



Asian skunk cabbage in Oze Marsh (Oze NP) (2)
Wild azaleas and the Kuju Mountain Range (Aso-Kuju NP) (3)



A cape in a sea mist, Okino-shima Island (Daisen-Oki NP) (4)

C O L U M N

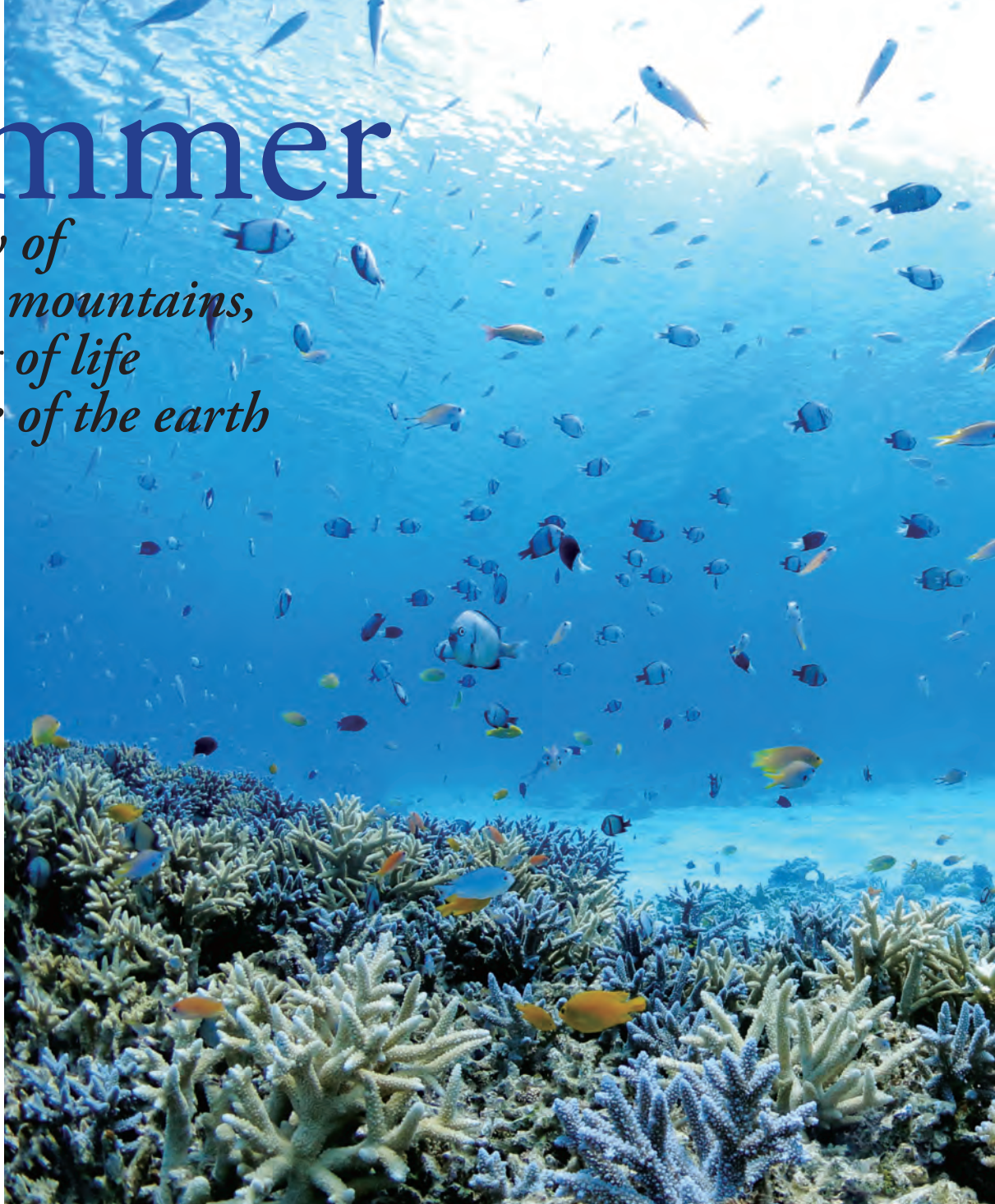
Cherry blossom front

In late March, when cherry trees begin blooming in southern Kyushu and Shikoku, Japanese people start caring about 'Cherry blossom front', which forecasts expected dates for cherry blossoms. For the following a month and half, cherry blossom front moves slowly up to the north in the Japanese archipelago. People are anxious to view the gorgeous full blooming and are fascinated with the transient nature of flowers dying in a few days and a beauty in the way of falling petals.



Summer

*The glow of
seas and mountains,
The song of life
in praise of the earth*



The bountiful clear ocean in Kerama Blue. (Keramashoto NP) (1)



A flower carpet spreading over near the summit of Mt. Hakuba-dake, the Japan Northern Alps (Chubusangaku NP) (2)

C O L U M N

A mountain high paradise —The garden of wildflowers

Summer is the season for mountain hiking. The mountains in north of central Japan offer an amusement for hikers to spot fields of wildflowers. As climbing a mountain trail patiently, where trees become sparse, hikers will find the garden of colorful alpine flowers spreading like a carpet. Alpine plants are adapted to harsh alpine environments such as low temperatures, strong wind and prolonged periods of snow pack. Most species bloom all at once in the short summer. The lovely life forms determined to survive in such severity is a remarkable view, etched into hiker's memories.



Komakusa (*Dicenta* sp.)