

Wildlife of Japan

Thirteen animals to discover · A field companion

SIX CAT STUDIOS · WORLD NATURE SERIES



SPECIES PROFILES

Japanese black bear

A shy mountain bear of Honshu and Shikoku that moves through forests like a seasonal wanderer, feeding on fruit, nuts, insects, roots, and sometimes small animals. It is mainly nocturnal, spends a lot of time climbing and making nests in trees, and changes its diet with the seasons.

Japanese red fox

A fox with a quick, watchful life in Japan's forests, fields, and rural edges, where it hunts small animals and also eats fruit and other plant food. It is an adaptable survivor, often active at dusk and night, and lives close enough to people to be familiar but usually far enough away to stay mysterious.

Japanese wild boar

A tough, ground-foraging animal that spends its life rooting through soil for roots, tubers, acorns, insects, and fallen fruit. It can live in wooded hills and farmland edges, moving between cover and feeding sites with surprising speed and determination.

Japanese rat snake

A slender, climbing, nonvenomous hunter that lives a stealthy life in trees, shrubs, and sometimes buildings. It feeds on rodents, birds, and eggs, and is built for patience rather than confrontation.

Tanuki / Japanese raccoon dog

A cat-sized, fox-like canid endemic to Japan, living from urban edges to mountain forests, especially where there is water and dense undergrowth. It is an omnivore that eats fruit, insects, small animals, and carrion, and it is unusually famous in Japanese folklore as a mischievous shape-shifter. In the wild it lives about 8 years and is one of the few canids that enters a winter dormancy-like torpor in colder areas.

Japanese dormouse

A tiny forest mammal that lives like a secret in the branches — nocturnal, arboreal, and famous for long hibernation. Its life is quiet, hidden, and strongly tied to wooded habitats, where it spends much of its time slipping through the canopy and disappearing into shelter.

Amami rabbit

A rare, ancient-looking rabbit found only on the Amami Islands in southern Japan. It is mostly nocturnal, stays close to forest cover, and lives a careful ground-level life, feeding on plants in a small island world.

Amami spiny rat

A rare island rodent from Amami Oshima with a life shaped by forest cover, limited range, and survival in a very small habitat. Because its world is so restricted, nearly every part of its life is tied to the rhythms of its island forest.

Hokkaido brown bear

Japan's largest native land mammal, ranging widely across Hokkaido with a powerful, roaming life. It is an omnivore that eats plants, nuts, fruit, insects, and sometimes animal food, and bears in Japan grow especially active around seasonal food shortages.

Japanese serow

A stocky, goat-antelope-like mountain browser that lives in steep wooded terrain and feeds on leaves, twigs, and other vegetation. It tends to be solitary or live in small family groups, moving with calm sure-footedness through rocky, forested slopes.

Japanese sika deer

A graceful deer that moves through forests and edges in groups, grazing and browsing as it goes. Males become especially dramatic during the rut, calling and competing for mates, while the herd life revolves around alertness, movement, and seasonal food.

Japanese macaque

The famous snow monkey, a highly social primate that lives farther north than any other nonhuman monkey. Its life is built around grooming, play, group relationships, and a flexible omnivorous diet. In colder places, these macaques become symbols of endurance, with fur, social warmth, and even hot springs helping them face winter.

Iriomote cat

A rare, elusive wild cat of Iriomote Island that lives a mostly nocturnal life in dense forests, wetlands, and river areas. It hunts small animals and avoids people, surviving in one of Japan's most fragile habitats as a quiet island ghost.

QUICK REFERENCE

ANIMAL	SCIENTIFIC NAME	HABITAT	DIET	NOTABLE LIFE NOTES
Japanese black bear	<i>Ursus thibetanus japonicus</i>	Forests and mountains of Honshu and Shikoku	Omnivore	Climbs well; hibernates; seasonal feeder
Japanese red fox	<i>Vulpes vulpes japonica</i>	City parks to remote mountains	Carnivore	Sacred messenger of Inari; dawn and dusk hunter
Tanuki	<i>Nyctereutes viverrinus</i>	Urban edges, farmland, forests, mountains with water and dense understory	Omnivore	Nocturnal, shy, canid, hibernates; major folklore animal
Japanese wild boar	<i>Sus scrofa leucomystax</i>	Forests, hills, farmland edges	Omnivore	Rooting forager; fast and tough
Japanese rat snake	<i>Elaphe climacophora</i>	Forests, grasslands, human structures	Carnivore	Climbing snake; feeds on rodents, birds, eggs
Japanese dormouse	<i>Glirulus japonicus</i>	Woodlands and forests	Mostly plant matter and insects	Tiny, nocturnal, arboreal, hibernates
Amami rabbit	<i>Pentalagus furnessi</i>	Forests of Amami Oshima and Tokunoshima	Herbivore	Nocturnal, rare, island endemic
Amami spiny rat	<i>Tokudaia osimensis</i>	Forests of Amami Oshima	Mostly plant material	Rare, island endemic, secretive
Hokkaido brown bear	<i>Ursus arctos yesoensis</i>	Hokkaido forests, rivers, mountains	Omnivore	Japan's largest native land mammal; wide-ranging
Japanese serow	<i>Capricornis crispus</i>	Steep wooded mountains	Browser	Solitary or small groups; mountain specialist
Japanese sika deer	<i>Cervus nippon</i>	Forests, grasslands, edges	Grazer/browser	Social; rutting males are vocal and competitive
Japanese macaque	<i>Macaca fuscata</i>	Forests, mountains, snowy regions	Omnivore	Social primate; snow monkey
Iriomote cat	<i>Prionailurus bengalensis iriomotensis</i>	Iriomote Island forests, wetlands, streams	Carnivore	Nocturnal, elusive, endangered