

JAPAN SPECIALITIES TOUR REPORT 2023

22 May - 7 June 2023

by Dave Farrow

A welcome return for this tour, it being four years since our last visit at this season. We enjoyed a wonderful journey around the islands despite meeting Typhoon Marwa head-on in Okinawa, which rudely cancelled our visit to Ishigakijima and Iriomote. We were able to find all the endemics and expected specialities on our route, plus we had some fantastic seabird encounters courtesy of the upset weather. We found Japanese Reed Bunting and Marsh Grassbird close to Narita, Yellow Bunting, Japanese Thrush, Japanese Leaf Warbler and Grey Bunting in the mountains of Karuizawa, Japanese Accentor on the slopes of Mt. Fuji, and all the Izu specialities on Miyakejima. On the Ryukyu Islands we found Amami Woodcock, Amami Thrush, Ryukyu Robin and Lidth's Jay, and on Okina-wa found plenty of Okinawa Rails, Owston's Woodpeckers, Okinawa Robins and a Pryer's Scops Owl. On Hokkai-do we found Red-faced Cormorant, Spectacled Guillemot, Japanese Robin, Sakhalin and Middendorf's Grasshopper Warblers, Sakhalin Leaf Warbler, Siberian Long-tailed Rosefinch, and of course the marvellous Blakiston's Fish Owl that spent thirty minutes entertaining us.

We began close to Narita just outside Tokyo where in fine weather we found numerous Marsh Grassbirds song-fighting over the reedbeds, and Japanese Reed Buntings singing from tall stems. We also found Eastern Marsh Harrier, noisy Oriental Reed Warblers, Japanese Bush Warblers singing from the wires, our first Meadow Buntings, plus Eastern Buzzards and Black-eared Kites, while a Eurasian Bittern boomed distantly. In another area we found Green Pheasants walking boldly among the fields, while along a reed-fringed lake numerous vocal Yellow Bitterns emerged in the late afternoon and began 'roding' up and down.

A day of heavy rain followed, as we drove up into the mountains of central Honshu. We made a stop along the Chikuma river (Japan's longest) where we found a fine Long-billed Plover, plus Japanese, 'Black-backed' (White) and Grey Wagtails all lined up together, plus 'Oriental' Crows. Some colourful Mandarin Duck were resting on the shingle islands, and a late Smew was still present. Up in the woodlands around our hotel at Karuizawa, our birding began slowly in the poor weather but we found Narcissus and Asian Brown Flycatchers, our first Brown-eared Bulbuls, a dapper Japanese Thrush, Warbling (formerly Japanese) White-eyes, Japanese Pygmy Woodpeckers, and Varied Tit with newly fledged young. Fine weather followed, and we found sweet singing Yellow Buntings, yelping Japanese Green Woodpeckers circled us, Eastern Crowned Warblers sang and Ashy Minivets trilled from the treetops. Blue-and-White Flycatchers shone in the sun, Siberian Blue Robin sang boldly from an exposed perch, and an Asian Stubtail lurked in the undergrowth. We shifted our focus to higher elevations where in the conifer forest we found Spotted Nutcracker and Red-flanked Bluetails, and eventually located a lively Japanese Leaf Warbler, and a Brown-headed Thrush feeding on the short grass. A Grey Bunting sang softly and emerged from the undergrowth to give us a good look, unlike a Rufous Hawk Cuckoo that didn't

oblige. A final stop in an area of cultivation produced some smart Chestnut-eared Buntings, our first Masked Bunting, Bull-headed Shrikes, Black-browed Reed Warblers, 'Japanese' Skylarks and Amur Stonechats, plus White-cheeked Starlings and Azure-winged Magpies. A last morning sortie added White-bellied Green Pigeon and Japanese Grosbeaks, Lesser and Common Cuckoos, Hawfinch, Brown Dipper, and a Japanese Serow trotting across a forest slope. Onwards to Mt. Fuji, where up in the stunted treeline forest we found a splendid pair of demure Japanese Accentors. Also up here were Spotted Nutcrackers, Red-flanked Bluetails drinking at a pool, Goldcrests and Coal Tits. An exploration of a gated estate near the foot of the mountain produced some smart Chestnut-cheeked Starlings, and more Japanese Green Wood-peckers. Further birding around the mountain was rather muted in hot and sunny conditions, with Red-billed Lei-othrix, Blue-and-White and the ever-present Narcissus Flycatchers, another Japanese Accentor, some vocal Japanese Grosbeaks, and the lead vehicle had the incredible luck to see a male Copper Pheasant dash across the road in a blur, only to disappear into the thick forest. From here it was a busy drive into Tokyo, where late in the evening we boarded the ferry to our next stop, the island of Miyakejima.

