



Siberian Thrush (All photos taken by Dave Farrow)

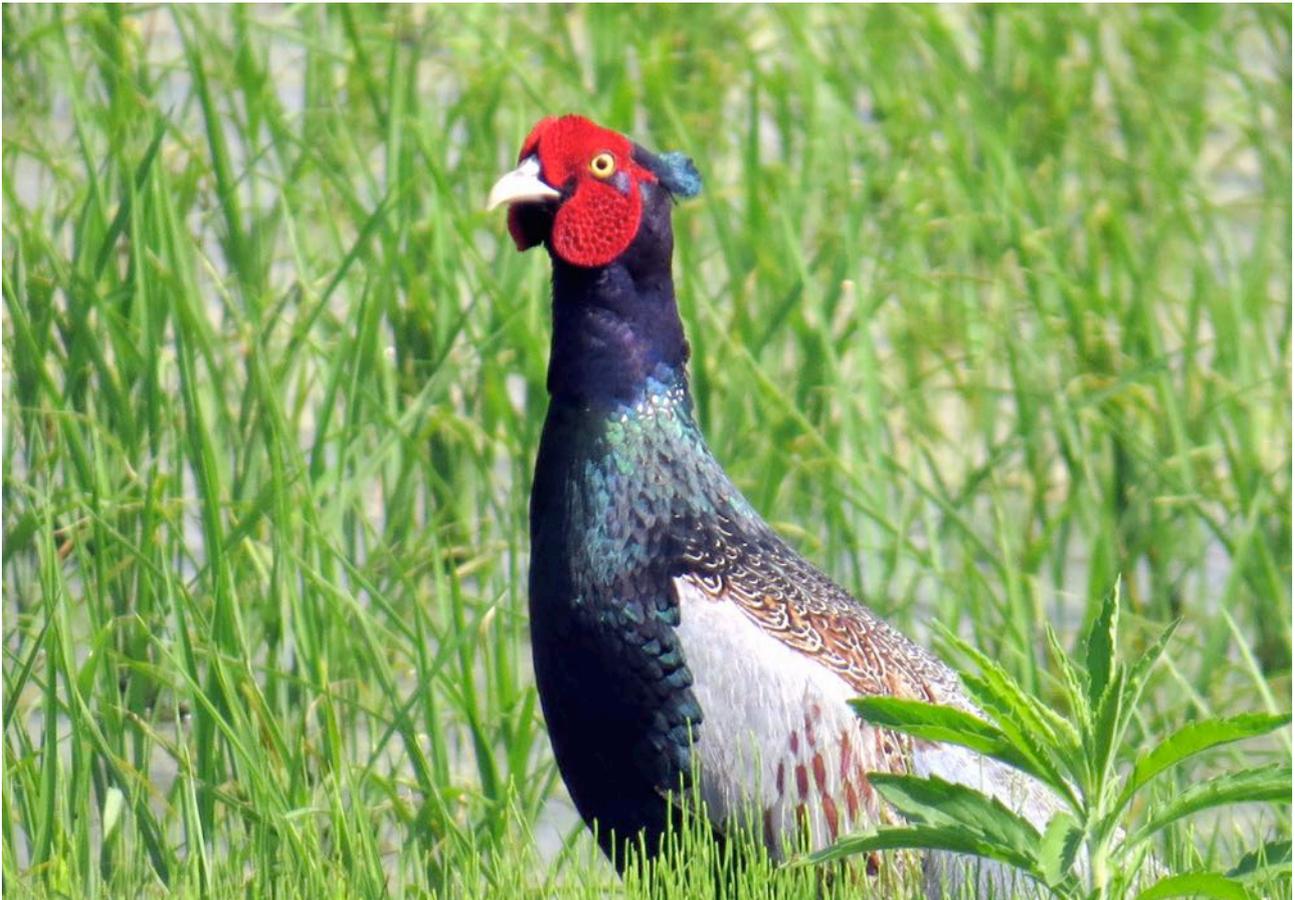
JAPAN

21 MAY – 4 JUNE 2017

LEADER: DAVE FARROW

This year's tour of Japan was once again a real delight, a wonderful island-hopping extravaganza around the Japanese archipelago. We were successful in finding all the target specialities of the highlands and islands, and in the mountain forests on the island of Honshu we saw Japanese Green Woodpecker, Rufous Hawk Cuckoo, a Ural Owl in the daytime, Japanese Accentor, Brown-headed and Japanese Thrushes, Siberian Blue Robin, Narcissus and Blue-and-white Flycatchers, Eastern Crowned, Sakhalin Leaf and Japanese Leaf Warblers, Japanese Grosbeak, Japanese Yellow Bunting and Chestnut-eared Bunting. In the lowlands and wetland areas we saw Japanese Reed Bunting, Marsh Grassbird, Japanese Green Pheasant, Japanese Wagtail, Chestnut-cheeked Starlings, and Yellow Bitterns. On the delightful island of Miyakejima we saw Styan's Grasshopper Warblers, Ijima's Leaf Warbler, Izu Thrush and Owston's Tit, plus Japanese Robins,

Japanese Woodpigeon and Northern Boobook, plus a Short-tailed Albatross, Bulwer's Petrel and countless numbers of Streaked Shearwaters from the ferry. Down in the exotic Ryukyu Islands we found a suite of island endemics and other great birds, starting on Ishigakijima where we saw Ryukyu Serpent Eagles, Ryukyu Green Pigeon, Ryukyu Flycatcher, Ryukyu Scops Owls in the daytime, Ryukyu Minivets and Ishigaki Tit, plus Ruddy Kingfisher, Malayan Night Heron and Chinese Egret. On Amami Island we enjoyed the superb Amami Woodcock, Lidth's Jay, Owston's (or Amami) Woodpeckers, Amami Robins, and an amazing five Amami Thrushes. On Okinawa we found many Okinawa Rails scuttling along the roadsides, Okinawa Woodpeckers, lovely Okinawa Robins, Japanese Scops Owl in the daytime, and some fine Black-naped and Roseate Terns. In addition to the birds we saw Japanese Serow, and many Amami Black Rabbits. The food, as always, was very enjoyable.



