



## JAPAN SPECIALITIES TOUR REPORT 2025

22 May - 7 June 2025

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The Birdquest Japan Specialities tour this year was a splendid trip and a very successful one, covering more islands of the Japanese archipelago than on any previous tours in our search for their endemics and specialities. We visited Honshu, Miyakejima, Amami Oshima, had a brief transit on Yoron, Ishigakijima, Iriomote, Okinawa and Hokkaido. The birding was great, we enjoyed good weather for the most part, added several birds to the list and saw some great mammals. A notable addition to the Birdquest list was the unassuming Iriomote Tit, this being the first time we have reached the island of Iriomote. Other highlights were Japanese Yellow Bunting, Japanese Thrush and Japanese Accentor on Honshu, on Miyakejima we saw Izu Thrush, Izu Robin, Owston's Tit, Ijima's Leaf Warbler and Styan's Grasshopper Warbler. Our next stop was Amami Oshima where we had great looks at Amami Woodcock, found Amami Thrush on a nest, Lidth's Jays, Ryukyu Robins and Amami Woodpecker. On Ishigakijima we saw Ryukyu Serpent Eagle and Malayan Night Herons, and on Okinawa we saw the eponymous Rail, Robin, and Woodpecker, plus the local form of Japanese Scops Owl. On Hokkaido we found Latham's Snipe, Sakhalin Grasshopper and Leaf Warblers, Middendorf's Grasshopper Warbler, Japanese Robin and Grey Bunting. Mammals made a good showing with Japanese Raccoon Dog, Amami Black Rabbit, Sea Otter, Baird's Beaked Whales, Killer Whales and Brown Bear all recorded.

Our tour began in Narita where we assembled ready for the road ahead. On our first morning after a fairly short drive from our hotel we found ourselves alongside the Tonegawa river, lined with reed beds and scrubby grass. Before long we could hear the stuttering songs of Marsh Grassbirds, and were able to find a good number of them here. At times it seemed like there was one every 50m along the bank along which we walked, ascending in songflights in the fresh breeze, and showing nicely. Also here were many Zitting Cisticola, Oriental Reed Warblers, Eastern Marsh Harrier, plenty of Grey Herons and some breeding plumage Medium Egrets, and eventually we found the black-headed Japanese Reed (or Ochre-rumped) Buntings sat singing high on tall reeds. Also we saw Black-crowned Night Herons, White-

cheeked Starlings, Meadow Bunting, while a Eurasian Bittern boomed from the depths of the reedbed. We then began a long drive across the Kanto plain (via some tiresome diversions) to reach the Karuizawa area. We spent much of the afternoon at an area of reedy fields where numerous bold cock Green Pheasant strutted about, Chestnut-eared Buntings sang from prominent perches, plus some fine Black-browed Reed Warblers, Amur Stonechats, dapper Chestnut-cheeked Starlings, a family of Japanese Wagtails, and some Oriental Greenfinches. Our hotel was in a pleasant setting among the woods at Karuizawa, though with a delinquent Japanese Macaque hogging the bird feeder!

We set out to find the special birds of the area on a rather dim morning, starting with a vocal Eastern Crowned Warbler, a fine male Narcissus Flycatcher dazzling us with its colours, plus Siberian Blue Robin, Japanese Green Woodpecker, White-bellied Green Pigeon, Lesser Cuckoo, some treetop Japanese Grosbeaks, and an unseen male Copper Pheasant making a loud wing whirr from deep in the forest. In a different area we saw Blue-and-White Flycatcher, Japanese Pygmy Woodpecker and eventually a Yellow Bunting that showed well after a long search. In the afternoon we headed to higher elevations, up into the mountains to 2000m where despite rain we found a pair of Brown headed Thrush, Japanese Leaf Warbler, Grey-bellied Bullfinch, Willow and Coal Tits. A pair of Daurian Redstart were attending a nest in a small building, an unusual sight on this tour.

Further explorations of Karuizawa the next morning began with excellent views of a Japanese Thrush singing from the top of a conifer. We also found Japanese Green Woodpecker, Brown Dipper, Blue-and-White Flycatcher, and for a lucky few a female Copper Pheasant that sneaked away into the forest. Close to our hotel an Asian Stubtail sang from the undergrowth and eventually emerged into the open. En route to our next destination, at a stop by the Chikuma river we saw Japanese Wagtails, Goosander, ground-nesting Grey Herons and tree-nesting Great Cormorants, plus numerous Black-crowned Night Herons. Travelling through some impressive mountain scenery we reached our destination of Mount Fuji in the afternoon, and had a good couple of hours of birding high among the dwarf trees of the upper treeline. Our main quarry here, Japanese Accentor, appeared close by and showed very well, as did Red-flanked Bluetail males that sang from stunted conifer tops. A bright and chunky Japanese Leaf Warbler made an appearance, we saw Grey-bellied Bullfinch at a drinking pool, and Northern Nutcracker appeared in the car park.

