This short custom extension was run prior to the Taiwan set departure tour. We just visited the main island of Okinawa where we concentrated on the forested north of the island with the local name ‘Yambaru’. Our main targets were the endemic Okinawa Woodpecker & Okinawa Rail, the latter only described as recently as 1981. We saw both easily, but we were also happy to see the endemic Ryukyu Robin & Ryukyu Minivet and several Ryukyu endemic subspecies, including Japanese & Ryukyu Scops-Owls, Whistling Green-Pigeon and Japanese Wood-Pigeon. We enjoyed fantastic birding and some great night excursions on which we saw several owl species, woodcock, the rare Ryukyu long-furred rat and beautiful Akamata snake. Our lodge was perfectly located in the native forests with all the targets on our doorstep. We were lucky to have the lodge to ourselves and the very friendly and helpful staff cooked us some wonderful Japanese food. After cleaning up in the north, we birded our way back to the capital Naha, hitting several areas of rice paddies and mudflats on the way back. We saw several interesting species such as Ruddy-breasted Crake, Yellow Bittern plus the endangered East Asian endemic Black-faced Spoonbill.
14th April – Naha to Yambaru
On arrival in Okinawa, we began our drive north. We left the concrete sprawl of Naha and drove along beautiful coasts towards the forested hills near Kunigami village, or its local name ‘Yambaru’. Along the way we saw our first common birds, with Light-vented Bulbul, Blue Rock-Thrush, Brown-eared Bulbul and even an Osprey soaring over the coast. We checked into our superbly located lodge in the mountains, with Pacific Swallows nesting under roof. After dropping our bags in our room, we took a short drive nearby. We stopped along the entrance road where there appeared to be some activity. We heard the unmistakeable song of the Japanese Bush-Warbler, and located this common but skulking bird straight away for good views. We also had Varied Tit and Ryukyu Minivet, before we lucked out with one of the major targets of the area, the Okinawa Woodpecker. We heard one close to the road and it flew across and perched very close to us in full view. It was incredibly cooperative and posed nicely for photos. Next we moved on to the local Fungawa Dam, where we heard our first Okinawa Rail calling. We scanned for wood pigeons with no luck but we did see our first Pygmy woodpecker. Further down to the coast we checked out a pig farm famous for the Okinawa Rail, but nothing yet. On the drive back, we had a few rail false alarms with Large-billed Crows on the road. The light started to fall and we saw a Northern Boobook flush from the side of the road. After a wonderful Japanese dinner, we took a short night drive and heard several Ryukyu Scops-Owls although they wouldn’t come in. We also found a beautiful snake on the road called the Akamata. It had been a good first day and we were excited about tomorrow.
15th April – Yambaru area

We started before dawn with a spot of owling. We took a stroll close to the lodge and located a vocal Ryukyu Scops-Owl. Unlike last night’s unresponsive individual, this one flew right in to the tape. Our main target now was the Okinawa Rail, and the best time to see it was early in the morning along the roadside. We took a drive, and soon saw a Ryukyu Minivet perching on a wire. Next, we found a stunning Ryukyu Robin by the side of the road. We stopped briefly by Fungawa Dam where we heard several Okinawa Rails calling. We scanned again for woodpigeons without success. We continued along the road and at last saw an Okinawa Rail by the side of the road. It walked slowly off and into the thick vegetation but we saw it well, and it was a start. We tried the pig farm area but no rails again. We continued along the coastal road in search of more rails. We found a particularly productive stretch of road where we saw Japanese Tit, Japanese Bush-Warbler, Barn & Pacific Swallows, Oriental Turtle-Dove and great flight views of a Grey-faced Buzzard. We went back to the lodge for breakfast, after which we explored further afield. We drove to the north of island and explored some roads in from the town of Oku. We drove through lush forest along surprisingly good paved mountain roads. It was difficult to imagine why they had been built, but we weren’t complaining. They were perfect for birding. Along here we found our target Whistling Green Pigeon, plus another Okinawa Woodpecker, some Japanese White-eyes and lots of Pale Thrushes.

