

Animals of Japan



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Teacher Instructions

1. Print the information sheets onto A4 paper.
2. Cut each page in half to separate the two sections (one for each animal).
3. Fold each section in half so that the name and picture of the animal are on one side and the information is on the other.

NB: You may require multiple sets, depending on the size of your class. The recommended group size to share one set of cards is 4 students.

Japanese Macaques, are found all over Japan. They are also known as Snow Monkeys because they live in some areas where it snows and they are a popular tourist attraction due to their fondness for a hot bath. Macaques can be seen enjoying a dip in natural hot springs called onsen in these areas.

Location: Nagano Prefecture in the centre of Honshu.

Habitat: Forest covered mountainous areas with onsen.

Best time to see them: In the winter when there is the most snow.

Macaque



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Tanuki are part way between a dog and a racoon. In folklore they are depicted as shapeshifters who get up to all sorts of mischief, pretending to be humans or even teapots!

Their natural habitat is woodland, but they are often found living in urban areas, taking advantage of the food and shelter available there.

Location: Hiroshima Prefecture in the south of Honshu and Tokyo city.

Habitat: Woodland.

Best time to see them: All year round.

Tanuki



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Deer are common in Japan and so they can be found all over the country.

They are used to being around people so can be quite friendly and people regularly feed them by hand. They are officially a national treasure and in the past they have even been considered sacred.

Location: Nara in the south of Honshu, to the east of Shikoku island.

Habitat: Woodland and sub-urban areas.

Best time to see them: Autumn.

Sika Deer



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Salamanders are usually around 15cm long, but the Japanese Giant Salamander can grow up to 150cm and they can regrow limbs! They “breathe” through their skin and mostly use their lungs to help them to float or sink in water.

Their habitat is threatened by pollution and dam-building.

Location: Central Honshu and some smaller islands in southern Japan.

Habitat: Cold, fast-flowing rivers and streams in mountainous regions.

Lifespan: Up to 70 years.

Giant Salamander



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Don't panic! These fearsome creatures live deep under the sea, so you're not going to run into one while exploring.

Fully grown, the **Giant Spider Crab** can have a leg span of up to 370cm! They mostly scavenge for dead fish and eat plants, so really they're gentle giants.

Location: Seas off the southern coasts of Japan.

Habitat: Up to 300m under the sea where it's around 10°C.

Lifespan: 100 years on average.

Giant Spider Crab



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Serow look like a cross between a goat and an antelope. They are quite small, growing to about 75cm tall.

In the past they had been hunted almost to the point of being endangered, but they are now protected as a national monument and their numbers have recovered.

Location: Honshu, Kyushu and Shikoku.

Habitat: Coniferous (boreal/evergreen) forest.

Best time to see them: Winter.

Serow



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Japan is home to three endangered species of **sea turtles**, including Loggerhead Turtles, Hawksbill turtles and Green Sea Turtles, which enjoy the tropical waters to the south and lay their eggs on the beaches.

Other species can be found visiting Japanese waters and occasionally nesting.

Location: Yakushima Island, off the south coast of Kyushu.

Habitat: Tropical waters and beaches.

Best time to see them: April to September, when their eggs are laid and hatched.

Sea Turtles



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Inoshishi, a type of wild boar, were traditionally respected as being brave and determined, but in recent years they have been seen more as a pest as they can be aggressive and cause damage to farms by digging and eating crops.

Location: Across Kyushu, Honshu and Shikoku.

Habitat: Forest covered mountains.

Best time to see them: All year round, but it's best not to go looking for them.

Inoshishi



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Hokkaido Brown Bears are considered to be shy and less dangerous than the black bears found on Honshu which have been known to attack people when panicked.

They are omnivores which means that they will eat meat, fish and plants. There's around 3000 bears living on Hokkaido.

Location: Hokkaido.

Habitat: Forest covered mountainous areas, near to rivers.

Best time to see them: Spring.

Hokkaido Brown Bear



Photo by wüstenigel, CC BY 2.0



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Pika look like tail-less mice, but in fact they are more closely related to rabbits.

They are difficult to see as they are crepuscular, which means they are only active at dusk and dawn (around sunrise and sunset). They live in small burrows where they build up a store of food for winter because they don't hibernate.

Location: Hokkaido.

Habitat: Loose rocky slopes in mountainous regions.

Best time to see them: All year round.

Pika



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