

TROPICAL BIRDING

Japan in Winter: Birding on Ice

Set departure tour 26th January – 8th February, 2020.

Extension I: 8th – 9th February. **Extension II :** 10th – 12th February, 2020

Tour leader: Charley Hesse **Report & photos:** Charley Hesse (All photos were taken on this tour)



This year's Japan in Winter tour was our most successful to date. Not only did we get our biggest ever trip list, we did it in style, hitting all of the big targets with great views and photos. In the end we saw over 500 Steller's Sea-Eagles, soaring, feeding, fighting... The Full Monty! The enormous Blakiston's Fish-Owl kept us waiting for hours, but we were rewarded with multiple fantastic views from our bedroom windows. We had over 100 Red-crowned Cranes bugling and strutting their stuff. We aced the tremendously difficult Copper Pheasant in the Japanese Alps, whereas most other groups missed it. We also got great views of Japanese Waxwing which only turns up every few years. In the south of Japan, we saw thousands upon thousands of cranes of 5 species flying into their feeding site at dawn, the globally threatened Saunders Gull on coastal mudflats, endangered Black-faced Spoonbills, close up views of Japanese Murrelets on a special boat ride and the rare Japanese Woodpigeon in a spot few people even know about. Those that chose to go on the extension were rewarded with hundreds of albatrosses including over a dozen of the rare Short-tailed Albatrosses, views of the endemic Izu Thrush, Japanese Robin and Owston's Tit. The tour was also characterized by the number of rarities including things like Naumann's Thrush, Fieldfare, Pallas's Rosefinch and even Ross's Gull! After the tour, I did a short recce to the north of Honshu to see the beautiful Crested Ibis; one of the greatest bird conservation success stories in Asia. I also visited the wintering grounds of thousands of Greater White-fronted Geese, in search of the rare Lesser White-fronted. This may become available as a future extension, as if there wasn't enough to see already. As ever, the food was mind-blowing and the exposure to Japanese culture carefully explained by a fluent Japanese guide was a big addition.

MAIN TOUR

26th January – Narita to Karuizawa

We met up earlier than originally planned this morning to give ourselves some extra birding time. Every year, I usually start the tour with some birding in the Tokyo area depending on what rarities are around. Just yesterday, I had heard that the rare **Naumann's Thrush** had been seen in one of Tokyo's parks, so I decided to try for that. It took about an hour to drive from Narita and as we arrived it was overcast and drizzling. We had limited time, so we went straight to the area where the thrush had been seen. I was expecting to see a large group of photographers, but there was nobody there, so we had to scan through the large numbers of **Dusky Thrushes** and **White-cheeked Starlings** ourselves. Here we also saw **Oriental Greenfinch**, **Eurasian Skylark**, **Bull-headed Shrike** and **American Pipits**. It took a while, but we finally found the **Naumann's Thrush** which had a very rufous chest and tail, and was chasing around all the **Dusky Thrushes**. At the other end of the park, **Long-tailed Rosefinch** had also been seen, so we started walking in that direction and on the way saw **Hawfinch**, **Brown-headed Thrush**, **Japanese Tit** and **Azure-winged Magpie**.



The rare Pallas's Rosefinch showed beautifully again this year.

We walked along the edge of a lake that was full of ducks, including **Common Pochard**, **Eastern Spot-billed Duck**, a single female **Smew** and a few **Great-crested Grebes**, along with many commoner species. We reached an area of reeds where there was a viewing hide. A Japanese bird photographer was just getting set up and pointed out our target **Long-tailed Rosefinches**. Unfortunately, just females. A juvenile **Northern Goshawk** also swooped in carrying a Feral Pigeon it had caught and landed nearby. Wow! We had already spent more time here than I had planned so we went back to the car, jumped back on the ring road around Tokyo and out into Saitama Prefecture. It was another couple of hours to Saitama Prefectural Forest Park where we were going in search of the rare **Pallas's Rosefinch** after a quick lunch stop at a highway service area restaurant with surprisingly good food. We turned off the highway, then wound up the mountain roads. On the way up, we stopped to look at a male **Green Pheasant** and the distinctive grey-bellied **Eurasian Bullfinches**.

We finally arrived at the parking lot and took a cold walk through the forest to the feeding site. When we got to there, some photographers were milling around and after inquiring, it appeared that the **Pallas's Rosefinches** had just been here 5 minutes ago. It might be a while until they came back. While we waited, we saw **Eurasian Nuthatch**, **Rustic Buntings**, **Japanese Willow** and **Varied Tits**. Luckily it wasn't too long before the **Pallas's Rosefinches** came back. At first just females, then a couple of spectacular males. It was another 2-hour drive from here and on the way saw **Eurasian Kestrel** and **Eastern Buzzard**. We swung by a few mountain roads, checking for Copper Pheasant, but it was a long shot. After the sun dropped below the hillside, the temperature quickly dropped below zero and we beat a hasty retreat to our hotel, where some of us enjoyed a dip in the hot spring before our 10-course traditional meal.



A close female Copper Pheasant brilliantly spotted by Alan.

27th January – Karuizawa

On our full day at Karuizawa, number one on our list of targets was the endemic and rarely seen **Copper Pheasant**. In the last couple of years, I have concentrated searches around the Wild Bird Forest in Karuizawa, but come up empty-handed. This year, following some good intel, I broadened the search and tried a spot further afield. Leaving Karuizawa, we went up a winding forest road into the mountains, driving slowly and scanning the roadside for pheasants. We arrived at a parking lot and got out of the car to listen. After a couple of minutes, we heard the unmistakable sound of a **Copper Pheasant** flapping its wings. They were here! We walked up some stairs to get closer. We reached a spot with a nice view over the forest floor above and started to scan. We came across **Eurasian Jay**, **Varied & Japanese Tits**, **Goldcrest**, **Eurasian Siskin**, **Daurian Redstart**, a couple of **Eastern Buzzards** and a family group of **Sika Deer**, but no pheasant. One of our participants, Alan, also spotted a fantastic **Japanese Serow** which was looking down at us from the ridge above. We went back down to the road, had one last scan and miraculously, Alan spotted a female **Copper Pheasant** very close. What luck!

We went back to the hotel for a well-deserved breakfast after which we spent some time at the feeders, where we saw **Coal, Varied, Willow & Japanese Tits, Eurasian Nuthatch, Oriental Greenfinch** and a **Japanese Squirrel** with long, tufty ears. Everybody went back to their rooms for a few minutes and while they were away, a **Pale Thrush** showed up. After breakfast, we birded the Kose forest road, alongside the Wild Bird Forest. Our target woodpeckers were conspicuous in their absence, but we did finally find a **Pygmy Woodpecker, Japanese Flying Squirrel** with its head sticking out of a nest box, plus some nice **Long-tailed Tits, Dusky Thrush** and a nice **Brown Dipper** on the river below. We also came across a flock of **Japanese Waxwings** coming down to drink at the river. The road got a bit icy, so we turned around and started back down. We had a quick foray up a side trail. We heard a woodpecker calling and finally tracked down **Japanese** and **Great Spotted Woodpeckers** close to one another. Alan also had brief views of **White-backed Woodpecker**.



The handsome Varied Tit.

We drove down to an area of fields south of town where we had great views of **Green Pheasant, Azure-winged Magpies** and **Meadow & Rustic Buntings**. On the forest edge, we also found **Brown-eared Bulbul**, plus more **Pygmy & Great Spotted Woodpeckers**. After a full morning's birding, we drove down to Saku City, and after a nice lunch at a Japanese diner, we went to check out Toden Lake. There are always plenty of ducks here and we saw **Eurasian Wigeon, Eastern Spot-billed Duck, Mallard, Northern Pintail, Eurasian Teal, Common Pochard**, a beautiful drake **Smew**, some **Common Mergansers** with beautiful pinkish breast feathers and also a **Great Crested Grebe**. We walked over to the bridge and scanned for **Long-billed Plover**. It wasn't obvious nearby, but finally we spotted one way down the river along with our first **Common Goldeneye**. We got back in the car to drive closer, picking up **Bull-headed Shrike, Black-eared Kite** and **Hawfinch** on the way. After a bit of searching, we found the well-camouflaged **Long-billed Plover** along with **Japanese & White Wagtails**. With our target in the bag, we set off back to Karuizawa. We still had a bit of time left for birding so drove up a couple of forest roads looking for Japanese Accentor but all we found was slippery ice. Extracting ourselves very carefully, we went back to the hotel for dip in the hot spring and another amazing 10-course meal.

