Japan in Winter: Birding on Ice

Set departure tour
7th – 20th February, 2015
Extension: 20th – 21st February, 2015

Tour leader: Charley Hesse
Report by Charley Hesse  Photos by Charley Hesse & tour participants

Blakinston’s Fish-Owl was our bird of the trip (Charley Hesse)

This year was our most successful Japan tour yet, with 175 bird species seen. Mammals were also on the menu, and we saw an impressive 13 species, including such treats as Racoon Dog, Japanese Giant Flying Squirrel and Dall’s Porpoise. Japan is all about quality of birds though, not quantity, and we sure had plenty of that. Of course we saw all the big Hokkaido draw cards of Blakinston’s Fish-Owl, Red-crowned Cranes dancing in the snow plus close encounters with dozens of Steller’s Sea Eagles on the ice flow, but we also enjoyed the thousands of cranes on their wintering grounds in the south, an incredible 10 species of alcids on our 4 separate pelagics, plus plenty of great forest birding. On this tour, there is always a likelihood of disruption due to bad weather conditions. Despite the unusually mild temperatures for most of the tour, we almost were affected by road closures, ferry and flight cancelations, but with a little bit of luck and some skilful management, we managed to avoid all adversities and lost no birding time whatsoever. On Honshu we visited the picturesque, forested slopes of the Asayama volcano at Karuizawa where we saw Japanese Woodpecker and Japanese Accentor; we watched the Snow Monkeys keeping warm in the hot springs at Jigokudani; and saw hundreds of Baikal Teal & Falcated Ducks amongst countless other waterfowl at the Western Honshu wetlands. On Kyushu we saw over 10,000 cranes of 4 different species at Arasaki, dozens of rare Saundre’s Gulls at Yatsushiro, Japanese Waxwing at Miike, Japanese Woodpigeon at Hyuga, Black-faced Spoonbills at Hitotsuse River and Japanese Murrelet on a boat trip from Kadogawa. After the previously mentioned Hokkaido highlights we finished the tour with a pelagic extension round-trip ferry ride to Hachijojima on which we saw Black-footed & Laysan Albatrosses. You cannot visit Japan without experiencing the culture, and clients were patiently navigated through the intricate maze of etiquette and cuisine by our fluent Japanese-speaking guide, for a fascinating side dish to Japan’s birding wonders.
PRE-TOUR BIRDING
6th February - Sasagawa

I joined on early-arriving client for a spot of pre-tour birding at Sasagawa, in Chiba prefecture. Although not the best time of year, some Ochre-rumped (or Japanese Reed-) Buntings were supposed to over-winter there and we set off in search of them. We took a taxi from Narita and got out next to the reed-fringed Tone River, close to the town of Sasagawa. Straight away we saw a few Oriental Greenfinches and a Dusky Thrush and in some nearby rice fields, our first White Wagtail and several Buff-bellied Pipits. We started walking along the reed beds and soon found some buntings. Unbelievably, the first ones we saw were actually Ochre-rumped Buntings and we saw very few after this. Common Reed Buntings were much more numerous after this but we also found many Meadow Buntings by the edge of the reeds plus a a handful of Chestnut-eared, Rustic & Black-faced Buntings to give a 6 bunting day. We also picked up a female Daurian Redstart and a Bull-headed Shrike. No Japanese Swamp Warbler though which is very tricky at this time of year, if present at all. Scanning the river we found Great Crested Grebe, Great Cormorant, Gray Heron and Eurasian Coot. The area also held several raptors, including Osprey, Eastern Marsh-Harrier, Black-eared Kite, Eastern Buzzard and Peregrine Falcon. Walking back along, we found a nice Blue Rock-Thrush under a bridge. Then scanning the river from bridge we started our duck list with Mallard, Eastern Spot-billed Duck, Northern Pintail, Green-winged Teal and Common Pochard. On our walk back to station we saw our first Brown-eared Bulbul and White-cheeked Starlings.

MAIN TOUR
7th February – Tokyo to Karuizawa

Our final 2 clients arrived at Narita late morning, so we killed a bit of time in the gardens of the nearby Naritasan, an Impressive local temple. We picked up some common birds like Oriental Turtle-Dove, Japanese White-eye and Oriental Greenfinch and other forest birds including Varied & Japanese Tits, Hawfinch, Pygmy Woodpecker and some surprise Dusky Warblers. We went to Narita Airport to meet the final arrivals and we were soon on our way to Karuizawa in the Japanese Alps, some 4 hours away. On the drive we saw several Great Cormorants, Black-eared Kites and Eastern Buzzard. In Karuizawa, we dropped our bags at our minshuku (Japanese-style Inn), and headed straight out to yacho-no-mori (literally ‘Wild bird forest’). Things were a little quiet as we walked along the trail on a thin layer of snow, but we soon came across a nice Daurian Redstart, followed by a small flock with Willow & Coal Tits in, and also heard a Great Spotted Woodpecker. After settling in back at the minshuku, we headed out to a small local restaurant for our first Japanese meal together.

Our first of many delicious Japanese meals (Michaela Bauer)

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8th February – Karuizawa & Toden Lake
We took a pre-breakfast bird walk along the road. There was a beautiful blue sky but quite a nip in the air. We hadn’t gone far before we found our first bird, a nice female Red-flanked Bluetail. We walked up to a pond fed by hot spring water. Quite a few ducks had gathered here and we saw Gadwall, Eurasian Wigeon, Eastern Spot-billed Duck, Green-winged Teal and best of all a couple of beautiful drake Falcated Ducks. We continued our walk along the road passing through open and forested habitats where we added Great Spotted Woodpecker, Bull-headed Shrike, several Bramblings feeding on the ground and a Hawfinch. I heard a strange call I didn’t recognise and as we moved closer to investigate, we saw a couple of endemic Japanese Squirrels squeaking and clucking away. We headed back for breakfast and afterwards took another walk up to yacho-no-mori. On the way we checked a couple of bridges and finally found our target Brown Dipper bobbing and swimming in the freezing cold, crystal-clear water. Inside the forest, we found our first Eurasian Jay, very different looking than the one we see in Europe, and had nice views of the endemic Japanese Green Woodpecker. We found a nice mixed flock with Coal, Japanese & Long-tailed Tits, Pygmy Woodpecker and Eurasian Nuthatch. By now it had clouded over and started snowing, so we turned back, and on the way back down, met a bird photographer who said he had just seen a Japanese Flying Squirrel poking its head out of a nest box. I knew the spot and we walked straight there to see a cute pink nose sticking out.

Brown Dipper is a regular resident of fast-flowing mountain streams (Charley Hesse)

We jumped into the car and drove to a nearby temple which had lots of mistletoes, a favourite food of waxwings. We didn’t see any there so drove to an area of open fields on the outskirts of town. We found an amazing field full of birds, and had several female and a beautiful male Japanese Green Pheasant. There were also plenty of Oriental Turtle-Doves, Meadow & Rustic Buntings, Oriental Greenfinches and nearby, an Eastern Buzzard. Driving through a residential area, I spotted a couple of Azure-winged Magpies flying over and we had good views when they perched in a nearby tree. An old lady in the area put seeds out for the birds and at her feeders we had good views of Willow & Varied Tit, but no luck with an Ural Owl that was supposed to nest in the area. We drove round a bit more and at a bit of forest edge we flushed up a few Yellow-throated Buntings and the main target for this area, a Long-tailed Rosefinch.
Next we drove on to a neighbouring town called Saku where we had a quick lunch before heading to Toden Lake. There were a lot fewer ducks than last year, but we did see Common Pochard, Tufted Duck and Common Merganser. From there we walked to the neighbouring river and scanning it, found: Reed Bunting, Japanese Wagtail, Common Sandpiper, Common Snipe and our target Long-billed Plovers that were actually still in breeding plumage. We had a flyby of some Bewick Swans and a few Mandarin Ducks swan across the river and out of sight. We walked along a track where we had a different view of the river and saw Little Grebe, Great Cormorant, Eurasian Coot and the swans that had just flown over. We had added quite a few birds to our list but I wanted to get back in time for another forest walk to try again for the very tricky endemic Copper Pheasant. It had stopped snowing and the forest was very quiet as we walked round, until the bark of a Sika Deer broke the silence. No luck with the pheasant, so tomorrow morning would be our last chance here. After another delicious Japanese meal we went on a night drive back around the open fields. No sign of Ural Owls, but we were very lucky to see a Raccoon Dog, followed by a couple of Red Foxes and a beautiful stag Sika Deer.