Waking at dawn to go ashore, we began our birding in an area of scrub and grass where Styan's Grasshopper Warbler sang their stuttering songs from exposed perches, while Streaked Shearwaters could be seen swarming off-shore in large numbers. Around the crater lake where the best forest remains, we quickly found Izu Robin hopping around with their young, Izu Thrushes calling and singing in good number from the large trees, plus numerous noisy Ijima's Leaf Warblers. Owston's Tits were feeding young, and a Northern Boobook put in an appearance much to the consternation of the local Brown-eared Bulbuls. This is a good place to find Japanese Woodpigeon, and they entertained us with their comical calls although getting views was a little more challenging as they lurked in the canopy. Around the lakeshore lurked Black-crowned Night Herons and Intermediate Egrets. Having found all the specialities and endemics, we went on a circumnavigation of the island, finding Pacific Reef Heron, Lesser Sand Plover, a migrant Eastern Cattle Egret, Lesser Cuckoos, some superb Pacific Swifts and several fine Green Turtles. A second morning was spent revisiting the special birds of the island, and along the coast we saw Japanese Cormorants and a Grey-tailed Tattler on the rocks. Scanning through the Streaked Shearwaters we saw Bulwer's Petrel and a Black-footed Albatross, a taste of what was to come! Back aboard the returning ferry to Tokyo, we could not have expected the seabird fiesta we were about to witness. A Bonin Petrel flew past to our great excitement, followed by another, and then another... – we recorded a minimum of 130 of this striking Pterodroma in the hours that followed, with many continuing right up into Tokyo Bay along with 55+ Tristram's Storm Petrels, and a single Matsudaira's Storm Petrel that was identified retrospectively from photos. Also, we saw a single Flesh-footed Shearwater, 14 Black-footed Albatross, two Long-tailed Skuas, a few Bulwer's Petrels and a pod of Short-finned Pilot Whale. At the end of this remarkable voyage, we arrived in Tokyo for the night, before flying down to Amami Oshima the following day. Checking the weather forecast it became evident that we were about to run into trouble! The most powerful tropical storm on the planet so far this year, Typhoon Marwa, was sitting just south of Ishigakijima and moving slowly northwards. As we were due to visit there in a couple of days, it was looking increasingly likely we would not be able to do so! Anyway, on arriving on subtropical Amami Oshima, we hastened to a patch of hill forest, hoping to beat the arrival of the storm. We soon found an obliging Ryukyu Robin, his bright plumage merging with the dark foliage as he sang to us beside a forest path, plus the endemic Owston's Woodpecker, and glimpsed some Lidth's Jays. After a quick dinner we headed out in the forest once more, driving narrow forest roads in rain and cloud that hung low over the hills. We quickly found Amami Black

Rabbit, many Amami Spiny Rat, Ryukyu Islands Pit Viper, and the famously deadly Habu curled up on the road. Ryukyu Scops Owls 'booboo'ed from the roadside trees, and a very wet Lidth's Jay was found roosting on a wire. Just as we had almost given up on finding Amami Woodcock, we found one stood in the middle of the road! He remained for some minutes, repeatedly lifting off and coming back down, unwilling to be displaced from the wet road.

The following morning, we walked forest tracks in the rain, where we saw a lovely Ryukyu Flycatcher, Ryukyu Minivet and Ryukyu Green Pigeons, numerous Warbling White-eyes, while an Amami Thrush sang from a hidden perch. A Habu curled up on the track provided a nasty surprise for the leader, I only noticed it as it reared to strike!