28th January – Karuizawa to Komatsu

There had been a thick snowfall overnight and we were happy to just watch some birds at the feeders at our hotel where we enjoyed more **Varied, Marsh, Japanese & Coal Tits, Pygmy Woodpecker** and **Eurasian Jay** from the warmth of the Hotel Lobby. After breakfast, we packed up the van and set off for the Snow Monkey park at Jigokudani, about 90-minute drive away. To begin with, the roads were snow covered, but as we drove west, the snow dissipated, and it got warmer. As we neared the park it looked like there had been no snow at all and the roads were completely clear. We made it up the steep entrance road with ease and found a nice parking spot, close to the trailhead. It was a 1 mile walk to the Snow Monkey Park, and I usually recommend crampons for the icy conditions, but today was just muddy. On the way we had some nice **Eurasian Siskins** and a mixed tit flock. We spent a wonderful hour with the endemic **Japanese Macaques**, and although there was very little snow for photos, there were plenty of monkeys in the hot spring and they made very nice photographic subjects. Once we had shot our fill, we walked back down, and started driving back towards the highway spotting a roadside **Eastern Buzzard** on the way.



The young Japanese Macaques can be very playful and a joy to watch.

After lunch at a fantastic Japanese diner, we were on our way to the City of Komatsu on the west coast of Honshu. Descending the mountains, we came down onto the coastal plain which was remarkably warm for this time of year and not a hint of snow. After driving a couple of hours, we had a quick birding stop in the city of Toyama where I had seen some interesting stuff last year. We got to the spot where there had been hundreds of swans and a few geese but there was nothing. We continued exploring and saw some swans landing in the distance. We drove towards them and finally found the main group of over 250 swans. As we got close we started to scan through the **Bewicks Swans**. There was no sign of any geese although we did stumble upon a vagrant **Tundra Swan** with very little yellow on its bill. There was not much more, other than **Grey Heron, Great Egret, Dusky Thrush, Japanese Wagtail** and some singing **Eurasian Skylarks**, so we drove on to our hotel in Komatsu. In the evening we went out to a very fun sushi restaurant where we ordered food on touch screens. It was quite an experience.



Scenes from the Snow Monkey Park at Jigokudani.

29th January – Western Honshu Wetlands

We had a full day to explore the Western Honshu Wetlands and we started heading south of Komatsu to the neighbouring prefecture of Fukui. We explored fields looking for White-fronted Geese that usually feed in this area but were unable to find them. Driving along a small river we saw lots of **Eurasian Wigeon** and a single male **American Wigeon**. We went to a pond where we had close views of the beautiful **Falcated Duck** along with **Gadwall**, **Northern Shoveler** and hundreds of other common ducks. We also had a couple of **Warbling White-eyes** in a nearby tree. From here we headed to the coast where we did some sea watching and found a few **Red-throated** and dozens of **Arctic Loons**, **Red-necked Grebe** and some distant **Black-legged Kittiwakes**. In small harbour, we saw **Pelagic & Japanese Cormorants**, **Black-tailed, Kamchatka, Vega & Slaty-backed Gulls** perched on a sea wall and a beautiful male **Blue Rock-Thrush**. Further along we added **Pacific Reef-Heron**. We drove north to the Katano Kamoike bird reserve, an important sanctuary for waterfowl where over 1000 **Baikal Teal** winter annually. On the way we stopped at rice fields where we saw a big flock of **Bewick's Swans** with a couple of **Tundra Swans** mixed in. It was starting to rain, so it was nice to spend time inside the visitors centre at Katano Kamoike. Many of the Baikal Teal had already left although there were still over 400 at the back of the large pond. Other waterfowl seen included **Tundra Bean-Geese**, **Bewick's Swan**, **Northern Shoveler**, **Green-winged Teal**, **Common Pochard** and **Tufted Duck**.



We saw dozens of elegant Falcated Ducks.

There were also a couple of **Northern Goshawks** perched up in the trees, probably deciding which duck to eat next. The staff of the centre enquired with their biologists and directed us to the flock of **Greater White-fronted Geese** we had been searching for in the morning. We counted over 450 individuals along with 7 **Tundra Bean-Goose** and a couple of **Common Snipe**. We scanned the flock carefully for Lesser White-fronted Geese that were supposedly in the area but couldn't find them. Leaving, we also flushed a couple of female **Green Pheasants**. After lunch at a local diner, we explored the extensive Komatsu rice fields. This area is an important feeding ground for hundreds of **Bewick Swans** and occasionally turns up rarities, but not today. We checked out the large Shibayama Lake and even took a walk along the water's edge scanning the lake for ducks and checking the reedbeds. We saw our first **Osprey**, **Eastern Marsh-Harrier** and **Eared Grebes** along with hundreds of **Eurasian Teal** and **Falcated Ducks**. We still had a bit of time left and decided to head back south to Fukui to look for Lesser Whitefronts, but they were nowhere to be found. We did see our first **Rooks** mixed in with a large flock of **Carriion Crows**. After a very successful day, we enjoyed dinner in a Japanese Pub (Izakaya), with some Tempura and sake.

30th January – Komatsu to Tokyo

Today was a travel day. Our flight to Haneda airport was on time, and we had time to kill in the airport. Unfortunately, due to heavy snow in Hokkaido, our flight to Kushiro was cancelled. We had no option but to spend the night in Tokyo and take the first flight tomorrow. The office quickly booked hotel rooms near Haneda Airport, and after checking in, we went out to try and do some local birding. We found a small park with a few trees, where we found **Oriental Turtle-Dove**, **Brown-eared Bulbul**, **Warbling White-eye**, **White-cheeked Starling**, **Dusky Thrush** and **Large-billed Crow**. From there we walked down to the Tama River and the poorly named, Daishi Bridge Greenspace. There was some exposed mud on river with many **Black-headed** plus single **Kamchatka & Vega Gulls**. We had good number of ducks, with **Northern Shoveler**, **Eastern Spot-billed Duck**, **Green-winged Teal**, **Common Pochard**, **Tufted Duck** and **Greater Scaup**, and also a few **Great Crested Grebes**, **Great Cormorant**, **Gray Heron** and **Great Egret**.



A gorgeous male Daurian Redstart in Tokyo.

We walked along the reed beds which were dotted with trees and bushes. Here we saw **Bull-headed Shrike**, **Daurian Redstart**, **Japanese Tit**, **Reed & Black-faced Buntings**. There were also **Black-eared Kites** and **Eastern Buzzard** flying overhead. We walked across a grassy area with **Carrion Crow** and **White Wagtail**, before arriving at an inlet with some exposed mud. Here we added **Black-winged Stilt** to the trip list and also saw **Little Egret** and **Eurasian Coot**. There were some locals feeding the birds nearby and we had great photo opps of **Black-headed Gull**, **Northern Pintail** and **Eurasian Wigeon**. For a spot of birding in a Tokyo park, it had been surprisingly productive. In the evening, we walked to a nearby restaurant where we had Okonomiyaki; a type of vegetable pancake cooked on a hot plate, which was lots of fun.

31st January – Nemuro Peninsular

Our flight to Hokkaido was due to depart but the airline said there was a chance they might have to reroute or turn back because of the weather, so it was a relief when we touched down in Kushiro. As I filled in the paperwork for the rental car, our first **Steller's Sea-Eagle** flew over and as I came back, the clients were jumping up and down. It was pretty mild (above freezing) and raining as we began our drive east to Nemuro. After our first convenience store lunch in the town of Hamanaka, we drove towards Kiritappu but stopped quickly near the bridge where we saw **Whooper Swan, Northern Shoveler, Eurasian Wigeon, Common Pochard, Tufted Duck** and **Common Goldeneye**. We also had a flyby of **White-tailed Eagle**. We drove up to the cape but it was hideous weather and it was barely worth getting out of the vehicle. Our target Asian Rosy-Finches were nowhere to be seen.



Red-breasted Merganser in the snow.

We continued to Nemuro and on to the Hanasaki port where we had some excellent photo opportunities of **Harlequin Duck, Long-tailed Duck, Red-breasted Merganser, Greater Scaup, Stejneger's** and **Black Scoters**, plus **Slaty-backed** and **Glaucous-winged Gulls**. We carried on along the coast, dropping in at Okineppu harbour where we added **Glaucous Gull**. We drove to the Onnemoto Bird Hide where Rock Sandpiper is often seen on a rocky island off the coast but conditions were terrible and there was no chance to see much at all. We tried sea watching from the lighthouse at Cape Nosappu but conditions were dire and we didn't even stray from vehicle. We saw no alcids but did finally get **Red-faced Cormorant** which was roosting on a rock with several **Pelagic Cormorants**. Despite the terrible conditions, we had still managed to see a few things but we were happy to drive to the hotel for a delicious dinner.