9th February – Karuizawa to Komatsu via Jigokudani
We took one last walk yacho-no-mori but still no Copper pheasant. We would have to try again for it in Kyushu. We did see Coal Tit, the endemic race of Eurasian Wren and more Brown Dippers. After breakfast we said goodbye to our friendly host and went to check out the feeders at a local hotel. There was a lot of birds coming in and we saw Oriental Turtle-Dove, Pygmy & Great Spotted Woodpeckers, Eurasian Jay, Willow, Varied & Japanese Tits, Eurasian Nuthatch, Daurian Redstart, Oriental Greenfinch, some very attractive Hawfinches and our first Eurasian Siskins. The reason for coming here though was a tip off that Japanese Accentor was coming in. It didn’t take long before a rather drab bird looking very much like the European Dunnock, showed itself. Some years they can be scarce and it was a relief to get this endemic under our belts. We had a long way to go and it was supposed to snow quite a bit in the afternoon.

The endemic Japanese Accentor showed very well this year (Charley Hesse)
We left Karuizawa and headed for the Snow Monkey Park at Jigokudani which was a couple of hours away. It was a 2km walk from the parking lot and we kept up a brisk pace so as to not get caught up in the snow later on. This is a very famous spot to see the Japanese Macaque and they performed very well, jumping in and out of the hot springs and rolling around in the snow. We could have spent a lot longer here but we didn’t dawdle. The snow began lightly and the further we went, the heavier it got. Gusting winds in addition to the snow made the driving conditions very unpleasant, but the many long tunnels along this stretch of road were a welcome break from the elements. The clients saw a few birds along the way, with Great Egret, plus our first Vega & Slaty-backed Gulls. My eyes were glued to the road though. It was a relief to make it to the city of Komatsu, our base for the next 2 days. After a soak in a nice hot bath, we all went out for a very fun meal where we ordered sushi on a touch screen.

Scenes of the snow monkeys in the hot spring at Jigokudani (Charley Hesse)
10th February – Western Honshu wetlands
We began the day at Awara, south of Komatsu, which are the feeding grounds of around 1,400 Greater White-fronted Geese. We drove around the whole area in search of them, but all we saw were snow-covered fields. It maybe that they chose to feed elsewhere today. We did see a few ducks nearby, with Eurasian Wigeon, Common Pochard, Tufted Duck and Greater Scaup, but eventually we gave up on the geese and drove along a wide river towards the sea. There were Japanese, Great & Pelagic Cormorants roosting along the river plus Kamchatka, Slaty-backed, Vega & Black-tailed Gulls. We made our way towards Oshima, a small island with a footbridge across to it. It was a bit chilly for a stroll but we did find our first Harlequin Ducks in a small harbour there, then we went along to a spot with a nice views where we did a spot of sea-watching. There was a brief pause in the snow and wind and we saw quite a bit, with Red-throated Loon, Red-necked Grebe, Pomarine Jaeger and Black-legged Kittiwake. A Pacific Reef-Heron flew by along the coast and we also had a nice Blue Rock-Thrush nearby. We made our way north to Kaga City, and the visitors centre at Katano Kamoike. A protected lake and a haven for ducks, geese and swans. Its most famous resident are the large numbers of Baikal Teal which was new for most of the group. There were also several Bewick’s Swans and Taiga Bean-Geese but no Tundra Bean Goose this year. Other birds seen were Falcated Duck, Northern Pintail, Little Grebe, Japanese Wagtail and we also had a flyby of Eastern Marsh-Harrier. We took a short drive nearby, looking for Gray-headed Lapwings but they were probably huddled up in a corner somewhere out of sight. One short stretch of road was particularly good for passerines and he saw Daurian Redstart, Pale Thrush, Yellow-throated Bunting, Eurasian Bullfinch and Hawfinch.

After lunch we jumped on the highway and headed up to Kanazawa City which has a few interesting sites. We visited an area called Kahoku and on the way we stopped to scan a river. I flushed a Japanese Green Pheasant on the way up to the edge, then we saw a few gulls and even a surprise White-tailed Eagle. Next we went to the edge of a large lake that was very good for ducks last year. On the edge of the water we flushed a few Reed Buntings, and scanning over the water, found Eared & Great Crested Grebes, Eurasian Wigeon, Eurasian Teal plus several stunning male Smews. We drove on to an area of water channels where we found Common Merganser, Gadwall and Northern Shovelers, and from there to some open fields with Northern Lapwing, Eastern Buzzard, Bull-headed Shrike and Sky Larks. We had bired this area pretty thoroughly and jumped back on the highway south to Awara. We waited around at a spot to try and catch a flyby of all the geese to their roosting site but they never showed. We did see the powerful Northern Goshawk chasing after birds. It had been fairly unpleasant weather all day long but we had seen quite a few birds considering. At night we went to a great hotpot restaurant which was just the thing after a full day’s birding in the cold.
11th February – Komatsu to Izumi
We had just enough time for a bit of birding around Komatsu before our flight to Kyushu. We tried some of the more extensive areas of rice fields and found Eastern Buzzard, many Oriental Greenfinches, Northern Lapwing, Eurasian Kestrel, Bull-headed Shrike, Rook, several pretty Meadow Bunting.
We ended up at the feeding fields for Bewick’s Swans and we saw around 300 of these beautiful birds. We noticed a small group of large birds flying towards us and as they got closer we could see that it was actually 6 Hooded Cranes. We were very lucky to see these birds here and I had heard that the Kyushu birds had started leaving their wintering grounds early. Before heading to the airport we hit one last site, a large lake. There seemed to be a lot of ducks on the water and with closer inspection, we saw that many of them were Falcated Ducks. Over 200 of them! Other species present were Gadwall, Eurasian Wigeon, Eastern Spot-billed Duck, Northern Pintail, Eurasian Teal, Common Pochard, Tufted Duck, Great Cormorant, Osprey plus a few Black-faced Buntings zipping in and out of cover. Our time was up so we drove to the airport for our flight to Fukuoka.

Northern Lapwing is called ‘Tageri’ in Japanese, which means ‘Rice field plover’ (Charley Hesse)

It was so much warmer in Kyushu that it was like arriving in a different country. I spent 5 years of my life here so it felt almost like coming home. It was a long shot, but there was a mountain called Kusenbu on the way to Izumi where I had seen Copper Pheasants many years ago. We pulled off the highway and drove up a winding narrow road to the top of the small mountain. It was fairly mild below, but up here there was still a bit of snow left and we had to park the car and walk the last bit. It was pretty birdie though and we saw Daurian Redstart, Yellow-throated Bunting and Red-flanked Bluetail along the road. From the summit, we walked along a trail and came across Pygmy Woodpecker, Varied Tit and a flock of Eurasian Siskins. There was no sign of the pheasants though. Driving down we saw several Pale Thrushes flying off the road. It had been an interesting drive but all we added was a Eurasian Magpie along the road before getting back on the highway. It is a very localized bird in Japan and only found in this area. We finished our drive to Izumi and checked into our hotel ready for our big day tomorrow.
12th February – Arasaki & Yatsushiro
After an early breakfast, we drove to the crane feeding site at Arasaki. My plan was to arrive just before dawn to catch the thousands of cranes flying in from their roosting sites. As it got light, we could see huge flock of cranes circling round calling all the while. It was incredibly atmospheric. Most of the birds landed some distance from the road on which the grain was put out and from there they walked closer. We started scanning the flocks as it got light and we could see that the vast majority were Hooded Cranes with a few heads of White-naped Cranes sticking out here and there. A family of 4 Sandhill Cranes turned up quite soon and we also spotted a few Common Cranes dotted around. They were the 4 species present this year. Unfortunately no Demoiselle’s or Siberian Cranes that turn up some years. Scanning a flooded rice field to one side, we also noticed a few Common Shelducks, Northern Lapwings and both Eurasian & Black-faced Spoonbills that were flying around.