In the afternoon we explored further and had some flight views of vocal Amami Thrushes, as the weather became more turbulent. Another night drive was successful in getting some superb views of Amami Woodcock and Ryukyu Scops Owls, and a Ruddy Kingfisher was found at roost. A final outing before breakfast produced more views of an Amami Thrush as he circled us singing strongly, and a beach at low tide had Marsh Sandpipers and a smart Sharp-tailed Sandpiper. We headed for the airport, fearful of getting stranded here, yet our flight to Okinawa was still on schedule. Our onward flights to Ishigaki had been cancelled as had most flights in the region, plus all ferries around Ishigaki and Iriomote had been cancelled for the entire week. So, we could get to Okinawa, and as our tentative planning had correctly assumed we would need to spend four nights there while we sat out the storm. Our flight to Okinawa was on a rather small turboprop, and the first leg was to the small island of Yoron, before continuing on to Okinawa. At Yoron we were told that it was possible that the aircraft may not be able to land at Naha, which was exactly the scenario I feared the most – being stuck for four days on a tiny island with no forest, and no chance to reach Okinawa which sat just 22km to our south! So, off we went, a short turbulent flight, however the tight gripping of the armrests clearly helped, as did the skill of the pilot who brought us down at Naha with a rather bumpy landing. Hurrah! So, into new vehicles, and off we went. A brief stop at a pond near the airport produced several Black-faced and a Eurasian Spoonbill, plus Pied Avocet, all getting blown around in the ever-increasing wind gusts. We headed for our hotel, in the forests of Yambaru National Park at the northern end of the island. It was warm and dry and somewhat sheltered here, so we made a night drive after dinner finding our first Okinawa Rails roosting a tree, a pryeri Japanese Scops Owl sat on a wire, along with some very vocal Ryukyu Scops Owls. It was a relief to find these birds, as we didn't know how what tomorrow would bring! The next morning was dark and wet and windy, and a foray along the roads wasn't too successful. We headed to the nearest convenience store to stock up on supplies, dodging fallen trees and debris along the way. We ventured out again in the afternoon, and peering out to sea we could see the full force of the storm. A few blips started appearing in the murk, with a Tris-tram's Storm Petrel in the surf, an immature Sooty Tern that joined Common, Whiskered and White-winged Terns getting blown into the harbour, a Grey-tailed Tattler sat unperturbed and a flock of Red-necked Phalaropes bobbed around the breakwaters. We retreated to our hotel for a stormy night, and by morning the eye of the storm had passed although the wind and rain had not. We headed around the coast looking for windblown waifs, finding Gull-billed, Roseate and Black-naped Terns, saw Light-vented Bulbul around some paddyfields, and by the afternoon the Okinawa Rails and Okinawa Robins were beginning to venture out in sheltered corners and onto the wet roadsides. The forecast was good, and the next day was fine, sunny and calm. The birds came pouring out to greet us, and we found seven Okinawa Woodpeckers before breakfast! Okinawa Rails sauntered casually along the verges, although it's a worrying feature that traffic is busy even in this area, and the drivers clearly do not slow down for any-thing! We explored the forest lanes of the interior, managing to get through despite a large amount of typhoon de-bris lying on the ground. We had a splendid encounter

with a couple of Japanese Paradise Flycatchers, and several Okinawa Robins showed very well. Back at the harbour we found a Kentish Plover and a stray Terek Sandpiper stood on a breakwater.

The next day it was time to leave our solid refuge, wave goodbye to the jaywalking Okinawa Rails and head back to Naha airport. We flew via Tokyo up to Kushiro in Hokkaido, to a rather different world, where the dinner served at the hotel was particularly delicious and well received! The sun rises early here, so before long we were out in some nearby forest where we found numerous Sakhalin Leaf Warblers and a furtive Japanese Robin, Japanese and Brown-headed Thrushes, Oriental Cuckoo and the abundant and ever-vocal Eastern Crowned Warblers. Near our hotel we found Russet Sparrows, Siberian Long-tailed Rosefinch and Siberian Rubythroat, before we pressed on across the verdant landscape to the east coast, finding Red-crowned Cranes at the roadsides as we did so. A brief stop produced many Slaty-backed and Black-tailed Gulls, Harlequin Ducks, Black Scoter and Slavonian Grebe, and then we pressed on to the town of Rausu on the Shiretoko peninsula. Once we had enjoyed another fine meal, we headed down to the minshuku on the stream, where we would sit and wait for Blakiston's Fish Owl. Looking at the records from previous nights it seemed that we were in for a long wait, but at 2100hrs in flew the Owl, and sat in the stream in front of us. It took some fish from the pond, and then moved into the stream itself where it caught something fresher. Brilliant!