We had another half day around this iconic mountain, and in the early morning we made our way up the eastern side finding song-fighting Olive-backed Pipits, Japanese Leaf Warblers with their rattling songs, Eurasian Jay of the pale-eyed japonicus race, Eurasian Treecreepers that sound very unlike European birds, and a Japanese Raccoon Dog posed briefly at the roadside. Later on we explored the south side of the mountain, finding smart Japanese Grosbeaks in the cherry trees, Eurasian Nuthatch, a surprise Ryukyu Minivet, and at our highest elevation of 2450m we found a quartet of Japanese Accentors singing among the stunted treeline vegetation. Dropping back down to the surrounding lowlands we explored a couple of temple groves where we searched unsuccessfully for Ural Owl, but the ancient Japanese Cedar goliaths made the visit memorable. Then it was time to head for Tokyo, where after dropping our vehicles we had the experience of taking a train from Shinagawa station in the middle of rush hour (er, tenth busiest in the world!), later boarding our overnight ferry out to the Izu Islands.

Arriving at dawn at Miyakejima, we made our way ashore in the rain, and after some breakfast at our hotel headed out to find the island's birds. Our first stop was in the scrubby coastal strip where we found Styan's Grasshopper Warblers singing atop the bushes, and Black Wood Pigeons sat bathing in the rain on open branches. Also we found our first Izu Thrushes and Pacific Swifts, while offshore tens of thousands of Streaked Shearwaters swarmed over the sea. In the remnant woods around a crater lake we saw Izu Robins, Ijima's Leaf Warblers, Izu Thrushes and Owston's Tit, and had secured all of the endemic birds before 8am! The rain perhaps helped, although activity dropped off as it got heavier. Exploring further we saw Lesser Cuckoo, and over the sea a Black-footed Albatross. In the afternoon we repeated our visits to the woods around Tairo Ike, where a collection of Great, Eastern Cattle and Little Egrets were joined by a Black-crowned Night Heron, and Northern Boobook was heard calling from the big trees. In the evening the hotel produced some world-class maguro and bonito sashimi, the likes of which are rarely encountered.

Next morning we headed out to see what more we could find on this pleasant island. On the exposed side of the island we met the storm hitting the rocky coast in spectacular fashion, and three Brown Booby flew past along with the legions of Streaked Shearwaters that were still streaming past. We checked for migrants around the grassy airstrip and found ten Oriental Pratincoles, a Pacific Golden Plover and more Eastern Cattle Egrets, and back in the woods we managed to improve on our views of key birds such as Izu Thrush and Izu Robin. After a final lunch here we then boarded the ferry back to Tokyo. Strong winds from the north-east were suboptimal conditions for producing unusual seabirds, but apart from seeing what seemed like most of the world's Streaked Shearwaters, we also saw Short-tailed Shearwaters, and closer to Tokyo Bay a few Black-footed Albatross began to appear, plus a single Laysan Albatross, plus two pods of

Short-finned Pilot Whales, and a trio of Baird's Beaked Whales that initially confused us, until the photos helped confirm their identity.

After a comfortable night in Tokyo we took a flight from Haneda down to the forest clad island of Amami Oshima in the Ryukyu chain. Picking up new cars and venturing out into a rainy afternoon, we started our island birding at a small forest park where we found Ryukyu Robin singing beautifully, some furtive Lidth's Jays, and a trio of dusky Amami Woodpeckers. Also we found bulky Ryukyu Green Pigeons sitting on wires, Varied Tit, and Pacific Reef Heron. A night drive is necessary to find the most exciting birds here, and later on we headed out along forest lanes in the drizzle to see what we could find. It wasn't long before we found an Amami Woodcock sat in the middle of the road, and before the night was out we had stunning views of six of these iconic birds. It turned out to be a busy night, with two Ruddy Kingfishers found at roost, showing the purple bloom on their plumage to good effect, six Lidth's Jays trying to get some sleep on wires over the road, and an Amami Thrush high on a wire. Many Ryukyu Scops Owls could be heard along the way, and mammals featured strongly with a gerbil-like Amami Spiny Rat, a Ryukyu Long-tailed Tree Rat walking the tightrope, and an Amami Black Rabbit lurking in the roadside vegetation. The next morning we walked a track in the damp forest, finding Ryukyu Flycatcher, Black Paradise Flycatcher, and an amazing nest of Amami Thrush made out of moss, with the parent sat incubating with its head and tail visible. In the afternoon we continued forest birding, enjoying better views of Black Paradise Flycatcher, more Lidth's Jays, Ryukyu Robin and a daytime calling Ryukyu Scops Owl that was eventually located sitting among the dense branches.