On the drive back, we had yet another Okinawa Woodpecker (I thought they were supposed to be critically endangered) and a rather striking salamander with a red belly crossing the road. After lunch we went for another drive, where we saw Pygmy woodpecker, Brown-eared Bulbul and several Blue Rock-Thrushes. We had done so well in the forest habitat that we went to check out some other spots. We went to an area of rice fields and ditches, where we saw Light-vented Bulbul, Zitting Cisticola, White Wagtail, White-cheeked Starlings, Little, Great, Intermediate Egrets, Grey Heron and an Osprey flying over. We drove to Hiji Waterfall, which was closed, then back over forested hills which produced more Whistling Green Pigeons. After another delicious dinner, we took another night drive along some of the mountain roads we had discovered. Spot-lighting, we saw an Okinawa Rail walking down a tree trunk, which was our best view yet. We also had a surprise Japanese Scops-Owl, which perched nicely for us. On the way back, we had yet another Okinawa Rail roosting up in a tree, the endemic, Ryukyu long-furred rat and even a woodcock outside our lodge. It was most likely a Eurasian Woodcock although there have been records of the endemic Amami Woodcock, although usually in winter. What a day it had been.
16th April – Yambaru area to Naha

We started pre-dawn again with some owling. Although we had seen Ryukyu Scops-Owl briefly yesterday, we wanted better looks, which we got. We went back to Fungawa Dam where we saw Okinawa Rail crossing the road. On the dam itself, we saw a family of Common Kingfishers, looking over the forest, Pygmy Woodpecker, Ryukyu Minivet, Varied Tit and Brown-eared Bulbul, and calling up on the ridge, our first Ruddy Kingfisher. Our patience finally paid off with a brief flyby of our first Japanese Woodpigeon before we went back for dinner. We packed up and said goodbye to the very friendly staff of the nature centre before beginning our drive back to Naha. There were many birding sites to hit on the way, and we started in the Kijoka rice paddies with Yellow Bittern, Eurasian Moorhen, Common Sandpiper and Zitting Cisticola. At the Gabusoka River we added Common Snipe, Eastern Yellow Wagtail and Buff-bellied Pipit.

Ryukyu Scops-Owl is common in Okinawa’s northern forests (Charley Hesse)

After a quick lunch, we jumped on Okinawa’s only highway as far as the town of Kin, where we checked out more rice paddies, adding Intermediate Egret, Striated Heron, Little Ringed Plover, Wood Sandpiper, Gray Wagtail and Scaly-breasted Munia, but unfortunately no rarities for which this area is famous for. We found a Black-faced Spoonbill in flight at the Awase Tidal Flat, which was otherwise pretty devoid of shorebirds. Back in Naha we dropped in at the Manko Waterfowl and Wetland Center where we chatted with an interesting young student specializing in Black-faced Spoonbills and Spoonbilled Sandpipers. Manko often has some great birds, but today all we found was Common Sandpiper, Gray-tailed Tattler and Common Greenshank. We had time for just one more birding site so we went to check out the famous Triangle Pond. Here we found, Eurasian Teal, Gray Heron, Osprey, Eurasian Coot, dozens of Black-winged Stilts, Marsh Sandpiper and best of all a Ruddy-breasted Crake crossing the road. Our Okinawa birding was at an end, and all that remained was to drive to our hotel in Naha and the following day depart for Taiwan where our adventure continued.
Bird list
Taxonomy follows ebird/Clements online checklist v2015.

DUCKS, GEESE and SWANS: Anatidae
Green-winged (Eurasian) Teal  Anas c. crecca
Potential split

HERONS, EGrets and BITTEnRS: Ardeidae
Yellow Bittern  Ixobrychus sinensis
Grey Heron  Ardea cinerea
Great Egret  Ardea alba
Intermediate Egret  Mesophoyx intermedia
Little Egret  Egretta garzetta
Cattle Egret  Bubulcus ibis
Black-crowned Night-Heron  Nycticorax nycticorax

IBISES and SPOONBILLS: Threskiornithidae
Black-faced Spoonbill  Platalea minor
Endangered. One seen in flight at Awase.

OSPREY: Pandionidae
Osprey  Pandion haliaetus

HAWKS, EAGLES and KITES: Accipitridae
Gray-faced Buzzard  Butastur indicus

RAILS, GALLINULES and COOTS: Rallidae
Ruddy-breasted Crake  Porzana fusca phaeopyga
Okinawa Rail  Gallirallus okinawae
Eurasian Moorhen  Gallinula chloropus
Eurasian Coot  Fulica atra

AVOCETS and STILTS: Recurvirostridae
Black-winged Stilt  Himantopus himantopus

PLOVERS and LAPWINGS: Charadriidae
Little Ringed Plover  Charadrius dubius

SANDPIPERs: Scolopacidae
Common Sandpiper  Actitis hypoleucus
Gray-tailed Tattler  Tringa brevipes
Common Greenshank  Tringa nebularia
Marsh Sandpiper  Tringa stagnatilis
Wood Sandpiper  Tringa glareola
Common Snipe  Gallinago gallinago

PIGEONS and DOVES: Columbidae
Rock Pigeon  Columba livia
Japanese Woodpigeon  Columba j. janthina
Oriental Turtle-Dove  Streptopelia orientalis stimpsoni
Whistling Green-Pigeon  Treron formosae permagnus
Near-threatened.

