua
- 2 Dogtooth Violet
- 3 Oobana-no-enrei-so (*Trillium kamtschaticum*)
- 4 Soft Windflower
- 5 Enreiso (*Trillium smallii*)
- 6 Pheasant's Eye



Hokkaido where Northern and Southern Forests Meet

Beech tree forests widely distributed in Honshu and southward, can also be seen in Hokkaido, up to Oshima Peninsula. There are no beech tree forests further northward, but in the lowlands, mixed forests prevail, where a wide variety of broadleaf trees, common in mountainous areas of Honshu, such as Japanese Elm, Japanese Linden, Japanese Judas, Japanese White Birch, grow. In addition, there are needle-leaf trees, which do not grow in Honshu, such as Ezo Spruce and Sakhalin Fir. This is due to the fact that Hokkaido is located in a transitional climate, between subarctic and cold-temperate zones, possessing the trees of both forest types.

• Forest types of Hokkaido



Moss Gateway

There is a narrow, mossy gorge situated at the western base of Mount Fuppushi that was created by the erosion of cracks in the volcanic rocks discharged from Mount Tarumae, and has a maximum depth of about 10m, width 3m, and length 400m. Around 30 types of mosses including Ebigoke (*Bryoxiphium savatieri*) and Ohokigoke (*Jungermannia infusca*) grow densely on both sides of its rocky walls. This is due to the favorable conditions inside including temperature, humidity, and lack of sunlight, and has taken a long time to develop. A viewing deck is available at the entrance.

Column

Nature Destruction Caused by Volcanic Eruptions and Subsequent Regeneration



Vegetation of Mount Tarumae (top) and Mount Fuppushi (bottom)

Volcanic eruptions significantly influence nearby forests. Trees and shrubs wither and die in the areas where volcanic ashes and igneous rocks accumulate or areas covered by pyroclastic flow. Ground temperature rises near the volcanic vents, which furthers the damage. The regeneration of forests begins only when the ground temperature drops, and it takes a long time for the forest to recover. In contrast, in areas distant from the crater and where the accumulation of released materials is low, plants are able to regenerate and forests may return to their original state in a relatively short time. Presently, forests at various stages of recovery can be seen around Mount Tarumae and Mount Usu.