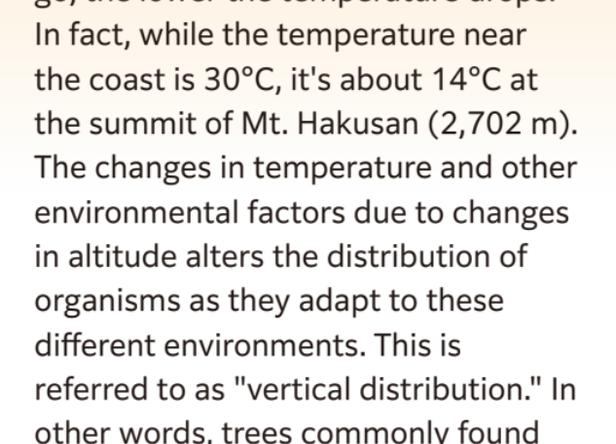


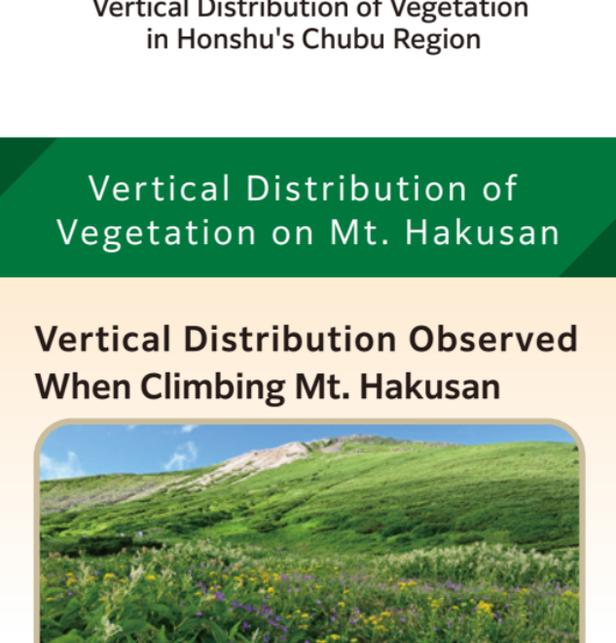
Vertical Distribution: Vegetation Changes as You Climb



Distribution of Plants Changes with Altitude

What is "Vertical Distribution?"

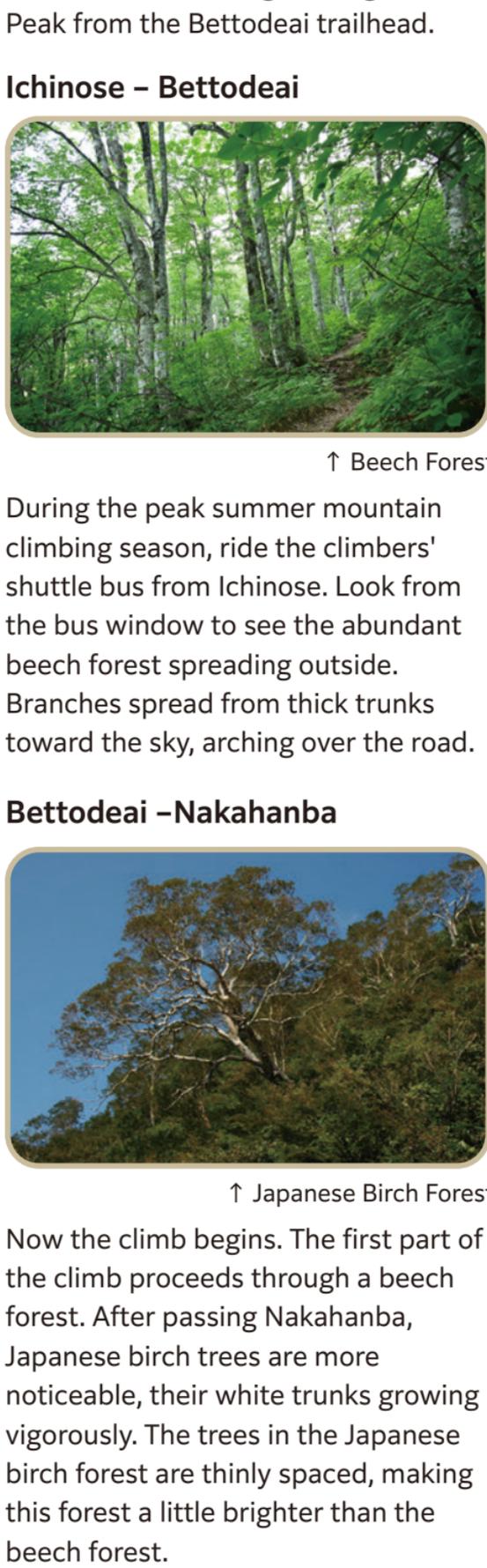
In the mountains, the higher up you go, the lower the temperature drops. In fact, while the temperature near the coast is 30°C, it's about 14°C at the summit of Mt. Hakusan (2,702 m). The changes in temperature and other environmental factors due to changes in altitude alters the distribution of organisms as they adapt to these different environments. This is referred to as "vertical distribution." In other words, trees commonly found on high mountains will differ from those found on the flatlands.