OWLs: Strigidae
Japanese (Pryer’s) Scops-Owl  Otus semitorques pryeri
Potential split

Ryukyu endemic subspecies
Okinawa endemic
near Japanese endemic
Ryukyu endemic subspecies
Ryukyu endemic subspecies

Ryukyu endemic subspecies
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Ryukyu Scops-Owl</strong></th>
<th><em>Otus elegans elegans</em></th>
<th>Ryukyu endemic subspecies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Near-threatened.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Northern Boobook</strong></td>
<td><em>Ninox japonica totogo</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Potential split</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**WOODPECKERS: Picidae**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pygmy Woodpecker</th>
<th><em>Dendrocopos kizuki</em></th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Okinawa Woodpecker</td>
<td><em>Sapheopipo noguchi</em></td>
<td>Okinawa endemic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critically endangered. Several individuals seen in the north.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**CROWs: Corvidae**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Large-billed Crow</th>
<th><em>Corvus macrorhynchos connectens</em></th>
<th>Ryukyu endemic subspecies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Carrion Crow</td>
<td><em>Corvus corone</em></td>
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</table>

**Swinos: Hirundinidae**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Barn Swallow</th>
<th><em>Hirundo rustica</em></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pacific Swallow</td>
<td><em>Hirundo tahitica</em></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**TITS: Paridae**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Varied Tit</th>
<th><em>Poecile varius amamii</em></th>
<th>Ryukyu endemic subspecies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Japanese Tit</td>
<td><em>Parus minor okinawae</em></td>
<td>Ryukyu endemic subspecies</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Bulbuls: Pycnonotidae**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Light-vented Bulbul</th>
<th><em>Pycnonotus sinensis orii</em></th>
<th>Ryukyu endemic subspecies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brown-eared Bulbul</td>
<td><em>Hypsipetes amaurotis pryeri</em></td>
<td>Ryukyu endemic subspecies</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Bush-warblers: Cettidae**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Japanese Bush-Warbler</th>
<th><em>Horornis diphone riukiuensis</em></th>
<th>Ryukyu endemic subspecies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Cisticolas: Cisticolidae**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Zitting Cisticola</th>
<th><em>Cisticola juncidis</em></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Yuhinas, White-Eyes & Allies: Zosteropidae**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Japanese White-eye</th>
<th><em>Zosterops japonicas insularis</em></th>
<th>Ryukyu endemic subspecies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Flycatchers: Muscicapidae**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Blue Rock-Thrush</th>
<th><em>Monticola solitarius phillipensis</em></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ryukyu Robin</td>
<td><em>Larvivora komadori namiyei</em></td>
<td>Ryukyu endemic</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Thrushes & Allies: Turdidae**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pale Thrush</th>
<th><em>Turdus pallidus</em></th>
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</table>

**Starlings: Sturnidae**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>White-cheeked Starling</th>
<th><em>Spodiopsar cineraceus</em></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Wagtails and Pipits: Motacillidae**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Eastern Yellow Wagtail</th>
<th><em>Motacilla t. tschutschensis</em></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gray Wagtail</td>
<td><em>Motacilla cinerea</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White Wagtail</td>
<td><em>Motacilla alba</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American (Buff-bellied) Pipit</td>
<td><em>Anthus rubescens japonicus</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
SPARROWS: Passeridae
Eurasian Tree Sparrow \textit{Passer montanus}

WAXBILLS and ALLIES: Estrildidae
Scaly-breasted Munia \textit{Lonchura punctulata} Introduced

\textbf{Mammal list}
Taxonomy follows \textit{en.wikipedia.org}
Ryukyu Long-furred rat \textit{Diplothrix legata} Rynkyu endemic

The endangered Ryukyu long-furred Rat (Charley Hesse)
**Reptile list**  
Taxonomy follows en.wikipedia.org

**Akamata**  
*Dinodon semicarinatum*  
Rynkyu endemic

We saw several non-venemous Akamata snakes at night (Charley Hesse)

**Amphibian list**  
Taxonomy follows en.wikipedia.org

**Sword-tailed Newt**  
*Cynops ensicauda*  
Rynkyu endemic

Sword-tailed Newt (Charley Hesse)