

Shirakami-Sanchi

Outstanding Universal Value / Valeur universelle exceptionnelle



(ix) Ecosystem / Écosystème

The largest primeval beech forest in East Asia which features rich biodiversity

La plus grande forêt primitive de hêtres d'Asie de l'Est, offrant une biodiversité remarquable

A Surviving Pristine Forest

Shirakami-Sanchi contains the largest primeval beech forest in East Asia, having been untouched by human development. Beech forests were once distributed in the area around the Arctic region when the Earth was warmer than it is now. They were home to a diverse array of vegetation including Siebold's beech, *Silene aomorensis*, and *Hylotelephium ussuriense* var. *tsugaruense*, which are said to be surviving remnants (relicts) from the ice age. During the ice age, the beech forests moved south in response to the cooling of the climate. In many parts of the world, including Europe, shrubs and herbaceous plants could not migrate southwards because they were hindered by mountains stretching from east to west. Only beech trees migrated south and established themselves in new areas, but this simplified the vegetation in beech forests. In Japan, however, there were no mountains to prevent the southern distribution of beech forests, so they migrated southwards, largely maintaining the species composition. As a result, the Shirakami-Sanchi has preserved a distinctive beech forest similar to those that existed around the Arctic region approximately 30 million years ago.



A Forest Museum

During the winter, Shirakami-Sanchi receives the damp air from the Sea of Japan, making the region extremely snowy by global standards. Vegetation that is reflective of the heavily snow-laden environments can be seen on the ground in the beech forests, as is represented by *Sasa kurilensis*. More than 540 species of plants grow here, including *Silene aomorensis* endemic to this region. Shirakami-Sanchi is also home to a diverse array of animals, which includes 35 species of mammals, 94 species of birds, and approximately 2,200 species of insects. These include rare birds like golden eagles and black woodpeckers, as well as Japanese serows and Japanese black bears. The beech forest of Shirakami-Sanchi can be described as a museum of forest ecosystems, based primarily on Siebold's beech, a species endemic to Japan.

Protection and Management of Shirakami-Sanchi Protection du Patrimoine Naturel Mondial de Shirakami-Sanchi

The primeval beech forest of the Shirakami-Sanchi World Heritage property is conserved through measures like patrols and management grounded in various laws, ordinances, and rules. At present, no significant problems have surfaced that would threaten its Outstanding Universal Value. However, ongoing monitoring of the natural environment is necessary since the possibility of challenges arising in the future has been pointed out, such as the impact of climate change. Government officials, experts, and local stakeholders are working together to promote conservation efforts.

Protected Areas in the Property

Shirakami-Sanchi
Nature Conservation Area : 14,043 ha

(Under jurisdiction of MOE)

Examples of Efforts / Exemples d'actions



Patrols
Patrouilles

Rangers from the Ministry of the Environment and other personnel from government agencies, staff hired by the agencies, and volunteers periodically carry out patrols to ensure that the World Heritage property is being properly conserved. The patrols prevent entry to core area in which trespassing is restricted, felling of and damage to trees, illegal harvest of plants, poaching of fish in no-fishing areas, disposal of trash, and open bonfires. In addition, they educate visitors about etiquette and provide instruction on procedures for visiting the mountains. Joint patrols undertaken by assembling persons involved together are carried out several times a year organized by the Shirakami-Sanchi World Heritage Area Liaison Committee.



Promoting Ecotourism
Promotion de l'écotourisme

In 2011, a committee was launched to promote ecotourism in Shirakami-Sanchi. The committee carries out activities to discover local resources such as by asking local people about how they have interacted with nature in Shirakami-Sanchi since the past and conducting questionnaires related to historical culture, foods, and nature that the people can appeal, value, and look on with pride. This is done with the goal of having local residents, local stakeholders, and others come together to work to address ecotourism in the World Heritage property and its surrounding regions. Promoting ecotourism will convey to tourists the appeal inherent in the local area, get them to understand its value and importance, and thereby lead to conservation.



Monitoring
Monitoring

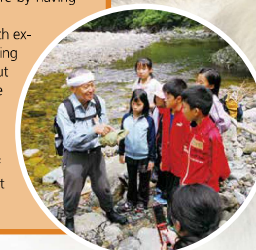
It is essential to detect early on potential effects of global warming and air pollution on the beech forest that is so important to the Shirakami-Sanchi World Heritage property. Ongoing monitoring activities are being carried out to watch over the changes at Shirakami-Sanchi by incorporating natural scientific content like climate and vegetation, and social scientific content like the number of visitors to the mountains.

Since a range of resources is required in order to continue with the surveys, they are carried out via coordination with the public, students, researchers, and government agencies.

Programs for Experiencing Nature Programmes de découverte de la nature

There are programs in World Heritage property to teach children about the wonders of nature and connections between humans and nature by having them experience nature.

With the programs, the children go out into nature together with experts of the rivers and mountains who have actually lived by receiving the bounty of nature in Shirakami-Sanchi. The kids hear talks about the traditional dietary culture and hunting from *Matagi*, Japanese traditional game hunter, and are taught knowledge on fishing from river fishermen. Programs are also held for children to learn about the wonders of nature together with rangers from the Ministry of the Environment through forest patrols and surveys of living creatures. Environmental education is promoted in a way that uses Shirakami-Sanchi as living teaching materials.



Learning wisdom of *Matagi*