Vertical Distribution of Vegetation in Honshu's Chubu Region

Vertical Distribution of Vegetation on Mt. Hakusan

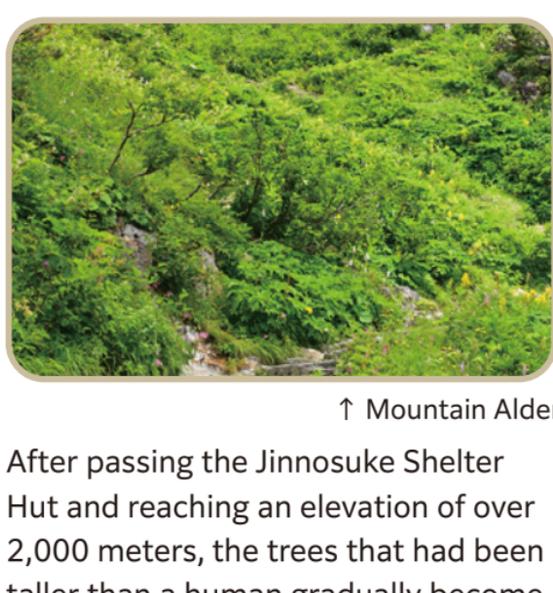
Vertical Distribution Observed When Climbing Mt. Hakusan



↑ Alpine meadow(Murodo)

The most frequently used hiking trail on Mt. Hakusan is the Sabo Shindo Route in Hakusan City, Ishikawa Prefecture. You can observe the vertical distribution of vegetation on the route to Gozengamine Peak using this trail. Let's take a look at how the vegetation changes starting from Ichinose and climbing Gozengamine Peak from the Bettodeai trailhead.

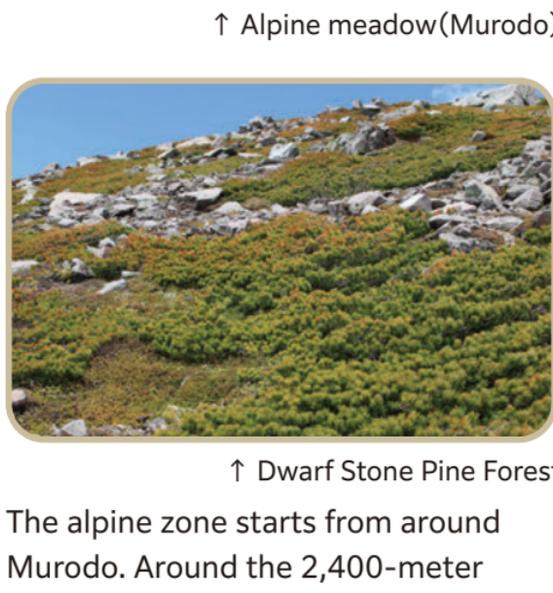
Ichinose – Bettodeai



↑ Beech Forest

During the peak summer mountain climbing season, ride the climbers' shuttle bus from Ichinose. Look from the bus window to see the abundant beech forest spreading outside. Branches spread from thick trunks toward the sky, arching over the road.

Bettodeai –Nakahanba



↑ Japanese Birch Forest

Now the climb begins. The first part of the climb proceeds through a beech forest. After passing Nakahanba, Japanese birch trees are more noticeable, their white trunks growing vigorously. The trees in the Japanese birch forest are thinly spaced, making this forest a little brighter than the beech forest.

Nakahanba–Jinnosuke Shelter Hut



↑ Maries' Fir Forest

As you leave the brightness of the Japanese birch forest and approach the Jinnosuke Shelter Hut, you will begin to see coniferous Maries' fir trees growing around you. Mixed in with the Japanese birches, these trees form part of the forest.

Jinnosuke Shelter Hut–Murodo

↑ Mountain Alder

After passing the Jinnosuke Shelter Hut and reaching an elevation of over 2,000 meters, the trees that had been taller than a human gradually become shorter and shorter. As you approach Kuroboko-Iwa Rock, the surrounding area becomes more visible, with hardly any trees taller than a human remaining. This area is home to low-growing trees such as the Mountain Alder.

Murodo-Gozengamine Peak

↑ Alpine meadow(Murodo)

↑ Dwarf Stone Pine Forest

The alpine zone starts from around Murodo. Around the 2,400-meter mark, you'll see a carpet of dwarf stone pines, which stand at about human height. Spreading out among the dwarf stone pines are flower fields replete with beautiful blossoms. Many plants grow in these flower fields, and even tiny trees—standing only about 10 cm, they look like grasses—are covered with flowers.

Chubu Regional Environment Office, Ministry of the Environment/Association for Conservation of Circum-Hakusan Area

