

TROPICAL BIRDING

Japan in Winter: Birding on Ice

Set departure tour

28th January – 10th February, 2018 Extension: 10th – 11th February, 2018

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Report & photos Charley Hesse



Japan in Winter once again proved to be one of the most impressive and memorable trips available; and one of the top 'bucket list' tours anywhere in the world. If you want to Steller's Sea-Eagles up close and personal, elegant Red-crowned Cranes prancing on the snow, cheeky Snow Monkeys taking a dip in hot springs, or the behemoth Blakiston's Fish-Owl coming in to feed while you sit in a heated room, AND take killer pictures of all these amazing things, signing up to this tour is a no-brainer. We checked off all of these major draw cards in style. Other lesser known but equally awesome memories included: Finding the rare Japanese Waxwing on the snow-dusted slopes of Mt Asama, watching thousands of cranes (of 4 species) flying in at dawn for feeding time at Arasaki, locating the dinky Japanese Murrelet off the coast of Miyazaki, and watching dozens of rare Baikal Teal from inside a heated visitors centre while it snowed outside. Highlights are really too numerous to mention, but let it be said that the quality of birds on this tour was VERY, VERY high. And let's not even get started on the incredible food, hot springs, scenery and fascinating culture. Japan is a difficult place to leave.

MAIN TOUR

28th January, 2018 – Tonegawa to Karuizawa

Having all arrived last night, we brought forward the meeting time to give ourselves a bit of extra birding time. We headed for the nearby Tone River which I felt might give us a few extra birds. We tried a couple of different spots along the river and saw a good range of water birds, including the introduced **Mute Swan**, **Common Pochard**, **Little & Great Crested Grebes** and **Eurasian Coot** on the water and many **Great Cormorants**, a pair of **Common Mergansers** and several *vega* subspecies **Herring Gulls** in flight. We got our raptor list off the mark with **Eastern Marsh-Harrier**, several **Black-eared Kites**, **Eastern Buzzard** and a **Eurasian Kestrel**. Some other common birds were **Dusky Thrush**, **White-cheeked Starling**, **White Wagtail**, the *japonicus* race of the poorly-named **American Pipit** and **Oriental Greenfinch**. One of our main targets was the Japanese Reed or **Ochre-rumped Bunting**, which we saw well, along with **Meadow**, **Chestnut-eared**, **Black-faced & Reed Buntings**.



Varied Tit was a regular visitor to our hotel's feeders.

Time was up, and we started our drive to Karuizawa with a stop at a highway rest area for our first Japanese food which was some wonderful *teishoku*. On arrival in Karuizawa, we went straight to the wild bird forest where we took a walk along the forest road. We saw some mixed flocks with **Pygmy Woodpecker**, **Varied**, **Willow & Japanese Tits** and **Eurasian Nuthatch**. Further on we picked up a single **Great Spotted Woodpecker** and the distinctive dark race of **Eurasian Wren**. We also had **Gray Wagtail** and a nice pair of **Brown Dippers** on the river. **Dusky Thrushes** were common along the road, but we also found a single **Pale Thrush** followed by a delightful group of **Long-tailed Tits**. The best find of the afternoon though were several **Japanese Waxwings** feeding on mistletoes. Absent many winters, they were seemingly numerous this year. We arrived at our hot spring hotel and had some time to soak in the hot spring before an amazing 10 course Japanese meal.

29th January – Karuizawa

We left at dawn and drove up and down the forest road in the hope of the elusive endemic Copper Pheasant, but it was a long shot. We had a wonderful Japanese breakfast back at the hotel followed by some time at the feeders which we could view through a large window from inside the warmth of the building. We saw **Eurasian Jay, Coal, Varied, Willow & Japanese Tits, Eurasian Nuthatch** and our target **Japanese Accentor**. It was back up to the Wild Bird Forest after breakfast and this time we took a walk along the trails. They were fairly quiet with a few pockets of activity and we picked up a few nice birds, including a beautiful male **Red-flanked Bluetail, Pygmy, Great Spotted** & the endemic **Japanese Woodpecker, Long-tailed Tit, Eurasian Treecreeper**, a flock of **Brambling** and **Japanese Grosbeak**. The latter I missed as I was, 'shooting a pheasant' to use the Japanese euphemism. Back along the forest road, we added **Eastern Buzzard, Eurasian Wren, Brown Dipper, Pale Thrush** and more **Japanese Waxwings**.



One of the most beautiful waterfowl in the world, Mandarin Duck.

We moved on to an area near Karuizawa with some open fields. Here we had a lucky **Rough-legged Hawk, Bull-headed Shrike, Brown-eared Bulbul, Meadow & Rustic Buntings** and the dapper **Japanese Wagtail**. With no sign of our hoped for Long-tailed Rosefinches, we set off for the neighbouring town of Saku, picking up a flyby **Azure-winged Magpie** on the way. After a nice hot lunch in a Japanese diner, we headed to Lake Toden and our first chance to get stuck in to the local waterfowl. The reservoir had a good number of common ducks, plus a few **Northern Pintail, Green-winged Teal** and **Common Pochards** mixed in. We walked up to the bridge and added our target **Long-billed Plover**. We next went down a road along the river and found a nice male **Daurian Redstart** and many more ducks, adding **Tufted Duck, Common Merganser** and some beautiful snow white male **Smews**. To finish off the day, we took another drive up and down the forest road back in Karuizawa and although there was no sign of Copper Pheasants, we had great views of **Mandarin Duck** on the mountain stream. After another dip in the hot spring and another outrageous 10 course meal, we ventured out again for a night drive, on which we saw a couple of **Red Foxes** and a wonderful **Ural Owl**.

30th January – Jigokudani to Komatsu

Today was mainly a travel day but we did take an early drive to wild bird forest. We had another try for Copper Pheasant but again came up empty handed. We did however have more good views of **Mandarin** and **Japanese Waxwing** as we drove slowly up and down. After breakfast, we had a short time at the feeders and saw the same array of tits as yesterday. We loaded up the vehicle and checked out before having one last try at the wild bird forest. This time we got out and scanned a few times, but had to be content with **Eastern Buzzard**, **Great Spotted Woodpecker** and the very cute face of a **Japanese Giant Flying Squirrel** sticking out of its box.



“Come on then! I’ll take you all on! ”

Aggressive encounters between monkeys are common at the Snow Monkey Park.

We were back on the road, and an hour and a half later, we were at the Jigokudani Snow Monkey Park. We parked and started walking up the trail, which didn’t as much snow or ice as in previous years. The trees looked rather beautiful all covered in snow. We arrived at the hot spring and first **Japanese Macaques**. There were dozens of signs saying not to feed the monkeys, or even show them plastic bags as this could cause the monkeys to be aggressive. There were many more monkeys, than expected, and for the most part they were fairly well behaved. Some sat on hot water pipes to keep warm, some sat in main pool, others were fighting, playing or foraging quietly for food in the snow. It was a fantastic opportunity for photos, and after we had taken our fill, we made our way back down and were back on the road. The Japanese Alps had experienced heavy snow fall in the last few days, and although it was cleared the driving conditions were not optimum. By the time we reached Komatsu, everything was snow covered from the last few days and it was still snowing. In the evening we went out to a conveyor belt sushi restaurant, which was a lot of fun



Scenes from the Snow Monkey Park at Jigokudani.