A day of mostly travelling followed, but not until we had spent a productive hour at a beach close to Amami airport where we found Black-faced Spoonbills, Grey-tailed Tattlers, Terek Sandpiper, Bar-tailed Godwit, Eurasian Curlew, Ruddy Turnstone, Little Tern, Osprey and Pacific Reef Herons of both colour forms. We flew from here via the tiny island of Yoron to Naha, Okinawa, then after a lengthy wait we continued onwards to Ishigakijima. As we drove from Ishigaki airport towards town we added two write-ins for the tour, Black-winged Kite and Common Myna, both recent colonists, plus many of the osai form of Large-billed Crow.

The next day we were off to terra nova, with the early ferry to Iriomote island. After a swift crossing we were ashore on this new destination, and after getting our rental cars we set off for a short drive to the start of the 'Cross Island Trail'. We walked through the dense jungle, and then after about an hour we heard what we were searching for, the thin song of the Iriomote Tit. Eventually we were rewarded with views of an adult and juvenile, they stayed mostly in the treetops offering plenty of ventral views, and after a while we all had decent looks at this unassuming fellow. We then realised we could return on an earlier ferry, so we headed back to the port, where we saw many Little Terns, Greater and Siberian Sand Plovers, and on our rapid ride back to Ishigaki we saw a Bulwer's Petrel and a few Black-naped Terns. Once ashore on Ishigaki we headed into the interior, and Otani spotted a Ryukyu Serpent Eagle perched by the roadside which caused some freestyle parking on a bend. Further on we saw Greater Crested and Whiskered Terns, many Eurasian Whimbrels and Pacific Reef Herons. Our time spent in the forests was less productive as the weather deteriorated, although a Ryukyu Scops Owl came to say hello at close range. Several Northern Boobooks could be heard but none would break cover.

An early session the next morning took us to a small patch of dense woodland where Northern Boobooks were flying up and down the lane chasing each other, although perched views were a little more fleeting. We had a flight view of a Malayan Night Heron as we disturbed it from its perch, while another three lurked in the dense thicket and did their best to avoid us. Another roosting Ryukyu Scops Owl showed well in the open. Further explorations across paddy fields produced Black-winged Stilts and Cinnamon Bitterns, and we found a very confiding immature Ryukyu Serpent Eagle hunting along the edge of the fields. Along a hot beach en route to the airport we saw two Chinese Egrets alongside Little and Pacific Reef Egrets for a handy comparison, and Black-naped and Roseate Terns that swarmed around rocky islands in the bay.

We flew onwards to Naha on Okinawa, and then drove to the north end of the island to our lodgings at Ada among the forests of Yambaru National Park. A night drive proved to be rather quiet apart from a Northern Boobook on a wire, but back at our hotel we found a confiding Ryukyu Scops Owl, and our first Okinawa Rail, with a pair roosting in a tree.

In the early morning we drove the lanes until we found Okinawa Rails walking on the roadsides, looking cautious about their jaywalking as big trucks whizzed past. We also saw our first Okinawa Robin in the half light, and an Okinawa Woodpecker showed well in some roadside pine trees. Further explorations took us in to the interior of the forested peninsula, and along jungle lanes we had some great views of more Okinawa Robins, Black Paradise Flycatcher and a showy Japanese Bush Warbler. For a change of scenery we checked some Iris fields where we saw Cinnamon Bittern, Light-vented Bulbuls and Zitting Cisticolas. Returning to the village of Ada we had great views of another Okinawa Rail along the roadside. Our second night drive was eventually successful, with a great close view of a fat Japanese Scops Owl, glaring at us with his red eyes.

Departing as the rain arrived, we headed back to Naha, flew to Haneda and then onwards to Kushiro in eastern Hokkaido. Arriving in the evening, it was a short hop to our hotel where we enjoyed perhaps the best dinner of the tour.