Scenes from the crane feeding site at Arasaki (Charley Hesse)
It was quite a spectacular start to the day. Once we had our fill, we went on to a ditch which can be good for rails and crakes, although all we saw was a Eurasian Moorhen and a Northern Shoveler nearby. We drove around some fields which were full of birds. We saw Common Sandpiper, Eurasian Kestrel, Bull-headed Shrike, lots of Sky Larks, a Common Snipe in a ditch, many Buff-bellied Pipits in the muddy fields and the odd Meadow Bunting. We got to the observation centre which hadn’t opened yet but in the parking lot there were lots of Rooks and Russet Sparrows. We saw a flock of European Starlings and a Eurasian Sparrowhawk flew by. Next we went on to some reed beds where we found our target Chinese Penduline-Tits as well as a Zitting Cisticola and several Reed Buntings.

Land reclamation has reduced the available habitat for Saunderson’s Gull (Charley Hesse)

We’d had an incredible couple of hours but my plan was now to head north to Yatsushiro to beat the tide and find some shorebirds and gulls. It was a bit of a drive but on the way we saw an Osprey and Red-breasted Merganser. When we reached Yatsushiro, we made our way down some back roads towards the coast, and on our way went by a flooded field full of small gulls. At first glance I thought they must be Black-headed Gulls, but on closer inspection we found them to be the rare Saunderson’s Gull, and 37 of them! Unbelievable. The tide was coming in and it was already half way up. There was just a little bit of mud still exposed and it was here that all the birds were concentrated. Here we saw Falcated Duck, Northern Pintail, many Kentish Plovers, a few Common Greenshanks, hundreds of Dunlin and a single Terek Sandpiper, also a good find. There were hundreds of gulls, mainly Vega Gulls but we also managed to pick out a couple of Mongolian & Heuglin’s Gulls. After a spot of lunch at a nice Japanese diner we started back and saw a few Asian House Martins on the way.
We drove all the way back to Izumi and cut straight up a mountain road. We made our way up to a dam which is a stake out for Mandarin Duck which we found as well as a beautiful Common Kingfisher. We took a walk around the road above the dam at the base of the forest and found a few nice birds like Pygmy Woodpecker, Japanese Tit, Red-flanked Bluetail and our awaited Japanese Grosbeak. We went from there along the Komenotsu River where we saw Green-winged Teal, Brown Dipper, Gray & Japanese Wagtails and our main target, the Crested Kingfisher. We drove back down to Arasaki where we checked the same ditch again, this time finding a beautiful Ruddy-breasted Crane and also a Green Sandpiper. One last site for the day was along a small river with overgrown banks. Here we saw Japanese Bush-Warbler, Japanese White-eye, Daurian Redstart, Pale & Dusky Thrushes and Black-faced Bunting. When checking a thrush hopping around on some short grass by the river, I was absolutely astonished to find it was a Naumann’s Thrush. What an astonishing find! It was especially memorable for one tour participant who had missed it on a tour to its more regular grounds. What an incredible day it had been.

Naumann’s Thrush is a mega bird in Japan (Charley Hesse)

13th February – Arasaki to Miike
We had done so well yesterday, we were left with very few birds to look for. After breakfast we checked out and headed straight back to Arasaki. We drove passed feeding station again, spotting many of the same birds again, like White-naped & Hooded Cranes, Common Shelduck and Northern Lapwing. We went back to the ditch to try one more time for the Brown-cheeked Rail. Driving along the edge of the water, we had great views of a couple of Eurasian Spoonbills, along with Common Snipe, Eurasian Moorhen and several Common Reed Buntings. We had all but given up on the rail, when we spotted it dashing across and into deep cover. It was a good if brief view. We drove out past a small estuary with 2 Black-faced Spoonbills on it and on to the observation centre where we checked the large flocks of Rooks for Daurian Jackdaws. We couldn’t find any, and after looking at some more Russet Sparrows, we said goodbye to Arasaki.
We drove inland to the town of Satsuma, located on the Sendai River, where Scaly-sided Merganser had recently been seen. This is one of the rarest ducks in Asia and every year, several turn up to winter in Japan. We stopped at several points, scanning the river and saw a wide variety of ducks, including: Mandarin Duck, Eurasian Wigeon, Green-winged Teal, Common Pochard and Tufted Duck along with Little Grebe, Great Cormorant and Eurasian Coot. Next we went to a riverside park, where we saw Long-billed & Little Ringed Plovers, Common & Green Sandpipers, Gray & Japanese Wagtails, Barn & Red-rumped Swallows, Asian House Martin, Blue Rock-Thrush and Meadow Bunting. It was great birding but the Scaly-sided Merganser eluded us. We drove on to the Kirishima hot spring area and visited the impressive Kirishima Jingo Shrine. This is a good location for Red-billed Leiothrix which although an introduced species, is still a rather pretty one. We found it fairly easily, along with Daurian Redstart, Red-flanked Bluetail and Olive-backed Pipit, and it was also nice to have a brief cultural stop. We continued our drive and had lunch with a view over the most active volcanoes in the area, Sakurajima. After this we drove on to Miike with a brief stop to look at Japanese Grosbeak.

Miike is a volcanic crater lake and the scenery from the viewpoint at the top is stunning. From there we drove to a small temple also overlooking the lake and here we saw a Bull-headed Shrike, some Japanese White-eyes, Pale Thrush and several buntings. Each one we checked carefully to in case it was the rare Grey Bunting, but all were Black-faced Buntings. Next, we walked down to the parking lot, where we saw Varied, Japanese & Coal Tits, several Bramblings and Eurasian Siskins and some beautiful Yellow-throated Buntings. One of our main targets here was the endemic Ryukyu Minivet. I picked out the distinctive call and we located a couple of birds in the trees. We walked to the trailhead into the forest and started along. Michaela waved us back and when we went back to see what she was looking at, we saw it was a Japanese Giant Flying Squirrel! What a great find during the day. Further on we found Pygmy Woodpecker, Eurasian Nuthatch, Long-tailed Tit and our main target, White-backed Woodpecker which we located by following its drumming. We finished the forest loop trail back at the camp site and as we were walking back to the car, we bumped into another birding group led by the author of our field guide, Mark Brazil. He was very friendly and put us onto a Japanese Waxwing which he had just found back up at the top viewpoint. We drove back to Kirishima and up to our quaint little lodge in the mountains where I insisted that everybody try the outdoor hot springs before dinner.
14th February – Miike to Kadogawa & Miyazaki
We started the day in the dark back at Miike where we drove up and down looking for Copper Pheasant. It was a long shot and unsurprisingly we didn’t find any although we did find the very dark race of Sika Deer whose eye shine we picked out in the spotlight. As it got lighter, we started looking for the elusive Grey Bunting too but had no more success with that. On the roads we saw good numbers of Red-flanked Bluetails, Daurian Redstarts and Pale Thrushes. We went up to the temple again and here we saw Japanese Grosbeak, a Ryukyu Minivet in flight, the same Bull-headed Shrike and a Meadow Bunting singing from the top of a tree. We went down to the trailhead and set off along the forest trail. There was more activity than yesterday and we had Varied & Japanese Tits and Black-faced Bunting but no sign of Grey Bunting. The trail ended at the camp site where we saw Yellow-throated Bunting and several Eurasian Siskin. Our time at Miike was up and we set off for Kadogawa on the coast where we were to take a boat trip in search of Japanese Murrelet. After a quick stop for lunch, we drove to the harbour and were soon aboard a boat and chugging out of the harbour. The sky was blue and the sea was flat calm and on and around the many buoys and other floats we saw Great Crested Grebe, Black-tailed & Vega Gulls, Japanese Cormorant and Pacific Reef-Heron. It wasn’t long before Gido spotted a group of 3 Japanese Murrelets, which the captain got us nice and close to for great photo opportunities.

