



*Pallas's Rosefinch (all photos by D. Farrow unless otherwise indicated)*

## JAPAN IN WINTER

19 FEBRUARY – 6 MARCH 2020

**LEADER:** DAVE FARROW and CHIKARA OTANI.

This year's winter tour to Japan was once again a truly wonderful trip around this enchanting country, with its thrilling and spectacular avifauna. As always the host country was very hospitable, with delightful people and an exciting cuisine, all adding hugely to the enjoyment of the birding. The birdlist is always one of quality over quantity, however we recorded a respectable 197 species. Visiting the three main islands, we began on Honshu where in the rather snow-free hills we saw three Copper Pheasant, White-backed and Japanese Green Woodpecker, Long-billed Plovers, Long-tailed Rosefinch, Japanese Waxwings, a stunning group of Pallas's Rosefinches, Japanese Accentor and a Naumann's Thrush. We visited the (snow-free!) Snow Monkeys of Nagano, where Japanese Macaques have learned the habit of sitting in a hot pool, and along the north coast we found two Lesser White-fronted Geese, Baikal Teal, Oriental Stork, Green Pheasants and Grey-headed Lapwings. In the warmer climes of Kyushu we enjoyed the spectacle of thousands of Hooded and White-naped Cranes at Arasaki, along with a single Demoiselle Crane, Saunders's Gulls, Black-faced Spoonbills, Daurian Jackdaw, Chinese Penduline Tits and Chestnut-eared Bunting. Elsewhere in Kyushu we saw Japanese Murrelets at close range, White-bellied Green Pigeon, Crested Kingfisher, Ryukyu Minivets and Yellow-throated Buntings. On a pleasingly sub-zero Hokkaido (always a favourite part of the tour) we saw our sixth species of Crane – Red-crowned, plus a sunbathing Ural Owl, two Blakiston' Fish Owl (our

bird-of-the-trip) and the mind-blowing sight of hundreds of White-tailed and Steller's Sea Eagles standing on pack ice. Mammals featured with Japanese Serow, Sea Otter, Sable and Humpback Whale.

We began our tour at Haneda airport in Tokyo, with the distant Mount Fuji clearly visible in the background. We first took a bus into Tokyo, and then the Shinkansen (or 'Bullet-train') that sped us at speeds of up to 240kph into the mountains, to an unusually snow-free Karuizawa. After collecting our vehicles we drove on up to our hotel and enjoyed some lunch in front of the famous bird feeders, and here we saw our first Japanese Varied Tits, Coal, Willow and Japanese Tits, and white-eyed Eurasian Jays of the *japonicus* race. We visited a nearby temple where in mistletoe-laden trees we found some smart Japanese Waxwings, plus a single Bohemian Waxwing, Japanese Pygmy Woodpeckers and Eurasian Nuthatch. Up in the woodlands we found Brown Dipper, our first Daurian Redstart and a smart male Long-tailed Rosefinch. The woods were very quiet otherwise, but at sundown we were surprised by a flock of 30 Japanese Waxwings busily having a late feed on mistletoe berries. At dinner we were served a splendid multi-course banquet of elegant Japanese food, our first taste of the elaborate local cuisine.



*Japanese Serow*

We made an early morning foray along forest roads, searching the snow-free wooded slopes as we went. A pair of White-backed Woodpeckers showed nicely, and Japanese Serow trotted off the verges, pausing to look back at us with a blank stare. As we rounded a bend, a cry went out and from below a bank came running one, two, then three female Copper Pheasants, moving quickly but pausing long enough for a view before they shot off down into a steep valley. Hurrah! Against expectations, we had actually seen Copper Pheasant! Back for breakfast at our hotel, a cry went out once more... Japanese Accentor! Hopping around by the feeders at the staring window, offering prolonged close views from inside the lounge. Sometimes a tough bird to find, the hotel feeders often provide the only reliable place to see it. You lucky people!

This meant we had to rethink our plan for the day, which was actually going to be centred on searching for Japanese Accentor. We set off on foot into the surrounding woods, where we found another flock of Japanese Waxwings, and further up the hill we had a great look at our target for the morning – Japanese Green Woodpecker, sharing a tree with Japanese Pygmy and Great Spotted Woodpeckers, for a four Woodpecker day. In the afternoon we drove down to the Chikuma River, where we found that most of the riverine habitat had been scoured away by the floods of last September's typhoon! Along the river we found a Long-billed Plover, Japanese Wagtails and Common Goldeneye, and on the adjacent lake we saw several

splendid Smew (including dapper males), Chinese Spot-billed Ducks, Gadwall, Northern Pintail, Goosanders and Eurasian Wigeon. In nearby fields at the end of the day we saw some Rustic Buntings, Dusky Thrushes, White-cheeked Starlings and some vocal Chinese Hwamei (a non-native introduction).

Another early foray did not produce any more Copper Pheasants, but the woodland was alive with activity and we saw our first Japanese Grosbeaks, Hawfinch, Eurasian Siskins, Grey-bellied Bullfinch, and another pair of White-backed Woodpeckers. Another couple of Japanese Serow also entertained us, but Sika Deer here were shy. After breakfast, in light of the fact that we had seen just about all our targets here at Karuizawa, we decided to embark on a 'twitch' down to Saitama Prefecture to a place where Pallas's Rosefinches were being seen. After a rather lengthy drive we arrived at an unassuming car park among the forest and took a trail a short way to where several photographers had gathered. After a short while an immature male Pallas's Rosefinch was seen, which made its way down to where some grain had been put out. What a great view of a great bird! We then noticed the many Varied and Willow Tits around were rather confiding, so with a few broken peanuts to hand we soon had them feeding from my hand and landing on my head! They even enjoyed hopping around on my scope, until suddenly a vivid bolt of pink and silver took our attention – the rest of the flock of Pallas's Rosefinch arrived, with two males, two juvenile males and three females. Wow! What stunning birds. They fed close-by for a prolonged period, allowing all manner of photography, until we had our fill and made our way homeward. Unforgettable.



Varied Tit (photo by M. Galtry)



Japanese Squirrel

A last look at the hotel feeders produced Japanese Accentor once again, and Eurasian Wren of the rather uniform *fumigatus* race. Just up the lane an interesting Thrush was found, which turned out to be a Naumann's Thrush! A rare winter visitor to Japan, a Japan lifer for the leader, it was a welcome surprise for all. We then headed westwards, with a pause at a 7-11 on the edge of town where two female Green Pheasant were showing in the field opposite. We drove on to Jigokudani – the 'Snow Monkey Park' where a lack of snow made for a slightly disappointing visit, and a sobering reminder of the global climate problems. Also it made for a rather comical sight as so many tourists from around the world gathered, hoping a monkey would actually go into the hot bath, but only one of them did! A Goldcrest and a flock of Eurasian Siskins kept our minds focussed on our main task, then we headed north into a rainstorm that followed us all the way along the Sea of Japan coast until we reached Komatsu. We turned off towards Kaga, and just before reaching our destination of the Katano Kamo-Ike we stumbled upon a big flock of Japanese Waxwings sat on a TV aerial, causing some wild parking on the narrow lanes as we piled out to look at them. At the pond we scoped distant Baikal Teal, and saw an Oriental Stork - a colour-ringed yet wild-born bird from a re-introduction program that has been running from many years. Does that mean we can tick it? Probably... Also here were a handsome group of Smew, and Bewick's Swans began to arrive, dropping into the pond to roost. The Observatory was open for longer tonight due to a public event, so we were able to stay and see the wildfowl arriving at dusk. A sizable flock of Taiga Bean Geese arrived, and we were able to pick out several Tundra Bean Geese among them. As darkness fell, a big flock of Greater White-fronted Geese came whiffing down onto the pond, but it was too gloomy to see much more than shapes by then.

