

## **Environmental Issues with Alien Species of Mammals**

The introduction of alien species is a problem throughout the islands of the Natural World Heritage Site. The most prominent examples on Amami-Oshima are two animals that have had a damaging effect on the island's endemic species.

Soon after World War II, several thousand Indian mongooses were introduced to the island in order to reduce the number of habu vipers, the venomous snakes that are found throughout the island. The mongooses, however, also preyed on other animals, seriously threatening the populations of native species like the Amami rabbit and the Amami Ishikawa's frog. In 2000 a program was established to restore the island's ecological balance, and in 2005 the Amami Mongoose Busters project launched a widespread campaign to hunt and trap the mongooses. Their efforts were successful: mongooses are now rarely seen, and most of the formerly endangered animal populations have begun to recover.

Feral cats that have left their domestic habitat for the forests and other locations are also a problem for some endangered species, notably Amami-Oshima's unique species of rat and rabbit. Now that the mongooses are nearly extinct, trapping efforts are focused on reducing the number of these cats.