

## Mammals in Kikuchi Gorge

Kikuchi Gorge is a haven for animals that thrive in areas where forest and river ecosystems intersect. The gorge's mammal residents represent some 20 species and include mice, moles, bats, martens (*ten*), giant flying squirrels (*musasabi*), and raccoon dogs (*tanuki*). As most of these animals are small and active mainly at night, they are very infrequently seen by visitors. Two of the most distinctive mammals in the gorge are the dormouse (*yamane*) and water shrew (*kawanezumi*).

The nocturnal ***yamane* dormouse** (*Glirulus japonicus*) grows to be 6.5 to 8 centimeters long and has a thick and fuzzy tail around 5 centimeters in length. Its fur is pale brown with a black stripe down its back, and it spends most of its time in trees, feeding on berries, nectar, and insects. Thanks to the small curved claws on its fingers and toes, it can run very fast upside down along the underside of tree branches.

The ***kawanezumi* water shrew** (*Chimarrogale platycephalus*) is the only land mammal in Japan that gets its prey mainly from freshwater sources. Between 11 and 14 centimeters in length, it has dense and short grayish-black fur, and fringes of flattened, stiff hairs on both lateral edges of each finger and toe, which act as paddles. It swims in the river under the cover of darkness, hunting for aquatic insects, small crabs and shrimp, and fish. The water shrew prefers rapidly flowing waters interspersed with calm pools, like the environment here in Kikuchi Gorge.