It was a windy and wet night, and we feared we might have a washout the next day, but apart from a few squalls the weather gradually improved and we ended up having a great days birding. We began in fields

near town where we saw Eastern Marsh Harrier, Hen Harrier and Peregrine, and another flock of Japanese Waxwings together with two Bohemian Waxwings. We headed out into an area of rice-fields where we managed to track down the flocks of Greater White-fronted Geese, and a sharp-eyed Otani managed to pick out two Lesser White-fronted Geese that showed well feeding with their larger cousins. Hurrah! Another Japan lifer for the leader! Also here we saw a nice Merlin, and nearby we visited a roadside pond busy with duck, including many handsome Falcated Duck. We took our lunch to the Katano observatory, but the Baikal Teal were still far away at the very back of the pond. The Bean Goose flock was here again, with two species present. Sea-watching along the coast was a little difficult due to the rough seas, but we persisted at Cape Kasano and saw both Japanese and Pelagic Cormorants, numerous Divers of which we identified a few Black-throated and Pacific, plus Red-necked Grebe, some distant dots of Ancient Murrelet, and our first Vega, Black-tailed, Slaty-backed and Kamchatka Gulls. Returning to the Kaga rice-fields and reedbeds for the last hour of the day we saw three male Green Pheasants, and were very happy to find two Grey-headed Lapwings standing cryptically in a muddy field, a bird that is unusually scarce this winter.

We packed up and left for Komatsu airport, and flew under a blue sky to Fukuoka where we picked up new vehicles and drove southwards on the highway. In the early afternoon we reached the extensive mudflats on the west coast and spent a couple of hours here watching the changing moods of the tidal mud, with hundreds of Saunders's Gulls scattered across the crab-infested mud, several Black-faced Spoonbills, a couple of adult *taimyrensis* Heuglin's Gulls, Common Greenshank, Kentish and Grey Plover, many Dunlin, Falcated Duck, Western Ospreys in good number, Daurian Redstart and Bull-headed Shrike. From here we drove on southwards, reaching our well-appointed accommodation at Arasaki in time to see the surrounding fields full of Hooded Cranes as dusk fell.



*Hooded Cranes at dawn*

At dawn the next day we stood in the gloom as pink spread across the eastern sky, and flocks of bugling Hooded Cranes began flying overhead into the fields. This made for some nice photos, then we shifted to where the feeding frenzy was going on, and were eyeball to eyeball with a jostling scrum of Hooded Cranes. White-naped Cranes seemed fewer, many having already departed northwards, and we picked out several Sandhill and Common Cranes, and a single Demoiselle Crane was found, a rare vagrant here. Also here we saw Japanese Skylark, Buff-bellied Pipit, Oriental Rooks, a small number of juvenile Daurian Jackdaw, Northern Goshawks and Peregrine. Returning for breakfast we spent some time around our well-appointed lodgings and the Crane Observatory before heading out around the fields. Along reed-filled channels where we eventually found a flock of Chinese Penduline Tits, plus Japanese Bush Warbler, Pale Thrushes, Common Reed Buntings and some fairly elusive Chestnut-eared Buntings, one of which perched up for a scope view. Also we saw a smart American Wigeon, Black-faced and Eurasian Spoonbills, and even heard a

Ural Owl calling in the daytime! We moved to a dammed lake in the afternoon where saw Ryukyu Minivets and a fine Crested Kingfisher. In Izumi town we glimpsed a Ruddy-breasted Crake before returning to our lodgings and its excellent cuisine.

The next morning we resumed our Crake hunt, and found a Brown-cheeked Rail lurking in the reeds. It was a gloomy morning after a rainy night, and in the East Fields we watched the Cranes once more, and saw a Peregrine take a Feral Pigeon. Another Peregrine flying with prey was chased down by a Goshawk, and after a minute or two eventually was forced to drop it, which was then swooped upon by the Black-eared Kites! Back at our lodgings the Demoiselle was visible from our guesthouse, and we were able to see both *alba* and *modesta* Great Egrets side by side. Moving on after bidding farewell to our gracious hostesses, we headed southwards along the coast. We stopped to view some Japanese Cormorants, and saw five Brown Boobies feeding close inshore, and a Pacific Reef Heron sat on a rock. Along a track into a Japanese Cedar plantation we found Japanese Green Pigeons flying out and around over the forest, then we travelled up the Satsuma river, and at a pleasant confluence we found three Long-billed Plovers, numerous White and Japanese Wagtails, and another Crested Kingfisher. We completed our journey to Mi-ike, and close to the lake saw Ryukyu Minivet, Eurasian Nuthatch and Long-tailed Tits, and in fields near our hotel we saw a large flock of Russet Sparrows.



*Bull-headed Shrike*

An early start and a lengthy drive took us down towards the east coast, and we began our birding along a forested track where we found a female Long-tailed Rosefinch, a flock of Yellow-throated Buntings, Ryukyu Minivets, and were treated to the sound of several Asian Stubtails singing, but only if your hearing extended to the higher range! Despite their close proximity they didn't even give us a glimpse! A look at a nearby pond produced a trio of redhead Smew, and then we headed up the coast for an appointment with the 'Sea Sparrow', aka Japanese Murrelet.

From one of the docks that surround the Kadogawa bay we boarded a boat, and headed off into the mouth of the bay, searching for the diminutive Alcids. Before long we were coasting alongside some of these delightful seabirds, finding three in all, giving us superb close views and even calling with their sharp whistles. After this thoroughly enjoyable little excursion, we began our return journey, calling in at an estuary where we saw a Lesser Sand Plover, Sanderling, Eurasian Curlew, Black-faced Bunting, and a couple of Chinese Penduline Tits. We headed back to our lodgings for another superb meal, and some of our number

enjoyed the Onsen pools that the hotel is famous for. We spent a final morning around Mi-ike, visiting the crater lake shores. It was rather quiet for birds but we managed to see Russet Sparrows, Yellow-throated Bunting, White-backed Woodpecker, Eurasian Nuthatch, Olive-backed Pipits and a hybrid American x Eurasian Wigeon. Then we headed for the airport, flew to Haneda, and then onwards to snowy Kushiro in Hokkaido in time for dinner.

