



Hoar frost covered trees on Mt. Unzen-myoken-dake (Unzen-Amakusa NP) (3)



A messenger of winter: the Steller's sea eagle (Shiretoko NP) (4)

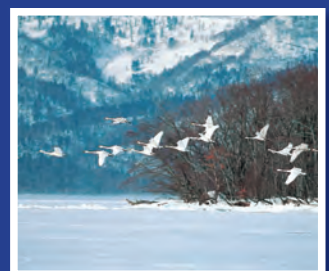
Surging ice floe, with Kunashiri Island in the distance (Shiretoko NP) (5)



COLUMN

Migratory birds —a sign of the changing seasons

Since ancient times, Japanese have sensed the beginning of a new season by bird migration. In late fall, mallard and swans fly from the north, spend winter in Japan and return to the north in spring. Other species, such as swallows and gray-faced-buzzard eagles, migrate from the south in early spring, and nurture juveniles in summer. Snipes and plovers visit the country both in spring and fall on the way to their final destinations. The National Parks play a vital role as habitats of these migratory birds and other wildlife.



Whooper swans over
Kussharo Lake
(Akan-Mashu NP)

(Photo by Toshitaka Morita)

Spring

Soft sunlight, Budding of trees and flowers