Green Pheasant

Our tour began once we had gathered together at our Narita hotel on a warm and sunny morning, and once our transport had been secured we set off immediately for our first Japanese birding, to the Tonegawa River. Despite it being rather hot and bright, we found our first Marsh Grassbird before the minibus had even stopped, and found several of these scarce birds songflighting over the reeds uttering their frantic songs. Also here were a pair of Japanese Reed Buntings bringing food to a nest among the reeds, and we found numerous Intermediate Egrets in breeding dress, Eurasian Whimbrels and Northern Greenshanks feeding in wet rice paddies, numerous noisy Oriental Reed Warblers, Japanese Skylarks, Eastern Spot-billed Ducks, Black-crowned Night Heron, Meadow Buntings, White-cheeked Starlings and Black-backed Wagtail. We bought picnic lunches and took them to another reedbed area, where despite the heat of the midday we found Japanese Reed Bunting singing from the reed stems, plus Western Osprey and Black-eared Kites. In nearby rice paddies we saw Ruddy Turnstones and a pair of Japanese Green Pheasant, the male of the latter showing us his glistening iridescence in a close view. Later in the afternoon we visited a reed-fringed lake where we saw some Yellow Bitterns, more Oriental Reed Warblers and Green Pheasants, and Little and Great Crested Grebes.

In the early morning we birded around the patchwork of fields and woods near our hotel, finding Bull-headed Shrike, Oriental Greenfinch, more Green Pheasants, Japanese Tit and a Northern Goshawk, before setting off on an epic journey through the centre of Tokyo. This wasn't nearly as arduous as it sounds, and we were up in the sylvan mountains by midday. Despite it being yet another hot day, the forests around Karuizawa were surprisingly active and an afternoon stroll into the woodland near our hotel produced a trio of Japanese Green Woodpeckers, a Japanese Pygmy Woodpecker, Grey Wagtails, Japanese White-eye, Brown Dipper with recently fledged young, some gorgeous Narcissus Flycatchers, Eastern Crowned Warbler, Japanese Varied Tit, Long-tailed Tit, and a splendid male Japanese Thrush. We made a short drive from here and spent a couple of hours around some fallow paddies fringed with reedbeds, where we enjoyed some good looks at Chestnut-eared Bunting, Black-browed Reed Warblers along with the now familiar Oriental Reed Warblers, Stejneger's Stonechats, Japanese Skylarks, Chestnut-cheeked and White-cheeked Starlings, and Eastern Buzzard. Despite staying till dusk there was no sign of any Latham's Snipe and it seems like they are no longer present at this site.



Narcissus Flycatcher

On an early walk in the woods near our hotel we quickly found our first Japanese Yellow Bunting, singing from a treetop. We found gorgeous male Narcissus Flycatchers, a splendid Siberian Blue Robin singing from a high branch, nest-building Japanese Grosbeaks, Ashy Minivet, and a superb Ural Owl appeared in some tall trees and gave us a great view. We saw Coal and Willow Tits, Eurasian Nuthatch, the lovely Japanese Varied Tit, and the Grey Wagtails nesting in the hotel car park made a fuss whenever we walked past. After breakfast we visited another area where we found more Japanese Yellow Buntings, and had a surprisingly good view of an Asian Stubtail sat preening on the ground. From here we drove up in to the mountains and explored some forest at 2000m where we found a Rufous Hawk Cuckoo, sky-dancing Eastern Buzzards, Pacific Swifts, Bull-headed Shrikes getting frisky, and a pair of lemon-coloured Japanese Leaf Warblers. We then returned to lower elevations where we found three Mandarin drakes, some Japanese Wagtails, singles of Eurasian Wigeon, Tufted Duck and Goosander, before returning to the forests of Karuizawa. On a late

afternoon walk we were successful in finding a perched Ashy Minivet, gaudy Narcissus and demure Asian Brown Flycatchers, and a Blue-and-white Flycatcher singing from a treetop.



Japanese Accentor

We made an early morning drive along forest tracks, on the remote chance of finding a Copper Pheasant, but to no avail. We did bump into a splendid Japanese Serow though, peering down the slope at us. A walk around the woods produced another Blue-and-White Flycatcher, Asian Brown Flycatcher, plus we heard the female Ural Owl making some harsh barking calls. We then set off on a long drive southwards, reaching the foot of Mount Fuji (3776m, the highest mountain in Japan) by midday. We drove part way up this impressive mountain, following one of several roads that ascend its slope to a height of 2000m, and up near the treeline we were able to find some friendly Japanese Accentors hopping about among the stunted larches. At a small drinking pool we saw a pair of gorgeous Grey-bellied Bullfinches, plus two male Red-flanked Bluetails that came down to bathe, in addition to Coal Tits and Goldcrests. Lower on the mountain we had good looks at some delightful Japanese Leaf Warblers, making curious wing shivering noises like a cicada as they became excited. Descending to the foot of the great volcano, we spent the night in the town of Gotemba where we had a fine view of Fuji-san from our rooms.

On another of the mountain roads in the early morning we found a male Brown-headed Thrush, some singing Olive-backed Pipits and an Eastern Crowned Warbler, but persistent rain made it rather miserable and we retreated for breakfast. The weather cleared up and we returned to the mountain, exploring its forested flanks we found a Sakhalin Leaf Warbler singing strongly, then followed a trail through gorgeous deciduous forest with a very attractive ground flora of Peonies and Anemones. Here we were lucky enough to find a very obliging male Siberian Thrush that came and sat up on a nearby branch, giving us great close views. Wow! We also found a couple more Brown-headed Thrushes, Narcissus Flycatcher, Eurasian Jays

calling like ducks, and a male Siberian Blue Robin. Further birding around the mountain forests yielded little, and the weather closed in, bringing an end to our Honshu birding. We headed for Tokyo along busy expressways, to catch the overnight ferry to the Izu Islands.