The sun rises very early here, being further north and east without any time zone change. The surroundings of our hotel among the woods provided our first birds, with a cheery Sakhalin Grasshopper Warbler that sang loudly from the lush vegetation, showing quite well as it shot around in the trees. Our first Latham's Snipe was displaying overhead, and along the roadside we found our first Red-crowned Cranes standing in the mist. In the forests we found Eastern Crowned Warblers, Brown-headed Thrush, Oriental Cuckoo, White-backed and Great Spotted Woodpeckers, Eurasian Woodcock, and a Black Woodpecker showed well on several occasions. Back at our hotel we had a good look at Sakhalin Leaf Warbler, before we began heading towards the coast. We explored a boardwalk along the margins of Kushiro marsh where we found Russet Sparrow, Eastern Marsh Harrier and our first White-tailed Eagle, plus Amur Stonechats and Masked Buntings. Pressing onwards, at the east coast we found a busy flock of Greater Scaup and Japanese Cormorants, plus Black Scoters, a couple of distant Stejneger's Scoter, and many Slaty-backed and Black-tailed Gulls. We visited a small grassland reserve where we found gorgeous pink Siberian Long-tailed Rosefinches, a skulking Middendorf's Grasshopper Warbler, and sweet sounding Black-browed Reed Warblers. We had an appointment with an early dinner at the fabled minshuku Washi No Yado at Rausu, and at dusk we settled into our viewing positions overlooking the stream outside, waiting for the Blakiston's Fish Owl to appear. As night fell slowly over the valley, we soon heard the deep booming call of the Owl, just before it swooped down to the stream to collect its supper. Soon after, a second bird came to do the same, and between us we were fortunate enough to see it visit at least three more times during the evening.

Another fine morning followed, and we scanned the sea from an elevated watchpoint looking across the straits to the Russians occupied islands. We saw two groups of Killer Whales out on the ocean plus a pod of Pacific White-sided Dolphin, thousands of Short-tailed Shearwaters, several Pacific Divers, and many Rhinoceros Auklets. After breakfast we headed up on to the Shiretoko Pass at 780m, here we had a glimpse of a Brown Bear as it walked through the pine scrub, plus some gorgeous Grey-bellied Bullfinches. Lower down we chased singing Grey Buntings, and had a great look at a Japanese Robin singing in a birch tree. We then drove across the island to Kiritappu marsh on the south coast, where alas we met with strong winds. This unfortunately kept the Warblers down, with Lanceolated Warblers only heard and Middendorf's Grasshopper Warblers playing hard to get, but we had good looks at Siberian Rubythroat and more Siberian Long-tailed Rosefinches. The wind did not bother numerous Latham's Snipe, they entertained us as they flew around in display flights or sat on posts making their strange squawking noises. Our last night of the tour was in Nemuro town, and the next morning we visited some nearby mixed habitat where we saw a pair of Red-crowned Cranes with a fluffy yellow long-legged chick, many Black-tailed Gulls washing in a lake, and Middendorf's Grasshopper Warblers that posed in the open. Latham's Snipe displayed overhead, Masked Buntings and our only Asian Red-rumped Swallows of the tour sat on the wires. After breakfast we heard that our Ochiishi boat trip was cancelled due to the strong winds, so we headed for Cape Nosappu. Sea fog was thick over the ocean, but a sleepy Sea Otter lounging on the surface close inshore was pleasing to all. Exploring the harbours along the coast produced many Japanese Cormorants and some Rhinoceros Auklets offshore, and two splendid Siberian Rubythroats sang from a bank covered in impressive Giant Butterbur. Then it was time to head for Kushiro airport, though with a little time to spare we explored the woods close by and were surprised to see a Lesser Spotted Woodpecker, a Japan lifer for the leader! And so our tour ended, and we flew back to Tokyo. A remarkable journey that visited eight different islands; Honshu, Miyakejima, Amami Oshima, Yoron (blink and you miss it!) Ishigakijima, Iriomote, Okinawa and Hokkaido. We did very well with almost all of our targets, enjoyed good weather for the most part, added several birds to the list, and saw some great mammals.

## **BIRDS OF THE TOUR**

**1st: Blakiston's Fish Owl**

**2nd: Okinawa Rail**

**3rd: Ryukyu Robin**

**4th: Amami Woodcock**

**5th: Red-crowned Crane**

## **SYSTEMATIC LIST OF SPECIES RECORDED DURING THE TOUR**

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).

The species names and taxonomy used in the bird list follow Gill, F., Donsker, D., & Rasmussen, P. (Eds). **2024 IOC World Bird List (v14.2)**.