31st January – Western Honshu Wetlands

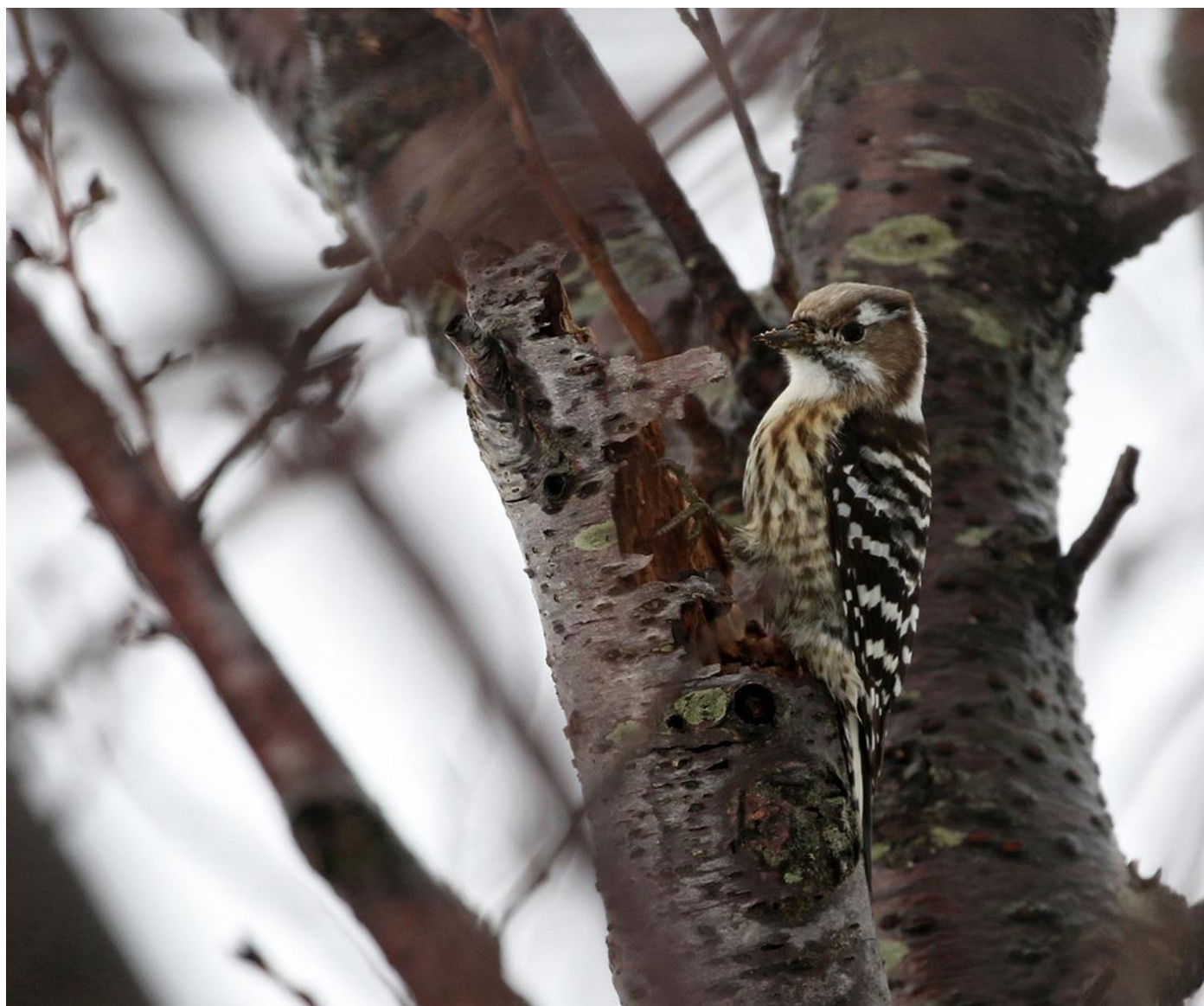
Today was our full day to explore the western Honshu Wetlands, although 'snowlands' would have been more accurate at the moment. Our first place to visit was an extensive area of rice fields south of Komatsu where hundreds of White-fronted Geese normally forage. On the way there, we found a flooded area of a rice field that had several **Gray-headed Lapwings** and **Common Snipes**, which was a good start. The area we got to was covered in a blanket of snow and the small roads criss-crossing the fields were all closed off. It was a waste of time, and when it started snowing again, visibility decreased, and we decided to head north again. We swung by a lake nearby, and during a brief respite, we scanned through the numerous ducks to find **Green-winged Teal**, **Northern Shoveler**, **Common Pochard** and the handsome **Falcated Duck**. In some fields with less snow, we also saw numerous **Oriental Turtle-Doves**, **Dusky Thrushes** and **White-cheeked Starlings**. On the way back North, we came across a Japanese Green **Ring-necked Pheasant** and numerous **Meadow Buntings**, and a while later our first **Tundra Swans** and a flock of hundreds of **Oriental Greenfinches**.



In Japan's all star cast of winter ducks, Falcated Duck definitely deserves a nomination.

The main birding site of the day though was a waterfowl sanctuary called Katano Kamoike. Here, we came across another birding group sheltering from the increasingly snow conditions outside. The main target of the day was beautiful **Baikal Teal**, which we found, but most of these were right at the back of the lake, although a few did venture a little closer. We saw plenty of other good waterfowl species, including a few **Greater White-fronted Geese** (which we had missed this morning), **Taiga Bean-Goose**, **Tundra Swan**, **Northern Shoveler**, **Gadwall**, **Northern Pintail** and **Common Pochard**. After spending quite a bit of time here, we left and went for a leisurely lunch at a Japanese diner. The snow was getting heavier and heavier and we had just about decided to call it a day and head back to the hotel when it eased off a bit. We took a gap and headed to the coast and in the fishing port of Hashitate saw our first **Black-tailed Gull**. We drove up to a look out over the sea and the visibility remained good long enough for us to get good views of **Pelagic & Japanese Cormorants**.

When the snow got thicker, we started beating a hasty retreat, but just before we got to the hotel, it seemed to improve once more. We spotted some **Northern Lapwings** and **Common Snipe** in a field and did a U-turn to take a closer look. After this we went along a water channel full of ducks and other water birds. We saw many of the same ducks again along with **Great Crested Grebe**, **Great Cormorant**, the Kamchatka race of **Mew Gull** and vega race of **Herring Gull**. We managed one more location, which was the large Shibayama Lake. Again, large numbers of ducks with many **Falcated Ducks** headlining, plus single **Common Goldeneye** and **Common Merganser**. In the reedbeds and trees next to the water, we also had a lot of activity and saw **Eastern Marsh-Harrier**, **Pygmy Woodpecker**, **Japanese & Long-tailed Tits**, **Japanese Bush Warbler**, **Japanese Wagtail** and **Oriental Greenfinch**. Despite the adverse conditions, it had been a surprisingly productive day.



What Japanese Pygmy Woodpecker lacks in color, it makes up in cuteness!

1st February – Komatsu to Lake Furen

Today was a travel day. We started with an early morning convenience store breakfast, followed by our transfer to the airport. Our flight to Haneda airport in Tokyo was of course on time, and we had time to kill in the airport. Our flight to Kushiro on the northern island of Hokkaido also went smoothly, and after picking up our hire car we set off to Lake Furen, a couple of hours away. We didn't have much time to stop on the way, but we did have our first **White-tailed** and **Steller's Sea Eagles** flying over the road as well as a few **Sika Deer**. We settled in to our very cosy family-run lodge (*mishuku*) and enjoyed a delicious home cooked meal.

2nd February – Nemuro Peninsular

From the window of our minshuku, we could see a pair of our first **Red-crowned Cranes** across the frozen lake. They were normally gone from here at this time of year, but the mild winter had left some spots of the lake unfrozen and they were still able to catch food. Nearby there was also a pair of **Whooper Swans**. The minshuku also had some feeders and we saw **Great Spotted Woodpecker**, **Coal** & our first **Marsh Tits** and a rather hungry looking **Brown-eared Bulbul**. We took a short pre-breakfast walk around the Shunkunitai Nature Centre, where there was a small flock of birds moving around in the trees with **Coal & Long-tailed Tits**, **Eurasian Nuthatch** and even a **Goldcrest**. We took a walk along a trail and heard one of the many corvids giving the distinctive call of **Common Raven**. We got to a viewpoint over the coast from where we saw our first **Black Scoter**, **Common Goldeneye**, **Red-breasted Merganser** and **Glaucous Gull**.



Long tailed Ducks. One of many attractive sea ducks on this tour.