Grey-bellied Bullfinch

As dawn broke over a calm and misty sea, we arrived at the island of Miyakejima and hurried off the ship, where it was a short walk up the jetty to where our hotel was. After an early Japanese breakfast we boarded our tangerine coloured minibus to begin our exploration of this volcanic island. Unfortunately a low pressure system chose that moment to arrive so we had to endure a morning of rain, often heavy. We were still able to find some of the local delights such as Japanese Woodpigeons, which seem to love the rain and sat out on exposed perches to bathe. We found some rusty-coloured Owston's Tits bringing food to a nesthole in a large tree despite the downpour, and our first Izu Thrush hopping along a track. Looking out to sea we saw a Japanese Cormorant sitting on the rocks, a few Black-tailed Gulls, and several large Green Sea Turtles swimming close inshore, their necks craning above the surface. There were innumerable Streaked Shearwaters gathered in rafts on the surface in calm conditions, then the wind increased and they could be seen shearing across the waves as far as the eye could see. In the afternoon the rain eventually stopped, and we had a fine view of a Styan's Grasshopper Warbler in the coastal scrub, and down in the tall forest around the crater lake we found many Ijima's Leaf Warblers, more Owston's Tits, Japanese White-eyes, several Izu Thrushes, had some glimpses of vocal but furtive Japanese Robins, and saw two different Northern Boobooks, kept awake perhaps by noisy Brown-eared Bulbuls. In addition we saw some Pacific Swifts, Eastern Cattle Egrets and Black-crowned Night Heron, and we rounded off an enjoyable days' birding with some excellent fresh fish in the restaurant of our hotel.

The next morning we returned to the same sites as the previous day, and had a great experience with several Styan's Grasshopper Warblers that were sitting up and singing energetically in the grass. Down at the crater lake in sunny conditions we found it to be quieter than on our damp visit yesterday, but we enjoyed revisiting the handsome endemics such as Izu Thrush, Owston's Tit and Ijima's Leaf Warbler, while Japanese Robin showed for a little, the birds being a rather furtive perhaps as a result of their breeding at this time. Japanese Woodpigeons were also hidden away in the canopy, and on the sea we saw more large Turtles, two of which seemed to be locked in coitus. After lunch it was time to meet the returning ferry and jump aboard in the short time that it docked, it's turnaround and departure happening with impressive swiftness! We spent the afternoon on deck watching the hordes of Streaked Shearwaters, picking out a few Short-tailed Shearwaters plus the odd Sooty, a Bulwer's Petrel showed well, and then a monster of a juvenile Short-tailed Albatross appeared, a very welcome surprise and a write-in for the tour. Mount Fuji was standing tall off the port side as we entered Tokyo Bay, and once we had disembarked we headed to Haneda on the Tokyo monorail and to our hotel for the night.

We began our journey to the southern islands with a short ride to Haneda airport, and then a three-hour flight took us to the island of Ishigakijima, at the eastern end of the archipelago and not far from Taiwan. On arrival we were greeted by dark skies, rain and strong winds, hampering our birding during the remainder of the

afternoon. Nevertheless we found a roosting Ryukyu Scops Owl, and had a great view of his rusty plumage and yellow eyes. We also saw Common Pheasant (introduced here), Common Emerald Dove and White-breasted Waterhen, before calling it a day, hoping for better weather tomorrow.



Japanese Leaf Warbler

The next morning the weather improved, and the birds began to appear. We began in a forest park close to town, finding brightly coloured Ruddy Kingfishers, Ryukyu Green Pigeon, Ryukyu Minivet, a vocal Ryukyu Flycatcher singing from the thick jungle, and the dusky-looking Ishigaki Tit. Driving along some of the back roads, we had stupidly close views of a Malayan Night Heron feeding on earthworms right next to the minibus! After filling up with coffee and toast we headed back into the centre of this small island, exploring some of the small farm roads that criss-cross the mosaic of rice paddies and forest patches. We found Chinese Bulbuls, House Swifts and Red-rumped Swallows, and eventually we found our primary target of Ryukyu Serpent Eagle, partly-hidden as it sat in the crown of a tree. After a while it took flight on ragged wings, and as it went it was vigorously harried by one of the small local *osai* Large-billed Crows, which was not very different in size to this diminutive taxon. In dense forest we heard a Slaty-legged Crane, plus Ryukyu Scops Owls that were calling in the daytime, had a good view of another Ryukyu Flycatcher, plus many large and exotic butterflies that appeared once the sun came out. Moving to the coast we found Greater Crested Terns gathered on a sea wall, and as the tide turned we found a splendid example of a Chinese Egret along a shoreline punctuated with Little and Intermediate Egrets and a white morph Pacific Reef Egret, all lined up for a comparison. Add to this Eastern Cattle Egrets, Eastern Great Egrets, Grey Heron and an immature Purple Heron, we saw an impressive nine species of Heron in a day! We then found another Ryukyu Serpent Eagle, this time sat at the roadside on a telephone pole, periodically calling to two birds that were soaring high overhead.

We spent a while scanning across a lovely rocky beach at low tide, and we found Sharp-tailed Sandpiper, Red-necked Stint, Lesser Sand Plovers in breeding dress, Greater Sand, Grey and Kentish Plovers, Grey-tailed Tattler, Terek Sandpiper and Eurasian Whimbrel. We then returned to the forest park and enjoyed Ishigaki Tit, Ryukyu Flycatcher, Ruddy Kingfisher, another Ryukyu Scops Owl at roost, a brief view of a Northern Boobook, and heard another Slaty-legged Crake to round off an excellent day.