1st February – Lake Furen to Rausu

First thing, we went up to the forest at the Shunkunitai Nature Centre. It was pretty quiet, but we did get a flock of **Arctic Loons** flying over. We went around the back of the forest where we came across numerous Sika Deer, a pair of **Eurasian Jays** and a flyover of some **Asian Rosy-Finches**. During breakfast back at the lodge, we had **Great Spotted Woodpecker**, **Marsh & Japanese Tits**, **Brown-eared Bulbul** and the distinctive race of **Eurasian Nuthatch** coming in. This group was especially keen on Steller's, so after breakfast, we decided to go to the Eagle feeding site at Lake Furen. We made it just as the eagles were coming in to start feeding. In the end we counted 84 **White-tailed Eagles** and 92 **Steller's Sea-Eagles** and they were joined with large numbers of **Large-billed Crows** and **Black-eared Kites**. Many eagles were flying around, and we had good opportunities for flight shots. Occasionally there was a skirmish over a fish which gave quite a spectacle. There was a stiff, cold wind coming straight off the frozen lake, and after we had taken our photos, we retreated to the warmth of our heated vehicle. We set off towards Rausu with quite a few birding sites on the way. We stopped at a rest area with a viewpoint over the frozen Lake Furen where we had a couple of **White-tailed Eagles** perched out on the ice.



Steller's Sea-Eagles fighting over frozen fish at a feeding site.

We drove north, then down a side road to Hashirikotan. Along here we had a lonely **Oriental Greenfinch**, and then a MEGA rarity, a **Fieldfare**. We got to the fishing port of Hashirikotan where we saw **Greater Scaup**, **Black Scoter**, **Common Goldeneye** and **Common Merganser**. We were looking for a vagrant Bald Eagle. There were many **Black-eared Kites**, **White-tailed & Steller's Sea-Eagle**, but no Baldie. We set off north again towards Rausu and along the road had dozens of **Slaty-backed**, **Glaucous-winged & Glaucous Gulls** lined up along the sea wall. We stopped at a roadside restaurant where scanning the sea we had our first **Brants** and a nice adult male **Stejneger's Scoter**. We had a delightful lunch and even saw a couple of **Eurasian Siskins** in an Alder tree outside the window. We explored the Odaito fishing port which had **Whooper Swan**, **Greater Scaup**, **Tufted & Long-tailed Ducks**, **Common Goldeneye**, **Common & Red-breasted Mergansers**. Our main birding stop on the way up was at the Notsuke Peninsular, a thin spit of land that juts out into the Sea of Okhotsk. Driving along here, we had several **Sika Deer** including some impressive stags. There were large numbers of gulls present and scanning for something rarer Alan spotted another MEGA, **Ross's Gull**! They were moving fast but their pink breasts were unmistakable.

We checked out the Todowara Nature Centre and tried a bit of sea watching, with a distant **Spectacled Guillemot**, and then drove back along the peninsular and on to Rausu, spotting a nice **Red Fox** on the way. We arrived around 4pm and were welcomed by some **Brown Dippers** in the stream. We were shown to our rooms and had time to get settled in before going to the restaurant where we enjoyed a traditional Japanese meal. The **Blakiston's Fish Owl** had come into the feeding pond early yesterday, but it was after 11 before it arrived today. The huge owl had landed in a tree above the feeding pond, and after peering down intently for a few minutes, flew down to the edge of the stream. It didn't take long before it saw a fish and jumped in to grab it. It sat there with it in its mouth before flying upstream. It had been a long wait, but well worth it.



Red Fox and Brown Dipper in the snow.

2nd February – Rausu

The **Blakiston's Fish-Owl** came down again at about 5am. Luckily one of us was up to wake the others and we got a few more shots, but still wanted better. After a leisurely 7:30am breakfast, we had nice views of **Brown Dipper** before driving down to the harbour for our boat ride to see the eagles. The skies were clear and winds moderate but there was a bit of swell. There were 3 different boats going out for the eagles this morning, but there were plenty to go around. We spent a wonderful 90 minutes watching and photographing **White-tailed & Steller's Sea-Eagles** swooping in and catching the frozen fish on the water that the crew of our boat were tossing out for them. In addition to the eagles we saw **Greater Scaup, Harlequin Duck, Black Scoter, Long-tailed Duck, Common Goldeneye, Common & Red-breasted Merganser, Slaty-backed, Glaucous-winged & Glaucous Gulls** plus a distant **Spectacled Guillemot**. I had received information about more Ross's Gulls and Red-legged Kittiwakes in Shari Harbour about a 90 minute drive from here. The roads were clear and we made it up and over the mountains easily.



Ross's Gull is a rarity in Japan.

Just before the town, we saw a large flock of **Common Redpoll**. We drove into the harbour where there were plenty of the same sea ducks but also **Whooper Swan** and **Stejneger's Scoter**. We took a walk, scanning gulls on the breakwater and out at sea. There were many of the usual large gulls, plus plenty of **Kamchatka Gulls** too. We finally found a kittiwake but unfortunately just a **Black-legged Kittiwake**. Then, a **Ross's Gull** flew very close for photos. We drove around to the other side of the river mouth and scanned the sea from there and had **Pigeon Guillemot** and 3 more Ross's Gulls, but no sign of the Red-legged Kittiwakes. There were a small number of **White-tailed & Steller's Sea-Eagles**, and even a few passerines, with **Brown-eared Bulbul, Dusky Thrush, Asian Rosy-Finch** and **Oriental Greenfinch**. The sun had come out now and the mountain scenery on the drive back was spectacular. Once we got back to the coast road and started heading north back to Rausu, the setting sun was shining on the southern Kuril islands (claimed by Japan but controlled by Russia) making them a beautiful pink colour. We returned to the lodge for another traditional Japanese dinner, then began the vigil in our room. I gave up at midnight with the owl a 'No Show'.



Scenes from our boat ride to see eagles at Rausu.



Blakiston's Fish-Owl kept us waiting, but showed marvellously in the end.

3rd February – Rausu to Akan

One member of our group slept early and set his alarm for 3am. The tactic worked and we were all very grateful when he woke us up at 3:30am when the **Blakiston's Fish-Owl** finally showed up to feed. Ten minutes later, its mate showed up and also got itself a nice tasty fish. One more visit at 5:50am gave us the photos we had been waiting for. We had our last breakfast at the fish-owl lodge, before hitting the road. Driving through Rausu, there were 2 stunning **Steller's Sea-Eagles** perched in a tree by the roadside with blue skies behind them and we couldn't help but stop to take pictures of them. We had a distance to cover to get to our next birding location at Cape Nosappu. On the way we picked up our first **Common Ravens** of the trip. Not a very common bird in Japan. After a couple of hours driving, we reached Onnemoto and walked out to the bird hide. It was a totally different scene from terrible conditions we had the other day, and we enjoyed the warm sun on our faces, and scanned the calm sea. There were large number of **Harlequin Ducks** bobbing happily on the surface and numerous **Spectacled Guillemots**, but no sign of any Rock Sandpipers. We drove on to Cape Nosappu, where we continued our sea-watching with **Greater Scaup**, **Black & Steneger's Scoter**, **Long-tailed Duck**, **Red-breasted Merganser**, **Horned & Red-necked Grebe**.



Red-crowned Cranes flying off to roost in a nearby river.

The lighthouse here is a well-known spot to see alcids. Numbers were definitely down this year but we still found many **Spectacled Guillemot**, a couple of **Pigeon Guillemot** and a single **Ancient Murrelet**. Driving back towards Nemuro, we also had a lucky **Short-eared Owl**. After a quick convenience store lunch we were on our way back to Kushiro. The blue skies changed to grey and threatened snow. Before going to see the **Japanese Cranes**, we went looking for a day roost of **Ural Owl**. After parking and walking along a path, we reached a view point over a narrow valley. There was an old tree facing us with a hole in it, and a beautiful, pale **Ural Owl** looking out of it. There are several winter feeding-sites for **Red-crowned Cranes**, and we chose to visit the Ito Sanctuary. There were about 100 cranes, and we spent time trying to get photos of them but unfortunately it had started snowing so the results weren't great. It was just a short drive to our lodge where we checked in to our rooms, enjoyed a nice hot bath and delicious gourmet dinner.