After breakfast, we drove to the Ochiishi fishing port and joined a boat ride out to sea which is often good for alcids. Leaving the harbour, we saw many sea ducks, including **Harlequin & Long-tailed Ducks**, **Red-breasted Merganser**, many **Black** and a single **White-winged Scoter**. Out at sea, it was icy cold with a strong wind and sizeable swell. I cannot say that it was the most comfortable ride I have ever had, but we did pick up a few more good birds, with **Arctic Loon**, **Pelagic Cormorant**, and **Pigeon & Spectacled Guillemots**. We even had **White-tailed & Steller's Sea-Eagles** perched on some of the small islands we passed. Back on shore we drove on to a cliff-top called *Kurumaishi* (literally 'wheel rock') which had some interesting round rock formations. Out at sea we saw more **Harlequin Ducks**, **White-winged & Black Scoters** and added our first **Red-necked Grebe**. Next, we warmed ourselves up with a hearty warm meal from a local convenience store (which are surprisingly good).

We stopped by the Habomai port which had many of the same ducks, but we added **Common Pochard** and **Greater Scaup**. Gulls were particularly numerous here and we saw **Slaty-backed, Glaucous** and our hoped for **Glaucous-winged Gull**. The latter which my phone auto-corrected to 'Glaucoma-winged' Gull. Onto the terrific Cape Nosappu, with more sea ducks including **Harlequin Duck, Black Scoter, Red-breasted Merganser**, another **Red-necked Grebe** and several **White-tailed & Steller's Sea-Eagles** flying along the cliffs. I had hoped for some more alcids, and in addition to more **Pigeon & Spectacled Guillemots**, we added distant **Common Murre & Ancient Murrelet**. We tried the Onnemoto hide, but this year there were no Asian Rosy Finches or Rock Sandpipers. To finish off the day, we returned to Nosappu Misaki to scan the numerous **Pelagic Cormorants** forming rafts on the sea before flying in to roost on the cliffs. After one or two false alarms, we found a definite **Red-faced Cormorant** which we enjoyed scope views of. We set off back to our minshuku and in the last light of the day had another pair of **Red-crowned Cranes** from bridge nearby. It had been a very cold but productive day.



Sika Deer sparring in the snow. I guess it's one way to keep warm.

3rd February – Lake Furen to Rausu

We watched the feeders during our breakfast with homemade, wild berry preserves, and saw many of the same birds as yesterday, including **Marsh Tit, Brown-eared Bulbul** and **Eurasian Nuthatch**. We packed the vehicle and said goodbye to our very gracious host, before heading north for somewhere even colder. It seemed barely possible. On the way, we checked out a couple of day roost spots for Ural Owls but nobody was home today. After a quick convenience store lunch, we set off along the Notsuke Peninsular. Normally the sea here would be partially frozen, but apparently it can't have been cold enough. Hard to believe. Ducks were therefore more spread out, but we still saw **Eurasian Wigeon, Harlequin & Long-tailed Ducks, Black Scoter** and **Red-breasted Merganser**. We also saw several **White-tailed & Steller's Sea-Eagles** perched on poles, and from the Todowara Nature Centre, some more sea watching produced **Pelagic Cormorant**, more **Spectacled Guillemots** and our first **Red-throated Loon**. Snow Buntings had been seen recently, but despite our efforts, we were unable to locate them. We did however see plenty of **Sika Deer**.

The clear roads and good driving conditions came to an end as it started to snow. We had one last stop at a viewpoint named Hakuchodai ('*hakucho*' being Japanese for 'swan') and saw several **Whooper Swans** and **Common Merganser**. We decided not to delay further and made it to our next *minshuku* with time to spare. I was delighted to see that we had been given rooms with the very best view, where this evening we hoped the colossal **Blakiston's Fish-Owl** would come in to feed on fish put in a small pond. We had an early dinner and were told by the owner that they had only been coming in well after midnight in last few days. We were all prepared to set our alarms and get a few hours' sleep, but even before we had finished our miso soup, we were told it had arrived. What incredible luck! There was a scramble to the windows, where we quickly set up our cameras. Luckily it waited for us before it flew down to the edge of the pond and pounced upon an unlucky fish. It came in several more times during the night and this time we were ready for it from the comfort of our own rooms. What a fantastic end to the day!



Blakiston's Fish-Owl catching a fish.



Blakiston's Fish-Owl claims its prize.

4th February – Rausu

Today was our long-awaited Shiretoko Nature Cruise, to see up close, and photograph **White-tailed & Steller's Sea-Eagles**. Some people were a little apprehensive after our cold and windy boat ride the other day, but there was nothing to worry about and it turned out to be one of the highlights of the trip. The arrival of the ice flow has been a little erratic over the last few years, and unfortunately, it was still too far out to reach. This was certainly not going to stop us from having a fantastic boat ride. We simply chugged out of the harbour and the crew started tossing **frozen fish** into the sea. Dozens and dozens of both species of eagles knew the drill, one by one they swooped in and grabbed them right before our lenses. The photo opps were incredible. Some would soar by at eye level and occasionally there would be a mid-air aggressive encounter that was simply spectacular. From behind the harbour wall, some large chunks of ice started to flow by. As soon as the captain spotted these, he made a bee-line for them and the crew started hurling handfuls of fish in an attempt to get some of them to land on the ice. The eagles swooped in, several took the opportunity for a quick rest on the mini ice bergs and we made haste to capture the moment. The flight shots had been great up until now, but the ice gave some different shots which were gratefully snapped up.



White-tailed Eagle with its prize.

The grand finale was to head back inside the harbour and walk up to the top of the boat, which was eye-level with the 120 or so eagles waiting for their final feed. We had a wonderful opportunity to see and photograph these monstrous raptors. Two hours had flown by and the photographers amongst us had really burned through out memory cards. We drove further south and sheltered in a nice restaurant along the coast and had a hearty lunch. I had hoped to do a spot of sea watching from inside the restaurant, but the weather had taken a turn for the worse and visibility was poor. By the time we had finished lunch, conditions were worse if anything and there was nothing to do but head back to our *minshuku* and relax before another night of owl-watching. Before turning off the coast road up our little forested valley, we saw **Harlequin Duck**, **Common Goldeneye** and **Common Merganser** bobbing up and down on the frigid sea. We had a final **Brown Dipper** sat by the edge of the stream, seemingly unperturbed by the conditions. We beat a hasty retreat to our rooms and put our heaters on full blast until dinner time. Last night's views were hard to beat but some of us were looking for some better shots. The **Blakiston's Fish-Owl** must have liked our group and today arrived even earlier. It came in a few times and if anything gave a better show than last night.



Steller's Sea-Eagles are giants of the raptor world.

5th February – Rausu to Akan

Today we had a fairly long drive, all the way back to Akan, near Kushiro. One spot that we didn't have time for on the way up was Kiritappu, a raised peninsular jutting out into the sea, good for sea watching and a site for the tricky **Asian Rosy Finch**. It snowed a lot over night, but heavy machinery had been out since well before dawn and the roads were all clear. We made it to Kiritappu and went straight out to the lighthouse at the cape and tried some sea-watching. More of the by now very familiar **Harlequin & Long-tailed Ducks**, **Black Scoter** and **Pelagic Cormorant** but we did add **Horned Grebe** and get a better look at **Japanese Cormorant**. We had several **White-tailed & Steller's Sea-Eagles** perched on the frigid cliff edges and some Kamchatka race **Mew Gulls** on the sea below. Our main target at Kiritappu though was the **Asian Rosy-Finch**, and we had all but given up on them when Jim spotted a flock of birds perched on an overhead wire back in the village. We had great views before the whole lot up and left. Ten minutes later and we would have missed them.



A pair of Red-crowned Cranes do their weird and wonderful courtship display.

We stopped at a sheltered bay by a bridge and found a good array of ducks with **Northern Shoveler**, **Greater Scaup**, **Falcated Duck**, **Common Goldeneye** and **Common Merganser**. We still had some distance to travel and didn't delay in getting to the Akan Crane Centre. The weather had improved significantly by now, and the light on the 80 or so **Red-crowned Cranes** was beautiful. We spent the rest of the afternoon photographing them. Most of the time they were happily feeding on grain scattered over the snow, but every now and then, some birds would put their heads up and call, and some would fly in or out creating the most wonderful images on the snowy back drop. Despite losing some sensation in our fingers and toes, we stuck it out to the end and were rewarded with a grand finale of honking, strutting and displaying that made it all worthwhile. Another one of our most eagerly anticipated moments of the trip under our belts, we could now sink into our hotel's hot spring.

