

BIRDS

Amami jay / *Garrulus lidhi* / Ruri-kakesu / ルリカケス

This member of the crow family is endemic to the Amami Islands. It is large—almost 38 centimeters long—with a black face and a strong, ivory-white beak. The head and body are a combination of a rich cobalt blue with brown on the chest and back. The blue of the wings with their white tips is particularly striking when the jay is in flight. It forages on the trees and the forest floor, feeding especially on acorns from the chinquapin oaks that proliferate here. It often hides acorns in tree hollows or the soil for later dining, helping the regeneration of the forest. A social bird, the Amami jay lives in groups except during mating season. It builds nests and lays its eggs in tree hollows—or sometimes even on houses—and sleeps on the thin ends of branches to avoid the habu viper.