Related species of the Tsushima leopard cat

There are 2 types of wild cats in Japan: the Tsushima leopard cat and the Iriomote cat, which inhabits Iriomote Island in Okinawa prefecture.

Characteristics and morphological shape of the Tsushima leopard cat

How to distinguish between a Tsushima leopard cat and a domestic cat

Besides Tsushima leopard cats, there are also many feral and domestic cats on Tsushima islands. Please remember the following points.

Attention!

The most significant difference is that Tsushima leopard cats have white spots on the back of their ears.

- Long trunk and short legs
- Striped forehead
- Round ear tips
- Long, thick tail

Tsushima Wildlife Conservation Centre

Tsushima Wildlife Conservation Centre is a Ministry of the Environment facility for the protection of Tsushima's wildlife. The centre's activities include providing explanations of the ecology and status of wildlife in Tsushima, including the Tsushima leopard cat. It also carries out education activities to further understanding about wildlife conservation, as well as conservation programs for endangered species.

- Opening hours: 10:00-16:30 (Last admission 16:00)
- Admission fees: Free
- Closed: Monday (or Tuesday if Monday is a national holiday), December 23rd-January 3rd
- Note: No food, drink, smoking or pets are allowed inside the centre.

Please contact us with any information or sightings of Tsushima leopard cats.

Tel.0920-84-5577

http://www.tsushima-yamaneko.jp/

Tsushima has precious plants and animals which show that Tsushima was joined to the Asian continent many years ago. Furthermore, you can observe many rare wild birds here, as it is a stopover for migratory birds.

Memo and stamp corner

Tsushima leopard cat

[Scientific name] Prionailurus bengalensis uryuilla
[Japanese name] Tsushima Yamaneko

The Tsushima leopard cat is a wild cat which only inhabits Tsushima Island. It is regarded as a subspecies of the Leopard cat, which migrated to the island around 100,000 years ago when Tsushima was connected to the Asian continent. In 1971, the Tsushima leopard cat was designated as a National Nature Monument. However, due to road kills and habitat degradation, the cat population is decreasing and in 1994, the Tsushima leopard cat was designated as a National Endangered Species in accordance with the Law for the Conservation of Endangered Species. Conservation projects are being carried out so that in the future Tsushima leopard cats can live in a natural environment.
Ecosystem

Native habitat

The main habitats are naturally broad-leaved forest valleys, the edge of forest and mountain slopes, although they have also been seen in cultivated fields near houses and near the coast. This wealth of nature diversities is very important for the Tsushima leopard cats’ habitats.

Home range

Tsushima leopard cats were fitted with radio-collars in order to investigate their home ranges by radio-tracking. It was discovered that the average home range size of the resident females was 1km², and tend to stay in the same area throughout the year. On the other hand, the resident males had a much larger home range size, particularly in winter, when it can increase to 7 or 8 times the home range size of females. It is thought that this increase is due to reproduction activities.

Field signs

Tsushima leopards are rarely sighted due to their cautious nature, however we can confirm their presence by footprints and feces.

Reproduction

It is thought that Tsushima leopard cats mate in February and March, resulting in 1-3 kittens being born between April and June. The kittens are brought up by their mothers until they become independent after 6-7 months old.

Cat population

In the 1960s, the population was estimated at approximately 250-300 cats. However, recent research shows a decrease in population and habitation and it is currently estimated that there are 80-110 cats. Furthermore, it is thought that there are only a very small number of cats on the Shimojima, the south island.

Food

The most important food is mice and moles which are eaten throughout the year. It is also known that Tsushima leopard cats eat many birds in winter and insects in summer.

Conservation activities

In March 1994, the Ministry of the Environment designated the Tsushima leopard cat as a National Endangered Species in accordance with the Law for the Conservation of Endangered Species. The Ministry of the Environment is cooperating with the Nagasaki Prefectural Government and various actors to carry out conservation activities.

Habitat research

Tsushima leopard cats have been fitted with radio-collars to study their home ranges by radio-tracking. Also, their population and distribution change have been monitored with camera traps and field sign surveys.

Habitat improvements

- Improvement of forest environment due to community support forestation activities
- Promotion of appropriate rearing of domestic cats by the Tsushima Area Cat Appropriate Rearing Council
- Countermeasures against road kills

Projects for breeding in captivity

A breeding project was started at Fukuoka City Zoological Garden in December 1999, so that Tsushima leopard cats could be bred in captivity and then later returned to the wild on the island. The first kittens bred in captivity were born in April 2000 and since then numbers have been steadily increasing. At present, Tsushima leopard cats are also being bred at Inokashira Park Zoo in Tokyo, Yokohama Zoological Gardens in Yokohama and Toyama Municipal Family Park Zoo in Toyama.

Public education programs

The Tsushima Wildlife Conservation Centre holds classes about Tsushima leopard cats for elementary and junior high school children as well as monthly interaction events, so that lots of people can appreciate Tsushima leopard cats and Tsushima’s beautiful nature. Also, in prevent road kills campaigns, appeals are being made for drivers to look out for Tsushima leopard cats safety driving.