The next morning we drove out in the first glimmer of dawn, the temperature reading as low as -15c! Oh goody! Ideal conditions for viewing our first Red-crowned Cranes that were stood in the unfrozen waters of the Setsurigawa River, framed by rising mists and hoar frost coated trees as we watched from a bridge. As the light came up they shuffled about and a few began to dance about, the pink sky and rising sun adding a sparkle to the ice-laden trees. To add to this magical scene, Whooper Swans and Common Goldeneye swam among the waking Cranes. After returning to our hotel for refreshment, we set out again and visited a stunning Ural Owl sat sunning itself in a tree hole, and found Eurasian Siskins at the roadside, along with our first Steller's Sea Eagle. At another field we spent more time with the Red-crowned Cranes at close range, watching them dancing on the snow under a bright blue sky, their breath condensing in little clouds of mist as they bugled skywards. Moving cross-country on the back roads, our journey interrupted briefly by Bramblings, we reached the south coast and the scenic headland of Cape Kiritappu. Here on calm seas, and with the sun behind us, we found a flock of Least Auklets feeding off the headland, plus Pigeon and Spectacled Guillemots, Stejneger's Scoter and Harlequin Ducks, and some very cute Sea Otters. A Rough-legged Buzzard hunting over the grassy cliffs was a nice surprise, and in the harbours we saw Glaucous Gulls and Common Goldeneye. We headed to Nemuro and our comfortable hotel where we were served a wonderful feast of Hanasaki crab.



*Notsuke Hanto*

The following morning our first stop was Cape Nosappu at the eastern tip of Hokkaido, a stone's throw from the Russian-occupied islands. As was hoped, immediately on arrival we found a Red-faced Cormorant sat on a rock, which was then joined by two others (a high count!) plus some of the commoner Pelagic Cormorants. The sea this morning was covered in Duck, mostly Black Scoter, with good numbers of Harlequin Ducks, plus a scattering of Long-tailed Ducks, Red-breasted Merganser, a couple of Slavonian Grebes, while Glaucous-winged Gulls, Steller's Sea Eagle and White-tailed Eagles floated about. Further searching offshore produced a good number of Spectacled Guillemots, Brunnich's Guillemots, and a few of Stejneger's Scoters, Least Auklets and Pigeon Guillemots. We also found a Sea Otter nearby, a couple of Harbour Seals, and a Steller Sea Lion was seen poking his head and neck out of the water from some distance away. It was bitterly cold, so we headed from here along the south coast checking various harbours along the way. The was productive for close views of some great birds, and we saw two Ancient Murrelets at close range, plus Black Scoters, Long-tailed Ducks, Harlequin Ducks and Red-breasted Mergansers, plus

Goosander, Greater Scaup and Common Goldeneye. Some Asian Rosy Finches were seen in a brief flyby, and an inquisitive Red Fox came to make friends. It began snowing at lunchtime, and grew thicker as the afternoon wore on, increasingly hampering our viewing until we had to quit and head home for an early bath.

In the early morning at Hanasaki Harbour we found more endearing Harlequin Ducks, Black Scoter, Greater Scaup and Red-breasted Mergansers, then after some breakfast we continued on our way, checking several points around Lake Furen as we went. Here we met an impressive concentration of Steller's Sea Eagles out on the ice, along with a smaller number of White-tailed Eagles, hanging around the ice fisherman and engaging in spectacular swarming where they had evidently discarded their catch. Further up the coast we found a distant flock of Black Brant plus more Whooper Swans, and then we drove the length of the snowy Notsuke peninsula, going as far as is possible out to the very tip of the spit. The pack ice had blown in up to the shore, presenting us with a spectacular sight although it excluded all birds from the sea. A group of Snow Buntings were a delight to see, but our searching failed to find any Asian Rosy Finches. The mammals delighted, with several handsome Red Fox loitering by the road including one that found then lost a shrew that disappeared back into the snow. Sika Deer were abundant and tame, with many giant racks available. Along the coast we found all the harbours to be frozen in, with the pack ice that extended all the way up the coast. We arrived at our minshuku at Rausu, overlooking the stream where after dinner we settled in for the night and waited for the Blakiston's Fish Owl...

It was a long night of waiting (contrary to expectations!), with the Owl not appearing until 0415! It made three appearances before dawn, swooping in to take a fish from the pool in the small stream. It always looks so comical to see such a huge Owl selecting such a small fish! Sleep had been rather deprived due to its late appearance, however after breakfast it was time to move on to the next part of the adventure – the Eagle 'Nature Cruise'.



*Blakiston's Fish Owl (photo by M. Galtry)*

As the extensive pack ice was rammed up against the coast, even our powerful boat could not push farther than 100m out of Rausu harbour. No matter, once the fish-chucking commenced, the Eagles came swooping in, and we were lost in the wonder of it all for the next two hours. With nearly 300 Eagles scattered across the ice in the vicinity, we greatly enjoyed the antics of the rather lumbering Steller's Sea Eagles and the more rapacious and agile White-tailed Eagles that swooped in to grab any unattended fish. After every possible

angle and encounter was photographed, there were still the Gulls gathered around the boat to enjoy, with a few Glaucous, Glaucous-winged and Kamchatka Gulls among the hordes of Slaty-backed Gulls.

After some hot refreshment back on shore, we went and saw a fine Solitary Snipe that Otani had found, then headed back down the coast, returning to Notsuke with its many Sika and Red Foxes. There was a definite lack of birds out here, with a stiff breeze off the ice-packed ocean, however we persisted until we found one single Asian Rosy Finch! From here we headed to our night-stop, Yoroushi Onsen, a remote hotel along a stream where in contrast to the spartan minshuku of the previous night we were propelled into the lap of luxury. Similar to the previous accommodation, the big draw here was Blakiston's Fish Owl that regularly visited a small pool containing its favourite fish, just a few metres from the 'staring window' in the elegant lounge. Sure enough, it wasn't long after sundown when in swooped this giant piscivore, and just outside the window it sat and studied the pool before grabbing its dinner (or is it breakfast?) and flying off up the valley. Wonderful. That called for a round of sake with another tasty meal, to finish off what had been quite a remarkable day.



*White-tailed Eagle*

Early risers had another dose of Blakiston's Fish Owl shortly after 5am, and also a handsome Sable appeared several times during our leisurely breakfast. At the windows there was a seemingly endless procession of fine-looking passerines coming to the feeders such as *brandtii* Eurasian Jays, Eurasian Nuthatches of the frosty-looking subspecies *clara*, and the super cute white-headed Long-tailed Tits - a better name perhaps is 'snow-fairy'! In addition were Great Spotted and Japanese Pygmy Woodpeckers, Brown-eared Bulbul, Marsh, Willow and Japanese Tits. We eventually dragged ourselves away from this cavalcade of birds and set off onwards on our journey. Along the way we encountered a Northern (Great Grey) Shrike, a flock of Common Redpolls, some rather friendly Whooper Swans on Lake Kussharo, and Goosanders and Common Goldeneye. We ate our picnic lunch by some impressive sulphur-caked fumarole stacks, then headed south to Tsurui. We revisited the Red-crowned Cranes pacing about in a snowy field, and in the surrounding area we saw our last Steller's and White-tailed Eagles, and as the afternoon slipped away our last bird in Hokkaido was a lone Bohemian Waxwing sat in a small berry bush by the roadside. We arrived at Kushiro airport just hours before a large blizzard was about to descend on the island, and managed to fly to Tokyo where we said our goodbyes to two of our party, the remainder of us continuing on our short extension.