A fine and calm morning along the coast meant the Dall's Porpoises were easy to spot, we saw our only Stejneger's Scoter, and Short-tailed Shearwaters sat around in their hundreds just offshore. We drove up to the Shiretoko pass, a rather tundra-like place at 740m where Olive-backed Pipits sang and a Pine Grosbeak flew by, then in the lower forest we found Grey Bunting, while Japanese Robins and Siberian Blue Robins sang from hidden perches in the thick forest. Next, we had a long drive across to the south coast at Kiritappu, pausing on the way for a noisy Sakhalin Grasshopper Warbler that lurked under the Giant Butterbur leaves. We finished the day among some idyllic marshland meadows, with Middendorf's Grasshopper Warbler and Lanceolated Warblers singing from low herb-age, Latham's Snipe emitting their strange calls in whooshing song flights, plus we found Siberian Rubythroats, Siberian Long-tailed Rosefinches, numerous Amur Stonechats and loafing White-tailed Eagles.

Our final night was spent in comfort in Nemuro, and here the weather turned once more with dense fog greeting us in the early morning. We made our way to a small wooded patch by a lake where the cat-like calls of the Black-tailed Gulls drifted from unseen birds, and we took a small trail to where we found a Sakhalin Grasshopper Warbler that was typically furtive. A splendid Japanese Robin showed well as did a vocal Brown-headed Thrush, and along the roadsides we found another Middendorf's Grasshopper Warbler and more Siberian Rubythroats, while Latham's Snipe kept up their banshee chorus like ghosts in the fog. Making our way to the cape at Nosappu Misaki it was clear we weren't going to see much, as visibility was barely 20m. As luck would have it, heavy rain and thunder-storms started which cleared the fog, and we were able to scan the sea from the seawatching hide. Numerous Rhinoceros Auklets passed by, plus a few Spectacled Guillemot, plus we had brief views of a Northern Minke Whale and Killer Whale. We scooted from here to Ochiishi where we were taking a 'nature cruise' offshore in a dedicated fishing boat, the rain stopped and the sky cleared and we set out onto the ocean. There were many Rhinoceros Auklets, and we had close views of Spectacled Guillemot, Pacific Diver, and a surprise Laysan Albatross that made a rapid pass. Around the cliffs of an offshore island were many Sea Otters hanging about like floating teddy bears, and a single Red-faced Cormorant was seen among the more numerous Japanese and Pelagic Cormorants. We headed back to port, satisfied with a great day's birding to round off this excellent tour, and hurried back to Kushiro

airport for our flight back to Tokyo.

It had been an eventful and successful tour around these wonderful islands, a journey that always leaves me wanting more. I shall look forward to returning again in the future!

SYSTEMATIC LIST OF SPECIES RECORDED DURING THE TOUR

BIRDS

Mandarin Duck ♦ *Aix galericulata* Some nice males seen on the Chikuma river, also a female with 7 chicks at Karuizawa.

Northern Shoveler *Spatula clypeata*

Eastern Spot-billed Duck *Anas zonorhyncha*

Mallard *Anas platyrhynchos*

Tufted Duck *Aythya fuligula*

Greater Scaup *Aythya marila*

Harlequin Duck ♦ *Histrionicus histrionicus* Seen well around the Hokkaido coast.

Stejneger's Scoter ♦ *Melanitta stejnegeri* A single seen off Rausu.

Black Scoter ♦ *Melanitta americana*

Smew *Mergellus albellus* A lingering female at Lake Toden.

Common Merganser (Goosander) *Mergus merganser*

Red-breasted Merganser *Mergus serrator*

Copper Pheasant ♦ *Syrnaticus soemmerringii* A male that shot across the road on Mt.Fuji was unprecedented!

Green Pheasant ♦ *Phasianus versicolor* Numerous encounters on Honshu, also on the airfield on Yoron!

Chinese Bamboo Partridge (introduced) *Bambusicola thoracicus* Glimpsed as they flew across the track at Tairo-ike.

Pacific Swift *Apus pacificus*

House Swift *Apus nipalensis*

Rufous Hawk-Cuckoo ◊ (Northern H C) *Hierococcyx hyperythrus* A flight view for some of a vocal bird near Karuizawa.

Lesser Cuckoo ◊ *Cuculus poliocephalus* Very common on Miyakejima, also seen at Karuizawa and Mt. Fuji.

Oriental Cuckoo ◊ *Cuculus optatus*

Common Cuckoo (Eurasian C) *Cuculus canorus*

Rock Dove (introduced) *Columba livia*

Japanese Wood Pigeon ◊ *Columba janthina* Many by voice on Miyakejima, not easy to get a prolonged look at.

Oriental Turtle Dove *Streptopelia orientalis*

White-bellied Green Pigeon ◊ (Japanese G P) *Treron sieboldii* Good views at Karuizawa and Mt. Fuji.

