

References

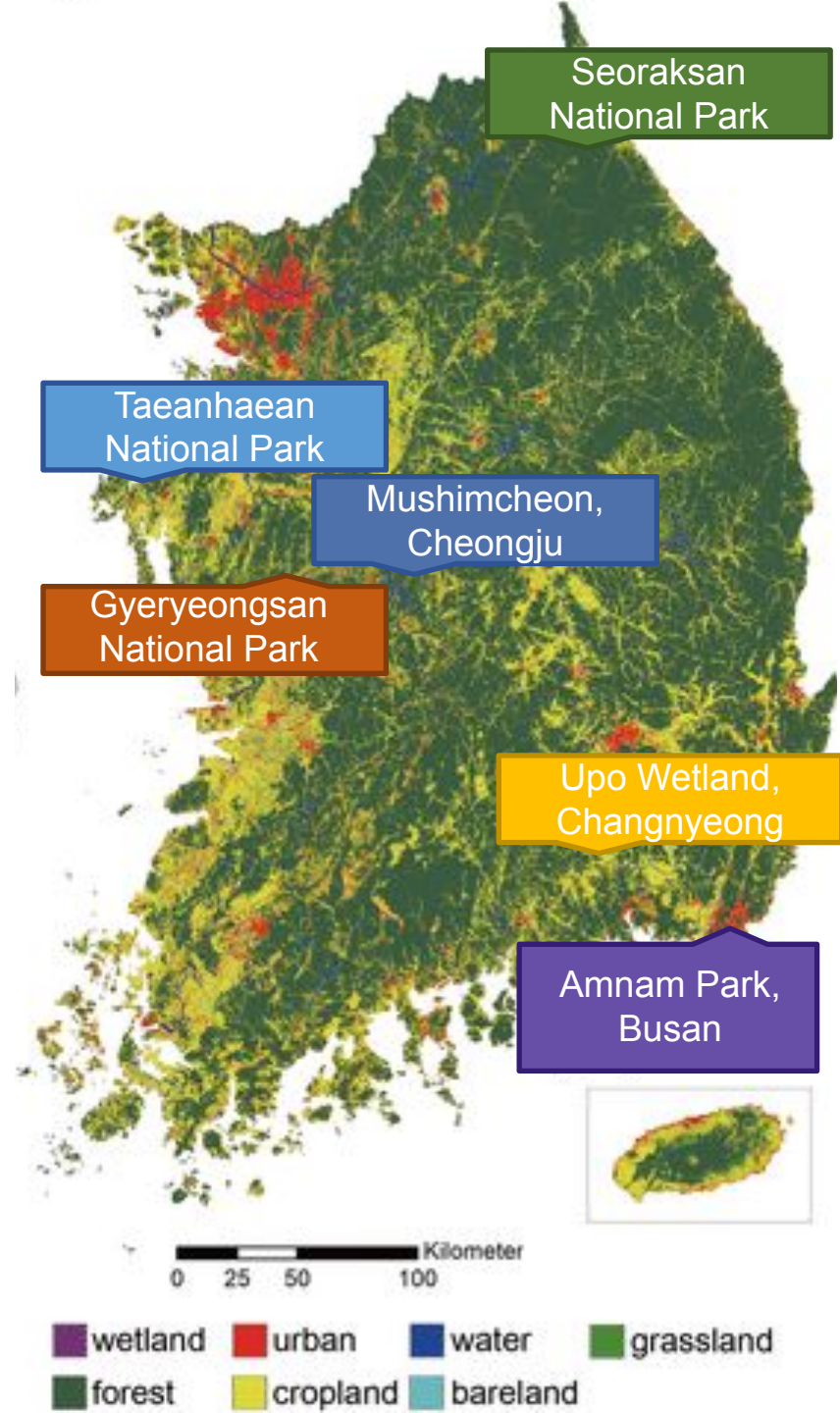
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Wild Places of South Korea

Gabrielle Loisel

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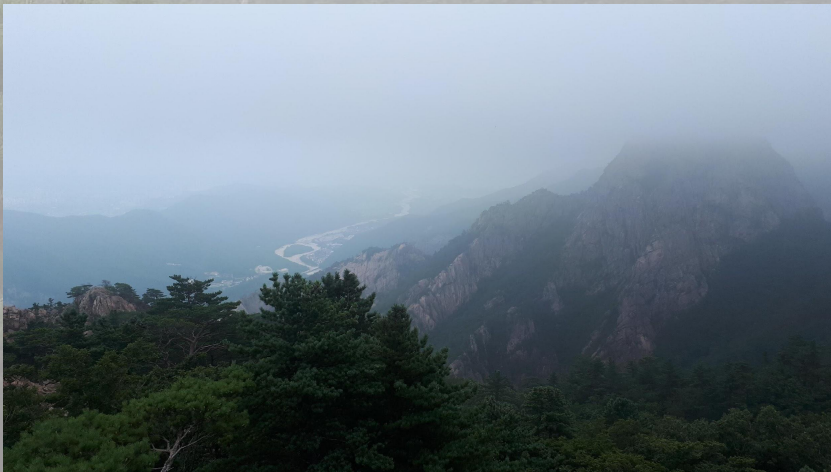
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Seoraksan National Park

