

The Brown Bear is the largest land animal in Japan.

Aspects of Shikotsu-Toya National Park

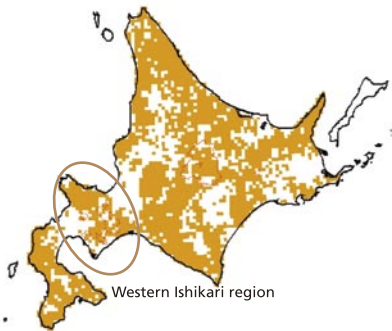
Living with Wild Animals

Precious Habitat of Wildlife



Fox in winter fur

Distribution of Brown Bear in Hokkaido (2000-2002)



Investigation of mammalian distribution by the Ministry of Environment

- 1 Ezo Owl
- 2 Narcissus Flycatcher
- 3 Black Woodpecker
- 4 Japanese Grosbeak
- 5 Brown-headed Thrush



Birds Living in the Forest

There are numerous forest bird species in the natural forests near Lake Shikotsu, and their chirping echoes throughout the early summer when the colors of the new leaves are brilliant. In Hokkaido's forests, where the winter climate is harsh, the majority are summer birds. Non-migratory birds are mainly those of the woodpecker species such as the Great Spotted Woodpecker and the Black Woodpecker, and the tit species such as the Great Tit and the Marsh Tit, as well as the Hazel Grouse. The wide variety of summer birds also includes the Japanese Thrush, the Brown-headed Thrush, the Narcissus Flycatcher, the Japanese Bush Warbler, the Black-faced Bunting, and the Oriental Cuckoo.

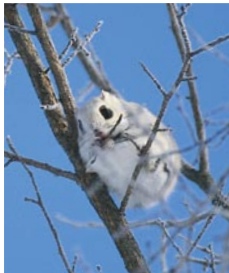
National parks play a significant role as a place to preserve biodiversity. Numerous species of mammals inhabit this park, such as the Brown Bear, Ezo Deer, Fox, Mountain Hare, Red Squirrel, Chipmunks, Ezo Flying Squirrel (Pteromys volans orii), and relatives of bats and mice. The Brown Bear and Ezo Deer are especially important in

relation to humans.

The Brown Bear is the largest land animal in Japan and Hokkaido is its only habitat in Japan. Formerly the Brown Bear was distributed across much of Hokkaido but its habitat has shrunk and is fragmented due to human development in the plains. In particular, the bears inhabiting the western Ishikari region are thought to be endangered. The national park area covers large part of their habitat. Furthermore, in recent years the Ezo Deer has increased in number, causing damages to agriculture and forestry, traffic accidents, and even affecting the vegetation within the park. For this reason, Hokkaido Government has established a scientific management plan for the Ezo Deer and is advancing multiple measures.

The Impact of Invasive Alien Species

There are numerous cases of non-native animals imported for domestic use (food and pets) running wild after escaping or being abandoned. The raccoon, native to the north-western United States, has been expanding its habitat range, raising concerns of agricultural damage and negative effects on the ecosystem. Signal Crayfish, originally from the United States and possibly endangering native Japanese Crayfish, have been recently found at Lake Toya and Lake Shikotsu. It is prohibited to transport and/or release either of these species into the wild by the Invasive Alien Species Act enacted in 2005. Currently, efforts such as capturing individuals in the wild are being made.



Ezo Flying Squirrel



Captured Common Raccoon

Column

The Ezo Deer on Nakajima in Lake Toya



On Nakajima, the islands located at the center of Lake Toya, the Ezo Deer gradually increased in number just from the three that were brought to the islands in 1957, and their feeding pattern has ruined parts of the forest. As a result, only plants inedible to the deer have begun to dominate the vegetation on the islands. At one point the number of deer increased to almost 300, and a large number have died from starvation. At present, their number has stabilized at 150-200. The case has become an important precedent when discussing the ecological balance in small and isolated area. Research that will lay the foundation for deer protection and management is currently in progress.