Ryukyu Green Pigeon ◊ *Treron permagnus* Fairly obliging on Amami, also seen on Okinawa.

Okinawa Rail ◊ *Hypotaenidia okinawae* Once the weather had improved, we saw plenty along the roadsides, also at roost on our first night.

Common Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus*

Eurasian Coot *Fulica atra*

Ruddy-breasted Crake *Zapornia fusca* heard-only, at Omigawa.

Red-crowned Crane ◊ *Grus japonensis* Some nice views on Hokkaido, including a pair with a chick.

Little Grebe *Tachybaptus ruficollis*

Great Crested Grebe *Podiceps cristatus*

Horned Grebe (Slavonian G) *Podiceps auritus* A nice breeding plumage bird at Shibetsu, a write-in.

Black-winged Stilt *Himantopus himantopus*

Pied Avocet *Recurvirostra avosetta* One seen on Triangle Pond at Naha.

Long-billed Plover ◊ *Charadrius placidus* One showed well in typical habitat on the Chikuma river.

Little Ringed Plover *Charadrius dubius*

Kentish Plover *Charadrius alexandrinus*

Lesser Sand Plover (Mongolian S P) *Charadrius [mongolus] mongolus* One on Miyakejima.

Sharp-tailed Sandpiper *Calidris acuminata* A smart example on Ose beach on Amami.

Eurasian Woodcock *Scolopax rusticola* A roding bird outside our hotel at Rausu.

Amami Woodcock ♦ *Scolopax mira* Two seen very well on night drives, also one seen flying along a road in daytime.

Latham's Snipe ♦ (Japanese S) *Gallinago hardwickii* A favourite from Hokkaido, with splendid calls and display flights.

Terek Sandpiper *Xenus cinereus*

Red-necked Phalarope *Phalaropus lobatus* Four seen on our 'typhoon seawatch' at Ada.

Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos*

Grey-tailed Tattler ♦ *Tringa brevipes* Singles seen on Miyakejima and Okinawa.

Common Redshank *Tringa totanus*

Marsh Sandpiper *Tringa stagnatilis* A handful seen on Ose beach on Amami.

Black-legged Kittiwake *Rissa tridactyla* A few seen from Nosappu Misaki.

Black-tailed Gull ♦ *Larus crassirostris* A lovely Gull with an attractive call.

Slaty-backed Gull ♦ *Larus schistisagus* Very numerous on Hokkaido, with many bleached immature birds providing confusion.

Gull-billed Tern *Gelochelidon nilotica* A single on the breakwater at Ada.

Little Tern (Eastern L T) *Sternula [albifrons] sinensis*

Sooty Tern *Onychoprion fuscatus* An all-dark immature seen on our 'typhoon seawatch' at Ada.

Roseate Tern *Sterna dougallii* Some nice examples around the Okinawa coast.

Black-naped Tern *Sterna sumatrana* Some nice examples around the Okinawa coast.

Common Tern (Eastern C T) *Sterna [hirundo] longipennis*

Whiskered Tern *Chlidonias hybrida* Quite a few storm-blown birds on Okinawa.

White-winged Tern (W-w Black T) *Chlidonias leucopterus* Like the above, on Okinawa.

Long-tailed Jaeger (L-t Skua) *Stercorarius longicaudus* Two seen from the Izu ferry, both adults.

Spectacled Guillemot ♦ *Cephus carbo* Plenty seen on our last day from our Ochiishi boat.

Rhinoceros Auklet ♦ *Cerorhinca monocerata* Many seen around the coasts of Hokkaido.

Pacific Loon ♦ *Gavia pacifica* Several flying birds seen off Hokkaido, one seen well on the water from our Ochiishi boat.

Laysan Albatross ♦ *Phoebastria immutabilis* A surprise find on our Ochiishi nature cruise, one made a rapid pass.

Black-footed Albatross ♦ *Phoebastria nigripes* One from Miyakejima, another 14 seen from the ferry.

Matsudaira's Storm Petrel ♦ *Hydrobates matsudairae* One identified from photos taken on the Izu ferry.

Tristram's Storm Petrel ♦ *Hydrobates tristrami* A remarkable concentration, with at least 55 seen between Miyakejima and Tokyo, plus another at Ada.

Bonin Petrel ♦ *Pterodroma hypoleuca* A stunning bird and a remarkable concentration between Miyakejima and Tokyo, with at least 130 counted.

