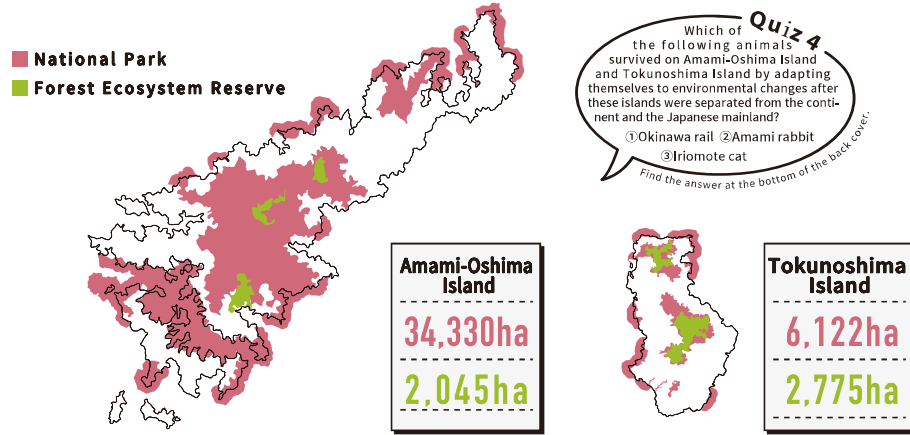


4 | EFFORTS FOR REGISTERING WORLD NATURAL HERITAGE

In Amami Island Group, various endeavors have been taken to protect the local natural environment and thus to revitalize the region.

Designation of Protection Area

In order to protect the bountiful nature valued as a World Heritage for future generations, the Japanese national government designated the forests of the heritage area as National Parks and Forest Ecosystem Reserves. The national parks of Japan represent the natural sites that have been designated by the Natural Parks Act, where large scale development is regulated and activities that promote familiarity with nature are given priority. A Forest Ecosystem Reserve is a type of protected forest in a National Forest. The purpose of such reserves is to maintain natural environments and protect the wild animals and plants living there.



Species found in protection areas

©: Amami Ranger Office, Tokunoshima Ranger Office of the Ministry of Environment



COLUMN 03 | Features of Habu snakes that are different on each island

Habu snakes are found on Amami-Oshima Island and Tokunoshima Island, Kagoshima Prefecture and Okinawa Island and neighboring islands, Okinawa Prefecture. Habu, known for their potent venom, are quite large, poisonous snakes with a body length of 1 to 2 meters. Their habitats cover a wide area and their activity scope ranges from summit areas of primeval forests to coastal areas such as beaches and shores. They also appear on farms and in communities. The color, shape, and poison content of Habu differ slightly from island to island. It has become known that the genes controlling Habu poison also differ according to island. In general, it is considered that approximately 3 million years would be required before shape difference of an animal of the same species would appear in distant regions. However, in the case of Habu, gene mutation occurs at a higher speed than usual. As a result, the changes are seen in 1 to 2 million years.



Measures against alien species

Although Amami-Oshima Island was originally free from mongoose, they were introduced with the aim of reducing the number of Habu and black rats. However, predation did not proceed as expected. Instead, Amami rabbits and other precious creatures of the island became their target. Therefore, in 2005, the Ministry of the Environment formed “Mongoose Busters”, and the traps they prepared have made great strides in capturing the mongoose.



©: Amami Ranger Office of the Ministry of Environment



Abandoned pet dogs and cats have become wild, and have been attacking wild animals. Municipalities of Amami-Oshima Island and Tokunoshima Island have enacted ordinances that call on pet owners to raise pet cats properly. On Tokunoshima Island, new efforts are being made to capture feral cats and match them with new owners.

©: Amami Ranger Office of the Ministry of Environment

Quiz 5
Which animal preys on the Amami rabbit on Amami?
①fox ②monkey ③cat
Find the answer at the bottom of the back cover.

Rules for visiting the site

After the site is registered as a World Natural Heritage, a large number of people will visit the islands to familiarize themselves with nature. This will cause trampling on plants and they will become weaker or wither. In order to avoid such problems, rules for visiting the site are being implemented to limit the number of visitors to forests, to obligate visitors to enter forests with a guide and other such measures.



Promotion of Ecotourism



Ecotourism is responsible travel with a guide to deepen encounters with nature, the relationship between nature and human beings, and the lifestyle rooted in local areas. The Amami Island Group is now promoting the development of the concept of ecotourism and is training eco-tour guides.

A selection of trail courses



A selection of “Amami World Heritage Trail” courses is being promoted to provide visitors with opportunities to leisurely get in touch with the attractive points of the Amami Island Group.

Promotion of public works that are friendly to the natural environment



Building roads, bridges and ports are important public works that allow people to live more convenient lives. Public works on Amami have been implemented based on guidelines that have been written with the purpose of minimizing the impact of public works on the nature of Amami.