

Wild Deer of Japan's Southern Extremities

The deer that live on Aka, Geruma, and some other islands in the Keramas are called Kerama deer. According to the *Ryukyukoku Yuraiki*, an account of the origins of the Ryukyu Kingdom, they were originally brought to the Keramas from Satsuma (present-day Kagoshima Prefecture) and released on Kuba Island in the mid-seventeenth century. Kerama deer are smaller than the Japanese deer found on the island of Honshu, with blackish coats and rather short horns. There are several herds on the islands of Aka and Geruma. They mostly live in the forested hills and around the villages, but sometimes appear in the villages and near the seashore.

As a wild deer that lives in the subtropics, the Kerama deer is a special animal, and has been designated a Japanese national natural treasure.

During the autumn mating season, the males lock horns in battles of strength to claim the females. If you're lucky, you may see them fighting it out on the beach at sunset.