Streaked Shearwater ♦ *Calonectris leucomelas*

Short-tailed Shearwater ♦ *Ardenna tenuirostris* A few from the Izu ferry, large numbers off Rausu.

Flesh-footed Shearwater ♦ *Ardenna carneipes* A single bird seen as we approached Tokyo Bay.

Bulwer's Petrel ♦ *Bulweria bulwerii* One seen from shore on Miyakejima, a handful of others seen from the ferry.

Red-faced Cormorant ♦ *Urile urile* A single seen from our Ochiishi boat.

Pelagic Cormorant ♦ *Urile pelagicus*

Japanese Cormorant ♦ *Phalacrocorax capillatus*

Great Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo*

Eurasian Spoonbill *Platalea leucorodia* One on the Triangle pond at Naha.

Black-faced Spoonbill ♦ *Platalea minor* A nice collection of six wind-blown birds on the Triangle pond at Naha.

Eurasian Bittern *Botaurus stellaris* heard-only.

Yellow Bittern *Ixobrychus sinensis* Nice encounters with several birds at Inbanuma.

Black-crowned Night Heron *Nycticorax nycticorax*

Eastern Cattle Egret *Bubulcus coromandus*

Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea*

Great Egret (Eastern G E) *Ardea [alba] modesta*

Intermediate Egret *Ardea intermedia*

Little Egret *Egretta garzetta*

Pacific Reef Heron *Egretta sacra*

Osprey *Pandion haliaetus* A single on Miyakejima.

Japanese Sparrowhawk ◇ *Accipiter gularis* A single seen while driving on Okinawa.

Eastern Marsh Harrier *Circus spilonotus* A couple of females at Omigawa.

Black Kite (Black-eared K) *Milvus [migrans] lineatus*

White-tailed Eagle *Haliaeetus albicilla*

Eastern Buzzard ◇ (Japanese B) *Buteo [japonicus] japonicus*

Northern Boobook ◇ *Ninox japonica* One seen in daytime at Tairo-ike.

Ryukyu Scops Owl ◇ *Otus elegans* Several seen on Amami, one or two on Okinawa.

Japanese Scops Owl ◇ (Pryer's S O) *Otus [semitorques] pryeri* Endemic. Seen well close to our hotel in Ada.

Blakiston's Fish Owl ◇ *Bubo blakistoni* Great views of one coming to fish in the stream at Washino Yado.

Ruddy Kingfisher ◇ *Halcyon coromanda* A couple of flight views on Amami and Okinawa, one spotlighted on an Amami night drive.

Common Kingfisher *Alcedo atthis*

Japanese Pygmy Woodpecker ◇ *Yungipicus kizuki*

Great Spotted Woodpecker *Dendrocopos major*

Okinawa Woodpecker ◇ (Pryer's W) *Dendrocopos noguchii* Endemic. On day three on Okinawa, they came out in force, with eleven noted.

White-backed Woodpecker ◇ (Owston's W) *Dendrocopos [leucotos] owstoni* Endemic. Seen well on our first afternoon on Amami.

Black Woodpecker *Dryocopus martius* heard-only, at Akan on Hokkaido.

Japanese Green Woodpecker ◇ *Picus awokera* Endemic. Nice views eventually at Karuizawa and Mt. Fuji.

Common Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus*

Ashy Minivet ◇ *Pericrocotus divaricatus* Seen well at Karuizawa.

Ryukyu Minivet ◇ *Pericrocotus tegimae* Endemic. Some views on Amami and Okinawa.

Bull-headed Shrike ◇ *Lanius bucephalus*

Japanese Paradise Flycatcher ◇ *Terpsiphone atrocaudata* Some great sightings of full tailed, blue faced males on Okinawa.

Eurasian Jay *Garrulus glandarius*

Lidth's Jay ◇ (Ryukyu J) *Garrulus lidthi* Endemic. Some brief views in the forest, a good look at a spotlight roosting bird.

Azure-winged Magpie ◇ (Asian A-w M) *Cyanopica cyanus*

Spotted Nutcracker *Nucifraga caryocatactes*

Carrion Crow ◇ (Oriental C) *Corvus [corone] orientalis*

Large-billed Crow *Corvus macrorhynchos*

Coal Tit *Periparus ater*

Varied Tit ◇ (Japanese V T) *Sittiparus varius*

Owston's Tit ◇ (Izu T) *Sittiparus owstoni* Endemic. A few seen on Miyakejima.