Ryukyu Serpent Eagle

We left for the airport in the early morning, and took a short flight to Okinawa where we waited until midday for our onward flight to Amami Oshima. Arriving on this well-forested island set in an impossibly blue sea, we began our birding on a nearby beach where we found Pacific Golden Plover in full breeding dress, Sharp-tailed Sandpiper and Greater Sand Plovers, before heading to our first Amami forest site. Here we found some photographers staking out a nest hole of Owston's Woodpecker, with a near fully-grown juvenile poking out of the hole. Later on we saw the female come twice with food, never staying long, and it seemed likely that the young would be vacating the nest in the following hours and days. We had a great look at a spanking male Amami Robin, and a brief look at our first Lidth's Jay. We traveled onwards to our hotel in the town of Naze, and after some dinner we went on a night drive in search of the main prize on this island, the Amami Woodcock. We slowly drove along narrow forest roads that wind their way around the mountainous spine of the island, and once we were in the correct habitat the endemic Amami Black Rabbits began to appear, indeed they were surprisingly common, a sign that the introduced mongooses and feral cats must be under control to a large extent. We saw a roosting Lidth's Jay in a dead pine tree, a Ryukyu Scops Owl, but where were the Woodcocks? After two hours of driving up and down it was looking like a dip, until *finally* we found one, standing in the middle of the road, and we enjoyed a good look for several minutes as it scuttled in and out of the roadside vegetation.

After a short night's sleep back at the hotel, we rose early and headed along another forest road, where we soon located an Amami Thrush singing loudly in the forest. Seeing it well proved rather more difficult, but he gave us several good flight views as he went from one side of the road to the other, landing on hidden perches. We finally had a good look, as he landed in a dead pine where he continued singing. The forest was busy this morning, and we had further views of Amami Robin, Lidth's Jay and Owston's Woodpecker, Ryukyu Green Pigeons, plus some brief views of Ruddy Kingfisher. At the foot of the hills we heard another two Amami Thrushes, and had good views of a pair of Japanese Paradise Flycatchers. A pair of Pacific Reef Heron standing in a tree alongside a freshwater stream was rather atypical, and then the sleeplessness caught up with us and we returned for a midday break.



Chinese Egret

Later, we drove to another forest area at the western side of the island, and quite unexpectedly had stunning looks at an Amami Thrush feeding on the roadside in the middle of the afternoon, plus another two were seen flying off the roadsides. Common where found! We found another pair of Owston's Woodpeckers, then the forest quietened down so we turned our attentions to roadside puddles that were full of dozens of endangered Anderson's Crocodile Newts, and watched some of the gorgeous butterflies present here.

A final morning sortie in the forests of Amami produced more looks at Amami Thrush, with one that flew past us unbidden and sat on a low perch, we had another great look at a vocal Amami Robin, and another Owston's Woodpecker that was producing a loud metallic drumming by banging on a metal telephone pole. Ruddy Kingfisher and Ryukyu Green Pigeons sat on telephone wires, and a migrant Sakhalin Grasshopper Warbler gave a burst of song from the dense vegetation. On the beach near the airport we found a smart Broad-billed Sandpiper, several Mongolian Plovers, two Sharp-tailed Sandpipers and a Western Osprey. We

flew from here to Naha in Okinawa, and then drove almost to the most northern part of the island to reach our hotel, arriving at dusk. A night drive in search of Owls was cut short when the rain became persistent, and we were forced to call it a day.



Amami Thrush

The next day we left under leaden skies, dawn being delayed by the dark rain clouds. The roads were full of Okinawa Robins and Large-billed Crows picking things off the asphalt, and it wasn't long before we found our first Okinawa Rails, one of which put on quite a show walking around in the road in front of us. We had several more good views before it was time to head back for breakfast, after which the rain worsened. We ventured out in the downpour, and during a pause in the precipitation we found an Okinawa Woodpecker in a dead tree. We carried on birding but the rain had definitely set in for the day, so we drove the forest roads where we found more Okinawa Robins. They seemed to enjoy the conditions and were hopping all over the roads, some bathing in the potholes that were now full of rainwater. We descended to the coast for a look at some fields where we found a Yellow Bittern in some iris fields, and further down the coast we watched Roseate, Black-naped and Whiskered Terns feeding in a harbour, while we sheltered under a bridge. The rain became so heavy it was no longer feasible to do any birding, so it was time for an early bath.

Just in time, as we were finishing our dinner in the hotel the rain actually *stopped*, so we were able to go out and do some owling. Not far down the road we had a close encounter with a vocal Japanese Scops Owl, which never perched for us but actually flew *through* our group in the darkness, before going silent. A little further down the road we heard hissing coming from some trees, and found the cutest down-covered yet full sized juvenile Japanese Scops Owl, clutching a small rodent as if it were a little toy, which clearly was its supper that had just been brought by a parent, as it glared back at us with bright red eyes. It then proceeded to swallow the prey in one piece, gulping it down with gusto! Hurrah!

We repeated our Okinawa Rail hunt the next day, and although many were behaving furtively we eventually had better looks as some decided to emerge into the open. Now the rain had passed, there were far fewer Okinawa Robins hopping along the verges, and the Crows no longer dominated the road. We made a final visit to Ada village and had another view of Okinawa Woodpecker, and then checking the place where we had found the juvenile Japanese Scops Owl, we were able to find a splendid adult Japanese Scops Owl roosting in a tree. We returned to the narrow forest roads in the hills, finding another Okinawa Woodpecker, more Okinawa Robins and an Okinawa Rail preening at the roadside, and then it was time to pack up and head for the airport, pausing only to look at some Roseate and Black-naped Terns en route.



