

Dear Charlotte,

Thank you for your letter about the endangered Japanese dormouse. I appreciate your concern about the survival of this special animal and would like to let you know of a project under way in Japan to protect it.

For many years, birds and mammals, including the Japanese dormouse, have been protected under Japan's Wildlife Protection and Hunting Law. Moreover, Japan's Environment Agency, prefectural governments and academics collaborating with non-governmental organisations are engaged in ongoing efforts to extend the protection afforded to Japan's threatened fauna and flora.

The Japanese dormouse has been officially designated in Japan as a National Natural Treasure. A special permit is therefore required even to move a dormouse. In the city of Hokuto in Yamanashi Prefecture, this precious animal has become a symbol of the rich natural environment of the region. You may be interested to know of one initiative the city has implemented, in cooperation with construction companies and concerned organisations, to help protect the dormouse's habitat. An elevated animal pathway has been built over a main road running through the forest, linking the treetops on both sides of the road. This allows dormice and other creatures to cross from one side to the other without the danger of being run over. With the help of strategically placed video cameras, this facility has also made it possible to study the behaviour of these animals and is therefore contributing to environmental education.

Please refer to the following photographs related to this project:



The Japanese dormouse



Elevated animal pathway.

For further information on Japan's forestry and wildlife, including the efforts being undertaken to preserve our irreplaceable natural resources, please go to the link below:

The Wildlife in Japan –

<http://www.env.go.jp/nature/yasei/pamph/pamph01/en.pdf>

Forestry in Japan –

<http://www.jofca.or.jp/koho/Forestry%20in%20Japan.pdf> (46MB)

Sincerely,

Ken Okaniwa (Mr)  
Minister, Embassy of Japan  
Director, Japan Information and  
Cultural Centre