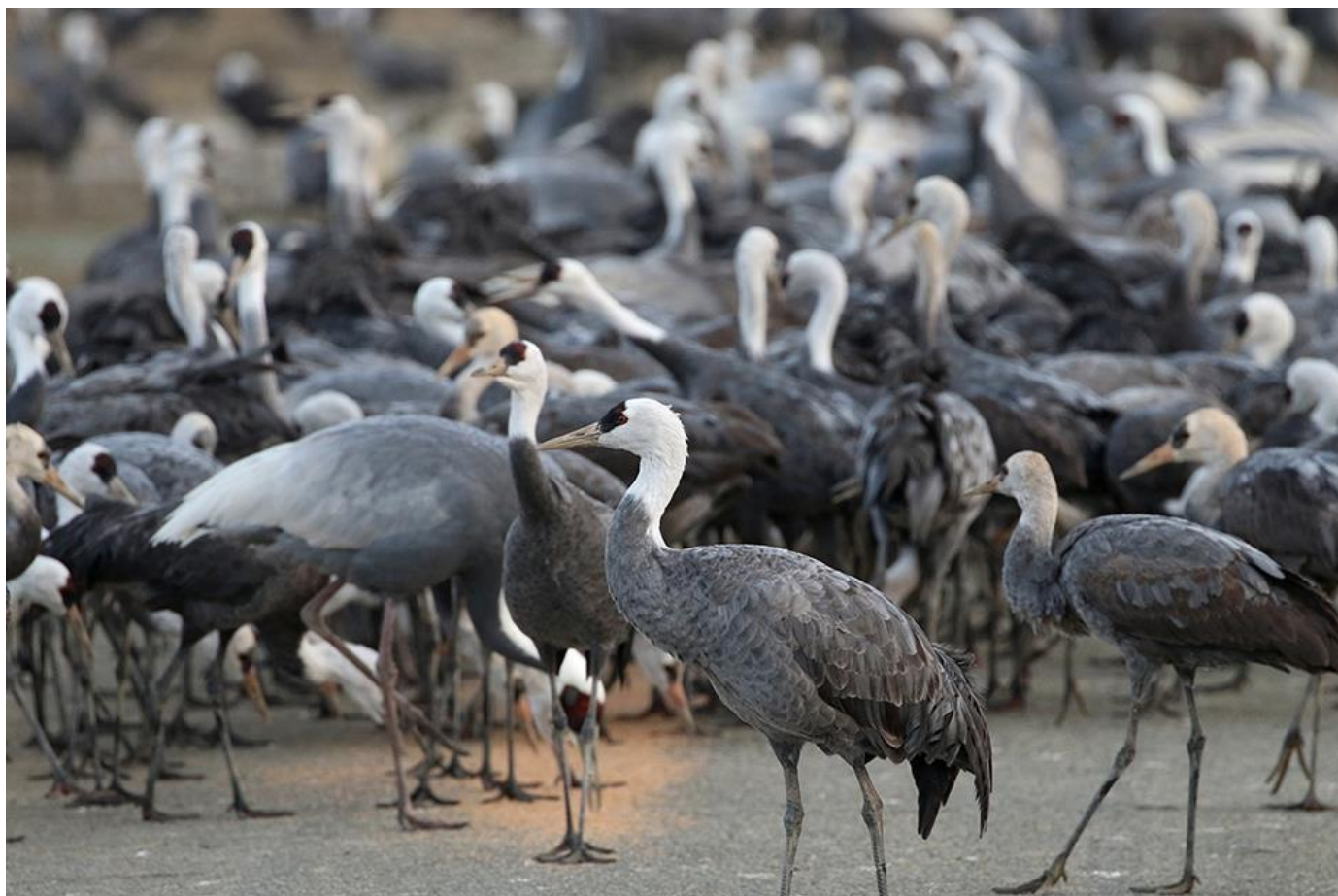


A pair of Red-crowned Cranes bugling in the snow.

After breakfast, we had a short time at the Akan Crane Centre for those that wanted to get some more photos of the **Red-crowned Cranes**. It was snowing but it gave some different shots from yesterday. There were fewer birds, but they gave us a nice display of calling and strutting up and down. We also had some **Whooper Swans** fly over and Jim found the interesting brandt's race of **Eurasian Jay**. We went back to the hotel to pack and check out. On the way to the airport, we had a quick look down a side road for Crested Kingfisher but had to be content with one last **White-tailed Eagle**. Our flight from Kushiro airport left on time and we had a very 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 stops on the way, the first of which was to check out a bridge over a small river where we had good views of a small group of **Mandarin Ducks**. Next, we had a stop at the Sendai River at Satsuma town. On the way into town we saw a small flock of **Long-tailed Tits** and **Japanese White-eye**, then we got out at a bridge over the river, where we saw **Green-winged Teal**, **Tufted Duck**, **Common Sandpiper** and many **Asian House-Martins** flying overhead. The best bird though was the rare **Long-billed Plover** which we had previously seen on Honshu. It was much colder than expected here and as we passed over the mountains, it was even snowing; not a common event in most of Kyushu. We made it safely to our hotel in the city of Izumi where we were to spend the next 2 nights.

7th February – Izumi & Yatsushiro

This morning was to be one of the highlights of the trip; a visit to the crane feeding site at Arasaki. This year, over 15,000 cranes had been counted in the area, and first thing in the morning, they gathered in huge concentrations at the feeding sites. It was still a little dark when we arrived and the cacophony of cranes flying in was very impressive. **White-naped & Hooded Cranes** formed the majority, but we also found several **Sandhill** and a single **Common Crane**. As we observed the cranes, we scanned the fields to find a single **Greater White-fronted Goose**, 3 **Tundra Bean-Goose**, **Common Shelduck** and a **Northern Goshawk** on the ground, eating its prey. Huge flocks of **Northern Pintail** passed us, a single **Merlin** shot quickly by and an Osprey circled slowly nearby. We checked the concrete ditches and channels to find **Green Sandpiper**, **Gray Wagtail**, and both **Eurasian & Black-faced Spoonbills**. Next, we checked a reed-filled ditch and managed brief views of **Brown-cheeked Rail** running across a gap. We drove by more fields, to find **Eurasian Skylark**, **Dusky Thrush**, **Brambling**, and large numbers of **Oriental Greenfinches**. Next, we went to a more extensive reedbed where we found **Japanese White-eye**, many **Black-faced & Reed Buntings** and a flock of the delightful **Chinese Penduline-Tits**.



The gathering of 15,000 cranes at Arasaki is one of the most impressive avian spectacles in Japan.

We needed to get up to the mud flats at Yatsushiro, but had one last stop at the crane centre where we scanned the numerous **Rooks** for any potential Daurian Jackdaws. Yatsushiro was about an hour and a half's drive north and our main target there was the globally threatened Saunder's Gull. The tide was already a bit high when we arrived and there were only a few larger shorebirds like **Common Greenshank** and **Eurasian Curlew**. We saw several ducks including **Common Shelduck**, **Red-breasted Merganser**, and mixed in with the common **Eurasian Wigeon**, a vagrant male **American Wigeon**. We continued driving along the sea wall, and found a little park, where we found **Daurian Redstart** and our first **Russet Sparrows**. On the wall itself we saw our first **Blue Rock-Thrush**, and scanning out to sea, a large flock of **Japanese Cormorants** flying by.