We paid another visit to a marvellous stakeout for Ural Owl.

4th February – Tsurui-mura to Izumi, Kyushu

Today was mainly a travel day and we only had a short time with the cranes. After breakfast, we drove to the nearby feeding site at Ito Sanctuary but no cranes had showed. We did see a few **Coal & Japanese Tits** plus **Eurasian Nuthatch** but moved on to another feeding site called Tsurumidai. Here, there was one lonely **Red-crowned Crane** which had arrived early. We got a few shots of it plus some beautiful **Long-tailed Tits** before driving to the airport. Our flight left on time and we had a brief lunch at Haneda airport before boarding our connecting flight to Kagoshima on the southern island of Kyushu. The drive to our hotel was about an hour and a half but we had time for a couple of quick stops. The first was at a bridge over a river where I had seen Mandarin Duck in previous years. We scanned both sides to see **Common Sandpiper**, **Great Egret**, **Brown-eared Bulbul**, **Warbling White-eye**, **Brown Dipper** and **Daurian Redstart** but unfortunately no Mandarins. We had one last stop at the Sendai River in the town of Satsuma. Some years, you get some interesting birds here but today we just had **Eastern Spot-billed Duck**, **Tufted Duck**, **Eurasian Wigeon**, **Eurasian Teal**, **Little Grebe**, **Eurasian Coot**, **Long-billed Plover**, **Great Cormorant**, **Little Egret**, **Osprey** plus **Common & Green Sandpipers**. We also saw a few passerines, with **Dusky Thrush**, **Bull-headed Shrike**, many **Barn Swallows**, **Japanese**, **Grey** and dozens of **White Wagtails**. We made it to the city of Izumi where we were to spend the next 2 nights and enjoyed a nice meal at the hotel restaurant.



Red-crowned Crane in the snow.

5th February – Izumi & Yatsushiro

This morning we were visiting Arasaki, where over 15,000 cranes gather at the feeding site. It was a seriously impressive sight, as hundreds at a time, flocks left the flooded fields where they roosted and came down near the roads in front of us, where they poured bags of grain daily. **White-naped & Hooded Cranes** formed the majority, but after some searching, we also found several **Sandhill**, a couple of **Common** and a single **Demoiselle Crane**. We found all species within the first 10 minutes of observation. There are not too many places in the world where you could do that. As we observed the cranes, huge flocks of **Northern Pintail** passed us, **Northern Lapwings** flapped by and we saw a **Northern Goshawk** perched on the sea wall. Next, we checked out a flooded field to find **Common Shelduck**, **11 Eurasian** & **1 Black-faced Spoonbill**. Driving around the fields, we found several **Eurasian Skylarks**, **Dusky Thrushes**, **Buff-bellied Pipits** and large numbers of **Oriental Greenfinches**. In the creeks and ponds we saw **Eurasian Moorhen**, **Common Sandpiper** and the beautiful **Common Kingfisher**. Next, we went to the Crane Centre where we enjoyed the displays on cranes, and scanned from the top floor to add more cranes. Outside, we found our first **Russet Sparrows** mixed in with the common **Eurasian Tree Sparrows**, and a flock of **European Starlings**. We moved on to the extensive reedbeds Euchi River where we saw **Japanese Bush Warbler**, **Warbling White-eye**, **Pale Thrush**, **Meadow**, **Black-faced & Reed Buntings** and our target **Chinese Penduline-Tits**.



Thousands of cranes gathering at the feeding station.

We drove to the city of Yatsushiro, which was about an hour and a half north. After the drive, we first had lunch and then began our search for the globally threatened **Saunders's Gull**. We timed it perfectly and the tide was just half-way out when we arrived. **Saunders's Gull** was one of the first birds we saw and we had several of these rare gulls as they flew over the mudflats looking for crabs. We also had **Vega & Lesser Black-backed Gulls**, **Eurasian Wigeon**, **Red-breasted Merganser**, **Eared Grebe** and a surprise flock of **Brown Boobies** diving in the distance. There were many shorebirds feeding in the distance. **Kentish & Black-bellied Plovers** and **Dunlin** were the most numerous but there were also several **Eurasian Curlews** and **Common Greenshank** plus **Common Shelduck** and **Osprey**. We continued driving along the sea wall and found a little park, where we found some **Russet Sparrows**. We drove back to Arasaki and had some last birding at the end of the day. On the way in, we found a mega flock of more than 1000 **Rooks**, with a few **Daurian Jackdaws** mixed in. We had a chance to get some more photos of cranes in the last light of the day and then visited the reedbeds again for more photos of **Chinese Penduline-Tits** plus **Northern Shoveler**, **Chestnut-eared Bunting**, **Eastern Buzzard**, **Daurian Redstart** and **Bull-headed Shrike**. It had been an amazing day and we finished off with some more great Japanese food in a local restaurant.



Hooded Cranes (above) and White-naped Cranes (below).

6th February – Izumi to Miike

We went back to see the cranes this morning. We stopped first at the flooded pond where many cranes were still roosting. We had good views of **Eurasian Spoonbills** and finally confirmed the ID of the **Black-faced Spoonbills** that had their bills tucked away yesterday. We tried again at the reed-filled ditch, where we heard a **Ruddy-breasted Crake**, but couldn't get it to come in. We did however have a nice **Northern Goshawk** in the trees. At my bridge spot where we heard both **Ruddy-breasted Crake** and **Brown-cheeked Crake** but also no visuals. We added a nice **Hawfinch**, **Bull-headed Shrike**, **Meadow Bunting** and our first **Peregrine Falcon**, before leaving this amazing area. Next, we headed for the mountains and drove around a reservoir surrounded by lush forest. We finally tracked down a few **Mandarin Ducks** but they were wary and a bit distant. We stopped and walked around a small park where we saw our first **Red-flanked Bluetail**, **Yellow-throated Bunting** plus more views of **Pale Thrush** and **Black-faced Bunting**. We drove back down to the river where we tried several spots up the valley for the Crested Kingfisher but had to be satisfied with **Brown Dipper**. We continued our drive and a while later stopped quickly when I heard **Chinese Bamboo Partridge** calling in some roadside forest. We could find it, but we did see our first **Ryukyu Minivet**.



Sika Deer look very different in the south of Japan.

Further up in the town of Isa, we checked some bridges and found several **Asian House Martins**. We had a nice lunch stop at a restaurant with a view down to the Sakurajima volcano on the coast with a plume of smoke coming from it. Afterwards, we drove on up to Kirishima Shrine where we had a short cultural diversion and also saw our first **Japanese Grosbeak**. Our last site of the day was Miike, a small volcanic crater lake surrounded by lush forest. We first went to check out the shrine overlooking the lake where we had great views of **Pygmy Woodpecker**. We then drove down to the campsite inside the crater and took a brief look from the lake edge to find an assortment of ducks. We took a short walk around the campsite and saw **Japanese Woodpecker**, **Olive-backed Pipit**, **Varied & Long-tailed Tits** and **Japanese Grosbeak**. We searched for White-backed Woodpecker but only heard it drumming nearby. We called it a day and drove back to Kirishima and drove up to our cosy guesthouse. Further along the road, we saw some **Sika Deer** which looked different than those we had seen on Hokkaido. The outdoor hot springs, and what most people in the group agreed was one of the best meals they had ever eaten, made for a memorable stay.

7th February – Miike to Kadogawa & Hitotsusegawa

After a delicious breakfast, we drove up towards Miike and tried my spot for **Ural Owl** which we heard inside the forest, but it wouldn't come in. We did however find several **Japanese Grosbeaks** and **Hawfinches**, and also **Black-faced Buntings** hopping along the road but none of our hoped-for Grey Buntings. We drove to the temple at Miike but it was misty and rainy and not many birds about. Back down the hill, we found a nice active spot where we saw **White-backed Woodpecker**, **Ryukyu Minivet**, **Eurasian Jay** and **Varied Tit**. We didn't have long, and it was soon time to hit the road, but we did see **Pale Thrush**, **Red-flanked Bluetail** and **Olive-backed Pipit** on the way out. It was time to move on, and we decided to go in search of the **Crested Kingfisher**. We stopped at a bridge over a large river and had a small group of **Mandarin Duck** and our target **Crested Kingfisher** (brilliantly spotted by Tyler) which we all had distant scope views of. Another bridge further on added a further 40 **Mandarin Ducks**. We really wanted closer views of the **Crested Kingfisher** so we tried another couple of bridges. A long suspension bridge over the Iwase river, had **Northern Pintail**, **Common Pochard**, **Eastern Buzzard** and some **Japanese Bush Warblers** singing below. Our last bridge over the Oyodo River had **Eurasian Kestrel**, **Barn Swallows**, **Gray Wagtail**, **Meadow Bunting** and finally a beautiful pair of closer **Crested Kingfishers**. It was now time to head down to the small fishing village of Kadogawa, where a boat takes people out in search of **Japanese Murrelets**.