Seoraksan National Park, located in the northeast of Korea, was designated the fifth national park in 1970. Its name means “tall, snowy mountain,” and it is home to more than 1,400 species of plant, including deciduous trees like Mongolian oak, Korean maple, Japanese emperor oak, and hornbeam as well as conifers like Korean pines.

Over 2,000 species of animals call the park home, such as Asiatic blackbears, musk deer, long-tailed gorals, Eurasian otters, Siberian flying squirrels, common kestrels, grey frog hawks, Manchurian trout, and Korean spotted barbel. This 398.539km² of Manchurian mixed forest biome was designated as a Biosphere Preservation District by UNESCO in 1982.



The Korean goral (left) and the dwarf stone pine (right), flagship species of Seoraksan National Park.

The park is mostly composed of granite formed in the Cretaceous period, uplifted by continuous faulting and folding of the area over time. The flagship species are the Korean goral and the dwarf stone pine. The Korean goral is a goat-like mammal found in mountainous areas in Siberia, Manchuria, and the upper Korean peninsula that feeds on rock moss and herbs. Around 700 Korean gorals live in South Korea, with 100-200 inhabiting the park. The slow-growing dwarf stone pine inhabits mountain ranges of Japan, Siberia, China, Mongolia, and Korea.



Gyeryongsan National Park

Gyeryongsan National Park is located in Gongju, with areas that cover parts of the cities of Gyeryong, Nonsan, and Daejeon with a total area of 64.71km² of central Korean deciduous forest. Positioned on the Gyeonggi Massif, an enormous mass of Precambrian rock that covers more than half of the northern part of the country, the area is composed of various forms of granite rocks such as feldspar granite, gneiss granite, and granite diorite. The topography of the area is typical of most of the country: numerous tall mountains casting shadows over deep valleys and studded with granite topography in the form of ridges, joints, tors, and rock domes.



The park is named for the belief that the Gyeryongsan mountain ridge looks like a dragon with the crown of a rooster. Gyeryongsan, containing 20 different peaks and about valleys, was once considered a holy site and has several Buddhist temples within the park.

Gyeryongsan has 1,867 different types of insects and 654 other species of animals, including the small-eared cat, marten, common buzzard, and black woodpecker. There are 11 endangered species in the park and the park's flagship species are the ruddy kingfisher, an orange-pink bird with a huge, bright-red beak; the Korean crevice salamander, a reddish-brown lungless amphibian that hides under moist forest stones; and the Chinese twinleaf, a perennial that sprouts in moist forest soil.



The ruddy kingfisher (left), Chinese twinleaf (center), and the Korean crevice salamander (right), flagship species of Gyeryongsan National Park.

It was declared South Korea's second official national park in 1968 and, like most of the country, consists of central Korean deciduous forests containing 1,121 different species of plants including broadleaf trees like zelkova, Japanese snowbell, Mongolian oak, and birch, as well as pine.



Upo Wetland, Changnyeong

Originating with the Nakdong River, Upo Wetland is part of a network of four wetland areas, along with the Mokpo, Sajipo, and Jjokji-beol Wetlands located near the town of Changnyeong. An 8.7km path encircles the wetland complex. Poorly-draining silt and clay sit on layers of shale, granite, and sandstone, creating a basin.



The wetlands conceal far more than they show. 20 species of mammal live in the wetland, including large mammals such as the leopard cat, yellow-throated marten, Eurasian otter, Asian badger, raccoon dog, and water deer as well as smaller mammals like the Eurasian red squirrel, Eurasian harvest mouse, and shrewmouse.

Upo Wetland is an important stop for many migratory birds, as well as a permanent home for over 180 species of birds. The crested ibis once called the wetlands home but disappeared in the area by 1979 due to habitat destruction. In 2008, A restoration project to protect the crested ibis began. More than 300 crested ibises now inhabit the wetlands and many more can be seen on merchandise and signage around Changnyeong.



The crested ibis once again calls Upo Wetland its home.