We scanned the agricultural land looking for any flooded fields, which occasionally attract Saunder's Gulls at high tide. We did luck across a **Black-faced Spoonbill** and a large flock of **Northern Lapwing** which we drove closer to get photos. We went away and found a diner for lunch, after which we went back to the shore birding area spotting our first **Common Kingfisher** on the way. We found a high tide roost of **Kentish Plovers** and **Dunlins** although we did manage to find a single **Lesser Sand-Plover** mixed in. The tide was starting to drop now and the first bits of mud were beginning to be exposed. A few **Black-tailed & Herring Gulls** started coming in and I had high hopes of the rare Saunders flying in to join them. The shorebirds we had already seen started feeding on the freshly exposed mud and were joined by numerous **Black-bellied Plovers**. Even a **Caspian Tern** showed up, a real rarity in winter. We would have another chance for Saunder's Gull later in the trip.



The endangered Black-faced Spoonbill and the handsome Northern Lapwing.

8th February – Izumi to Miike

After a slightly later breakfast, we went back to Arasaki and enjoyed the spectacle of thousands of cranes. Today, also picking up an **Eastern Yellow Wagtail** which we had missed yesterday. We found some nice **Northern Lapwings** and **Common Snipe** in the fields and had great views of a **Rustic Bunting**. We went back up to the reed-filled ditch to try for rallids, and there had a surprise fly over of a **Hen Harrier**. We again saw many **Meadow & Reed Buntings** and finally heard a **Ruddy-breasted Crake** calling. After some effort, I got the crake to walk through some reeds and got a couple of people on it. At the crane centre, we picked up a few **Russet Sparrows**, many **Rooks** and a surprise flock of **European Starlings**, a rarity in Japan. After a quick look inside the crane centre, we drove up into the mountains to the nearby Kogawa Dam. There were a few common ducks on the water and a pair of **Little Ringed Plovers** in a muddy area. We checked through a few mixed flocks in the forest to find **Pygmy Woodpecker**, **Japanese & Long-tailed Tits** and **Japanese White-eye**. We also had a **Red-flanked Bluetail** and several **Pale Thrushes** before we hit the road once more. With no Crested Kingfisher at my usual stakeout, we drove on to a lunch stop with a nice view. After lunch, we had a brief cultural stop at the beautiful Kirishima Shrine.



The beautiful Red-flanked Bluetail adds a splash of colour in Winter.

The afternoon we devoted to exploring Miike, a small volcanic crater lake surrounded by lush forest. We first went to check out the shrine which commanded a fine view over the lake. Here we got scope views of **Japanese Woodpecker** and **Yellow-throated Bunting**. We drove down to the campsite, where we had **Pygmy Woodpecker**, **Varied & Long-tailed Tits**, **Eurasian Nuthatch** and a major target here, the **Ryukyu Minivet**. We took a brief look from the lake edge to find an assortment of ducks and a nice pair of **Eared Grebes**. We walked around the area of cabins and picked up **Red-flanked Bluetail**. Next, we planned to go looking for White-backed Woodpecker inside the forest, but the leader of the parallel Tropical Birding custom tour, Andres, came to get us to show us a **White's Thrush** he had found. It was a rather tame individual and we were able to get good views of this normally tricky bird. We also added **Olive-backed Pipit** and had better views of **Yellow-throated Bunting** before heading back to the forest where we found a pair of our target **White-backed Woodpeckers** which were uncharacteristically cooperative. We called it a day and drove back to Kirishima where we checked in to our cosy if somewhat quirky guesthouse. The outdoor hotsprings and what most people in the group agreed was one of the best meals they had ever eaten, made for a memorable stay.

9th February – Miike to Kadogawa & Hitotsusegawa

The only real chance of a new bird at Miike was the **Gray Bunting**. After a delicious early morning breakfast, we drove back up towards Miike but turned down a quiet mountain road where we could stop more easily. We saw a number of buntings feeding by the roadside, most of which were **Black-faced**, but we finally all got scope views of a female **Gray Bunting** which was distinctive. From a viewpoint over the lake we had a nice **Rustic Bunting** which perched out cooperatively; then on the way in to Miike we also added a small group of **Red-billed Leiothrix** which although an introduced species in Japan, are still a delight to see. Back down at the camp, we got more looks at **Red-flanked Bluetail**, **Daurian Redstart**, and the same cooperative **White's Thrush**. It was time to move on, and we decided to go in search of the Crested Kingfisher. We reached a GPS point on a bridge over a small river where we have had them before and as soon as we pulled up, Leslie spotted a **Ruddy-breasted Crake**. What luck!



The delightful Daurian Redstart.

The spot was alive with birds, and we found **Green Sandpiper**, **Bull-headed Shrike**, **Barn Swallow**, **Japanese Bush Warbler**, a nice male **Blue Rock-Thrush**, **Japanese Wagtail**, **Meadow Bunting** and over 20 **Japanese Grosbeaks**. We had a **Crested Kingfisher** flying underneath the bridge, so we jumped in the vehicle and drove along the river to try and relocate it. We had it in flight again heading to where our small river joined the large Oyodo River. This too was an excellent spot and in addition to dozens of **Brown-eared Bulbuls**, we had 10 **Mandarin Ducks** and a **Northern Goshawk**. We were unable to relocate the kingfishers but it had been a very worthwhile stop and it was now time to head down to the coast for today's boat ride. After a quick convenience store lunch in the small fishing village of Kadogawa, we went to the office of the boat company who take people out in search of Japanese Murrelets.

The boat captain had kindly gone out this morning to stake out the murrelets for us and had found them. He said he hoped they would still be in the same area. After a fair amount of searching, we located a group of 3 birds which we got nice and close to for photos. It seemed we were the first group to see them this year as the unusually cold temperatures meant that most had not returned yet. On the way back, our captain took the scenic route past some beautiful rock formations and sea caves. We also saw **Great Crested Grebe**, **Black-tailed & Vega Gulls**, **Japanese Cormorant**, **Pacific Reef-Heron** and **Osprey**. What a day it was turning out to be! 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, came to the coastal forest. Inside the forest we found **Pygmy Woodpecker**, **Ryukyu Minivet**, **Varied Tit**, **Eurasian Nuthatch**, **Japanese White-eye** and many **Pale Thrushes**. We enjoyed the scenery along the coast at the end of the rocky peninsular and we even had an **Eastern Buzzard** fly by.



Islets off the coast of Miyazaki host the most important nesting colonies of Japanese Murrelet.

The Japanese name of **Japanese Wood-Pigeon** translates as, 'crow pigeon' and we had a few false alarms with **Large-billed Crows**. Finally, some of the clients spotted the wood-pigeons and we all had rare scope views of this seldom seen bird. We had just enough time to check out one last birding site, called the Hitotsuse River. The tide was quite low now which meant that the muddy banks of the estuary were exposed and gave us a chance for the **Saunders's Gull** which we had previously missed. We went straight to a GPS spot where we had seen them before, and within minutes of arriving, we had found one! We drove around to the other side of the estuary and scanned the exposed muddy island to find more **Saunders's Gulls**, plus **Common Shelduck**, **Black-bellied Plover**, **Kentish Plover**, **Eurasian Curlew**, **Sanderling** and **Dunlin**. While we were scanning for shorebirds, Jim remarks, 'I have a raptor that's not a kite'. Checking it carefully, we found it was a **Greater Spotted Eagle** flying to roost. This is an annual bird here but seen almost nowhere else in Japan. What a find! We finished off the day with about 15 endangered **Black-faced Spoonbills**, before heading to our hotel nearby.

10th February – Hitotsusegawa to Tokyo

We picked up where we left off this morning back at the Hitotsuse River. It was low tide again, and in the estuary we found **Black-bellied & Kentish Plovers**, **Eurasian Curlew**, **Dunlin**, **Saunders's**, **Vega & Slaty-backed Gulls**. On the pond, we had a good selection of ducks, including **Common Shelduck** and **Northern Shoveler**, along with **Eared Grebe**, 17 **Black-faced Spoonbills**, **Osprey**, some noisy **Bull-headed Shrikes** and a beautiful male **Daurian Redstart**. We started to drive upstream along the river and caught a glimpse of a **Peregrine Falcon** flying by. We were on our way to Kota Oike; a beautiful lake by an apparently disused shrine. Our luck with the weather had finally run out and we were left birding in the light rain. We parked and walked along a short track through some forest where we saw **Goldcrest**, **Japanese Bush Warbler** and **Japanese White-eye**. We came to the edge of the duck-filled pond where we found hundreds of **Mallard**, with smaller numbers of **Northern Shoveler**, **Common Pochard**, **Tufted Duck** and **Smew**.