Japanese Woodpigeon showed brilliantly this year.

The captain located the **Japanese Murrelets** which we got fairly close to for photos. We also saw **Eared & Great Crested Grebe**, **Black-headed Gull**, **Black-tailed & Vega Gulls**, **Japanese Cormorant** and **Pacific Reef-Heron**. Just as we were coming back in, another passenger on the boat spotted another couple of Japanese Murrelets and we spent another 10 minutes getting our closest views yet. Next, we went on to a coastal site a bit further south where sometimes the rare **Japanese Wood-Pigeon**, normally a bird of small offshore islands, comes to the coastal forest. Inside the forest we found **Red-flanked Bluetail**, **Varied Tit & Japanese White-eye**. We enjoyed the scenery along the coast at the end of the rocky peninsular and in the last patch of forest, we heard the birds calling nearby. Finally, we spotted the **Japanese Wood-Pigeons** inside the forest and we all had good, close views of this seldom seen bird. We had just enough time to check out one last birding site, called the Hitotsuse River. We visited a pond with several ducks, including **Northern Shoveler**, **Common Pochard**, **Eurasian Wigeon**, **Tufted Duck** and the American race of **Green-winged Teal**. We also had several shore birds, with **Dunlin**, **Common Sandpiper**, **Common Snipe**, many **Northern Lapwings**, plus several other interesting species like **Black-crowned Night-Heron**, **Osprey**, **Warbling White-eye**, **Pale & Dusky Thrushes**, **Daurian Redstart** and **Black-faced Bunting**. The main target here though was the endangered **Black-faced Spoonbill** and we had close views of 15 individuals.

8th February – Hitotsusegawa to Tokyo

We picked up where we had left off, back at the Hitotsuse River. The tide was still fairly high again, so no shorebirds in the estuary, but on the pond, we had **Northern Shoveler**, **Black-faced Spoonbill**, **Northern Lapwing**, and nearby **Pale Thrush**, **Daurian Redstart** and **Hawfinch**. We met a local birder who gave us some valuable information on the **Greater Spotted Eagle**, and we shot off to the spot he told us about. We parked our vehicle and walked over a narrow bridge onto a large island, There were large fields full of birds including **White Wagtails**, **Eurasian Skylarks**, **Dusky Thrushes**, several **Richard's Pipits** and a single **Eastern Yellow Wagtail**. The last 2 species both new for the trip. We started walking towards the other end of the island and on the way found our first **Zitting Cisticola**. There were a few Japanese bird photographers also looking for the eagle, but nobody had seen it yet. We did find our first **Eurasian Wryneck** though. We walked back to the car and just before getting in, had the **Greater Spotted Eagle** fly right over head for great views and photos. We started to drive upstream to Kota Oike; a beautiful lake by an apparently disused shrine. We parked and walked along a short track through some forest. We came to the edge of the duck-filled pond where we found hundreds of **Mallard**, with smaller numbers of **Northern Shoveler** and **Common Pochard**, but the ducks here were so skittish, that as soon as they saw us they all took off to the back of the lake. Our main goals here were **Mandarin Duck** and **Baikal Teal** and we got good scope views of both species, and also saw **Barn Swallow** and **Daurian Redstart**. We drove down to Miyazaki where we quickly checked out the prefectural forest park. Here we found a beautiful male **Red-flanked Bluetail**. We had a last lunch and a spot of souvenir shopping before flying back to Tokyo where we finished the main tour.



This Greater Spotted Eagle visited its Winter site for the 6th year running.

BIRDS OF THE TRIP (Main tour only)

- 1st STELLER'S SEA-EAGLE
- 2nd BLAKISTON'S FISH-OWL
- 3rd JAPANESE MURRELET
- 3rd ROSS'S GULL
- 5th PALLAS'S ROSEFINCH
- 5th COPPER PHEASANT
- 5th WHITE-NAPED CRANE

EXTENSION I

8th to 9th January – Tokyo to Miyakejima

From Haneda Airport, we made our way to Takeshiba Ferry Terminal where we ate dinner and repacked an overnight bag, leaving the rest of our luggage in the large lockers here. We boarded our ferry late at night, and after a few precious hours sleep, we were woken by the tannoy at 4:30am. After getting off the boat, we waited in the ferry terminal until 6 when our driver came to pick us up and drive us to the bidding site called Taro-ike. Taro-ike is a small volcanic crater lake surrounded by lush forest and it also has a visitor's centre called Akakokko-kan, named after the Japanese endemic **Izu Thrush**. It was still a bit dark and we waited in the parking lot for a short while until there was enough light to begin our birding. Looking along the entrance road to the visitor's centre at dawn, we spotted 2 of our targets, the **Izu Thrush** and **Japanese Robin**. We got decent views, which is just as well as they were the only ones we saw in the whole morning.



Short-tailed Albatross in the famed 'Oshima Triangle'.

We found the trail heading down towards the lake and enjoyed a pleasant morning's birding. We saw our other endemic target, **Owston's Tit**, plus endemic subspecies of **Eastern Buzzard**, **Eurasian Wren** and **Japanese White-eye**. I heard a **Grey Bunting** calling and we managed brief views. It was a successful walk and we made our way back up to the visitors centre where they had some feeders. **Owston's** and **Japanese Tits** were coming in constantly. The rain slowed down a bit and we went out for a walk and found **Japanese Woodpigeon**. I also got chatting to a local who told me about some waxwings nearby. Our time was up here, and our driver took us back to the ferry terminal stopping at a spot on the way to see both **Bohemian** and **Japanese Waxwings**. After boarding the ferry, we went straight up to the deck to start our seawatch on which we had good views of hundreds of **Laysan**, 12 **Short-tailed** and 1 **Black-footed Albatross**, along with **Pomarine Jaeger**, **Black-legged Kittiwake**, **Ancient Murrelet**, **Northern Fulmar** and **Streaked Shearwater**. It was a busy couple of hours, but as we started to get close to Tokyo, it quietened down and the sun dropped lower in the sky. At the Takeshiba Port in Tokyo, we were transferred to our hotels where we all said goodbye after an unforgettable tour.

EXTENSION II

10th to 11th January – Sado Island, Niigata

On an exploratory extension, I visited Sado Island (*Sado-ga-shima*) in Niigata Prefecture in search of Crested Ibis, whose scientific name is *Nipponia nippon*. In Japan, this species became extinct in the wild when the last 6 individuals were caught to start a captive breeding program. The program failed and these birds all finally died. Luckily the species also occurs in China, and they were being bred successfully in captivity there. The Sado breeding facility received some birds from China and these bred successfully. The captive population slowly grew and eventually a reintroduction program began. There are now over 400 birds in the wild on Sado Island, and these have been breeding for 4 generations. I reached Sado Island by a short 2-hour ferry from Niigata City. After renting a car, I began my exploration of the island and had soon tracked down my first **Crested Ibises**. Over the next 24 hours, I found over 20 birds, had wonderful photographic opportunities and visited the conservation centre to hear the full story of the conservation program.



Juvenile (below) or non-breeding Crested Ibises are arguably prettier than the breeding adults.

12th January – Sendai & Lake Izunuma

The next site I visited was Miyagi Prefecture in north eastern Honshu which is a famous spot where tens of thousands of geese winter. I started in the large city of Sendai and visited a park where the rare **Solitary Snipe** had been seen recently. After a thorough search, I was able to find one, plus dozens of **Whooper Swans**, a variety of ducks and passerines. Next, I drove north searching the fields and located a flock of about 50 Aleutian **Cackling Geese**, which now seems to winter annually in this area. As I went north, I passed countless groups of **Greater White-fronted Geese** and at Kabukuri Marsh, I hit the motherload with about 2000 birds in one field. I made my way to a site where the rare **Lesser White-fronted Goose** had been seen. My intel was good and I found 16 birds in 4 groups. I went as far as Izunuma where many thousands of geese fly into roost in the evening. I certainly look forward to bringing clients here in the future.



Solitary Snipe & Lesser White-fronted Geese.