Marsh Tit *Poecile palustris* Seen on Hokkaido.

Willow Tit *Poecile montanus* Seen on Honshu.

Japanese Tit (Eastern Great T) *Parus minor*

Eurasian Skylark ◇ (Japanese S) *Alauda [arvensis] japonica* I still don't believe this is just Eurasian!

Brown-eared Bulbul ◇ *Hypsipetes amaurotis*

Light-vented Bulbul ◇ (Chinese B) *Pycnonotus sinensis*

Sand Martin *Riparia riparia*

Pacific Swallow *Hirundo tahitica* Present on Amami and Okinawa.

Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica*

Asian House Martin *Delichon dasypus*

Japanese Bush Warbler ◇ *Horornis diphone* Abundant in some places but still not often seen.

Asian Stubtail ◇ *Urosphena squameiceps* Some glimpses at Karuizawa.

Long-tailed Tit *Aegithalos caudatus*

Eastern Crowned Warbler ◇ *Phylloscopus coronatus* Wonderfully common by ear on Hokkaido, seen at Karuizawa, Mt. Fuji and Kushiro.

Ijima's Leaf Warbler ◇ *Phylloscopus ijimae* Common in the forest on Miyakejima.

Sakhalin Leaf Warbler ◊ *Phylloscopus borealoides* Despite numerous birds at Akan, they didn't want to show much!

Japanese Leaf Warbler ◊ *Phylloscopus xanthodryas* Nice looks at a songster near Karuizawa, also some on Mt.Fuji.

Oriental Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus orientalis*

Black-browed Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus bistrigiceps*

Sakhalin Grasshopper Warbler ◊ *Helopsaltes amnicola* Noisy but oh so skulking, we managed glimpses of two on Hokkaido. Split from **Gray's Grasshopper Warbler** *H. fasciolatus*.

Marsh Grassbird ◊ (**Japanese Swamp Warbler**) *Helopsaltes pryeri* Numerous in the reedbeds at Omigawa, even though we didn't manage close views.

Middendorff's Grasshopper Warbler ◊ *Helopsaltes ochotensis* Some lovely views eventually on Hokkaido.

Styan's Grasshopper Warbler ◊ *Helopsaltes pleskei* Curiously similar to the above species, we saw these very well on Miyakejima.

Lanceolated Warbler ◊ *Locustella lanceolata* Nice to see these sat up and singing at Kiritappu marsh.

Zitting Cisticola *Cisticola juncidis*

Warbling White-eye ◊ *Zosterops japonicus*

Red-billed Leiothrix (introduced) *Leiothrix lutea*

Chinese Hwamei (introduced) *Garrulax canorus* heard-only.

Goldcrest *Regulus regulus*

Eurasian Wren *Troglodytes troglodytes*

Eurasian Nuthatch *Sitta europaea*

Eurasian Treecreeper *Certhia familiaris*

White-cheeked Starling ◊ *Spodiopsar cineraceus*

Chestnut-cheeked Starling ◊ *Agropsar philippensis* A very attractive bird, we saw several around Mt.Fuji.

Amami Thrush ◊ *Zoothera major* Endemic. At least four seen, the best being one on our last morning on Amami, even if it were only repeated flight views.

Japanese Thrush ◊ *Turdus cardis* Lovely males in the garden of our Karuizawa hotel, also seen on Hokkaido.

Brown-headed Thrush ◊ *Turdus chrysolaus* Our first was near Karuizawa, then found fairly commonly by voice on Hokkaido, with one showing well on our last morning near Nemuro.

Izu Thrush ◊ *Turdus celaenops* Endemic. Definitely more around on Miyakejima than on previous visits, we had multiple encounters and good looks.

Asian Brown Flycatcher *Muscicapa dauurica*

Blue-and-white Flycatcher ◊ *Cyanoptila cyanomelana*

Siberian Blue Robin *Larvivora cyane*

Ryukyu Robin ◊ *Larvivora komadori* Endemic Great views of a male on our first afternoon on Amami, elusive after that.

Okinawa Robin ◊ *Larvivora namiyei* Endemic Some great views around Ada, especially once the storm had passed!

Japanese Robin ◊ *Larvivora akahige* An elusive bird at Akan, good views of a songster on our last morning near Nemuro.

Izu Robin ◊ *Larvivora tanensis* Endemic. Split from the above, we found plenty in the dark forest around Tairo-ike.

Siberian Rubythroat *Calliope calliope* You can never see too many of these, we enjoyed several singing males on Hokkaido.