Okinawa Rail

From Naha we flew back to Tokyo, enjoyed a final meal together before parting ways, having enjoyed a splendid journey around some of the best and most exotic parts of Japan and seeing its wonderful endemics. It is such a joy to travel in this country, with its great wildlife, wonderful food, excellent service and polite and friendly hosts, it all adds up to make this trip one of the most fantastic travel experiences available.



Fishing at Omigawa



Japanese Scops Owl juvenile



Black-naped Terns



Red-flanked Bluetail

SYSTEMATIC LIST OF SPECIES RECORDED DURING THE TOUR

The species names and taxonomy used in the bird list mostly follows Gill, F & D Donsker (Eds). 2017. IOC World Bird List (v 6.4). This list is updated several times annually and is available at <http://www.worldbirdnames.org>.

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

Species which were only recorded by the leader are indicated by the symbol (LO)

Species which were not personally recorded by the leaders 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).

Mandarin Duck ◊ *Aix galericulata* Three drakes seen at Toden Lake.

Eurasian Wigeon *Anas penelope* A male seen at Toden Lake.

Mallard *Anas platyrhynchos* A single seen at Karuizawa, not looking very wild!

Eastern Spot-billed Duck *Anas zonorhyncha* Rather common on Honshu, also seen on Ishigakijima.

Tufted Duck *Aythya fuligula* A drake on Toden Lake.

Common Merganser *Mergus merganser* A female on Toden Lake.

Chinese Bamboo Partridge (introduced) *Bambusicola thoracicus* A glimpse at Narita, heard on Miyakejima.

Common Pheasant (introduced) *Phasianus colchicus* Common on Ishigakijima.

Green Pheasant ◊ *Phasianus versicolor* Not uncommon around Narita and the Tonegawa, also seen at Hochi.

Indian Peafowl (introduced) *Pavo cristatus* Present on Ishigakijima, one seen.

Short-tailed Albatross *Phoebastria albatrus* A nice surprise to see a juvenile from the Izu ferry.

Streaked Shearwater ◊ *Calonectris leucomelas* Innumerable from the Izu ferry, also from Miyakejima.

Sooty Shearwater *Ardenna grisea* Some likely examples seen from the Izu ferry.

Short-tailed Shearwater ◊ *Ardenna tenuirostris* Several seen from the Izu ferry.

Bulwer's Petrel ◊ *Bulweria bulwerii* A single seen from the Izu ferry.

Little Grebe *Tachybaptus ruficollis* One seen at Inbanuma.

Great Crested Grebe *Podiceps cristatus* Two on the lake at Inbanuma.

Eurasian Bittern ◊ *Botaurus stellaris* (H) Heard booming at Inbanuma.

Yellow Bittern *Ixobrychus sinensis* Three or more seen in flight at Inbanuma, another in the Iris fields on Okinawa.

Malayan Night Heron ◊ *Gorsachius melanolophus* A splendid adult at close range on Ishigakijima.



Streaked Shearwater



Malayan Night Heron

Black-crowned Night Heron *Nycticorax nycticorax* Seen at Omigawa and in the lake at Miyakejima.

Eastern Cattle Egret *Bubulcus coromandus* Seen on Miyakejima, Ishigakijima and Okinawa.

Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea* Frequently seen along our route.

Purple Heron *Ardea purpurea* Two immature birds seen on Ishigakijima.

Eastern Great Egret *Ardea [alba] modesta* Frequently seen along our route.

Intermediate Egret *Ardea intermedia* Numerous around Narita and Omigawa, also on Ishigakijima.

Little Egret *Egretta garzetta* Seen on Miyakejima, Ishigakijima and Amami Oshima.

Pacific Reef Heron *Egretta sacra* Both morphs on Ishigakijima, dark ones seen on Amami Oshima.

Chinese Egret ◊ *Egretta eulophotes* A fine example seen on Ishigakijima.

Great Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo* Seen around Narita and Omigawa, Tokyo waterfront and Toden Lake.

Japanese Cormorant ◊ *Phalacrocorax capillatus* A single bird seen on Miyakejima.

Western Osprey *Pandion haliaetus* Several seen, at Omigawa, Ishigakijima and Amami Oshima.

Ryukyu Serpent Eagle ◊ *Spilornis [cheela] perplexus* Great views of four on Ishigakijima.

Japanese Sparrowhawk ◊ *Accipiter gularis* (NL) One seen briefly on Ishigakijima.

Northern Goshawk *Accipiter gentilis* A single bird seen by our Narita hotel.

Black-eared Kite *Milvus [migrans] lineatus* Quite a few around Narita and Omigawa, also in the Karuizawa area.

Eastern Buzzard ◊ (Japanese B) *Buteo japonicus* Good looks at Hoshi and high in the hills near Karuizawa.

Slaty-legged Crake ◊ *Rallina eurizonoides* (H) Two heard calling from dense jungle on Ishigakijima.

Okinawa Rail ◊ *Gallirallus okinawae* Some good looks at some around Yambaru, many heard. See note.

Brown-cheeked Rail ◊ (Eastern Water R) *Rallus indicus* One seen briefly at Hoshi.

White-breasted Waterhen *Amaurornis phoenicurus* Common on Ishigakijima.

Common Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus* Seen with chicks on Okinawa, also seen on Ishigakijima.

Eurasian Coot *Fulica atra* Some at Inbanuma, also seen on Ishigakijima.

Pacific Golden Plover *Pluvialis fulva* Two at Oze beach on Amami Oshima.

Grey Plover *Pluvialis squatarola* Two on Ohama beach on Ishigakijima.

Kentish Plover *Charadrius alexandrinus* Many on Ohama beach on Ishigakijima, also at Oze beach on Amami.

