

Amami Rabbit Observation Hut

This Amami Rabbit Observation Hut is a center for research on the Amami rabbit and a source of information for visitors. To encourage the rabbits to visit the area, their favorite vegetation has been planted nearby, and staff have built a tunnel for them to use. Being nocturnal, they are highly unlikely to be spotted during the day. However, video cameras installed behind the hut and by the adjacent Nanbu Dam reservoir record the rabbits' activities, which may be viewed inside the hut.

The observation hut won a government Cool Japan Award in the National Park segment in 2019.

Amami Rabbit Facts

The nocturnal Amami rabbit is peculiar to Tokunoshima and Amami Oshima. Relatively thickset, with dark fur, short legs, and big claws for digging, it is related to prehistoric rabbits once found in continental Asia. It grows to a body length of around 50 centimeters and weighs up to 3 kilograms.

The Amami rabbit lives in the forest, where it eats mostly grasses and large acorns. Breeding up to twice a year, it is unusual among rabbits in bearing only one, or sometimes two, young at a time. When mothers go out to forage, they seal the entrance of the burrow with earth and camouflage it with plants. They live separately from their young, returning every other day on average to nurse them.

Environmental pressures on the rabbits include encroaching human development, traffic accidents, and the rising population of feral cats and dogs. The rabbit is designated a rare wild animal and efforts to protect it on Tokunoshima have helped stabilize their number, which is now estimated at a few hundred.