Half of the world’s Japanese Murrelets nest close to Kadogawa (Charley Hesse)

Back in port we had a quick cup of tea and chatted with the captain and his family before heading on to a picturesque spot on the coast near the city of Hyuga. We walked though some nice coastal forest in which we saw the tiny Japanese White-eye. We reached a viewpoint and were lucky enough to spot a distant Peregrine Falcon circling above the cliffs. It started heading our way and got closer and closer to give great views. The main reason for coming here was to look for Japanese Wood-Pigeon, a species rarely seen on the main islands of Japan. The local birds roost on a nearby offshore island but come to the Hyuga coast to feed during the day. They are pretty sedentary when feeding and your need to be really lucky to catch one in flight. We had all but given up but on the way back heard the distinctive deep call that sounded almost like a cow ‘mooing’. We got as close to the call as possible but it seemed to be coming from downslope so there seemed to be little chance we would actually see it. I decided to take the initiative and leaving the others at the viewpoint, I clambered down the slope and was lucky enough to flush it in the right direction, giving the clients great views. What luck!
We continued our drive south and on the way saw Eastern Buzzard, Eurasian Kestrel and numerous overwintering Barn Swallows. The last call of the day was to explore a couple of estuaries, the largest of which named Hitotsusegawa. We had a fine selection of ducks including: Common Shelduck, Gadwall, Eurasian Wigeon, Northern Pintail, Green-winged Teal, Common Pochard and Tufted Duck plus Little & Eared Grebes. We hoped to see a few shorebirds and as well as Kentish Plover, Green Sandpiper, Common Greenshank and Dunlin, we also added Black-bellied Plover and Eurasian Curlew to our list. Hitotsusegawa is one of the few places in Japan to see Saunders's Gull and we added another 4 of these rare birds. Other birds seen in the area were Common Kingfisher, Blue Rock-Thrush, Buff-bellied Pipit and Reed Bunting. We finished the day at a pond packed with birds, including 8 endangered Black-faced Spoonbills, our first Black-crowned Night-Heron and around sunset Michaela spotted 2 more Raccoon Dogs to end a very full day’s birding.

15th February – Miyazaki to Tsuruimura
Unfortunately there was no time for birding this morning and we had to head straight to Miyazaki Airport after breakfast, seeing Oriental Turtle-Dove, Barn Swallows and a Blue Rock-Thrush on the way. We even saw an Osprey from the terminal building. Everything went smoothly and our flight to Tokyo left on time. We were told that there was a chance our connecting to Kushiro might have to turn back if the wind was too strong to land. We crossed our fingers and luck prevailed. It was warmer than expected in Kushiro with a positively balmy 0°C (32°F). The good news was that all the roads in the Kushiro area were open, but the bad news for tomorrow was that all the roads to Rausu were closed. We decided to spend our last unhindered birding time at the Akan Crane Centre and on the way flushed what could only have been a Red Crossbill from next to the road. Also on the drive were several Black-eared Kites, an Eastern Buzzard, Japanese Tit and Japanese Grosbeak. As we got out of the car at Akan, we could hear the unmistakeable bugling of Red-crowned Cranes and entering the centre we were greeted with the welcome sight of about 110 birds at close range. What a relief it was to see them after worrying whether we would even arrive. They performed beautifully giving us a full show of strutting, bugling, dancing and flying, and we finally dragged ourselves away to drive to our comfortable hotel in Tsuruimura where we enjoyed an impressive gourmet meal.
16th February – Tsuruimura to Rausu

We started the day at dawn at a bridge over the Setsuri River, famous as a Red-crowned Crane roosting site. Photographers often gather there to take photos of the cranes waking up in the misty river. This morning was fairly mild so there was no mist over the river and hoards of photographer were mercifully absent. There were over a hundred cranes though and some close, so we had a nice but rather cold time watching them become active, dancing, feeding and some flying off over our heads. There were a few Whooper Swans present on the river and several Sika Deer stags were having play fights in the distance. Our first Steller’s Sea-Eagle soared high over our heads, a Great Spotted Woodpecker appeared across the road and we were even lucky enough to catch a flock of 10 Bohemian Waxwings in the scope before they flew off. We went back to our lodge for a nice breakfast before heading out to hit the Tsuruimura feeding sites.

Bohemian Waxwings can be very confiding (Charley Hesse)

First we went to one called Tsurumidai. Here there were many Whooper Swans and Red-crowned Cranes waiting in the snow for the nice old lady to appear and feed them. While we were waiting too, a Bohemian Waxwing appeared on some low bushes across the road and we rushed across to photograph it. Next we drove the short distance to Ito Sanctuary, the final feeding site that we would visit. There were plenty of cranes here too but we were now more interested in smaller birds at the bird table. Here we saw Great Spotted Woodpecker, Marsh & Japanese Tits, Eurasian Nuthatch and some nice Eurasian Bullfinches too. Just before we left we spotted a beautiful Red Fox plodding through the snow in from of the photographers. From here we headed back to a spot close to Akan where Ural Owl had been seen previously. We saw our first Rough-legged Hawk and a Common Goldeneye at a bridge over a stream, but no owls.
We heard that the road to Nemuro was now open but that the road to Rausu was still closed. At least Nemuro got us a bit closer, so we set off hoping for the best. We were in no rush now, so we birded our way there. The first stop was the town of Akkeshi where I had been told was very good at the moment. We found some ducks in the harbour, like Eurasian Wigeon, Black Scoter, Common Goldeneye and Red-breasted Merganser, but not the big numbers I had been hoping for. It was however great for gulls and we saw Black-headed, Kamchatka, Slaty-backed Gull, a single Glaucous Gull flying by, but best of all, great views of our first Glauous-winged Gull. A definite favourite for one gull-lover in particular. From there we went on to the Kiritappu Peninsular. In a bay at the base of the peninsular we had Greater Scaup, Black Scoter and our first White-winged Scoters. On the peninsular itself, we had another Rough-legged Hawk, Merlin, and from the viewpoint at the end, lots of Harlequin Ducks, Pelagic Cormorant, White-tailed Eagles, a Peregrine Falcon soaring over the cliffs and even Sea Otter and Harbour Seal in the sea below. It was pretty exposed and very cold, so we started walking back to the car, but stopped when we spotted a small flock of Asian Rosy-Finch flying over. These were a major target and they let us get quite close for photos.

Just as we were thinking that we would have to book accommodation in Nemuro, we got the call that the road to Rausu was now open. This was the best news we could have had, and we wasted no time in getting there. We drove past countless Steller’s Sea-Eagles along the road, but our sights were now set on the Blakiston’s Fish-Owl. We arrived just after dark, threw our bags into the hostel and went straight to the small restaurant overlooking the stream where they were fed. The set up was impressive. Big lights lit up the spot beautifully and there were some windows open for photographers to stick there big lenses out of. No joke, we were there about 10 minutes before our first Blakiston’s Fish-Owl showed up and posed beautifully for photos. The owner was keen to shoo it off and put new fish in the feeding site so the bird would come back again. We let him do this and sure enough, 10 minutes later the bird was back for more. After eating another live fish, it flew off and we enjoyed our meal. A while later, some French photographers who had gone elsewhere for dinner, came back and they waited until midnight but the owls were not to return. What an amazing day and what incredible luck we had.
17th February - Rausu
Today was supposed to be our boat trip to the ice flow to take picture of Steller’s Sea-Eagles. I had been informed that the ice flow hadn’t arrived yet, but the captain took our money and I wasn’t quite sure what to expect. Well, as luck would have it, the ice flow had finally arrived and this was the first boat trip of the year to feed the eagles. Well, we weren’t complaining. As we chugged across the water we even saw some alcids, with Common & Thick-billed Murres and Least Auklet. The numbers of eagles seemed a bit down on last year, but we still had plenty of both White-tailed Eagles and Steller’s Sea-Eagle which put a great show of flying around, swooping down and feeding on the plentiful fish thrown onto the ice. The gulls had a great feed too and we saw a good diversity, with Kamchatka, Vega, Slaty-backed, Glaucous-winged & Glaucous Gulls. It was a wonderful morning, the photographic opportunities were world class and I had pretty much filled my memory cards.