Lesser Sand Plover (Mongolian S P) *Charadrius mongolus* Some fine examples on Amami and Ishigaki. See note.

Greater Sand Plover *Charadrius leschenaultii* A handful at Oze beach on Amami Oshima.

Amami Woodcock ◊ *Scolopax mira* It took a while, but great looks at one along a forest road on Amami. See note.

Whimbrel (Eurasian W) *Numenius [phaeopus] variegatus* Many in paddies around Omigawa, also on the islands.

Common Greenshank *Tringa nebularia* A couple at Omigawa, a couple more in the Ryukyu Islands.

Grey-tailed Tattler *Tringa brevipes* A good number on the Ishigaki beaches, also at Oze on Amami Oshima.

Terek Sandpiper *Xenus cinereus* Seen on the beaches of both Ishigakijima and Amami Oshima.

Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos* Seen on both Ishigakijima and Amami Oshima.

Ruddy Turnstone *Arenaria interpres* A migrant flock near Ukishima, also on Ishigakijima and Amami Oshima.

Red-necked Stint *Calidris ruficollis* A small number seen on the beaches of Ishigakijima and Amami Oshima.

Sharp-tailed Sandpiper *Calidris acuminata* A couple each on the beaches of Ishigakijima and Amami Oshima.

Broad-billed Sandpiper *Limicola falcinellus* A smart bird seen at Oze beach at Amami Oshima. A write-in.

Black-tailed Gull ◊ *Larus crassirostris* Seen only on Miyakejima and from the Izu ferry.

Greater Crested Tern *Thalasseus bergii* 22 birds counted around a fish farm on Ishigakijima.

Little Tern *Sternula albifrons* Seen near Haneda airport, also on Ishigakijima and Amami Oshima.

Roseate Tern *Sterna dougallii* Some great looks at vocal birds around a fishing harbour on Okinawa.

Black-naped Tern *Sterna sumatrana* One at Ohama on Ishigakijima, a dozen with the above showing well.

Whiskered Tern *Chlidonias hybrida* A couple over fields on Ishigakijima, another two on Okinawa with the above.

White-winged Tern *Chlidonias leucopterus* One at Ohama on Ishigakijima in non-breeding plumage.



Ryukyu Green Pigeon



Ruddy Kingfisher

Rock Dove (introduced) *Columba livia*

Japanese Wood Pigeon ◊ *Columba janthina* Great views of several sitting out in the rain on Miyakejima.

Oriental Turtle Dove *Streptopelia orientalis* Seen on every day of the tour.

Common Emerald Dove *Chalcophaps indica* A couple seen on Ishigakijima, not shy!

White-bellied Green Pigeon ◊ *Treron sieboldii* frustratingly heard often but seen only in flight at Fuji-san.

Ryukyu Green Pigeon ◊ *Treron [formosae] permagnus* Seen often and well on Ishigakijima and Amami Oshima.

Rufous Hawk-Cuckoo ◊ *Hierococcyx hyperythrus* A vocal bird seen near Karuizawa, also heard on Fuji-san.

Lesser Cuckoo ◊ *Cuculus poliocephalus* Often heard, two seen on Miyakejima.

Oriental Cuckoo ◊ *Cuculus optatus* (H) Heard on Miyakejima.

Common Cuckoo *Cuculus canorus* Two seen on the journey between Karuizawa and Fuji-san.

Japanese Scops Owl ◊ *Otus semitorques* Great views on Okinawa. See note.

Ryukyu Scops Owl ◊ *Otus elegans* Two in daytime on Ishigakijima, one at night on Amami. Many heard. See note.

Ural Owl *Strix uralensis* A great look at one at Karuizawa in daytime.

Northern Boobook ◊ *Ninox japonica* Two seen in daytime on Miyakejima, one briefly on Ishigakijima. See note.

Pacific Swift *Apus pacificus* A good number on Miyakejima, also seen at Karuizawa and Fuji-san.

House Swift *Apus nipalensis* A few seen on Ishigakijima and Amami Oshima.

Ruddy Kingfisher ◊ *Halcyon coromanda* Many on Ishigakijima, also on Amami Oshima and Okinawa. See note.

Common Kingfisher *Alcedo atthis* Some singles seen on Okinawa.

Japanese Pygmy Woodpecker ◇ *Yungipicus kizuki* Seen regularly throughout the tour, except for on Ishigakijima.
Great Spotted Woodpecker *Dendrocopos major* Three individuals seen at Karuizawa.
Okinawa Woodpecker ◇ *Dendrocopos noguchii* At least four seen on Okinawa, always rather furtive.
Owston's Woodpecker ◇ *Dendrocopos [leucotos] owstoni* Six adults seen, plus a large chick poking out of a nest.
Japanese Green Woodpecker ◇ *Picus awokera* A few seen at Karuizawa, good views of this handsome bird.
Common Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus* A few seen around Narita and Omigawa.



