

## **Animals of Oze**

Oze is home to animal life as diverse as the range of habitats in the park, from the smallest dragonfly in Japan, with a body only 2 centimeters long and wing length of only 15 millimeters, to the Asian black bear, which can weigh up to 200 kilograms.

These animals play an important part in the area's ecology. For example, thanks to the seeds in their droppings, bears help plants grow over a large area. Research is being conducted on ways to keep visitors from encroaching on the bears' habitats.

Recent changes in climate have caused an increase in the number of deer in the park, something previously unheard of. The growing deer population can damage the marshes and change the ecology of the forests, so strategies for limiting their numbers are being studied.

## **Mammals**

There are 34 species of mammals in the park, although most are rarely seen by visitors. The Asian black bear (*Ursus thibetanus*), is medium sized and largely herbivorous (see below for what to do in case of a bear encounter). The Japanese serow (*Capricornis crispus*) is a kind of goat-antelope, an even-toed bovine. One favorite animal, though rarely spotted, is the Japanese stoat (*okojo*; *Mustela erminea Nippon*). While it appears adorable and harmless, it is a carnivorous hunter of small mammals and birds. Other mammals sometimes spotted include rabbits and the tiny Japanese dormouse.

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### **Bear Encounter Tips**

Asian black bears are less aggressive than many species of bears and tend to avoid humans. They can be dangerous if they feel threatened or are caught by surprise. Visitors are encouraged to ring the bells that are placed in certain areas along the boardwalks, and to let bears know humans are near by clapping or talking. If you encounter a bear, do not make loud noises or run, but slowly and quietly exit the area.

## **Birds**

Over 160 bird species have been reported in the park. Many migratory birds prefer the marshlands, while others make their home in the forests. The chestnut-eared bunting (*Emberiza fucata*), Indian spot-billed duck (*Anas poecilorhyncha*), and Latham's snipe

(*Gallinago hardwickii*) can be spotted in the marshes. The forests shelter the Great spotted woodpecker (*Dendrocopos major*), the narcissus flycatcher (*Ficedula narcissina*), and the bush warbler (*Horornis diphone*), once called the Japanese nightingale for the beauty of its song. The alpine accentor (*Prunella collaris*) and the spotted nutcracker (*Nucifraga caryocatactes*) can be found in rocky areas at the higher altitudes.

### **Amphibians**

Nine species of amphibians live in the park, including the Montane brown frog (*Rana ornativentris*), which is endemic to Japan, and the Japanese fire belly newt (*Cynops pyrrhogaster*), often spotted from the boardwalks over the ponds and rivers. Others, like the Tohoku salamander (*Hynobius lichenatus*), are more difficult to spot.

### **Fish**

Ten species of fish, including the trout-like *iwana* (*Salvelinus*), and the tiny Amur minnow, live in Oze. Though grilled *iwana* is a favorite local dish, fishing is not allowed in the park.

### **Insects**

Oze's ecosystems are ideal for insects, and a wide variety can be found throughout the ponds, rivers, marshlands, and forests of the park. These include dragonflies that only inhabit cold areas and butterflies that prefer high altitudes. Among them are the damselfly (Zygoptera), the scarlet dwarf or pygmy dragonfly (*Nannophya pygmaea*), and the Old World swallowtail butterfly (*Papilio machaon*).