Red-flanked Bluetail *Tarsiger cyanurus*

Narcissus Flycatcher ◊ *Ficedula narcissina*

Ryukyu Flycatcher ◊ *Ficedula owstoni* Endemic. Just a single bird seen, a singing male on Amami.

Blue Rock Thrush (Eastern B R T) *Monticola [solitarius] philippensis*

Amur Stonechat ◊ (Stejneger's S) *Saxicola stejnegeri*

Brown Dipper *Cinclus pallasii*

Russet Sparrow *Passer cinnamomeus* Some smart examples seen on Hokkaido.

Eurasian Tree Sparrow *Passer montanus*

Japanese Accentor ◊ *Prunella rubida* A near endemic, we enjoyed three individuals on Mt Fuji.

Grey Wagtail *Motacilla cinerea*

White Wagtail ◊ (Black-backed W) *Motacilla [alba] lugens*

Japanese Wagtail ◊ *Motacilla grandis*

Olive-backed Pipit *Anthus hodgsoni*

Hawfinch *Coccothraustes coccothraustes* One at Karuizawa, one on the Shiretoko pass.

Japanese Grosbeak ◊ *Eophona personata*

Pine Grosbeak *Pinicola enucleator* non-leader. A flight view of a male on the Shiretoko pass.

Eurasian Bullfinch ◊ (Grey-bellied B) *Pyrrhula [pyrrhula] griseiventris* heard-only.

Siberian Long-tailed Rosefinch ◊ *Carpodacus sibiricus* Some gorgeous examples seen on Hokkaido.

Grey-capped Greenfinch ◊ (Oriental G) *Chloris sinica*

Eurasian Siskin *Spinus spinus* heard-only.

Meadow Bunting ◊ *Emberiza cioides*

Chestnut-eared Bunting ◊ *Emberiza fucata*

Yellow Bunting ◊ (Japanese Y B) *Emberiza sulphurata* A breeding endemic, we had some nice views at Karuizawa.

Masked Bunting ◊ *Emberiza personata* Split from Black-faced Bunting, a near-endemic, commonly seen on Hokkaido.

Grey Bunting ◊ *Emberiza variabilis* A near-endemic, we had great looks at a male near Karuizawa, and another showed near the Shiretoko pass,

Japanese Reed Bunting ◊ *Emberiza yessoensis* Several seen around Omigawa, singing from tall reeds, but never too close.

Common Reed Bunting *Emberiza schoeniclus*

MAMMALS

Red Fox *Vulpes vulpes* A few seen on the roads on Hokkaido

Common Seal *Phoca vitulina*

Sea Otter *Enhydra lutris* At least ten seen from our Ochiishi boat.

Japanese Badger *Meles anakuma* One at the roadside on Mt.Fuji.

Wild Boar *Sus scrofa* One on Okinawa.

Sika Deer *Cervus nippon*

Japanese Serow *Capricornis crispus* One at Karuizawa.

Common Minke Whale *Balaenoptera acutorostrata* One from Nosappu Misaki.

Short-finned Pilot Whale *Globicephala macrorhynchus* A pod seen from the Izu ferry.

Killer Whale *Orcinus orca* Fins seen on at least three occasions from Nosappu Misaki, but all in different directions!

Indo-Pacific Bottlenose Dolphin *Tursiops aduncus* Seen from the Izu ferry.

Dall's Porpoise *Phocoenoides dalli* Quite numerous on a glassy sea off Rausu.

Ryukyu Flying Fox *Pteropus dasymallus*

Amami Rabbit *Pentalagus furnessi* Great to see at least four of these on our night drive on Amami.

Japanese Squirrel *Sciurus lis*

Ryukyus Islands Tree Rat *Diplothrix legata* Seen on our night drive on Amami and also in the daytime.

Amami Spiny Rat *Tokudaia osimensis* Plenty seen on our night drive on Amami.

REPTILES & AMPHIBIANS

Green Turtle *Chelonia mydas*

Habu *Protobothrops flavoviridis*

Ryukyu Islands Pit Viper (Himehabu) *Ovophis okinavensis*

Otton's Frog *Babina subaspera*

Amami Tip-nosed Frog *Odarrana amamiensis*

Amami Sword-tailed Newt *Cynops ensicauda ensicauda*

Okinawa Sword-tailed Newt *Cynops ensicauda popei*

Okinawa Five-lined Skink *Plestiodon marginatus*