Most years Japanese Waxwings are nowhere to be found, but this year they were popping up everywhere.

Our main goal here was to photograph **Mandarin Duck** and **Baikal Teal**, but the ducks here were so skittish, that as soon as they saw us they all took off to the back of the lake. We got good scope views of **Mandarin Duck** and **Baikal Teal**, and also found **Eastern Buzzard**, **Green Sandpiper**, **Barn Swallow** and **Daurian Redstart**. On leaving the lake, we spotted hundreds of **Brambling**, **Oriental Greenfinches** and several **Russet Sparrows** perched on roadside wires. We drove towards them but got distracted by a fruiting tree that had several **Japanese Waxwings** on it. After lunch, the rain was even heavier and all we could do was head to the airport early, ahead of our flight back to Tokyo. Just before getting on the flight, we got the bad news that due to high winds, our ferry for the extension had been cancelled, meaning that we would be unable to get to Miyakejima. It was very disappointing, but our guides and ground agent moved swiftly and efficiently to make extra hotel and vehicle bookings.

EXTENSION

11th February – Tokyo area

With our Miyakejima extension cancelled, our only option was to bird the Tokyo area. Our parallel custom tour had visited the Akigase Park at the beginning of their trip and seen some good birds, so it was to there that we decided to go. The hotel we had chosen last night was fairly close to the park, and after breakfast we drove there and started our birding. Just close to the parking lot we found a great area buzzing with birds, including: **Bull-headed Shrike, Dusky Thrush, White-cheeked Starling, Meadow & Black-faced Buntings, Oriental Greenfinch**, and our first **Hawfinch**. There were quite a few Japanese photographers in the park, many of whom were taking pictures of an unusual race of **Peregrine Falcon**. We also tracked down some **Long-tailed Rosefinches** along the riverside vegetation, along with **Japanese Bush Warbler, Common Sandpiper** and **Common Kingfisher**. We checked out the reservoir which had a good variety of ducks, with **Green-winged Teal, Common Pochard, Tufted Duck** and a beautiful male **Smew**. We also saw a single **Vega** and a large flock of **Black-headed Gulls**. On the way out, we had our best views of a pair of **Long-tailed Rosefinches** and our first **Brown-headed Thrush** of the trip. We had hoped for **Eurasian Wryneck** which was being seen recently. After inquiring with some Japanese photographers, we tracked a bird down feeding on the ground.



Long-tailed Rosefinches were our consolation for a cancelled ferry.

I wanted to hit one more site today and decided to go looking for the rare Ferruginous Duck which had been seen a couple of days in a small park called Yakushiike. After slowly easing ourselves back into western culture with a pizza and Coca Cola lunch, we found the park and took a delightful stroll around. Unfortunately, the duck hadn't shown up today, but the birds that were present were so used to people, that we got some of our closest views and best photo opportunities of **Common Pochard, Tufted Duck, Little Grebe, Oriental Turtle-Dove, Japanese Tit, Brown-eared Bulbul** and **Red-flanked Bluetail**. The tour was at an end and all that remained was to drive around dropping participants at their various hotels. Despite our bad luck at the end with our cancelled ferry, we had got an impressive trip list of 171 species. More importantly we had all very much enjoyed birding this spectacular and unique country.

BIRD LIST

Avian taxonomy follows ebird/Clements v2017

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

ANSERIFORMES: Anatidae

Greater White-fronted Goose

Anser albifrons

Seen at Katano Kamoike & Arasaki.

Taiga Bean-Goose

Anser fabalis

Seen at Katano Kamoike.

Tundra Bean-Goose

Anser serrirostris

Seen at Arasaki.

Mute Swan

Cygnus olor

Introduced. Seen at Tone River.

Tundra (Bewick's) Swan

Cygnus columbianus bewickii

Seen at Katano Kamoike & near Komatsu.

Whooper Swan

Cygnus cygnus

Seen at Akan, Rausu, Hakuchodai & Kiritappu.

Common Shelduck

Tadorna tadorna

Seen at Arasaki, Yatsushiro & Hitotsuse River.

Mandarin Duck

Aix galericulata

Seen at Karuizawa, near Satsuma, Oyodo River & Kota Oike

Baikal Teal

Anas formosa

Around 30 birds seen at Katano Kamoike and several at Kota Oike.

Northern Shoveler

Anas clypeata

Seen at Katano Kamoike, Kiritappu & Hitotsuse River.

Gadwall

Anas strepera

Seen at Katanokamoike.

Falcated Duck

Anas falcata

Near-threatened. Seen in the Komatsu area & Kiritappu.

Eurasian Wigeon

Anas penelope

Seen at many sites.

American Wigeon

Anas americana

A single male seen at Yatsushiro.

Eastern Spot-billed Duck

Anas zonorhyncha

Commonly seen on Honshu & Kyushu.

Mallard

Anas platyrhynchos

Commonly seen throughout.

Northern Pintail

Anas acuta

Seen at Toden Lake, Katano Kamoike, Arasaki, Yatsushiro, Miike & Hitotsusegawa.

Green-winged (Eurasian) Teal

Anas c. crecca

Seen at Toden Lake, Katano Kamoike, Sendai River, Arasaki, Yatsushiro & Hitotsuse River.

Common Pochard

Aythya ferina

Seen at Tone River, Toden Lake, Katano Kamoike, Kogawa Dam, Hitotsusegawa, Kota Oike & Yakushiike.

Tufted Duck

Aythya fuligula

Seen at Toden Lake, Awara, Satsuma, Yatsushiro, Hitotsuse River & Yakushiike.

Greater Scaup

Aythya marila

Seen at Ochiishi, Nemuro Peninsular & Kiritappu.

Harlequin Duck

Histrionicus histrionicus

Seen at Ochiishi, Kiritappu, Rausu, Notsuke Peninsular, Hakuchodai & Cape Nosappu.

White-winged (Siberian) Scoter

Melanitta fusca stejnegeri

Seen at Ochiishi & Kurumaishi.

Black Scoter

Melanitta americana

Near-threatened. Seen at Kiritappu, Rausu, Notsuke Peninsular, Cape Nosappu & Habomai.

East Asian Endemic

Long-tailed Duck *Clangula hyemalis*
 Vulnerable. Seen at Ochiishi, Notsuke Peninsular & Habomai.
Common Goldeneye *Bucephala clangula*
 Seen at Rausu, Notsuke Peninsular, Hakuchodai, Cape Nosappu & Habomai.
Smew *Mergellus albellus*
 Seen at Toden Lake, Katano Kamoike & Kota Oike.
Common Merganser *Mergus m. merganser*
 Seen at Tone River, Toden Lake, Rausu, Hakuchodai & Cape Nosappu.
Red-breasted Merganser *Mergus serrator*
 Seen at Rausu, Hakuchodai, Cape Nosappu, Habomai & Yatsushiro,

GALLIFORMES: Phasianidae

Ring-necked (Green) Pheasant *Phasianus colchicus tanensis* **Endemic subspecies**
 Split by IOC. Seen at Karuizawa & near Komatsu.
Chinese Bamboo-Partridge *Bambusicola thoracicus*
 Introduced. Heard at Umagase.

GAVIIFORMES: Gaviidae

Red-throated Loon *Gavia stellata*
 Seen at Notsuke Peninsular.
Arctic Loon *Gavia arctica*
 Seen on the Ochiichi boat ride.

PODICIPEDIFORMES: Podicipedidae

Little Grebe *Tachybaptus ruficollis*
 Widely seen throughout Honshu & Kyushu.
Horned Grebe *Podiceps auritus*
 Seen at Kiritappu.
Red-necked Grebe *Podiceps grisegena*
 Seen at Kurumaishi & Cape Nosappu.
Great Crested Grebe *Podiceps cristatus*
 Seen at Tone River, Awara, Yatsushiro, Kadogawa & Hitotsusegawa.
Eared Grebe *Podiceps nigricollis*
 Seen at Miike & Hitotsusegawa.