Over 30 species of fish, 400 species of phytoplankton, 20 reptile and amphibian species, and 800 species of insect also make their home in Upo Wetland. Over 500 species of vascular plants grow here. Cattails, reeds, and silvergrass grow on the shore. Plants with long roots or long stems like water chestnut and prickly waterlily grow in shallower water, while plants like water hyacinth and duckweed float on the surface above submerged plants like *Hydrilla verticillata* and asian tape grass. Trees in the area include elm, acacia, zelkova, winged spindle, and yew.



Mushimcheon, Cheongju

Bisecting the city of Cheongju in Chungcheongbuk Province, the Mushimcheon begins with streams flowing from the villages of Neaemri and Chujeongri that merge at the village of Geumgori. The river is composed of five tributaries: the Weoruncheon, the Mipeyongcheon, the Yeonguncheon, the Myeongancheon, and the Michoollyeongcheon. It has a total length of 34.5km and a basin area of 177.71km².



The Mushimcheon eventually meets the Mihocheon, a tributary of the Geum River. The Geum River is one of the five major rivers in South Korea and empties into the Yellow Sea. The name “Mushimcheon” literally means “indifferent river,” or “the river without emotion.” Taken more figuratively, from a traditional Buddhist perspective, it means “the river without worldly desires.”



A map of Cheongju City divided by the Mushimcheon.



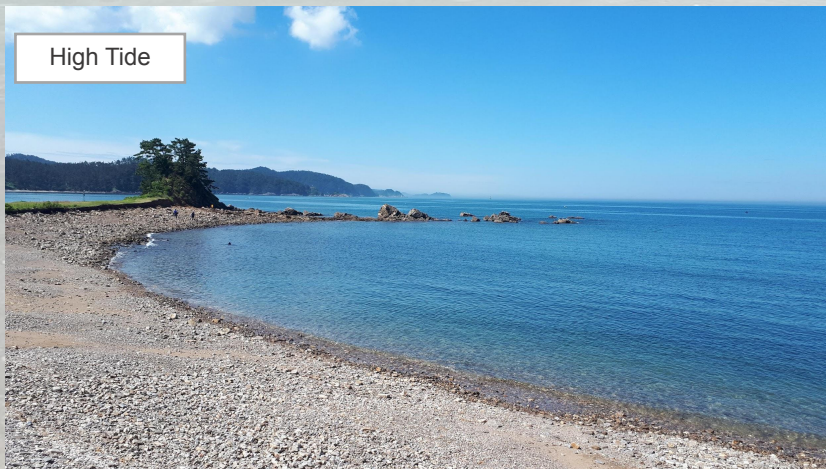
The Mushimcheon Ecological Map counts a total of 156 land plant species, 40 aquatic plant species, 27 species of fish, 36 species of insect, 33 species of bird, 9 species of mammal, and 8 species of large benthic invertebrates. The area around the river has been heavily altered to create parks, a skating rink, golf courses, roads, bike lanes, and bridges.

Taeanhaean National Park

Established in 1978, Taeanhaean Seaside National Park comprises 27 beaches on 230 km of western coastline. The area, totaling 377.019 km², composed of mostly Precambrian metamorphic sedimentary rocks and Mesozoic igneous rocks, contains tidal flats, sand dunes, wetlands, and small islands.



Low Tide



High Tide

1,195 animal species, 774 plant species, and 671 marine species can be found in the park, including 17 endangered species such as Swinhoe's egrets, Eurasian otters, and the Korean golden frog. The flagship species are *Ranunculus katusensis*, a white-flowering perennial that inhabits swamps and shallow water, and the Korean tiger lizard. The name "Taeanhaean" literally means "seaside of great comfort."



Millions of shells accumulate on the beach over time.



Ranunculus katusensis, called chyousenbaikamo in Korean (left), and the Korean tiger lizard (right), flagship species of Taeanhaean National Park.

Amnam Park, Busan



Situated within an urban environment beside Busan International Fish Market, Amnam Park is located on the south coast of Korea in the city of Busan. The park is an example of a southern Korea evergreen forest biome, populated with oaks, laurels, and pines, Japanese bay, Korean winter hazel, and camelias.



This broadleaf evergreen biome is found on the southern coast of the country and the countless nearby subtropical

islands. Located in the Gyeongsang Basin, the landscape is shaped by the forces of fire, wind, and water. Much of the area was created through volcanic activity and slow erosion has carved the numerous sea cliffs into distinctive shapes.

Coastal animals are particularly vulnerable to human activity, with threats coming from both land and sea. 9,534 species of marine organisms live in the waters surrounding Korea, with more than half of them invertebrates. 77 of these species are threatened, endangered, or designated as protected, including many types of corals, molluscs, and echinoderms.



Many different species can be found on the Southern shore, including these soft corals.