The next day we spent time in Tokyo city, firstly visiting the quieter corners of Meiji Jingu, a large area of mature trees with good undergrowth. Here we found four Grey Buntings feeding quietly on the forest floor, making up for all that effort spent looking for these birds during our time in Kyushu! Also here were Pale Thrush, Black-faced Bunting, Varied Tit and a Northern Goshawk. We then travelled across the city to Maioka Park where we spent a very productive afternoon, and while standing in more or less the same spot we saw Brown-headed Thrush, Brown-cheeked Rail, Chinese Bamboo Partridge, Eurasian Wryneck, Eurasian Woodcock, Bull-headed Shrike, Chinese Hwamei and more Black-faced Buntings, all of which obliged us by coming out into the open. At dusk we made our way back into the city, to the port where we would catch the ferry to the Izu Islands, which we boarded in the late evening.

Woken early by a rough sea, at dawn we found ourselves at Mikurajima and began our birding as we sped towards Hachijojima. The seas were initially quiet but we saw our first Laysan Albatross, and good numbers of Streaked Shearwaters. We had some extra time to go ashore at Hachijojima, but were unable to find any Izu island endemics and had to make do with Blue Rock Thrush and Buff-bellied Pipit. On the return leg the birds really began to appear, and before long we began seeing Short-tailed Albatross and Black-footed Albatross. As we approached Mikurajima once more, two Humpback Whales appeared close to the ship, one of which did a full body breach! Wow! Once we passed to the north of the island of Miyakejima (into the so-called 'Oshima Triangle') we saw many more Albatrosses, including 80+ that were beyond the horizon to the east of us, large Albatrosses wheeling about high in the air that could only have been Short-taileds. We also saw Brown Boobies, Japanese Murrelets, 'blue' Northern Fulmars in their odd brown plumage, Grey Phalarope, and as we headed into Tokyo Bay we saw plenty of Black-legged Kittiwakes that were attended by a significant number of Pomarine Skuas. Laysan were the most numerous of the three species of Albatross, with a minimum of 120 seen, plus 16 Short-taileds, and fewer Black-footeds. As we headed back into Tokyo, Mt Fuji sat on the horizon as the sun slipped behind for the last time to mark the end of our wonderful journey. On arrival at the port, we headed to Haneda where we dispersed in separate directions, having enjoyed a most spectacular tour.



*Hokkaido Flying Fox*



*Red-crowned Crane*



*Red-crowned Crane*



Steller's Sea Eagle

## SYSTEMATIC LIST OF SPECIES RECORDED DURING THE TOUR

Species which were heard but not seen are indicated by the symbol (H).

Species which were not personally recorded by the leader are indicated by the symbol (NL).

Species marked with the diamond symbol (◊) are either endemic to the country or local region or considered 'special' birds for some other reason (e.g. it is only seen on one or two Birdquest tours; it is difficult to see across all or most of its range; the local form is endemic or restricted-range and may in future be treated as a full species).

**Chinese Bamboo Partridge** ◊ (introduced) *Bambusicola thoracicus* Great views in Maioka Park, Tokyo.

**Copper Pheasant** ◊ *Syrnaticus soemmerringii* We were very lucky to see three females at Karuizawa.

**Green Pheasant** ◊ *Phasianus versicolor* Three males seen at Kaga, females seen near Karuizawa.

**Brant Goose** ◊ (Black Brant) *Branta [bernicla] nigricans* At least 70 at Odaito, also seen from Cape Nosappu.

**Taiga Bean Goose** ◊ *Anser fabalis* In good number at Katano Kamo-ike.

**Tundra Bean Goose** ◊ *Anser serrirostris* Not easy to pick out from the flock of the above, several found mixed in.

**Greater White-fronted Goose** *Anser albifrons* Some nice flocks in the fields around Awara, also at Kaga.

**Lesser White-fronted Goose** ◊ *Anser erythropus* Hurrah! Two seen near Kaga with the above. See note.

**Tundra Swan** ◊ (Bewick's S) *Cygnus [columbianus] bewickii* 250 counted flying in to roost at Katano Kamo-ike.

**Whooper Swan** *Cygnus cygnus* Seen in various locations on Hokkaido, tame at Lake Kussharo!

**Common Shelduck** *Tadorna tadorna* Eight seen at Uki in Kyushu.

**Mandarin Duck** ◊ *Aix galericulata* Two at Katano Kamo-ike, four at Kogawa, another seen in east Kyushu.

**Baikal Teal** ◊ *Sibirionetta formosa* At Katano Kamo-ike we counted 105, although they were all at the far end!

**Northern Shoveler** *Spatula clypeata* Some good numbers seen around Kaga and in Kyushu.

**Gadwall** *Mareca strepera* A scattering of sightings along our route.

**Falcated Duck** ◊ *Mareca falcata* A splendid show of numerous birds at Awara, also seen at Uki on the mudflats.

**Eurasian Wigeon** *Mareca penelope* Very numerous in Kyushu, also in good number around Kaga.

**American Wigeon** *Mareca americana* A nice pure-looking male at Arasaki, a hybrid at Mi-ike.  
**Eastern Spot-billed Duck (Chinese S-b D)** *Anas zonorhyncha* Common in Kyushu, also many in Nagano.  
**Mallard** *Anas platyrhynchos* Very numerous in Kyushu, also in good number around Kaga.  
**Northern Pintail** *Anas acuta* Small flocks seen regularly along our route.  
**Eurasian Teal** *Anas crecca* Numerous on the various wetlands on Kyushu, also in the Kaga area.  
**Common Pochard** *Aythya ferina* Regularly encountered, highest numbers at Katano Kamo-ike and Koda in Kyushu.  
**Tufted Duck** *Aythya fuligula* Scattered sightings on all three islands.  
**Greater Scaup** *Aythya marila* Frequent sightings around the coasts and harbours of Hokkaido, also one at Hitotsuse.  
**Harlequin Duck** ◊ *Histrionicus histrionicus* Good numbers around the ice-free Nemuro coasts, fewer further north.  
**Stejneger's Scoter** ◊ *Melanitta stejnegeri* A small number found along the Hokkaido coasts.



