

## Value of Heritage Forest

### The Yambaru Forest

The Yambaru forest is a unique ecosystem: a fertile, rain-watered forest at a subtropical latitude where, in most other places around the world, deserts are more common. At just 0.1 percent of Japan's area, it accounts for a disproportionate share of the country's biodiversity; more than half of Japan's bird species are found in the forest for at least part of the year, as are a quarter of the country's frog species. In fact, after millions of years of isolation from both Japan and the Asian continent, Yambaru is home to countless rare and endangered birds, insects, reptiles, and amphibians found nowhere else on Earth. Local communities have tended and shaped the forest for centuries, and its resources have enriched the entire island of Okinawa. As you enjoy the forest, please help us preserve it for future generations by staying on the trail and not taking any insects, plants or animals home with you.

## Features of the Mount Ibu Trail

### The Giant Oak Tree Trail on Mount Ibu

**Distance:** About 6 kilometers from trail entrance to giant *urajirogashi* oak and back

**Total time:** About 3 hours

**Difficulty:** Moderate (some slippery places; be wary of *habu* vipers in dense foliage off the trail)

**Sights:** Giant *urajirogashi* oak, abandoned charcoal kiln, long views down through the trees

The Mount Ibu trail is a pleasant hiking challenge, with just enough ropes and signage for safety. It is rich in variety, including everything from broad former logging roads to steep (and sometimes slippery) "stairways" of red clay, austere bamboo grooves, and narrow forested mountain ridges. Despite the rugged terrain, traces of longstanding human activity can be seen, including an abandoned and overgrown charcoal kiln just off the trail.

The trail ends in a short walk along a ridge to an enormous 300-year-old *urajirogashi* oak. The tree is famous for its complex, almost braided trunk, the result of being split

centuries ago and then gradually growing back together. To ensure that it survives for centuries more, it is now protected by a rope barrier which visitors are asked not to cross.

#### Part of seed-collecting mat

#### **Please wipe your feet!**

The Yambaru ecosystem is highly vulnerable to invasive species, including plants and fungi whose seeds or spores can arrive unnoticed on the sole of a visitor's shoe. Please help us protect the forest by wiping your shoes thoroughly on the mat provided.

#### back side

#### **Thank You for Visiting!**

The Mount Ibu trail is a short but diverse tour through the mountain forests of Yambaru, where local communities have worked and played for centuries. As a final reminder, please do not take anything home from the forest with you but photos and memories. Thank you for helping to preserve the mountain for future generations.