

## **Little Deer**

If you come across any cultivated land in the Keramas, the chances are that it will be surrounded by tall fencing. This is because the farmers are doing their best to protect their crops from the local deer, a subspecies of the Japanese sika deer known as Kerama deer (*Cervus nippon keramae*). Introduced from mainland Japan in the seventeenth century, the Kerama deer developed in insular form, with darker fur and smaller heads and antlers.

The Kerama deer and two of its habitats, Geruma and Yakabi, were listed as Japanese Special Natural Monuments in 1972. Nonetheless, by the late 1970s it was estimated that only around 60 deer were living on the three islands of Geruma, Yakabi and Aka. Since then, the numbers have bounced back strongly thanks to conservation efforts, and you are very likely to have a close encounter in Aka or Geruma. The deer are highly strung, but quite accustomed to humans.