BIRD LIST

Avian taxonomy follows ebird/Clements v2019

Note: Only endemic races and potential splits are given to subspecies level.

ANSERIFORMES: Anatidae

Greater White-fronted Goose

Anser albifrons

Seen at Katano Kamoike & Izunuma.

Lesser White-fronted Goose

Anser erythropus

Seen near Izunuma.

Tundra Bean-Goose

Anser serrirostris

Seen at Katano Kamoike.

Brant

Branta bernicla

Seen at Odaito.

Tundra (Bewick) Swan

Cygnus columbianus bewickii

Seen at Toyama, Katano Kamoike & Sado.

Tundra (Whistling) Swan

Cygnus c. columbianus

Seen at Toyama & Komatsu.

Whooper Swan

Cygnus cygnus

Seen at Toyama, Hamanaka, Odaito, Shari & Sendai.

Common Shelduck

Tadorna tadorna

Seen at Arasaki & Yatsushiro.

Mandarin Duck

Aix galericulata

Seen at Kogawa Dam, Nojiri, Iwase River & Kota Oike

Baikal Teal

Sibirionetta formosa

Seen at Katano Kamoike and Kota Oike.

Northern Shoveler

Spatula clypeata

Seen at Katano Kamoike, Awara, Tama River, Arasaki, Kota Shrine & Hitotsuse River.

Gadwall

Mareca strepera

Seen at Awara & Arasaki.

Falcated Duck

Mareca falcata

Near-threatened. Seen in the Awara & Komatsu areas.

Eurasian Wigeon

Mareca penelope

Commonly seen throughout.

American Wigeon

Mareca americana

A single male was seen at Awara.

Eastern Spot-billed Duck

Anas zonorhyncha

Commonly seen throughout.

Mallard

Anas platyrhynchos

Commonly seen throughout.

Northern Pintail

Anas acuta

Seen at Mizumoto Park, Toden Lake, Coastal Fukui, Tama River, Arasaki, Hitotsusegawa & Kota Oike.

Green-winged (Eurasian) Teal

Anas c. crecca

Split by IOC. Commonly seen throughout.

Green-winged (American) Teal

Anas c. carolinensis

Split by IOC. A single male was seen at Hitotsusegawa.

Common Pochard

Aythya ferina

Seen at Mizumoto Park, Toden Lake, Tama, Katano Kamoike, Hamanaka, Hitotsusegawa & Kota Oike.

Tufted Duck

Aythya fuligula

Seen at Mizumoto Park, Katano Kamoike, Tama River, Satsuma, Hitotsusegawa, Kota Oike, Taro-ike.

Greater Scaup

Aythya marila

Commonly seen on Hokkaido.

Harlequin Duck

Histrionicus histrionicus

Commonly seen on Hokkaido.

East Asian Endemic

Stejneger's Scoter *Melanitta stejnegeri*
 A newly split species. Seen in the Nemuro area, Betsukai & Shari.
Black Scoter *Melanitta americana*
 Near-threatened. Commonly seen on Hokkaido.
Long-tailed Duck *Clangula hyemalis*
 Vulnerable. Commonly seen on Hokkaido.
Common Goldeneye *Bucephala clangula*
 Seen at Toden Lake, Nemuro, Hamanaka, Betsukai, Shari & Rausu.
Smew *Mergellus albellus*
 Seen at Mizumoto Park & Toden Lake.
Common Merganser *Mergus m. merganser*
 Seen at Toden Lake, Nemuro, Betsukai, Rausu & Shari.
Red-breasted Merganser *Mergus serrator*
 Seen at Nemuro, Notsuke, Odaito, Shari & Yatsushiro.

GALLIFORMES: Phasianidae

Chinese Bamboo-Partridge *Bambusicola thoracicus*
 Introduced. Heard near Isa.
Copper Pheasant *Syrnaticus soemmerringii scintillans* **Endemic**
 A female seen very well near Karuizawa.
Ring-necked (Green) Pheasant *Phasianus colchicus tanensis* **Endemic subspecies**
 Split by IOC. Japan's national bird. Seen near Saitama Prefectural Forest, Karuizawa & Katano Kamoike.

PODICIPEDIFORMES: Podicipedidae

Little Grebe *Tachybaptus ruficollis*
 Seen at Mizumoto Park, Toden Lake, Satsuma & Miyakejima.
Horned (Slavonian) Grebe *Podiceps auritus*
 Seen at Cape Nosappu.
Red-necked Grebe *Podiceps grisegena*
 Seen in Coastal Fukui & Cape Nosappu.
Great Crested Grebe *Podiceps cristatus*
 Seen at Mizumoto Park, Lake Toden, Tama River, Kadogawa & Hitotsusegawa.
Eared Grebe *Podiceps nigricollis*
 Seen at Kaga, Yatsushiro, Kadogawa & Sado.

COLUMBIFORMES: Columbidae

Rock Pigeon *Columba livia*
 Introduced. Commonly seen throughout.
Japanese Wood-Pigeon *Columba j. janthina* **North-east Asian Endemic**
 Near-threatened. Seen at Umagase & Miyakejima.
Oriental Turtle-Dove *Streptopelia orientalis*
 Seen at Mizumoto Park, Karuizawa, Toyama, Komatsu, Arasaki, Hitotsusegawa, Kota Oike & Miyakejima.

GRUIFORMES: Rallidae

Brown-cheeked Rail *Rallus indicus*
 Heard at Arasaki.
Eurasian Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus*
 Seen at Arasaki.
Eurasian Coot *Fulica atra*
 Seen at Mizumoto Park, Toden Lake, coastal Fukui, Hitotsusegawa, Kota Oike & Miyakejima.
Ruddy-breasted Crake *Zapornia fusca*
 Heard at Arasaki.

GRUIFORMES: Gruidae**Demoiselle Crane***Anthropoides virgo*

A single bird seen at Arasaki.

Sandhill Crane*Antigone canadensis*

Seven seen at Arasaki.

White-naped Crane*Antigone vipio*

Vulnerable. Hundreds seen at Arasaki.

Common Crane*Grus grus*

Several seen at Arasaki.

Hooded Crane*Grus monacha*

Vulnerable. Thousands seen at Arasaki.

Red-crowned Crane*Grus japonensis*

Endangered. Over a hundred seen at Tsurui.

East Asian Endemic**CHARADRIIFORMES: Recurvirostridae****Black-winged Stilt***Himantopus himantopus*

Seen at Tama River.

CHARADRIIFORMES: Charadriidae**Black-bellied Plover***Pluvialis squatarola*

Seen at Yatsushiro & Hitotsusegawa.

Northern Lapwing*Vanellus vanellus*

Seen at Arasaki & Hitotsusegawa.

Kentish Plover*Charadrius alexandrinus*

Seen at Yatsushiro.

Long-billed Plover*Charadrius placidus*

Seen at Toden Lake & Satsuma.

CHARADRIIFORMES: Scolopacidae**Eurasian Curlew***Numenius arquata*

Near-threatened. Seen at Yatsushiro.

Dunlin*Calidris alpina*

Seen at Arasaki, Yatsushiro & Hitotsusegawa.

Solitary Snipe*Gallinago solitaria*

Seen at Mizu-no-mori Park in Sendai.

Common Snipe*Gallinago gallinago*

Seen near Katano Kamoike, Arasaki & Hitotsusegawa.

Common Sandpiper*Actitis hypoleucos*

Seen at Lake Toden, Satsuma, Arasaki & Hitotsusegawa.

Green Sandpiper*Tringa ochropus*

Seen at Satsuma.

Common Greenshank*Tringa nebularia*

Seen at Yatsushiro.

CHARADRIIFORMES: Stercorariidae**Pomarine Jaeger (Skua)***Stercorarius pomarinus*

Seen on the ferry back from Miyakejima.

CHARADRIIFORMES: Alcidae**Pigeon Guillemot***Cepphus columba*

Seen at Cape Nosappu.

Spectacled Guillemot*Cepphus carbo*

Seen at Onnemoto, Cape Nosappu & Notsuke Peninsular.

Ancient Murrelet *Synthliboramphus antiquus*
 Seen at Cape Nosappu & on the Miyakejima ferry.
Japanese Murrelet *Synthliboramphus wumizusume*
 Vulnerable. Seen on a boat ride out of Kadogawa.