*Black Scoter*

**Black Scoter** ◊ *Melanitta americana* Numerous around the Hokkaido coasts and in most harbours.  
**Long-tailed Duck** *Clangula hyemalis* Many gorgeous examples seen around the Hokkaido coasts and harbours.  
**Common Goldeneye** *Bucephala clangula* Fairly common in small groups around the Hokkaido coasts.  
**Smew** ◊ *Mergellus albellus* Ten at Toden Lake including stunning males, also in good number around Kaga.  
**Common Merganser (Goosander)** *Mergus merganser* Good numbers at Toden Lake, frequently seen on Hokkaido.  
**Red-breasted Merganser** *Mergus serrator* Not uncommon around the Hokkaido coasts and harbours.  
**Rock Dove (introduced)** *Columba livia* Really? Here? Are you sure?  
**Oriental Turtle Dove** *Streptopelia orientalis* Seen daily on Honshu and Kyushu, in good numbers in some localities.  
**White-bellied Green Pigeon** ◊ (Japanese G P) *Treron sieboldii* Four or more seen in Kyushu.  
**Brown-cheeked Rail** ◊ *Rallus indicus* One showed well at Arasaki, another seen well at Maioka Park in Tokyo.  
**Ruddy-breasted Crake** *Porzana fusca* A couple of brief sightings, in Izumi town and at Arasaki.  
**Common Moorhen** *Gallinula chloropus* Just two seen on the tour.  
**Eurasian Coot** *Fulica atra* Regularly seen in small numbers on Honshu and Kyushu.  
**Sandhill Crane** *Antigone canadensis* At least five birds seen at Arasaki.  
**White-naped Crane** ◊ *Antigone vipio* It seemed that the majority had departed, we saw a few dozen only.  
**Demoiselle Crane** *Grus virgo* A single vagrant bird at Arasaki.

**Red-crowned Crane** ◊ (**Japanese C**) *Grus japonensis* Some great encounters with these on Hokkaido.  
**Common Crane** *Grus grus* A few at Arasaki, never more than four in view at one time.  
**Hooded Crane** ◊ *Grus monacha* Allegedly 15000 at Arasaki, though it felt like a lot fewer.  
**Little Grebe** *Tachybaptus ruficollis* Regularly seen on Honshu and Kyushu.  
**Red-necked Grebe** *Podiceps grisegena* One seen off the coast near Kaga, also some off the Hokkaido coasts.  
**Great Crested Grebe** *Podiceps cristatus* Several sightings along our way on all three islands.  
**Horned Grebe (Slavonian G)** *Podiceps auritus* At least three seen off Cape Nosappu.



Hooded Crane

**Northern Lapwing** *Vanellus vanellus* Quite a few at Arasaki, smaller numbers at Hitotsuse and Kaga.  
**Grey-headed Lapwing** ◊ *Vanellus cinereus* Only two found, in rice-fields at Kaga.  
**Grey Plover** *Pluvialis squatarola* Plenty (80+) at Uki, also several at Hitotsuse.  
**Long-billed Plover** ◊ *Charadrius placidus* One on the Chikuma river at Saku, three at Satsuma on the Sendai river.  
**Kentish Plover** *Charadrius alexandrinus* A good number at Hitotsuse, a couple at Uki.  
**Lesser Sand Plover (Mongolian S P)** *Charadrius [mongolus] mongolus* A single on the sandbar at Hitotsuse.  
**Eurasian Curlew** *Numenius arquata* Two on the estuary at Hitotsuse.  
**Sanderling** *Calidris alba* Four on the estuary at Hitotsuse.  
**Dunlin** *Calidris alpina* A good number at Uki, also at Hitotsuse Arasaki.  
**Eurasian Woodcock** *Scolopax rusticola* One seen feeding in the late afternoon at Maioka Park in Tokyo.  
**Solitary Snipe** ◊ *Gallinago solitaria* A fine example located at Rausu by Otani, crouched by a stream in snow.  
**Common Snipe** *Gallinago gallinago* A few at Arasaki and Satsuma, 14+ at Hitotsuse.  
**Grey Phalarope** *Phalaropus fulicarius* At least two seen on our pelagic extension.  
**Common Sandpiper** *Actitis hypoleucos* A few seen on Kyushu.  
**Green Sandpiper** *Tringa ochropus* A small number at Arasaki, one at Satsuma.  
**Common Greenshank** *Tringa nebularia* Five or more seen at Uki.  
**Black-legged Kittiwake** *Rissa [tridactyla] pollicaris* At least a hundred on our extension, closely attended by Skuas.  
**Black-headed Gull** *Chroicocephalus ridibundus* A small number seen on Kyushu.  
**Saunders's Gull** ◊ *Chroicocephalus saundersi* At least 300 on the mud at Uki.