We got back to the port and went for a nice lunch after which we enjoyed some great sea-watching from the coast. We headed south from town, stopping at as many view points over the sea as possible. I had heard that there were very few alcids around a week ago, but it seemed that many had arrived with the ice. Along with more of the previously mentioned species, we saw Spectacled Guillemot, Rhinoceros Auklet and large numbers of Ancient Murrelets. We had a good selection of sea ducks, with Harlequin Duck, White-winged & Black Scoters, Common Goldeneye and Common & Red-breasted Mergansers. Other birds seen were both Red-throated & Arctic Loons, Eared Grebe and Pelagic Cormorant but one of the most interesting sightings of the day were the numerous Dall’s Porpoises with their distinctive gray dorsal fins and bump above their tails. Another fantastic day in Hokkaido.
More eagle shots from our awesome boat ride off Rausu (Charley Hesse)
18th February – Notsuke Peninsular to Lake Furen & Cape Nosappu

Rausu had been a resounding success and it was now time to move on to Nemuro and last site of the main tour. The day got off to a good start with a Steller’s Sealion from the window of the hotel at breakfast. On the way to Nemuro, we hit the Notsuke Peninsular, a very odd-shaped piece of land jutting out into the sea. We had several stops along here, picking up our first Long-tailed Duck, lots of Sika Deer, a few Red Foxes and of course plenty of White-tailed & Steller’s Sea-Eagles. Other sea ducks were plentiful, with Harlequin Duck, Black Scoter, Common Goldeneye and White-winged Scoter, as were gulls with Slaty-backed, Glaucoius-winged & Glaucoius Gulls. It was alcids that we were most interested in though and the sea was full of them. Most were at quite a distance but at the Todowara Nature Centre, the ice was closer and we saw Common Murre, Ancient Murrelet, Least & Rhinoceros Auklets, Spectacled Guillemot and even a very early Tufted Puffin.

The Red Fox in Hokkaido is an especially vivid color (Charley Hesse)

We continued our drive to Nemuro spotting Eurasian Bullfinch, Eastern Buzzard, Black-headed Gull and even a pair of Red-crowned Cranes on the way. We stopped at the Hakuchodai rest area for lunch, and true to its name (it means ‘swan view point’) there were plenty of Whooper Swans. We arrived in Nemuro and stopped in at our minshuku next to Lake Furen for information from our very knowledgeable host. While we were chatting, there was constant activity at the feeders just outside the window and we saw Pygmy & Great Spotted Woodpeckers, Eurasian Jay (a different race from Honshu), Marsh & Japanese Tits and Eurasian Nuthatch. After gathering the latest information, we headed of towards Cape Nosappu, stopping to scan a bridge with Tufted Duck, Greater Scaup and Northern Pintail. We had been told that Rock Sandpiper had been seen at a blind on the peninsular but that it wasn’t regular. Indeed we failed to see any although we did see both Largha & Harbour Seals. We went all the way out to the cape and spent some time scanning for Red-faced Cormorant which was supposed to roost here. We had both Red-throated & Arctic Loons plus many Pelagic Cormorants gathering but no sign of Red-faced. As it started to get dark, all the cormorants flew up to roost on the cliffs and we headed back for a delicious home-cooked meal.
19th February – Habomai boat ride & Betsukai area
This morning we were going on a boat trip but it wasn’t leaving too early and we had time for a pre-breakfast stroll to the nearby patch of forest. We left the minshuku and walked to the Shunkunitai Nature Centre spotting a nice Hawfinch on the way. It was early and the place wasn’t open yet but we checked the feeders anyway. We saw a Eurasian Jay hopping around in the trees and then our hoped for Eurasian Red Squirrel of a very dark race. We also picked up our first Goldcrest of the tour in the top of a pine tree. We went back for breakfast at the minshuku and watched Pygmy & Great Spotted Woodpeckers and Marsh & Japanese Tit at the feeders as we ate. We got the call confirming that the boat was going out, and we set off to the Habomai harbour. In the harbour itself we saw Tufted Duck, Greater Scaup, Black Scoter, Common Goldeneye, Red-breasted Merganser and incredibly a Thick-billed Murre. As we pulled out of the harbour, we saw many Pelagic Cormorant, Harlequin & Long-tailed Ducks, plus Mew, Slaty-backed, Glaucous-winged & Glaucous Gulls. There was a 2m swell which left some of us feeling a little green but the alcids were well worth it. We had very close views and great photo opps of Common Murre, Pigeon & Spectacled Guillemots, Ancient Murrelet, Least & Crested Auklet.

Clockwise from top left: Spectacled Guillemot, Common Murre, Crested Auklet, Ancient Murrelet (Charley Hesse)

Back on land we set off on a hunt for Ural Owl and we had quite a drive to get to the supposed stake out. On the way we saw a lot of Sika Deer and also a Rough-legged Hawk. We spent the rest of the afternoon watching a hole in a tree hoping an owl would pop its head out, but it was not to be. The best we came away with were nice views of Eurasian Bullfinch, Eurasian Nuthatch and another nice Red Fox before we set off for the long drive back. After another delicious home-cooked dinner, we went out for one last shot at Ural Owl at a local forest but with no more luck.
20th February – Nemuro to Tokyo
We were still missing Red-faced Cormorant, so very early we shot out again to the cape and scanned all the Pelagic Cormorants we could find. We also checked the Rock Sandpiper spot, but our luck seemed to have come to an end. We went back for our last breakfast and last look at Great Spotted Woodpecker, Marsh & Japanese Tits, Eurasian Nuthatch and Hawfinch at the feeders. It had been a wonderful experience staying here and we were very sad to leave. We had just enough time on the way to Kushiro to check out the Kiritappu area. There had been recent records of Lapland Longspurs in the area although we were unable to locate any. We did have one last addition to the trip list, which was Brant, mixed in with Whooper Swans, a very northerly Falcated Duck and several Dunlin. We saw what was to be our last White-tailed & Steller’s Sea-Eagles of the tour before we drove on to Kushiro Airport for our flight back to Tokyo where the main tour came to an end.

The group had great looks at both Laysan & Black-footed Albatrosses (Keith Barnes)

EXTENSION
20th - 21st February – Tokyo to Hachijojima ferry
From the airport we made our way to the Takeshiba ferry terminal. We had several hours to kill before we could get on the ferry and we took a nice walk around the outside of a local park where we saw Oriental Turtle-Dove and Japanese White-eye. We had a nice dinner and bought our supplies for the boat, and once we were allowed to board, we settled into our beds and had an early night ahead of our big day tomorrow. We were up early and there was quite a bit of wind and swell. We had already passed Miyakejima so most of the best sea-watching would be on the way back. The clients stood vigil on deck but could only manage Black-tailed & Slaty-backed Gulls. Eventually we turned up a Black-footed Albatross before we arrived at Hachijojima harbour. We were supposed to have over 30 minutes in port during which time we planned to have a walk around nearby and have a token search for Izu Thrush. Because of the weather they changed arrival to the other side of the island and we only had 10 minutes on land. We ran out of the port and poked our noses in the first gardens we came to but to say it was a long shot would be understating it. Back at the port we had to wait a while before we were allowed to board the boat, then we went up on deck with the scope and found Japanese & Pelagic Cormorants, Blue Rock-Thrush, White Wagtail and several Olive-backed Pipits. Heading back to Miyakejima we saw another couple of Black-footed Albatrosses and a small alcid that was most likely Japanese Murrelet. As expected, the best sea-watching was after Miyakejima, and although never really pumping, we started picking up birds at a better rate. Low numbers may have been partially due to the fact that the wind had dropped and it was so calm. We had decent views of the following: Black-legged Kittiwake, Laysan & Black-footed Albatrosses, Streaked Shearwater and Brown Booby. We were sad to miss the Short-tailed Albatross, but the group tried their best and in the end it is just down to luck. It had been our most successful to date, with an impressive 175 species of birds and 13 species of mammals.
### ANSERIFORMES: Anatidae