CHARADRIIFORMES: Laridae

Black-legged Kittiwake *Rissa tridactyla*
 Seen coastal Fukui, Shari & on the Miyakejima ferry.
Saunders's Gull *Saundersilarus saundersi*
 Vulnerable. Seen at Yatsushiro.
Black-headed Gull *Chroicocephalus ridibundus*
 Seen at Mizumoto Park, Tama River & Kadogawa.
Ross's Gull *Rhodostethis rosea*
 Seen at Notsuke Peninsular & Shari.
Black-tailed Gull *Larus crassirostris*
 Seen at coastal Fukui, Kadogawa & Hitotsusegawa.
Mew (Kamchatka) Gull *Larus canus kamtschatschensis*
 Seen at coastal Fukui, Tama River, Nemuro, Shari & Rausu.
Herring (Vega) Gull *Larus argentatus vegae*
 Seen near Toyama, coastal Fukui, Tama River, Betsukai, Yatsushiro, Kadogawa & Hitotsusegawa.
Lesser Black-backed (Heuglin's) Gull *Larus fuscus heuglini*
 Seen at Yatsushiro.
Slaty-backed Gull *Larus schistisagus*
 Seen at coastal Fukui, Nemuro, Shari & Rausu.
Glaucous-winged Gull *Larus glaucescens*
 Seen at Betsukai, Shari & Rausu.
Glaucous Gull *Larus hyperboreus*
 Seen at Nemuro, Notsuke, Betsukai, Shari & Rausu.

East Asian Endemic

GAVIIFORMES: Gaviidae

Red-throated Loon *Gavia stellata*
 Seen at coastal Fukui.
Arctic (Black-throated) Loon *Gavia stellata*
 Seen at coastal Fukui & Lake Furen.

PROCELLARIIFORMES: Diomedidae

Laysan Albatross *Phoebastria immutabilis*
 Near-threatened. Seen on the Miyakejima ferry.
Black-footed Albatross *Phoebastria nigripes*
 Near-threatened. Seen on the Miyakejima ferry.
Short-tailed Albatross *Phoebastria albatrus*
 Vulnerable. Seen on the Miyakejima ferry.

PROCELLARIIFORMES: Hydrobatidae

Tristram's Storm-Petrel *Oceanodroma tristrami*
 Seen on the Miyakejima ferry.

PROCELLARIIFORMES: Procellariidae

Northern Fulmar *Fulmarus glacialis*
 Seen on the Miyakejima ferry.
Streaked Shearwater *Calonectris leacomelas*
 Seen on the Miyakejima ferry.

SULIFORMES: Sulidae**Brown Booby***Sula leucogaster*

Seen at Yatsushiro.

SULIFORMES: Phalacrocoracidae**Red-faced Cormorant***Phalacrocorax urile*

Two birds seen at Cape Nosappu.

Pelagic Cormorant*Phalacrocorax pelagicus*

Seen at coastal Fukui, Nemuro, Shari & Rausu.

Great Cormorant*Phalacrocorax carbo hanedae***Endemic subspecies**

Seen at Mizumoto Park, Lake Toden, Tama River, Miike & Hitotsusegawa.

Japanese Cormorant*Phalacrocorax capillatus*

Seen near Coastal Fukui, Kadogawa & Miyakejima.

PELECANIFORMES: Ardeidae**Gray Heron***Ardea cinerea*

Seen at Tama River, Arasaki & Hitotsusegawa.

Great Egret*Ardea alba*

Commonly seen on Honshu & Kyushu.

Little Egret*Egretta garzetta*

Seen at Tama River, Arasaki, Kadogawa & Hitotsusegawa.

Pacific Reef-Heron*Egretta sacra*

Seen at coastal Fukui & Kadogawa.

Black-crowned Night-Heron*Nycticorax nycticorax*

Seen at Hitotsuse.

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 Kaga, Satsuma, Arasaki, Yatsushiro, Kadogawa, Hitotsusegawa & Miyakejima.

ACCIPITRIFORMES: Accipitridae**Greater Spotted Eagle***Clanga clanga*

Seen at Hitotsusegawa.

Eastern Marsh-Harrier*Circus spilonotus*

Seen at Kaga.

Eurasian Sparrowhawk*Accipiter nisus*

Seen at Kirishima Shrine.

Northern Goshawk

Seen at Mizumoto Park, Katano Kamoike & Arasaki.

Black(-eared) Kite*Milvus migrans lineatus*

Commonly seen throughout.

White-tailed Eagle*Haliaeetus albicilla*

Seen in the Nemuro area, Betsukai, Shari & Rausu.

Steller's Sea-Eagle*Haliaeetus pelagicus***East Asian Endemic**

Vulnerable. Seen in the Nemuro area, Betsukai, Shari & Rausu.

Eastern Buzzard*Buteo japonicus***Endemic subspecies***B.j.japonicus* was seen near Saitama Prefectural Forest, Karuizawa, Tama River, Arasaki & Hitotsusegawa. The endemic *B.j.toyoshimai* was seen on Miyakejima.

STRIGIFORMES: Strigidae**Blakiston's Fish-Owl**

Endangered. Seen at Rausu.

*Ketupa b. blakistoni***Endemic subspecies****Ural Owl***S.u.japonica* seen near Tsurui. *S.u.fuscescens* heard near Miike.*Strix uralensis***Endemic subspecies****Short-eared Owl**

Seen near Cape Nosappu.

*Asio flammeus***CORACIIFORMES: Alcedinidae****Common Kingfisher**

Seen at Arasaki.

*Alcedo atthis***Crested Kingfisher**

Seen near Nojiri.

*Megaceryle lugubris***Endemic subspecies****PICIFORMES: Picidae****Eurasian Wryneck**

Seen at Hitotsusegawa.

*Jynx torquilla***Pygmy Woodpecker***Y.k.seebohmi* heard at Mizumoto Park, Saitama Prefectural Forest & Karuizawa. *Y.k.kizuki* seen at several sites on Kyushu & Miyakejima.*Yungipicus kizuki***White-backed Woodpecker**

Seen by one participant at Karuizawa & at Miike.

*Dendrocopos leucotos namiyei***Great Spotted Woodpecker**

Seen at Karuizawa & Lake Furen.

*Dendrocopos major***Japanese Woodpecker**

Seen at Karuizawa & Miike.

*Picus awokera***Endemic****FALCONIFORMES: Falconidae****Eurasian Kestrel**

Seen near Saitama Prefectural Forest, near Jigokudani & Hitotsusegawa.

*Falco tinnunculus***Peregrine Falcon**

Seen at Arasaki.

*Falco peregrinus***PASSERIFORMES: Campephagidae****Ryukyu Minivet**

Seen at Kirishima Shrine, near Isa & Miike.

*Pericrocotus tegimae***Endemic****PASSERIFORMES: Laniidae****Bull-headed Shrike**

Seen at Mizumoto Park, Lake Toden, Tama River, Satsuma, Arasaki, Kota Shrine & Hitotsusegawa.

*Lanius bucephalus***PASSERIFORMES: Corvidae****Eurasian Jay**The endemic *G.g.japonicus* seen at Karuizawa. *G.g.bambergi* seen at Lake Furen. The endemic *G.g.hiugaensis* seen at Miike.*Garrulus glandarius***Endemic subspecies****Azure-winged Magpie**

Seen at Mizumoto Park & Karuizawa.

*Cyanopica cyanus japonica***Endemic subspecies****Daurian Jackdaw**

Seen at Arasaki.

*Corvus dauuricus***(Oriental) Rook**

Seen at Awara & Arasaki.

*Corvus frugilegus pastinator***Carion (Oriental) Crow**

Commonly seen throughout.

Corvus corone orientalis

Large-billed Crow

Commonly seen throughout.

Common Raven

Seen at Betsukai.

*Corvus macrorhynchos japonensis**Corvus corax***PASSERIFORMES: Paridae****Coal Tit**

Seen at Karuizawa & Tsurui.

*Periparus ater insularis***Varied Tit**

Seen at Saitama Prefectural Forest, Karuizawa, Kirishima Shrine, Kogawa Dam, Miike & Hyuga.

*Sittiparus varius***Owston's Tit**

Seen on Miyakejima.

*Sittiparus owstoni***Endemic****Marsh Tit**

Seen at Lake Furen.

*Poecile palustris hensoni***Endemic subspecies****Willow Tit**

Seen at Saitama Prefectural Forest & Karuizawa.

*Poecile montanus restrictus***Endemic subspecies****Japanese Tit**

Commonly seen throughout.

*Parus minor***PASSERIFORMES: Remizidae****Chinese Penduline-Tit**

Seen at Arasaki.

