

## **Santaro Pass**

The winding mountain road over Santaro Pass in central Amami-Oshima was once part of the main highway that connected the northern and southern halves of the island. Tunnels were opened in 1989, drastically cutting the travel distance and time; now nature is reclaiming the road made redundant by the tunnels. Today the old road is one of the best places for visitors to experience Amami wildlife when it is most active—at night. Among the endemic animals frequently seen are mammals like the Amami rabbit, birds like the Amami woodcock, amphibians like the large Otton frog, and fireflies. Visitors might get a glimpse of the habu viper, the venomous snake that is feared by all forest creatures—and by the people of Amami-Oshima.

*For observing wildlife at Santaro Pass at night:*

- *Please make an advance reservation online.*
- *Hiring a local guide who is experienced in spotting wildlife at night is highly recommended.*
- *Please observe the speed limit of 10 km/h to avoid injuring wild animals.*
- *Please keep a distance from animals.*
- *Please do not bring pets on the tour.*
- *Please use only one spotlight per car.*
- *Please signal with your left blinker to let approaching or overtaking cars know it is safe to pass.*
- *Please do not overtake the car in front of you or pass an approaching car unless they signal with their left blinker.*
- *Please switch off high beams when cars approach.*
- *When passing, cars going uphill have priority. Cars going downhill should pull to the left, turn off the headlights and wait for the approaching car to pass.*