**Black-tailed Gull** ◇ *Larus crassirostris* Seen in number on coasts near Kaga, at Kadogawa and on Hokkaido.

**Mew Gull** ◇ (Kamchatka G) *Larus [canus] kamtschatschensis* Not uncommon on Hokkaido, also seen near Kaga.

**Glaucous-winged Gull** ◇ *Larus glaucescens* Only seen on Hokkaido where they were fairly common.

**Glaucous Gull** *Larus hyperboreus* Several nice examples seen on Hokkaido, but never very numerous.

**Vega Gull** *Larus [vegae] vegae* Seen in good numbers near Komatsu and at Kadogawa, a few at Uki.

**Slaty-backed Gull** ◇ *Larus schistisagus* The commonest Gull in Hokkaido, also seen near Komatsu and at Kadogawa.

**Lesser Black-backed Gull** ◇ *Larus [fuscus] heuglini* Two at Uki, a taxonomic dogs breakfast. See note.

**Pomarine Jaeger** *Stercorarius pomarinus* A remarkable concentration of 35+ around the mouth of Tokyo Bay.

**Thick-billed Murre (Brunnich's Guillemot)** *Uria lomvia* A few seen from Cape Nosappu.

**Common Murre (C Guillemot)** *Uria aalge* Three seen from Cape Nosappu.

**Pigeon Guillemot** ◇ *Cephus columba* A few seen from Cape Kiritappu and Cape Nosappu. See note.

**Spectacled Guillemot** ◇ *Cephus carbo* A few off Cape Kiritappu, many more off Cape Nosappu.

**Ancient Murrelet** ◇ *Synthliboramphus antiquus* Some seen off Cape Nosappu, two close up in Hanasaki harbour.

**Japanese Murrelet** ◇ *Synthliboramphus wumizusume* A wonderful experience seeing these close up in Kyushu.

**Least Auklet** ◇ *Aethia pusilla* A good sized flock seen on a calm sea at Cape Kiritappu.

**Red-throated Loon (R-t Diver)** *Gavia stellata* Several seen off Cape Kiritappu, a couple of singles elsewhere.

**Black-throated Loon** ◇ (B-t Diver) *Gavia arctica* A few off the Komatsu coast, a single off Cape Kiritappu.

**Pacific Loon** ◇ (P Diver) *Gavia pacifica* Four flying by off Cape Kasano near Komatsu.

**Laysan Albatross** ◇ *Phoebastria immutabilis* A strong showing on our pelagic extension, 120+ counted.

**Black-footed Albatross** ◇ *Phoebastria nigripes* Far fewer than the above, eight or more seen.

**Short-tailed Albatross** ◇ *Phoebastria albatrus* An estimated 16+ seen between us on our pelagic extension.

**Northern Fulmar** *Fulmarus glacialis* At least eight on our pelagic extension, all dark 'blue' morphs.

**Streaked Shearwater** ◇ *Calonectris leucomelas* Very numerous in the seas around the Izu islands.

**Oriental Stork** ◇ *Ciconia boyciana* A single at Katano Kamo-ike. See note.



Oriental Stork



Red-faced Cormorant

**Brown Booby** *Sula leucogaster* Five seen off the Kyushu coast, another four on the extension, off Miyakejima.

**Pelagic Cormorant** ◇ *Phalacrocorax pelagicus* Seen commonly on Hokkaido, also seen near Komatsu.

**Red-faced Cormorant** ◇ *Phalacrocorax urile* Three birds seen at Nosappu Misaki, possibly a record count!

**Great Cormorant** *Phalacrocorax carbo* Fairly common on Honshu and Kyushu.

**Japanese Cormorant** ◇ *Phalacrocorax capillatus* Small groups seen at Komatsu, Kadogawa and Akune.

**Eurasian Spoonbill** *Platalea leucorodia* A single seen at Arasaki.

**Black-faced Spoonbill** ◇ *Platalea minor* Eight or more at Uki, also seen at Arasaki.

**Grey Heron** *Ardea cinerea* Frequent sightings on Honshu and Kyushu.

**Great Egret (Western G E)** *Ardea [alba] alba* Regular sightings in suitable habitat on Honshu and Kyushu.

**Great Egret (Eastern G E)** *Ardea [alba] modesta* A few noted at Arasaki and Koda. See note.

**Little Egret** *Egretta garzetta* Several at Uki, a few more seen around Kyushu.

**Pacific Reef Heron** *Egretta sacra* A single on a rock at Akune, two at Kadogawa.

**Western Osprey** *Pandion haliaetus* Frequent sightings along the Kyushu coasts, also around Kaga.

**Eurasian Sparrowhawk** *Accipiter nisus* A few sightings along our route.

**Northern Goshawk** *Accipiter gentilis* Some great sightings at Arasaki, another seen at Meiji Jingu in Tokyo.

**Eastern Marsh Harrier** *Circus spilonotus* Three seen in the Kaga area.

**Hen Harrier** *Circus cyaneus* Two or more seen in the Kaga area.

**Black Kite (Black-eared K) *Milvus [migrans] lineatus*** The commonest raptor, sometimes in big numbers.  
**White-tailed Eagle *Haliaeetus albicilla*** Fantastic encounters on the ice on Hokkaido. Abundant!  
**Steller's Sea Eagle** ◊ *Haliaeetus pelagicus* Awesome numbers on the ice at Rausu and at Lake Furen.  
**Rough-legged Buzzard** ◊ *Buteo lagopus* A single near Kushiro, another on Cape Nosappu.  
**Eastern Buzzard** ◊ (Japanese B) *Buteo japonicus* Regularly seen in Honshu and Kyushu, fewer in Hokkaido.  
**Blakiston's Fish Owl** ◊ *Bubo blakistoni* Our 'Bird of the Trip', seen at both Rausu and Yoroushi. See note.