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Common Name</th>
<th>Scientific Name</th>
<th>Endemic/Race</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Taiga Bean-Goose</td>
<td><em>Anser fabalis</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>Brant</td>
<td><em>Branta bernicla</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>Tundra (Bewick’s) Swan</td>
<td><em>Cygnus columbianus bewickii</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>Whooper Swan</td>
<td><em>Cygnus cygnus</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>Common Shelduck</td>
<td><em>Tadorna tadorna</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>Mandarin Duck</td>
<td><em>Aix galericulata</em></td>
<td>East Asian Endemic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gadwall</td>
<td><em>Anas strepera</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Falcated Duck</td>
<td><em>Anas falcata</em></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Eurasian Wigeon</td>
<td><em>Anas penelope</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>Mallard</td>
<td><em>Anas platyrhynchos</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>Eastern Spot-billed Duck</td>
<td><em>Anas zonorhyncha</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>Northern Shoveler</td>
<td><em>Anas clypeata</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>Northern Pintail</td>
<td><em>Anas acuta</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>Baikal Teal</td>
<td><em>Anas formosa</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>Green-winged (Eurasian) Teal</td>
<td><em>Anas c. crecca</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>Common Pochard</td>
<td><em>Aythya ferina</em></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Tufted Duck</td>
<td><em>Aythya fuligula</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greater Scaup</td>
<td><em>Aythya marila</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harlequin Duck</td>
<td><em>Histrionicus histrionicus</em></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>White-winged (Siberian) Scoter</td>
<td><em>Melanitta fusca stejnegeri</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>Black Scoter</td>
<td><em>Melanitta americana</em></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Long-tailed Duck</td>
<td><em>Clangula hyemalis</em></td>
<td>Vulnerable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Common Goldeneye</td>
<td><em>Bucephala clangula</em></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Avian taxonomy follows Clements 6.9 (Updated Aug 2014)

Note: Only endemic races and potential splits are given to subspecies level.
Smew
Mergus albellus
Seen at Katano Kamoike & Kahoku.

Common Merganser
Mergus m. merganser
Seen at Todden Lake, Kahoku, Tsurumiura, Rausu, Hakuchodai & Cape Nosappu.

Red-breasted Merganser
Mergus serrator
Seen at Yatsushiro, Akkeshi, Rausu, Hakuchodai, Cape Nosappu & Habomai.

GALLIFORMES: Phasianidae

Ring-necked (Green) Pheasant
Phasianus colchicus tanensis
Endemic subspecies
Seen at Karuizawa & Kahoku.

GAVIIDAE: Gaviidae

Red-throated Loon
Gavia stellata
Seen at Oshima, Rausu & Cape Nosappu.

Arctic Loon
Gavia arctica
Seen at Rausu & Cape Nosappu.

PODICIPEDIFORMES: Podicipedidae

Little Grebe
Tachybaptus ruficollis
Seen at Todden Lake, Katano Kamoike, Komatsu, Arasaki, Satsuma & Hitotsusegawa.

Red-necked Grebe
Podiceps grisegeia
Seen at Oshima.

Great Crested Grebe
Podiceps cristatus
Seen at Sasagawa, Awara, Kahoku & Hitotsusegawa.

Eared Grebe
Podiceps nigricollis
Seen at Kahoku, Hitotsusegawa & Rausu.

PROCELLARIIFORMES: Diomedeidae

Laysan Albatross
Phoebastria immutabilis
Near-threatened. Seen on the Hachijojima ferry.

Black-footed Albatross
Phoebastria nigripes
Near-threatened. Seen on the Hachijojima ferry.

SULIFORMES: Sulidae

Brown Booby
Sula leucogaster
Seen on the Hachijojima ferry.

PELECANIFORMES: Ardeidae

Gray Heron
Ardea cinerea
Seen at Sasagawa, Todden Lake, Katano Kamoike, Yatsushiro, Satsuma, Arasaki & Hitotsusegawa.

Great Egret
Ardea alba
Seen at Karuizawa area, Arasaki & Hitotsusegawa.

Little Egret
Egretta garzetta
Seen at Arasaki, Yatsushiro, Satsuma & Hitotsusegawa.
Pacific Reef-Heron  
*Egretta sacra*

Seen at Oshima & Kadogawa.

Black-crowned Night-Heron  
*Nycticorax nycticorax*

Seen at Hitotsusegawa.

**PELECANIFORMES: Threskiornithidae**

Eurasian Spoonbill  
*Platalea leucorodia*

Seen at Arasaki.

Black-faced Spoonbill  
*Platalea minor*

*East Asian Breeding Endemic*

Endangered. Seen at Arasaki & Hitotsusegawa.

**ACCIPITRIFORMES: Pandionidae**

Osprey  
*Pandion haliaetus*

Seen at Sasagawa, Kahoku, Komatsu, Arasaki & Miyazaki.

**ACCIPITRIFORMES: Accipitridae**

Eastern Marsh-Harrier  
*Circus spilonotus*

Seen at Sasagawa & Katano Kamoike.

Eurasian Sparrowhawk  
*Accipiter nisus*

Seen at Arasaki.

Northern Goshawk  
*Accipiter gentilis fuyamae*

*Endemic subspecies*

Commonly seen throughout.

Black(-eared) Kite  
*Milvus migrans lineatus*

Seen at Awara.

White-tailed Eagle  
*Haliaeetus albicilla*

Seen at Kahoku, Rausu, Notsuke Peninsula, Hakuchodai, Cape Nosappu & Habomai.

Steller’s Sea-Eagle  
*Haliaeetus pelagicus*

*East Asian Endemic*

Vulnerable. Seen at Setsuri River, Rausu, Notsuke Peninsula, Hakuchodai, Cape Nosappu. Lake Furen & Habomai.

Rough-legged Hawk  
*Buteo lagopus*

Seen at Akan, Kiritappu & Habomai.

Common (Eastern) Buzzard  
*Buteo buteo japonicus*

Seen at Sasagawa, on the drive to Karuizawa, Toden Lake, Awara, Komatsu, Miike, Akan, Lake Furen & Cape Nosappu.

**GRUIFORMES: Rallidae**

Brown-cheeked Rail  
*Rallus indicus*

Seen at Arasaki.

Ruddy-breasted Crake  
*Porzana fusca*

Seen at Arasaki.

Eurasian Moorhen  
*Gallinula chloropus*

Seen at Arasaki.

Eurasian Coot  
*Fulica atra*

Seen at Sasagawa, Toden Lake, Katano Kamoike, Kahoku, Komatsu, Arasaki, Satsuma & Hitotsusegawa.

**GRUIFORMES: Gruidae**

Sandhill Crane  
*Grus canadensis*

Seen at Arasaki.

White-naped Crane  
*Grus vipio*

Vulnerable. Seen at Arasaki.

Common Crane  
*Grus grus*

Seen at Arasaki.

Hooded Crane  
*Grus monacha*

Vulnerable. Seen at Komatsu & Arasaki.

Red-crowned Crane  
*Grus japonensis*

*East Asian Endemic*

Endangered. Seen at Aka, Setsuri River, Tsuruimura & Hakuchodai.
### CHARADRIIFORMES: Charadriidae

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Common Name</th>
<th>Scientific Name</th>
<th>Location(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Black-bellied Plover</td>
<td><em>Pluvialis squatarola</em></td>
<td>Hitotsusegawa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern Lapwing</td>
<td><em>Vanellus vanellus</em></td>
<td>Kahoku, Komatsu &amp; Arasaki</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kentish Plover</td>
<td><em>Charadrius alexandrinus</em></td>
<td>Yatsushiro &amp; Hitotsusegawa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Long-billed Plover</td>
<td><em>Charadrius placidus</em></td>
<td>Toden Lake &amp; Satsuma</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Little Ringed Plover</td>
<td><em>Charadrius dubius</em></td>
<td>Satsuma</td>
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### CHARADRIIFORMES: Scolopacidae