SULIFORMES: Phalacrocoracidae

Red-faced Cormorant *Phalacrocorax urile*
 A single bird seen at Cape Nosappu.
Pelagic Cormorant *Phalacrocorax pelagicus*
 Seen near Awara, Kiritappu, Rausu, Notsuke Peninsular, Habomai & Cape Nosappu.
Great Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo hanedae* **Endemic subspecies**
 Widely seen throughout Honshu & Kyushu.
Japanese Cormorant *Phalacrocorax capillatus*
 Seen near Awara, Kiritappu, Yatsushiro & Kadogawa.

PELECANIFORMES: Ardeidae

Gray Heron *Ardea cinerea*
 Commonly seen on Honshu & Kyushu.
Great Egret *Ardea alba*
 Commonly seen on Honshu & Kyushu.
Little Egret *Egretta garzetta*
 Commonly seen on Honshu & Kyushu.
Pacific Reef-Heron *Egretta sacra*
 Seen at Kadogawa.

PELECANIFORMES: Threskiornithidae

Eurasian Spoonbill *Platalea leucorodia*

Seen at Arasaki.

Black-faced Spoonbill *Platalea minor*

Endangered. Seen at Arasaki, Yatsushiro & Hitotsusegawa.

East Asian Breeding Endemic

ACCIPITRIFORMES: Pandionidae

Osprey *Pandion haliaetus*

Seen at Arasaki, Yatsushiro, Kadogawa, Hitotsuse River & Akigase.

ACCIPITRIFORMES: Accipitridae

Greater Spotted Eagle *Clanga clanga*

Seen at Hitotsuse River.

Eastern Marsh-Harrier *Circus spilonotus*

Seen at Tone River & Komatsu.

Hen Harrier *Circus cyaneus*

Seen at Arasaki.

Eurasian Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus*

Seen at Karuizawa.

Northern Goshawk *Accipiter gentilis fujiyamae*

Seen at Arasaki & Oyodo River.

Endemic subspecies

Black(-eared) Kite *Milvus migrans lineatus*

Commonly seen throughout.

White-tailed Eagle *Haliaeetus albicilla*

Seen at Rausu, Notsuke Peninsular, Cape Nosappu, Lake Furen, Habomai, Kiritappu & near Akan.

Steller's Sea-Eagle *Haliaeetus pelagicus*

Vulnerable. Seen at Rausu, Notsuke Peninsular, Cape Nosappu & Lake Furen.

East Asian Endemic

Rough-legged Hawk *Buteo lagopus*

Seen at Karuizawa.

Eastern Buzzard *Buteo japonicus*

B.j.japonicus was seen at Tone River, Karuizawa, Toden Lake & Umagase.

Endemic subspecies

GRUIFORMES: Rallidae

Brown-cheeked Rail *Rallus indicus*

Seen briefly at Arasaki.

Ruddy-breasted Crane *Porzana fusca*

Seen by some at Arasaki & seen well by everybody near Oyodo River.

Eurasian Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus*

Seen at near Awara & Arasaki.

Eurasian Coot *Fulica atra*

Commonly seen at wetland sites on Honshu & Kyushu.

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 near Awara & at Arasaki.

Red-crowned Crane *Grus japonensis*

Endangered. Seen at Akan & Lake Furen.

East Asian Endemic

CHARADRIIFORMES: Charadriidae

Black-bellied Plover *Pluvialis squatarola*

Seen at Yatsushiro & Hitotsusegawa.

Northern Lapwing *Vanellus vanellus*

Seen at Komatsu, Arasaki, Yatsushiro & Hitotsuse River.

Gray-headed Lapwing *Vanellus cinereus*

Several birds seen near Awara & Komatsu.

Lesser Sand Plover *Charadrius mongolus*

Seen at Yatsushiro.

Kentish Plover *Charadrius alexandrinus*

Seen at Yatsushiro & Hitotsusegawa.

Long-billed Plover *Charadrius placidus*

Seen at Toden Lake & Satsuma Sendai.

Little-ringed Plover *Charadrius dubius*

Seen at Kogawa Dam.

CHARADRIIFORMES: Scolopacidae

Eurasian Curlew *Numenius arquata*

Near-threatened. Seen at Yatsushiro & Hitotsuse River.

Sanderling *Calidris alba*

Seen at Hitotsuse River.

Dunlin *Calidris alpina*

Seen at near Kiritappu, Yatsushiro & Hitotsusegawa.

Common Snipe *Gallinago gallinago*

Seen near Komatsu & Arasaki.

Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos*

Seen at Satsuma Sendai, Yatsushiro, Arasaki, Oyodo River, Hitotsuse River & Akigase.

Green Sandpiper *Tringa ochropus*

Seen at Arasaki, Oyodo River & Kota Oike.

Common Greenshank *Tringa nebularia*

Seen at Yatsushiro.

CHARADRIIFORMES: Alcidae

Common Murre *Uria aalge*

Seen on Cape Nosappu.

Pigeon Guillemot *Cephus columba*

Seen at Ochiishi boat ride & Cape Nosappu.

Spectacled Guillemot *Cephus carbo*

Seen at Ochiishi boat ride & Cape Nosappu.

Ancient Murrelet *Synthliboramphus antiquus*

Seen at Cape Nosappu.

Japanese Murrelet *Synthliboramphus wumizusume*

Vulnerable. Seen on a boat ride out of Kadogawa.

CHARADRIIFORMES: Laridae

Saunders's Gull *Saundersilarus saundersi*

Vulnerable. Three birds seen at Hitotsuse River.

Black-headed Gull *Chroicocephalus ridibundus*

Seen at Awara & Akigase.

Black-tailed Gull *Larus crassirostris*

Seen near Awara, Yatsushiro & Kadogawa.

Mew (Kamchatka) Gull *Larus canus kamtschatschensis*

Seen at Awara & Kiritappu.

Herring (Vega) Gull	<i>Larus argentatus vegae</i>	
Commonly seen at coastal sites throughout.		
Slaty-backed Gull	<i>Larus schistisagus</i>	East Asian Endemic
Commonly seen around the coasts of Hokkaido. Also seen at Awara & Hototsuse River.		
Glaucous-winged Gull	<i>Larus glaucescens</i>	
Several seen around the coasts of Hokkaido.		
Glaucous Gull	<i>Larus hyperboreus</i>	
Commonly seen around the coasts of Hokkaido.		
Caspian Tern	<i>Hydroprogne caspia</i>	
A single bird seen at Yatsushiro. A rarity in Japan at this time of year.		

COLUMBIFORMES: Columbidae

Rock Pigeon	<i>Columba livia</i>	
Introduced. Commonly seen throughout Honshu & Kyushu.		
Japanese Wood-Pigeon	<i>Columba j. janthina</i>	North-east Asian Endemic
Near-threatened. Seen at Umagase.		
Oriental Turtle-Dove	<i>Streptopelia orientalis</i>	
Commonly seen on Honshu & Kyushu.		

STRIGIFORMES: Strigidae

Blakiston's Fish-Owl	<i>Ketupa b. blakistoni</i>	Endemic subspecies
Endangered. Seen at Rausu.		
Ural Owl	<i>Strik uralensis hondoensis</i>	Endemic subspecies
Seen at Karuizawa.		

CORACIIFORMES: Alcedinidae

Common Kingfisher	<i>Alcedo atthis</i>	
Seen at Satsuma Sendai.		
Crested Kingfisher	<i>Megaceryle lugubris</i>	Endemic subspecies
Seen at Oyodo River.		

PICIFORMES: Picidae

Pygmy Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos kizuki</i>	
Seen at Karuizawa, Komatsu, Kogawa Dam, Miike & Umagase.		
White-backed Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos leucotos</i>	
Seen at Miike.		
Great Spotted Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos major</i>	
Seen at Karuizawa & Lake Furen.		
Japanese Woodpecker	<i>Picus awokera</i>	Endemic
Seen at Karuizawa, Kogawa Dam & Miike.		

