

Frogs

Otton frog / *Babina subaspera* / Otton-gaeru / オットンガエル

This large frog is found only on Amami-Oshima and neighboring Kakeroma Island. The female and male are similar in size (12 to 14 centimeters long) and coloring—a mottled tan back and whitish abdomen, with brown bands on the hind legs. The Otton frog is found for the most part near streams in forest areas, where it feeds on insects and snails. While most frogs have four toes on their front feet, this frog has a fifth toe with an unusual feature. Inside the toe is a concealed weapon—a sharp, retractable claw that the male uses to hold on to a female when mating, often leaving scars. The male has also been observed using the claw in combat with other males, sometimes even attacking an opponent in the middle of mating. The Otton frog has been designated a prefectural natural monument. It was listed as endangered after its population declined due to deforestation and the proliferation of mongooses and feral cats, but the numbers are believed to have been increasing in recent years. Its name comes from the word for “big” in the Amami dialect.

Amami Ishikawa's frog / *Odorrana splendida* / Amami Ishikawa-gaeru / アマミイシカワガエル

The brilliant coloring of this rare amphibian has earned it a reputation as the most beautiful of Japanese frogs. Its body (9 to 12 centimeters long) is a bright yellowish-green, with blotchy areas of gold and purple on its bumpy back, head, and legs. Though once thought to be the same species as a type of frog found on Okinawa Island, it is now believed to have diverged from that species more than 2 million years ago, and is only found on Amami-Oshima. The frog's habitat is near mountain streams, but it can climb trees using the large suction cups on its toes. It feeds on insects, snails, and earthworms, and breeds in headstreams in the forest, where it lays eggs in rock crevices or underground. The tadpoles spend up to two years in the larval stage and can move long distances in streams from the spot where they hatched. The Amami Ishikawa's frog is now designated an endangered species and a prefectural natural monument.