*Remiz consobrinus***Endemic subspecies****PASSERIFORMES: Alaudidae****(Japanese) Eurasian Skylark**

Seen at Mizumoto Park, Toyama, Arasaki & Hitotsuse River.

*Alauda arvensis japonica***Endemic subspecies****PASSERIFORMES: Cisticolidae****Zitting Cisticola**

Seen at Hitotsusegawa.

*Cisticola juncidis***PASSERIFORMES: Hirundinidae****Barn Swallow**

Seen at Satsuma, Kota Oike & Hitotsusegawa.

*Hirundo rustica***Asian House Martin**

Seen at Isa.

*Delichon dasypus***PASSERIFORMES: Pycnonotidae****Brown-eared Bulbul**

Commonly seen throughout.

*Hypsipetes amaurotis***PASSERIFORMES: Cettiidae****Japanese Bush-Warbler***H.d.cantans* seen at Mizumoto Park, Arasaki, Hitotsusegawa & Kota Shrine. *H.c.diphone* seen on Miyakejima.*Horornis diphone***Endemic subspecies****PASSERIFORMES: Aegithalidae****Long-tailed Tit***A.c.trivirgatus* seen at Karuizawa. The distinctive white-headed *A.c.caudatus* seen at Tsurumidai. The endemic *A.c.kiusiuensis* seen at Miike.*Aegithalos caudatus***Endemic subspecies****PASSERIFORMES: Zosteropidae****Warbling (Japanese) White-eye***Z.j.japonicus* seen at Mizumoto Park, Tama River & Hitotsusegawa *Z.j.stejegeri* seen on Miyakejima.*Zosterops j. japonicus***Endemic subspecies**

PASSERIFORMES: Regulidae

Goldcrest

Regulus regulus

Seen at Karuizawa, Kirishima Shrine & Miyazaki.

PASSERIFORMES: Sittidae

Eurasian Nuthatch

Sitta europaea

Endemic subspecies

S.e.amurensis seen at Saitama Prefectural Forest & Karuizawa, *S.e.asiatica* seen at Lake Furen, The endemic *S.e.roseillia* seen at Miike.

PASSERIFORMES: Troglodytidae

Eurasian Wren

Troglodytes troglodytes

Endemic subspecies

T.t.fumigatus seen at Karuizawa. *T.t.mosukei* seen on Miyakejima.

PASSERIFORMES: Cinclidae

Brown Dipper

Cinclus pallasii

Seen at Karuizawa, Rausu & near Kogawa Dam.

PASSERIFORMES: Sturnidae

European Starling

Sturnus vulgaris

Seen at Arasaki & Hitotsusegawa.

White-cheeked Starling

Spodiopsar cineraceus

Seen at Mizumoto Park, Coastal Fukui, Karuizawa, Tama River, Yatsushiro & Hitotsusegawa.

PASSERIFORMES: Turdidae

Brown-headed Thrush

Turdus chrysolaus

Seen at Mizumoto Park.

Izu Thrush

Turdus celaenops

Endemic

Seen on Miyakejima.

Pale Thrush

Turdus pallidus

Seen at Karuizawa, Arasaki, Miike, Hitotsusegawa & Miyakejima.

Fieldfare

Turdus pilaris

Seen at Lake Furen.

Dusky Thrush

Turdus eunomus

Commonly seen throughout.

Naumann's Thrush

Turdus naumanni

Seen at Mizumoto Park.

PASSERIFORMES: Muscicapidae

Japanese (Izu) Robin

Larvivora akahige tanensis

Endemic subspecies

Potential split. Seen on Miyakejima.

Red-flanked Bluetail

Tarsiger cyanurus

Seen at Arasaki, Kogawa Dam, Miike, Hyuga & Miyazaki.

Daurian Redstart

Phoenicurus aureus

Seen at Mizumoto Park, Karuizawa, Tama River, Arasaki, Hitotsusegawa & Miyazaki.

Blue Rock-Thrush

Monticola solitarius

Seen at coastal Fukui & Miyakejima.

PASSERIFORMES: Bombycillidae

Bohemian Waxwing

Bombycilla garrulus

Seen on Miyakejima.

Japanese Waxwing

Bombycilla japonica

Seen at Karuizawa & Miyakejima.

PASSERIFORMES: Passeridae

Russet Sparrow

Seen at Arasaki & Yatsushiro.

Passer rutilans

Eurasian Tree Sparrow

Commonly seen throughout.

Passer montanus

PASSERIFORMES: Motacillidae

Gray Wagtail

Seen on the way to Karuizawa, Satsuma Sendai, Miike & Miyazaki.

Motacilla cinerea

Eastern Yellow Wagtail

Seen at Hitotsusegawa.

Motacilla tschutschensis taivana

Japanese Wagtail

Seen at Mizumoto Park, Toden Lake, Toyama, Satsuma & Sado.

Motacilla grandis

Breeding Endemic

White Wagtail

Commonly seen throughout Honshu & Kyushu.

Motacilla alba lugens/ocularis

Richard's Pipit

Seen at Hitotsusegawa.

Anthus richardi

Olive-backed Pipit

Seen at Miike & Miyazaki.

Anthus hodgsoni

American (Buff-bellied) Pipit

Seen at Mizumoto Park, Arasaki & Hitotsusegawa.

Anthus rubescens japonicus

PASSERIFORMES: Fringillidae

Hawfinch

Seen at Mizumoto Park, Saitama Prefectural Forest, Lake Toden, Arasaki & Miike.

Coccothraustes coccothraustes japonicus

Japanese Grosbeak

Seen at Kirishima Shrine & Miike.

Eophona p. personata

Endemic subspecies

Long-tailed Rosefinch

Seen at Mizumoto Park.

Carpodacus sibiricus

Pallas's Rosefinch

Seen at Saitama Prefectural Forest.

Carpodacus roseus

Eurasian (Gray-bellied) Bullfinch

Seen at Saitama Prefectural Forest.

Pyrrhula pyrrhula griseiventris

Asian Rosy-Finch

Seen Nemuro & Shari.

Leucosticte arctoa

Oriental Greenfinch

Seen at Mizumoto Park, Karuizawa, Shari, Arasaki & Miyazaki.

Chloris sinica

Common Redpoll

Seen near Shari.

Acanthis flammea

Eurasian Siskin

Seen at Karuizawa, Snow Monkey Park, Betsukai & Sado.

Spinus spinus

PASSERIFORMES: Emberizidae

Chestnut-eared Bunting

Seen at Arasaki.

Emberiza fucata

Meadow Bunting

Seen at Karuizawa, Arasaki, Kogawa Dam & Miyakejima.

Emberiza cioides ciopsis

Endemic subspecies

Yellow-throated Bunting

Seen at Kogawa Dam & Miike.

Emberiza elegans

Reed Bunting

Seen at Tama River & Arasaki.

Emberiza schoeniclus

Rustic Bunting

Seen at Saitama Prefectural Forest, Karuizawa & Sado.

Emberiza rustica

Black-faced (Masked) Bunting *Emberiza spodocephala*
 Seen at Mizumoto Park, Tama River, Arasaki, Nojiri & Hitotsusegawa.
Grey Bunting *Emberiza variabilis*
 Seen on Miyakejima.

MAMMAL LIST

Taxonomy follows <http://www.wikipedia.org>

CERCOPITHECIDAE: Old World Monkeys

Japanese Macaque *Macaca fuscata* **Endemic**
 Seen at Jigokudani.

SCIURIDAE: Squirrels

Japanese Squirrel *Sciurus lis* **Endemic**
 Seen at Karuizawa.

Japanese Flying Squirrel *Petaurista leucogenys* **Endemic**
 Seen at Karuizawa.

CANIDAE: Canids

Red Fox *Vulpes vulpes* **Endemic subspecies**
 The endemic *V.v.schrenki* was seen at several sites on Hokkaido.

Raccoon Dog *Nyctereutes procyonoides viverrinus* **Endemic subspecies**
 Seen at Mizumoto Park.

PHOCIDAE: Seals

Harbour Seal *Phoca vitulina*
 Seen at Cape Nosappu.

Largha Seal *Phoca largha*
 Seen at Cape Nosappu.

CERVIDAE: Deer

Sika Deer *Cervus nippon* **Endemic subspecies**
 The endemic *C.n.nippon* was seen at Karuizawa. *C.n.yezoensis* was seen several times in Hokkaido.
C.n.nippon was seen near Miike.

BOVIDAE: Bovids

Japanese Serow *Capricornis crispus*
 Seen at Karuizawa.