

NATIONAL

New law will protect 20 endangered species

The Environment Agency plans to list 20 species of animals and plants, excluding birds, for protection under an endangered wildlife species law scheduled to go into effect April 1, informed sources said.

Among the species on the planned list are the Japanese river otter, the Tsushima wildcat and Iriomote wildcat as well as snakes, salamanders, fresh water fish and flowers.

The endangered species preservation law was passed last May.

When it goes into effect it will designate certain marshlands, rivers and forests as wildlife sanctuaries. It will also prohibit the capture and harvest of or trade in the

threatened species.

In April, the agency is also expected to designate 38 species of birds that are considered to be endangered, including the Japanese crested ibis, the golden eagle, short-tailed albatross and white stork.

The 20 species are all listed in the agency's Red Data Book of threatened wildlife in Japan and are considered to be most in need of emergency protection.

They are not only threatened with the destruction of their environments by urban development but also by enthusiasts who capture them.

On the agency list are the Japanese river otter found in Kochi Prefecture, the Tsushima wildcat of Nagasaki Pre-

fecture and the Iriomote wildcat in Okinawa Prefecture.

The list also includes Kikuzato brook snake in Okinawa, the Hokuriku salamander found in Toyama Prefecture and the Abe salamander of Kyoto Prefecture.

The agency also chose four of the 16 species of freshwater fish designated as threatened by the Red Data Book, including the Ryukyu ayu and "mikyako tanago" (a Japanese bitterling).

The agency also named four species of insect from the Red Data Book's 23 endangered species and six species of plants that, because of their popularity, are threatened by people who collect them.



THE IRIOMOTE WILDCAT, which is native to Iriomote Island, Okinawa Prefecture, is among 20 species the Environment Agency plans to protect under a new law.