FALCONIFORMES: Falconidae

Eurasian Kestrel	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>	
Seen at en route to Karuizawa, Komatsu, Arasaki & Kadogawa.		
Merlin	<i>Falco columbarius</i>	
Seen at Arasaki.		
Peregrine Falcon	<i>Falco peregrinus</i>	
Seen at Arasaki.		

PASSERIFORMES: Campephagidae

Ryukyu Minivet	<i>Pericrocotus tegimae</i>	Endemic
Seen at Miike & Kota Oike.		

PASSERIFORMES: Laniidae

Bull-headed Shrike

Lanius bucephalus

Seen at Akigase, Toden Lake, Satsuma Sendai, Arasaki, Yatsushiro & Hitotsusegawa.

PASSERIFORMES: Corvidae

Eurasian Jay

Garrulus glandarius japonicus

Endemic subspecies

The endemic *G.g.japonicus* seen at Karuizawa. *G.g.bambergi* seen at Akan.

(Oriental) Rook

Corvus frugilegus pastinator

Seen at Arasaki.

Carion (Oriental) Crow

Corvus corone orientalis

Commonly seen throughout.

Large-billed Crow

Corvus macrorhynchos japonensis

Commonly seen throughout.

Common Raven

Corvus corax kamschaticus

Seen at Shunkunitai.

PASSERIFORMES: Alaudidae

(Japanese) Eurasian Skylark

Alauda arvensis japonica

Endemic subspecies

Seen near Komatsu, Arasaki & Hitotsuse River.

PASSERIFORMES: Hirundidae

Barn Swallow

Hirundo rustica

Commonly seen in coastal Miyazaki.

Asian House Martin

Delichon dasypus

Seen at Satsuma Sendai.

PASSERIFORMES: Paridae

Coal Tit

Periparus ater

Seen at Karuizawa, Lake Furen, Kirishima Shrine & Miike.

Varied Tit

Poecile varius

Seen at Karuizawa, Kirishima Shrine, Umagase, Miike & Kota Oike.

Marsh Tit

Poecile palustris hensoni

Endemic subspecies

Seen at Lake Furen.

Willow Tit

Poecile montanus restrictus

Endemic subspecies

Seen at Karuizawa.

Japanese Tit

Parus minor

Seen at Karuizawa, Komatsu, Lake Furen, Rausu, Akigase & Yakushiike.

PASSERIFORMES: Remizidae

Chinese Penduline-Tit

Remiz consobrinus

Seen at Arasaki.

PASSERIFORMES: Aegithalidae

Long-tailed Tit

Aegithalos caudatus

Endemic subspecies

A.c.trivirgatus seen at Karuizawa & Komatsu. *A.c.caudatus* seen at Shunkunitai. The endemic

A.c.kiusiuensis seen at Miike.

PASSERIFORMES: Sittidae

Eurasian Nuthatch

Sitta europaea

Endemic subspecies

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

PASSERIFORMES: Certhiidae

Eurasian Treecreeper

Seen at Karuizawa.

Certhia familiaris japonica

Endemic subspecies

PASSERIFORMES: Troglodytidae

Eurasian Wren

T.t.fumigatus seen at Karuizawa.

Troglodytes troglodytes

Endemic subspecies

PASSERIFORMES: Cinclidae

Brown Dipper

Seen at Karuizawa & Rausu.

Cinclus pallasii

PASSERIFORMES: Pycnonotidae

Brown-eared Bulbul

Commonly seen throughout.

Hypsipetes amaurotis

PASSERIFORMES: Regulidae

Goldcrest

Seen at Shunkunitai.

Regulus regulus

PASSERIFORMES: Cettiidae

Japanese Bush-Warbler

Seen at Komatsu, Arasaki, Kogawa Dam, Hitotsuse River & Miike.

Horornis diphone

PASSERIFORMES: Zosteropidae

Japanese White-eye

Seen at Arasaki, Umagase, Hitotsuse Rive, Kota Oike.

Zosterops j. japonicus

Endemic subspecies

PASSERIFORMES: Leiothrichidae

Red-billed Leiothrix

Introduced. Seen at Miike.

Leiothrix lutea

PASSERIFORMES: Muscicapidae

Red-flanked Bluetail

Seen at Karuizawa & Yakushiiike.

Tarsiger cyanurus

Daurian Redstart

Seen at Tone River, Lake Toden & several sites on Kyushu.

Phoenicurus aureoreus

Blue Rock-Thrush

Seen at Kadogawa.

Monticola solitarius

PASSERIFORMES: Turdidae

White's Thrush

Seen at Miike.

Zoothera aurea

Pale Thrush

Seen at Karuizawa, Arasaki & Miike.

Turdus pallidus

Brown-headed Thrush

Seen at Akigase.

Turdus chrysolaus

Dusky Thrush

Commonly seen throughout.

Turdus eunomus

PASSERIFORMES: Sturnidae

European Starling

Seen at Arasaki.

Sturnus vulgaris

White-cheeked Starling *Sturnus cineraceus*
Commonly seen on Honshu & Kyushu.

PASSERIFORMES: Prunellidae

Japanese Accentor *Prunella rubida* **Endemic**
Seen at Karuizawa.

PASSERIFORMES: Motacillidae

Eastern Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla tschutschensis taivana*

A single bird was seen at Arasaki.

Gray Wagtail *Motacilla cinerea*

Seen at Karuizawa, Lake Toden, Satsuma Sendai, Arasaki & Yatsushiro.

White Wagtail *Motacilla alba*

M.a.lugens & *M.a.ocularis* were both seen at several sites.

Japanese Wagtail *Motacilla grandis* **Breeding Endemic**

Seen at Karuizawa, Toden Lake, Katano Kamoike, Akan, Satsuma Sendai & Arasaki.

Olive-backed Pipit *Anthus hodgsoni*

Seen at Miike.

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

Seen at Tone River, Arasaki, Satsuma Sendai & Hitotsusegawa.

PASSERIFORMES: Emberizidae

Meadow Bunting *Emberiza c. ciopsis* **Endemic subspecies**

Seen at Tone River, Karuizawa, Toden Lake, Satsuma Sendai, Arasaki, Kirishima & Kadogawa.

Ochre-rumped Bunting *Emberiza y. yessoensis*

Seen at Tone River.

Chestnut-eared Bunting *Emberiza fucata*

Seen at Tone River & Kota Oike.

Rustic Bunting *Emberiza rustica*

Seen at Toden Lake, Arasaki & Miike.

Yellow-throated Bunting *Emberiza elegans*

Seen at Miike.

Black-faced Bunting *Emberiza spodocephala*

Seen at Tone River, Komatsu, Satsuma Sendai, Arasaki, Miike, Hitotsuse-gawa & Kota Oike.

Gray Bunting *Emberiza variabilis*

Seen at Miike.

Reed Bunting *Emberiza schoeniclus*

Seen at Tone River, Toden Lake & Arasaki.

PASSERIFORMES: Fringillidae

Brambling *Fringilla montifringilla*

Seen at Karuizawa & Kota-oike.

Hawfinch *Coccothraustes coccothraustes japonicus*

Seen at Akigase.

Japanese Grosbeak *Eophona p. personata* **Endemic subspecies**

Seen at Karuizawa & Oyodo-gawa.

Long-tailed Rosefinch *Carpodacus sibiricus*

Seen at Akigase.

Asian Rosy-Finch *Leucosticte arctoa*

Seen at Kiritappu.

Oriental Greenfinch *Chloris sinica*

Seen at many sites on Honshu & Kyushu.

PASSERIFORMES: Passeridae

Russet Sparrow

Passer rutilans

Seen at Yatsushiro & near Kota Oike.

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

Japanese Flying Squirrel

Petaurista leucogenys

Endemic

Seen at Karuizawa.

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 Notsuke Peninsular & Lake Furen.

PHOCIDAE: Seals

Harbour Seal

Phoca vitulina

Seen at Kiritappu & 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 Miike. The endemic *C.n.yezoensis* was seen several times in Hokkaido.