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<tr>
<th>Common Name</th>
<th>Scientific Name</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Common Sandpiper</td>
<td><em>Actitis hypoleucos</em></td>
<td>Toden Lake, Arasaki, Satsuma &amp; Hitotsusegawa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Green Sandpiper</td>
<td><em>Tringa ochropus</em></td>
<td>Arasaki, Satsuma &amp; Hitotsusegawa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Common Greenshank</td>
<td><em>Tringa nebularia</em></td>
<td>Yatsushiro &amp; Hitotsusegawa</td>
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<tr>
<td>Eurasian Curlew</td>
<td><em>Numenius arquata</em></td>
<td>Hitotsusegawa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dunlin</td>
<td><em>Calidris alpina</em></td>
<td>Yatsushiro, Hitotsusegawa &amp; Kiritappu</td>
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<tr>
<td>Terek Sandpiper</td>
<td><em>Xenus cinereus</em></td>
<td>Yatsushiro</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Common Snipe</td>
<td><em>Gallinago gallinago</em></td>
<td>Toden Lake &amp; Arasaki</td>
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### CHARADRIIFORMES: Stercorariiidae

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<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Scientific Name</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pomarine Jaeger</td>
<td><em>Stercorarius pomarinus</em></td>
<td>Oshima &amp; on the Hachijojima ferry</td>
</tr>
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</table>

### CHARADRIIFORMES: Alcidae

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Common Name</th>
<th>Scientific Name</th>
<th>Location(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Common Murre</td>
<td><em>Uria aalge</em></td>
<td>Rausu, Notsuke Peninsular, Cape Nosappu &amp; Habomai</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thick-billed Murre</td>
<td><em>Uria lomvia</em></td>
<td>Rausu &amp; Habomai</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pigeon Guillemot</td>
<td><em>Cephus columba</em></td>
<td>Habomai</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spectacled Guillemot</td>
<td><em>Cephus carbo</em></td>
<td>Rausu, Notsuke Peninsular &amp; Habomai</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ancient Murrelet</td>
<td><em>Synthliboramphus antiquus</em></td>
<td>Rausu, Notsuke Peninsular &amp; Cape Nosappu &amp; Habomai</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japanese Murrelet</td>
<td><em>Synthliboramphus wumizusume</em></td>
<td>Hitotsusegawa &amp; on the Hachijojima ferry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Least Auklet</td>
<td><em>Aethia pusilla</em></td>
<td>Rausu, Notsuke Peninsular &amp; Cape Nosappu &amp; Habomai</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crested Auklet</td>
<td><em>Aethia cristatella</em></td>
<td>Habomai</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rhinoceros Auklet</td>
<td><em>Cerorhinca monocerata</em></td>
<td>Rausu &amp; Notsuke Peninsular</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tufted Puffin</td>
<td><em>Fratercula cirrhata</em></td>
<td>Notsuke Peninsular</td>
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### CHARADRIIFORMES: Laridae

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<th>Scientific Name</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Black-legged Kittiwake</td>
<td><em>Rissa tridactyla</em></td>
<td>Oshima &amp; on the Hachijojima ferry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bird Name</td>
<td>Scientific Name</td>
<td>Location Description</td>
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<tr>
<td>-------------------------------</td>
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<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black-headed Gull</td>
<td>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</td>
<td>Seen at Akkeshi &amp; Hakuchodai.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black-tailed Gull</td>
<td>Larus crassirostris</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mew (Kamchatka) Gull</td>
<td>Larus canus kamtschatschensis</td>
<td>Seen at Oshima, Kahoku, Kadogawa, Akkeshi, Rausu, Cape Nosappu &amp; Habomai.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Herring (Vega) Gull</td>
<td>Larus argentatus vegae</td>
<td>Seen en route to Komatsu, Oshima, Kahoku, Awara, Yatsushiro, Hitotsusegawa &amp; Rausu.</td>
</tr>
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<td>Caspian (Mongolian) Gull</td>
<td>Larus cachinnans mongolicus</td>
<td>Seen at Yatsushiro.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lesser Black-backed (Heuglin's) Gull</td>
<td>Larus fuscus heuglini</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slaty-backed Gull</td>
<td>Larus schistisagus</td>
<td>East Asian Endemic</td>
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<td>COLUMBIFORMES: Columbidae</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rock Pigeon</td>
<td>Columba livia</td>
<td>Introduced. Commonly seen throughout.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japanese Wood-Pigeon</td>
<td>Columba j. jantitha</td>
<td>North-east Asian Endemic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oriental Turtle-Dove</td>
<td>Streptopelia orientalis</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STRIGIFORMES: Strigidae</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blakiston's Fish-Owl</td>
<td>Ketupa b. blakistoni</td>
<td>Endemic subspecies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Endangered. Seen at Rausu.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CORACIIFORMES: Alcedinidae</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Common Kingfisher</td>
<td>Alcedo atthis</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crested Kingfisher</td>
<td>Megaceryle lugubris</td>
<td>Endemic subspecies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seen at Komatsu, Arasaki, Kogawa Dam, Hitotsusegawa.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PICIFORMES: Picidae</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pygmy Woodpecker</td>
<td>Dendrocopos kizuki</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White-backed Woodpecker</td>
<td>Dendrocopos leucotos</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japanese Woodpecker</td>
<td>Picus awokera</td>
<td>Endemic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FALCONIFORMES: Falconidae</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eurasian Kestrel</td>
<td>Falco tinnunculus</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Merlin</td>
<td>Falco columbarius</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peregrine Falcon</td>
<td>Falco peregrinus</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Tropical Birding www.tropicalbirding.com
PASSERIFORMES: Campephagidae
Ryukyu Minivet  Pericrocots tegima  Endemic
 Seen at Miike.

PASSERIFORMES: Laniidae
Bull-headed Shrike  Lanius bucephalus
 Seen at Sasagawa, Karuizawa, Kahoku, Komatsu, Arasaki & Miike.

PASSERIFORMES: Corvidae
Eurasian Jay  Garrulus glandarius japonicus  Endemic subspecies
 The endemic G.g.japonicus seen at Karuizawa. G.g.bambergi seen at Lake Furen.
Azure-winged Magpie  Cyanopica cyanus japonica  Endemic subspecies
 Seen at Karuizawa.
Eurasian Magpie  Pica pica
 Seen at Tosu.
(Oriental) Rook  Corvus frugilegus pastinator
 Seen at Komatsu & Arasaki.
Carrion (Oriental) Crow  Corvus corone orientalis
 Commonly seen throughout.
Large-billed Crow  Corvus macrorhynchos japonensis
 Commonly seen throughout.

PASSERIFORMES: Alaudidae
(Japanese) Sky Lark  Alauda arvensis japonica  Endemic subspecies
 Seen at Kahoku & Arasaki.

PASSERIFORMES: Hirundidae
Asian House Martin  Delichon dasypus
 Seen at Yatsushiro & Satsuma.
Barn Swallow  Hirundo rustica
 Seen at Satsuma, Kadogawa & Miyazaki.
Red-rumped Swallow  Cecropis daurica
 Seen at Satsuma.

PASSERIFORMES: Paridae
Marsh Tit  Poecile palustris hensoni  Endemic subspecies
 Seen at Tsuruimura & Lake Furen.
Willow Tit  Poecile montanus restrictus  Endemic subspecies
 Seen at Karuizawa & Tsuruimura.
Varied Tit  Poecile varius
 Seen at Naritasan, Karuizawa, Kusenbu & Miike.
Coal Tit  Periparus ater
 Seen at Karuizawa & Miike.
Japanese Tit  Parus minor
 Seen at Naritasan, Karuizawa, Kahoku, Kogawa Dam, Miike, Akan, Tsuruimura & Lake Furen.

PASSERIFORMES: Remizidae
Chinese Penduline-Tit  Remiz consobrinus
 Seen at Arasaki.

PASSERIFORMES: Aegithalidae
Long-tailed Tit  Aegithalos caudatus kiusiuensis  Endemic subspecies
 A.c.tririgratus seen at Karuizawa. The endemic A.c.kiusiuensis seen at Miike.

PASSERIFORMES: Sittidae
Eurasian Nuthatch  Sitta europaea roseillia  Endemic subspecies
 S.e.amurensis seen at Karuizawa, The endemic S.e.roseillia seen at Miike. S.e.asiatica seen at Tsuruimura & Lake Furen.
PASSERIFORMES: Troglodytidae
Eurasian Wren *Troglodytes troglodytes fumigatus* Endemic subspecies
Seen at Karuizawa & heard at Miike.