Japanese Scops Owl



Ryukyu Scops Owl

Ashy Minivet ◇ *Pericrocotus divaricatus* Unusually, several seen rather well at Karuizawa.
Ryukyu Minivet ◇ *Pericrocotus tegimae* Quite showy on Ishigakijima, also seen on Amami Oshima and Okinawa.
Bull-headed Shrike ◇ *Lanius bucephalus* A few seen, at Narita, around Karuizawa and on Miyakejima.
Japanese Paradise Flycatcher ◇ *Terpsiphone atrocaudata* A good view of a pair on Amami Oshima.
Eurasian Jay *Garrulus glandarius* Several at Mt Fuji of the race *japonicus*, also seen at Karuizawa.
Lidth's Jay ◇ *Garrulus lidthi* Several encounters on Amami Oshima, one roosting bird spotted on our nightdrive.
Azure-winged Magpie ◇ *Cyanopica cyanus* (NL) One seen near Tokyo.
Oriental Crow ◇ *Corvus orientalis* A few seen in Honshu.
Large-billed Crow *Corvus macrorhynchos* Seen daily. See note.
Coal Tit *Periparus ater* Common on Mt Fuji, also seen at Karuizawa.
Varied Tit ◇ *Sittiparus varius* Plenty at Karuizawa, also seen on Amami Oshima and Okinawa.
Owston's Tit ◇ (Izu T) *Sittiparus owstoni* Plenty seen on Miyakejima, with an active nest at Tairo-ike.
Willow Tit *Poecile montanus* A few at Karuizawa and Mt Fuji.
Japanese Tit *Parus minor* Seen often on Honshu, also on Amami Oshima and Okinawa.
Ishigaki Tit ◇ *Parus [minor] nigriloris* Seen well on Ishigakijima, quite a distinctive taxon.
Japanese Skylark ◇ *Alauda [arvensis] japonica* Plenty seen at Omigawa and Narita, also at Hoshi.
Light-vented Bulbul ◇ (Chinese B) *Pycnonotus sinensis* Quite common in open country on Ishigakijima, Okinawa.
Brown-eared Bulbul ◇ *Hypsipetes amaurotis* Seen daily, different subspecies on different islands. See note.
Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica* Common on Honshu, also present on Miyakejima.
Pacific Swallow *Hirundo tahitica* Common on the Ryukyu Islands, Japanese name is 'Ryukyu Swallow'.
Asian House Martin *Delichon dasypus* Some seen around the bridge at Lake Toden.
Red-rumped Swallow *Cecropis daurica* A small flock seen on Ishigakijima.
Japanese Bush Warbler ◇ *Horornis diphone* Heard and seen on Honshu, Miyakejima and Okinawa.
Asian Stubtail ◇ *Urosphena squameiceps* Good views of one preening on the ground at Karuizawa.
Long-tailed Tit *Aegithalos caudatus* A few seen in the forests at Karuizawa and Mt Fuji.
Japanese Leaf Warbler *Phylloscopus xanthodryas* Great looks at Mt Fuji and in the hills near Karuizawa.
Sakhalin Leaf Warbler ◇ *Phylloscopus borealoides* A very vocal example showed well on Mt Fuji.
Eastern Crowned Warbler ◇ *Phylloscopus coronatus* At least three seen at Karuizawa, another one on Mt Fuji.
Ijima's Leaf Warbler ◇ *Phylloscopus ijimae* Common and very vocal on Miyakejima.
Oriental Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus orientalis* Common and noisy in suitable habitats, around Omigawa, Narita.
Black-browed Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus bistrigiceps* At least three songsters showing well near Karuizawa..

Styan's Grasshopper Warbler ◇ *Locustella pleskei* Several songsters showed very well on Miyakejima.

Marsh Grassbird ◇ *Locustella pryeri* Seen well at Omigawa, several birds making songflights from the reeds.

Sakhalin Grasshopper Warbler ◇ *Locustella amnicola* (H) One heard singing on Amami Oshima was a surprise.

Zitting Cisticola *Cisticola juncidis* Numerous around Omigawa etc, many heard on Ishigaki, also seen on Amami.

Japanese White-eye ◇ *Zosterops japonicus* Regularly encountered throughout the tour.

Goldcrest *Regulus regulus* A few seen on Mt Fuji.

Eurasian Wren *Troglodytes troglodytes* Seen at Karuizawa, race *fumigatus*.

Eurasian Nuthatch *Sitta europaea* Seen at Karuizawa and Mt Fuji.

White-cheeked Starling ◇ *Spodiopsar cineraceus* Often seen in open country on Honshu.

Chestnut-cheeked Starling ◇ *Agropsar philippensis* Five seen near Karuizawa was our only sighting.

Siberian Thrush ◇ *Geokichla sibirica* A splendid male showed well on Mt Fuji.

Amami Thrush ◇ *Zoothera major* A bumper year with five seen, great song, and one prolonged view at the roadside.

Japanese Thrush ◇ *Turdus cardis* Great looks at Karuizawa, three males seen there. Heard at Mt Fuji.



Japanese Thrush

Brown-headed Thrush ◇ *Turdus chrysolaus* Four seen at Mt Fuji.

Izu Thrush ◇ *Turdus celaenops* Many seen well in the rain on Miyakejima, none when the sun came out!

Asian Brown Flycatcher *Muscicapa dauurica* A few seen at Karuizawa.

Blue-and-white Flycatcher ◇ *Cyanoptila cyanomelana* A couple of singing males seen well at Karuizawa.

Siberian Blue Robin *Larvivora cyane* A great look at a singing male at Karuizawa, another on Mt Fuji.

Amami Robin ◇ *Larvivora [komadori] komadori* A few gorgeous sweet singing males seen well on Amami.

Okinawa Robin ◇ *Larvivora [komadori] namiyei* Multiple views of many birds feeding in the rain on forest roads.

Japanese Robin ◇ *Larvivora akahige* At least three seen on Miyakejima, none very well as they stayed aloof.

Red-flanked Bluetail *Tarsiger cyanurus* Some great views of bathing birds on Mt Fuji.

Narcissus Flycatcher ◇ *Ficedula narcissina* A gorgeous addition to the forests of Karuizawa and Mt Fuji.

Ryukyu Flycatcher ◇ *Ficedula [narcissina] owstoni* Three seen well on Ishigakijima, another on Amami.

