

## **Yezo Deer**

The Yezo deer (*Cervus nippon yezoensis*) is a subspecies of Japanese deer found only in Hokkaido. The word *yezo* (sometimes *ezo*), which refers to Hokkaido, appears in the names of many animals that are endemic to the island.

The Ainu people traditionally hunted Yezo deer for food, but during the Meiji era (1868–1912), the animals were hunted to near extinction by settlers from the mainland. The settlers also hunted Hokkaido wolves (*Canis lupus hattai*), natural predators of the deer, driving them to extinction in Hokkaido in 1889.

### *Living in balance*

The combination of a lack of predators, milder winters, and plentiful food from local farms allowed the Yezo deer population to recover, and their numbers have grown rapidly since the 1980s. Unfortunately, Yezo deer are destructive: they eat small plants and strip bark off trees, affecting the ecosystem. As a result, communities are using measures such as repellents, fences, and culling to manage the deer population.