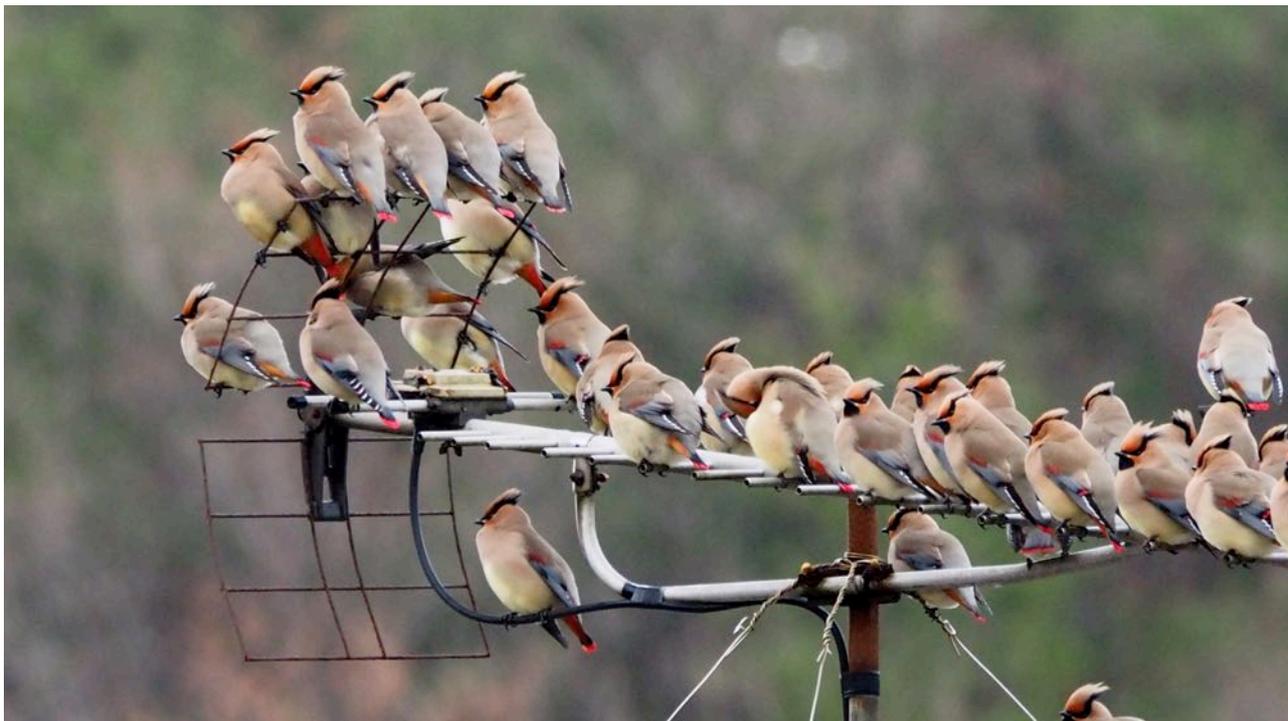
Ural Owl

**Ural Owl** ◊ *Strix uralensis* A splendid fellow sat sunning himself in a tree hole on Hokkaido.  
**Common Kingfisher *Alcedo atthis*** Several seen in Kyushu.  
**Crested Kingfisher *Megaceryle lugubris*** A female seen at Kogawa, another shy bird at Satsuma.  
**Eurasian Wryneck *Jynx torquilla*** One showed well at Maioka Park in Tokyo on our extension.  
**Japanese Pygmy Woodpecker** ◊ *Yungipicus kizuki* Seen at Karuizawa, Arasaki and Koda, also at Yoroushi.  
**Great Spotted Woodpecker *Dendrocopos major*** Some at Karuizawa, good views at Yoroushi on the feeders.  
**White-backed Woodpecker *Dendrocopos leucotos*** A pair or two seen well at Karuizawa, also one at Mi-ike.  
**Japanese Green Woodpecker** ◊ *Picus awokera* Seen well at Karuizawa, another briefly at Mi-ike.  
**Common Kestrel (Eurasian K) *Falco tinnunculus*** A few sightings in open country on Kyushu.  
**Merlin *Falco columbarius*** A single showed quite well near Kaga.  
**Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus*** Several seen along our route, on all three islands.  
**Ryukyu Minivet** ◊ *Pericrocotus tegimae* Several seen in Kyushu, always a bit elusive in the treetops.  
**Bull-headed Shrike** ◊ *Lanius bucephalus* Regular sightings on Honshu and Kyushu, a beautiful bird indeed.  
**Northern Shrike** ◊ *Lanius borealis* One along a roadside near Yoroushi. Only my second ever in Japan.  
**Eurasian Jay *Garrulus glandarius*** Good views on feeders of *japonicus* at Karuizawa, *brandtii* at Yoroushi.  
**Azure-winged Magpie** ◊ *Cyanopica cyanus* A couple of brief sightings from the vehicles near Karuizawa.  
**Daurian Jackdaw** ◊ *Coloeus dauuricus* Four seen at Karuizawa, all sooty juveniles.  
**Rook** ◊ (Oriental R) *Corvus [frugilegus] pastinator* Big numbers at Arasaki, many at Uki a few at Hitotsuse.  
**Carrion Crow** ◊ (Oriental C) *Corvus [corone] orientalis* Common throughout.  
**Large-billed Crow *Corvus macrorhynchos*** Common throughout.

**Northern Raven (Common R) *Corvus corax* (NL)** One at Rausu.

**Bohemian Waxwing ◊ *Bombycilla garrulus*** Unusually, one at Karuizawa, two at Kaga, one at Tsurui on Hokkaido.

**Japanese Waxwing ◊ *Bombycilla japonica*** A remarkable showing of these year. See note.



*Japanese Waxwing*

**Coal Tit *Periparus ater*** Small numbers seen in the forests of Karuizawa, also at Jigokudani.

**Varied Tit ◊ (Japanese V T) *Sittiparus varius*** Plenty seen around Karuizawa, in Saitama, a few in Kyushu.

**Marsh Tit *Poecile palustris*** Plenty seen well at Yoroushi on the feeders, a couple elsewhere on Hokkaido.

**Willow Tit *Poecile montanus*** Not uncommon around Karuizawa, a couple at Yoroushi.

**Japanese Tit ◊ *Parus minor*** Not uncommon around Karuizawa, also at Arasaki, Mi-ike, and Yoroushi.

**Chinese Penduline Tit ◊ *Remiz consobrinus*** Nine birds seen at Arasaki, a couple at Hitotsuse.

**Eurasian Skylark ◊ (Japanese S) *Alauda [arvensis] japonica*** Plenty seen at Arasaki, also at other sites in Kyushu.

**Brown-eared Bulbul ◊ *Hypsipetes amaurotis*** Seen daily throughout Honshu and Kyushu, a few in Hokkaido.

**Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica*** Seen on four days, in the milder corners of Kyushu.

**Asian House Martin *Delichon dasypus*** A small flock seen from the highway near Fukuoka.

**Japanese Bush Warbler ◊ *Horornis diphone*** Always skulking, several seen in Kyushu.

**Asian Stubtail ◊ *Urosphena squameiceps* (H)** Three or more heard singing (if you can!) at Koda on Kyushu.

**Long-tailed Tit *Aegithalos caudatus*** We saw *trivirgatus* on Honshu, *kiusiuensis* on Kyushu, *caudatus* on Hokkaido.



*Long-tailed Tit*



*Eurasian Nuthatch*

**Zitting Cisticola** *Cisticola juncidis* A single bird seen at Arasaki.

**Red-billed Leiothrix (introduced)** *Leiothrix lutea* (H) Heard at Koda.

**Chinese Hwamei (introduced)** *Garrulax canorus* Three seen around Karuizawa, five seen at Maioka Park in Tokyo.

**Warbling White-eye** *Zosterops japonicus* Not uncommon in Kyushu, formerly known as Japanese White-eye.

**Goldcrest** *Regulus regulus* Two seen at Jigokudani.

**Eurasian Wren** *Troglodytes troglodytes* A few seen at Karuizawa, one in Kyushu.

**Eurasian Nuthatch** *Sitta europaea* Seen on all three main islands, with three subspecies. See note.

**Eurasian Treecreeper** *Certhia familiaris* (H) Heard singing at Jigokudani.

**Crested Myna (introduced)** *Acridotheres cristatellus* A surprise find of a large roost at Totsuka station in Tokyo.

**White-cheeked Starling** ◊ *Spodiopsar cineraceus* Good numbers in open country on Honshu and Kyushu.

**Common Starling** *Sturnus vulgaris* A couple of small flocks at Arasaki. A scarce winter visitor.

**Pale Thrush** ◊ *Turdus pallidus* Not uncommon in the woods of Kyushu, also seen at Karuizawa and Tokyo.

**Brown-headed Thrush** ◊ *Turdus chrysolaus* A single smart male seen in Maioka Park in Tokyo.

**Naumann's Thrush** ◊ *Turdus naumanni* A big surprise to find one by our hotel at Karuizawa. A young male perhaps.

**Dusky Thrush** ◊ *Turdus eunomus* Seen throughout, many at Arasaki, few in Hokkaido. Some stunning males seen.

**Red-flanked Bluetail** *Tarsiger cyanurus* (H) Unusually absent, only heard at Mi-ike.

**Daurian Redstart** *Phoenicurus aureoreus* Frequently seen in Kyushu, plus one at Karuizawa.

**Blue Rock Thrush (Asian R T)** *Monticola [solitarius] philippensis* Singles at Komatsu, Arasaki and Hachijojima.

**Brown Dipper** *Cinclus pallasii* A couple seen at Karuizawa, also at Rausu on the stream outside our lodgings.

**Russet Sparrow** *Passer cinnamomeus* Attractive flocks seen at Mi-ike.

**Eurasian Tree Sparrow** *Passer montanus* Seen throughout in typical habitat.

**Japanese Accentor** ◊ *Prunella rubida* A pleasing sight of one feeding just outside the window of our Karuizawa hotel.