PASSERIFORMES: Cinclidae
Brown Dipper *Cinclus pallasii*
Seen at Karuizawa & Komenotsu River.

PASSERIFORMES: Pycnonotidae
Brown-eared Bulbul *Hypsipetes amaurotis*
Commonly seen throughout.

PASSERIFORMES: Regulidae
Goldcrest *Regulus regulus*
Seen at Lake Furen.

PASSERIFORMES: Cettiidae
Japanese Bush-Warbler *Horornis diphone*
Seen at Arasaki, Kogawa Dam & Miike.

PASSERIFORMES: Phylloscopidae
Dusky Warbler *Phylloscopus borealis*
Seen at Naritasan.

PASSERIFORMES: Cisticolidae
Zitting Cisticola *Cisticola juncidis*
Seen at Arasaki.

PASSERIFORMES: Zosteropidae
Japanese White-eye *Zosterops j. japonicus* Endemic subspecies
Seen at Naritasan, Oshima, Kusenbu, Arasaki, Kogawa Dam, Miike, Umagase & Tokyo.

PASSERIFORMES: Leiothrichidae
Red-billed Leiothrix *Leiothrix lutea*
Introduced. Seen at Kirishima shrine.

PASSERIFORMES: Muscicapidae
Red-flanked Bluetail *Tarsiger cyanurus*
Seen at Karuizawa, Kusenbu, Kogawa Dam, Kirishima shrine & Miike.

Daurian Redstart *Phoenicurus auroreus*
Seen at Sasagawa, Toden Lake, Karuizawa, Katano Kamoike, Komatsu, Arasaki, Kogawa Dam, Kirishima shrine & Miike.

Blue Rock-Thrush *Monticola solitarius*
Seen at Sasagawa, Oshima, Arasaki, Satsuma, Hitotsusegawa, Miyazaki, Cape Nosappu & Hachijojima.

PASSERIFORMES: Turdidae
Pale Thrush *Turdus pallidus*
Seen at Katano Kamoike, Komatsu, Arasaki, Kogawa Dam & Miike.

Dusky Thrush *Turdus eunomus*
Commonly seen throughout.

Naumann's Thrush *Turdus naumanni*
A big surprise at Arasaki.

PASSERIFORMES: Sturnidae
European Starling *Sturnus vulgaris*
Introduced. Seen at Arasaki.
White-cheeked Starling  
*Sturnus cineraceus*

Seen at Sasagawa, Naritasan, Kahoku, Komatsu, Kusenbu, Yatsushiro, Arasaki, Satsuma, Kadogawa & Miyazaki.

**PASSERIFORMES: Prunellidae**

*Japanese Accentor*  
*Prunella rubida*

Seen at Karuizawa.

**PASSERIFORMES: Motacillidae**

*Gray Wagtail*  
*Motacilla cinerea*

Seen at Komenotsu River & Satsuma.

*White Wagtail*  
*Motacilla alba*

Commonly seen throughout.

*Japanese Wagtail*  
*Motacilla grandis*

Breeding Endemic

Seen at Toden Lake, Katano Kamoike, Komenotsu River & Satsuma.

*Olive-backed Pipit*  
*Anthus hodgsoni*

Seen at Kirishima shrine, Miike & on Hachijojima.

**American (Buff-bellied) Pipit**  
*Anthus rubescens japonicus*

Seen at Sasagawa, Arasaki, Satsuma & Hitotsusegawa.

**PASSERIFORMES: Bombycillidae**

*Bohemian Waxwing*  
*Bombycilla garrulus*

Seen at Setsuri River & Tsuruimura.

*Japanese Waxwing*  
*Bombycilla japonica*

Near-threatened. Seen at Miike.

**PASSERIFORMES: Emberizidae**

*Meadow Bunting*  
*Emberiza c. ciopsis*

Endemic subspecies

Seen at Sasagawa, Karuizawa, Toden Lake, Kahoku, Komatsu, Arasaki, Satsuma & Miike.

*Chestnut-eared Bunting*  
*Emberiza fucata*

Seen at Sasagawa.

*Rustic Bunting*  
*Emberiza rustica*

Seen at Sasagawa, Karuizawa & Toden Lake.

*Yellow-throated Bunting*  
*Emberiza elegans*

Seen at Karuizawa, Katano Kamoike, Kusenbu & Miike.

*Black-faced Bunting*  
*Emberiza spodocephala*

Seen at Sasagawa, Komatsu, Arasaki, Komenotsu River & Miike.

*Ochre-rumped Bunting*  
*Emberiza y. yessoensis*

Endemic subspecies

Seen at Sasagawa.

*Reed Bunting*  
*Emberiza schoeniclus*

Seen at Sasagawa, Karuizawa, Kahoku, Arasaki & Miike.

**PASSERIFORMES: Fringillidae**

*Brambling*  
*Fringilla montifringilla*

Seen at Karuizawa & Miike.

*Asian Rosy-Finch*  
*Leucosticte arctoa*

Seen at Kiritappu.

*Eurasian (Gray-bellied) Bullfinch*  
*Pyrrhula pyrrhula griseiventris*

Seen at Katano Kamoike, Tsuruimura, Lake Furen & Nijibetsu.

*Long-tailed Rosefinch*  
*Uragus sibiricus*

Seen at Karuizawa.

*Oriental Greenfinch*  
*Chloris sinica*

Seen at Sasagawa, Naritasan, Toden Lake, Karuizawa, Kahoku, Komatsu, Arasaki, Komenotsu River, Kirishima shrine & Miike.

*Red Crossbill*  
*Loxia curvirostra*

Seen by the guide near Akan.

*Eurasian Siskin*  
*Spinus spinus*

Seen at Karuizawa, Kusenbu & Miike.
Hawfinch  
*Coccothraustes coccothraustes*  
Seen at Naritasan, Karuizawa, Katano Kamoike & Lake Furen.

Japanese Grosbeak  
*Eophona p. personata*  
*Endemic subspecies*  
Seen at Kogawa Dam, Miike & Akan.

**PASSERIFORMES: Passeridae**

Russet Sparrow  
*Passer rutilans*  
Seen at Arasaki.

Eurasian Tree Sparrow  
*Passer montanus*  
Commonly seen throughout.
MAMMAL LIST
Taxonomy follows http://www.wikipedia.org

CERCOPITHECIDAE: Old World Monkeys
Japanese Macaque Macaca fuscata Endemic
Seen at Jigokudani.

SCIURIDAE: Squirrels
Eurasian Red Squirrel Sciurus vulgaris orientis Endemic subspecies
Near-threatened. Seen at Lake Furen.
Japanese Squirrel Sciurus lis Endemic
Seen at Karuizawa.
Japanese Flying Squirrel Petaurista leucogenys Endemic
Seen at Karuizawa & Miike.

CANIDAE: Canids
Red Fox Vulpes vulpes Endemic subspecies
The endemic V.v.japonica was seen at Karuizawa. The endemic V.v.schrenki was seen at Tsuruimura, Notsuke Peninsula, Lake Furen & Nijibetsu.
Raccoon Dog Nyctereutes procyonoides viverrinus Endemic subspecies
Seen at Karuizawa & Hitotsusegawa.

MUSTELIDAE: Mustelids
Sea Otter Enhydra lutris
Endangered. Seen at Kiritappu.

PHOCIDAE: Seals
Largha Seal Phoca largha
Seen at Cape Nosappu.
Harbour Seal Phoca vitulina
Seen at Kiritappu & Cape Nosappu.

OTARIDAE: Sea lions & fur seals
Steller Sea Lion Eumetopias jubatus
Near-threatened. Seen at Rausu.

PHOCOENIDAE: Porpoises
Dall's Porpoise Phocoenoides dalli
Seen at Rausu.

CERVIDAE: Deer
Sika Deer Cervus nippon Endemic subspecies
The endemic C.n.nippon was seen at Karuizawa & Miike. The endemic C.n.yesoensis was seen at Setsuri River, Tsuruimura, Notsuke Peninsula & Lake Furen.

MURIDAE: Rats & Mice
House Mouse Mus musculus
Seen at Karuizawa.