Blue Rock Thrush *Monticola solitarius* Common on Miyakejima and the Ryukyu Islands, race *philippensis*.
Stejneger's Stonechat *Saxicola stejnegeri* Three seen in fields near Karuizawa.
Brown Dipper *Cinclus pallasii* Both adults and juveniles seen at Karuizawa.
Eurasian Tree Sparrow *Passer montanus* Seen throughout, near human habitation.
Japanese Accentor ◇ *Prunella rubida* Great views of three or more on Mt Fuji.
Grey Wagtail *Motacilla cinerea* A few noted around Karuizawa and Mt Fuji.
White Wagtail ◇ (Black-backed W) *Motacilla [alba] lugens* Regular sightings on Honshu.
Japanese Wagtail ◇ *Motacilla grandis* Seen well by Lake Toden, also at a highway stop en route from Tokyo.
Olive-backed Pipit *Anthus hodgsoni* A couple of singing and songflighting birds seen high on Mt Fuji.
Japanese Grosbeak ◇ *Eophona personata* Nest building birds seen at Karuizawa, also seen on Mt Fuji.
Grey-bellied Bullfinch *Pyrrhula [pyrrhula] griseiventris* Great views of a pair coming to bathe on Mt Fuji. Uso!
Grey-capped Greenfinch (Oriental G) *Chloris sinica* Regular sightings at Karuizawa and on Miyakejima.
Meadow Bunting ◇ *Emberiza cioides* Frequent sightings on Honshu and on Miyakejima
Chestnut-eared Bunting ◇ *Emberiza fucata* Great looks at several smart songsters near Karuizawa.
Yellow Bunting ◇ *Emberiza sulphurata* Several smart examples seen in the forests of Karuizawa.
Black-faced Bunting ◇ *Emberiza spodocephala* A couple of singles seen near Karuizawa.
Japanese Reed Bunting ◇ *Emberiza yessoensis* Two males and a female at Omigawa, seen carrying food to a nest.



Yellow Bunting

MAMMALS

Amami Rabbit *Pentalagus furnessi* A remarkable 20+ seen on our Amami nightdrive! See note.
Japanese Squirrel *Sciurus lis* A couple seen, at Karuizawa and Mt Fuji.
Ryukyu Flying Fox *Pteropus dasymallus* Singles seen on Amami and Okinawa.
Eurasian Wild Boar *Sus scrofa* A glimpse of one at Karuizawa.
Japanese Serow *Capricornis crispus* A prolonged look at one of these curious animals at Karuizawa.

REPTILES and AMPHIBIANS

Sword-tailed Newt *Cynops ensicauda* Seen on the back roads near Ada.

Anderson's Crocodile Newt *Enchinotriton anderson* Scores seen in puddles at Yuwandake on Amami. Endangered.

Princess Habu or Hime Habu *Ovophis okinavensis* (LO) One encountered late at night on Okinawa! Venomous!

Snake sp. One seen near Ada still defies identification.

Green Sea Turtle *Chelonia mydas* Plenty in the sea off Miyakejima, coitus observed.



Oriental Reed Warbler



Japanese Serow



Fuji-san from the Izu ferry

NOTES TO THE SYSTEMATIC LIST

Okinawa Rail ◇ *Gallirallus okinawae*

An extraordinary bird, it seems hard to comprehend that its existence was not confirmed until 1978! On our first morning at least ten were seen, on our second morning we recorded 13.

Lesser Sand Plover (Mongolian S P) *Charadrius mongolus*

Several of the subspecies *mongolus* seen, plus one *atrifrons* on Ohama beach on Ishigakijima..

Amami Woodcock ◇ *Scolopax mira*

A big highlight on this tour and one that requires a lot of night driving to find it. Our efforts were duly rewarded with excellent looks at a bird stood in the middle of the road. Listed as Vulnerable by BirdLife International, the world population is estimated at between 2,500 and 9,999. Key threats seem to be habitat loss and, perhaps more worryingly, predation from introduced predators, most notably the Javan Mongoose that was introduced for snake control! It does seem though that the threat is taken seriously and numbers are increasing following a campaign of Mongoose eradication.

Japanese Scops Owl ◇ *Otus semitorques*

Great views on Okinawa. . The Okinawa race *pryeri* differs slightly from the mainland form in having unfeathered tarsi, and red eyes, and is sometimes proposed as split from the mainland *semitorques*.

Ryukyu Scops Owl ◇ *Otus elegans*

We were most fortunate to find two in the daytime on Ishigakijima. Apparently the latest and ongoing DNA work indicates that there are genetic differences between the northern population, which includes Okinawa and Amami, and the southern group that includes Ishigakijima, and also Lanyu Island in Taiwan.

Northern Boobook ◇ *Ninox japonica*

Of the birds that we saw, on Miyakejima they should be migrant *japonica*, on Ishigaki they are the resident race *totogo* that also occurs on Taiwan.

Ruddy Kingfisher ◇ *Halcyon coromanda*

On the islands they would be of the supposedly resident *bangsi* race.

Large-billed Crow *Corvus japonensis*

On Ishigaki the super abundant Crows are of the very distinctive *osai* race of Large-billed Crow, being smaller, slimmer billed and with a different call. The taxonomy of the Large-billed Crow complex clearly has more work to be done on it!

Brown-eared Bulbul ◇ *Hypsipetes amaurotis* Several different races seen, such as *stejnegeri* on Ishigaki, *pryeri* on Okinawa, *ogawae* on Amami and *matchiae* on Miyakejima.

Amami Rabbit *Pentalagus furnessi*

A good number of these seen on our night drive on Amami, 20+ far exceeding the count of previous visits. A fascinating species, with shorter ears and legs quite unlike 'conventional' rabbits and hares. Endemic to just two islands; Amami Oshima and Toku-no-Shima. A relict of a lineage of Asian rabbits that have died-out elsewhere.



Amami Rabbit



Owston's Woodpecker nestling



Owston's Woodpecker



Blue Glassy Tiger



Common Peacock



Dragonfly sp., Ishigakijima



Pine Hawk Moth, Karuizawa



Ural Owl



Woodland Peony



Sundown over Asamayama