*Brown-eared Bulbul*



*Japanese Accentor*

**Grey Wagtail** *Motacilla cinerea* Not uncommon, seen at several sites in Kyushu and at Karuizawa.

**White Wagtail** ◊ (**Black-backed W**) *Motacilla [alba] lugens* Seen often in Honshu and Kyushu.

**Japanese Wagtail** ◊ *Motacilla grandis* Seen at several sites in Honshu, also in Kyushu, on streams and rivers.

**Olive-backed Pipit** *Anthus hodgsoni* Two at Mi-ike by the lakeshore.

**Buff-bellied Pipit** *Anthus rubescens* A few at Arasaki, at Mi-ike, also on Hachijojima.

**Brambling** *Fringilla montifringilla* Two at Karuizawa, another two on a roadside near Tsurui.

**Hawfinch** *Coccothraustes coccothraustes* Several seen in the Karuizawa area, around Kaga, and at Yoroushi.

**Japanese Grosbeak** ◊ *Eophona personata* A couple seen at Karuizawa were the only ones seen perched.

**Eurasian Bullfinch** ◊ (**Grey-bellied B**) *Pyrrhula [pyrrhula] griseiventris* Six near Karuizawa, two at Kushiro.

**Asian Rosy Finch** ◊ *Leucosticte arctoa* After much searching, we found a single bird on Notsuke Hanto.

**Long-tailed Rosefinch** ◊ *Carpodacus sibiricus* A male was well-studied at Karuizawa, a female at Koda on Kyushu.

**Pallas's Rosefinch** ◊ *Carpodacus roseus* OMG! What a bird! See note.

**Grey-capped Greenfinch (Oriental G)** *Chloris sinica* Seen regularly throughout Honshu and Kyushu, also in Nemuro.

**Common Redpoll** ◊ *Acanthis flammea* A small flock seen near Yoroushi, a couple elsewhere on Hokkaido.

**Eurasian Siskin** *Spinus spinus* Nice flocks seen at Karuizawa, Jigokudani, and in a couple of places on Hokkaido.

**Snow Bunting** *Plectrophenax nivalis* Seven birds on Notsuke Hanto, bright birds of the subspecies *vlasawae*.

**Meadow Bunting** ◇ *Emberiza cioides* Regularly seen on Honshu and Kyushu, most common at Arasaki.  
**Chestnut-eared Bunting** ◇ (**Grey-headed B**) *Emberiza fucata* Several of these smart birds seen at Arasaki.  
**Rustic Bunting** ◇ *Emberiza rustica* Small flocks seen in fields near Karuizawa, also near Kaga.  
**Yellow-throated Bunting** ◇ (**Elegant B**) *Emberiza elegans* A small flock seen at Koda, a couple at Mi-ike.  
**Black-faced Bunting** ◇ (**Masked B**) *Emberiza [spodocephala] personata* Not uncommon in Kyushu. See note.  
**Grey Bunting** ◇ *Emberiza variabilis* After drawing a blank in Kyushu, we saw four in a Tokyo Park!  
**Common Reed Bunting** *Emberiza schoeniclus* Quite numerous in the reedbeds of Kyushu.



*Pallas's Rosefinch*



*Hawfinch*



*Asian Rosy Finch*

## MAMMALS

**Japanese Macaque** *Macaca fuscata* A few dozen gathered at Jigokudani, without snow!  
**Long-clawed Shrew** *Sorex unguiculatus* The shrew that escaped the Fox at Notsuke was this species.  
**Pallas's Squirrel (introduced)** *Callosciurus erythraeus* A couple seen in Maioka Park in Tokyo.  
**Japanese Squirrel** *Sciurus lis* Three seen around the feeders at Karuizawa.

**Eurasian Red Squirrel *Sciurus vulgaris*** One seen running through the snow on Hokkaido.

**Red Fox *Vulpes vulpes*** Many seen on Hokkaido, with some charming encounters with curious and hungry ones.

**Sea Otter *Enhydra lutris*** Two seen from Cape Kiritappu, another near Nemuro. Very cute!

**Least Weasel *Mustela nivalis*** One in 'ermine' coat seen at Rausu.

**Sable *Martes zibellina*** Two seen at the feeders at Yoroushi.

**American Mink (introduced) *Neovison vison*** One seen at Yoroushi Onsen in Hokkaido.

**Steller Sea Lion *Eumetopias jubatus*** One seen distantly sticking its head out of the water from Cape Nosappu.

**Harbour Seal (Common Seal) *Phoca vitulina*** A small number seen off the Hokkaido coast.

**Wild Boar *Sus scrofa*** Three small ones surprised at Koda, quickly running for cover.

**Humpback Whale *Megaptera novaeangliae*** Two or four seen on our pelagic extension, including one breaching.

**Sika Deer *Cervus nippon*** Shy ones at Karuizawa, then found abundantly on Hokkaido.

**Japanese Serow *Capricornis crispus*** Two seen on each of two mornings at Karuizawa.



*Humpback Whale (Photo by M. Galtry)*

#### NOTES TO THE SYSTEMATIC LIST

**Lesser White-fronted Goose** ◇ *Anser erythropus* A scarce bird anywhere, the two birds that Otani spotted represented a Japan lifer for the leader, an exciting find.

**Lesser Black-backed Gull** ◇ *Larus [fuscus] heuglini* To be sure, these are not Lesser Black-backed Gulls! Heuglin's Gull is lumped in LBB Gull for some reason, and the birds we saw were of the often yellow-legged taxon *taimyrensis* which represents yet another taxon that some suggest could be split further.

**Pigeon Guillemot** ◇ *Cephus columba* A couple of birds seen at Kiritappu were likely to be of the subspecies *snowii* also known as 'Kurul' Guillemot.

**Oriental Stork** ◇ *Ciconia boyciana* The bird we saw at Katano Kamo-ike had colour-rings indicating it was from the introduced population from western Honshu, albeit a wild born individual. A dilemma as to whether it is tickable, it was the first that I had seen anywhere.

**Great Egret (Eastern G E)** *Ardea [alba] modesta* A few seen in south Kyushu showed obvious size differences with the larger *alba* alongside. They also have some other subtle features such as a more domed crown, and seasonal bare part colour differences.

**Blakiston's Fish Owl** ◇ *Bubo blakistoni* Typical that when we get to Washi-no-Yado, the bird changes its routine from a 1730 visit to an 0430 visit! It was nice that our new itinerary visits Yoroshi Onsen where we had a second opportunity to see this remarkable creature.

**Japanese Waxwing** ◇ *Bombycilla japonica* Given that in some years there are none around, we had multiple encounters with many birds. At least 30 at Karuizawa, over 50 near Katano sat on TV aerials, with another dozen in the Kaga area. They even reached the Philippines this year!

**Eurasian Nuthatch** *Sitta europaea* On Honshu the subspecies is *hondoensis*, at Mi-ike we saw *roseilia*, on Hokkaido it is *clara*.

**Pallas's Rosefinch** ◇ *Carpodacus roseus* A bird which is not seen on every tour, we had a sublime encounter with a flock of seven in Saitama.

**Black-faced Bunting** ◇ (Masked B) *Emberiza [spodocephala] personata* The birds we saw are of the *personata* subspecies that may be split as 'Masked' Bunting.

### Bird-of-the-Trip

1. Blakiston's Fish Owl
2. Pallas's Rosefinch
3. Steller's Sea Eagle
4. Red-crowned Crane
5. Solitary Snipe
6. Hooded Crane
6. Japanese Murrelet
8. White-naped Crane
8. Ural Owl
8. Naumann's Thrush



*White-tailed and Steller's Sea Eagles*



*Black-faced Spoonbill*



*Laysan Albatross*



*Chinese Bamboo Partridge*



*Goosander*



*Harlequin Duck*



*Varied Tit*



*Dusky Thrush*



*Sable*



*Eurasian Wryneck*



*Solitary Snipe*



*Hardy Birdquesters braving the snow*