## BIRDS

**Mandarin Duck** ◊ *Aix galericulata* Non-leader.

**Northern Shoveler** *Spatula clypeata* Seen at Omigawa.

**Eastern Spot-billed Duck (Chinese S-b D)** *Anas zonorhyncha*

**Mallard** *Anas platyrhynchos*

**Tufted Duck** *Aythya fuligula*

**Greater Scaup** *Aythya marila* An impressive flock feeding off the waterfront at Shibetsu.

**Harlequin Duck** ◊ *Histrionicus histrionicus* Smart males in the surf at Cape Nosappu.

**Stejneger's Scoter** ◊ *Melanitta stejnegeri* Two seen at Shibetsu.

**Black Scoter** ◊ *Melanitta americana*

**Common Merganser (Goosander)** *Mergus merganser*

**Red-breasted Merganser** *Mergus serrator* A single bird in Hanasaki harbour.

**Copper Pheasant** ◊ *Symaticus soemmerringii* A brief female at Karuizawa for Otani's car.

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

**Green Pheasant** ◊ *Phasianus versicolor* Some fine examples near Karuizawa.

**Indian Peafowl (introduced)** *Pavo cristatus* Heard-only.

**Chinese Bamboo Partridge (introduced)** *Bambusicola thoracicus* Heard-only.

**White-throated Needletail** ◊ *Hirundapus caudacutus* Superb examples seen near Kushiro.

**Pacific Swift** *Apus pacificus*

**House Swift** *Apus nipalensis* Two seen on Amami Oshima.

**Asian Koel** *Eudynamis scolopaceus* Heard-only, on Ishigakijima.

**Northern Hawk-Cuckoo** ◊ (Rufous H C) *Hierococcyx hyperythrus* Heard-only.

**Lesser Cuckoo** ◊ *Cuculus poliocephalus*

**Oriental Cuckoo** ◊ *Cuculus optatus*

**Common Cuckoo (Eurasian C)** *Cuculus canorus*

**Rock Dove (introduced) (Feral P)** *Columba [livia] var domestica*

**Black Wood Pigeon** ◊ (Japanese W P) *Columba janthina* Good views and many sightings on Miyakejima.

**Oriental Turtle Dove** *Streptopelia orientalis*

**Common Emerald Dove** *Chalcophaps indica* Heard-only.

**White-bellied Green Pigeon** ◊ (Japanese G P) *Treron sieboldii* One seen well at Karuizawa, several in the forest at Akan on Hokkaido.

**Ryukyu Green Pigeon** ◊ *Treron permagnus* Good views on Amami, also on Iriomote.

**Okinawa Rail** ◊ *Hypotaenidia okinawae* Our first were roosting birds close to our hotel, then during the course of the following day we saw at least 12 birds, with good views at the roadside.

**Common Moorhen** *Gallinula chloropus*

**Eurasian Coot (Common C)** *Fulica atra*

**Slaty-legged Crake** ◊ *Rallina eurizonoides* Heard-only.

**Watercock** *Gallicrex cinerea* A glimpse of one on Ishigaki.

**White-breasted Waterhen** *Amaurornis phoenicurus*

**Red-crowned Crane** ◊ *Grus japonensis* Lovely examples seen on Hokkaido, including a pair with a fluffy yellow chick

**Little Grebe** *Tachybaptus ruficollis*

**Black-winged Stilt** *Himantopus himantopus* Two on wet paddies on Ishigakijima.

**Grey Plover** *Pluvialis squatarola*

**Pacific Golden Plover** *Pluvialis fulva* A single on Miyakejima.

**Little Ringed Plover** *Charadrius dubius* A single on a beach at Hanasaki

**Siberian Sand Plover** *Anarhynchus mongolus* A handful stood on a pier on Iriomote.

**Greater Sand Plover** *Anarhynchus leschenaultii* Three stood with the above

**Eurasian Whimbrel** *Numenius phaeopus* A good number on Ishigakijima, singles on Amami and at Omigawa.

**Eurasian Curlew** *Numenius arquata* One at Oze beach, Amami Oshima.

**Bar-tailed Godwit** *Limosa lapponica* Singles on Amami and Ishigakijima.

**Eurasian Woodcock** *Scolopax rusticola* One flushed at Akan, two roding over Washi No Yado.

**Amami Woodcock** ♦ *Scolopax mira* Fantastic views on our first night on Amami Oshima, with at least six seen.

**Latham's Snipe** ♦ (Japanese S) *Gallinago hardwickii* Some great encounters on Hokkaido, with both perched birds and ones in aerial display.

**Terek Sandpiper** *Xenus cinereus* Two at Oze beach, Amami Oshima

**Common Sandpiper** *Actitis hypoleucos*

**Grey-tailed Tattler** ♦ *Tringa brevipes* Several seen on Amami Oshima and Ishigakijima.

**Ruddy Turnstone** *Arenaria interpres* A flock of 12 on the rocks at Oze beach.

**Sharp-tailed Sandpiper** *Calidris acuminata* Two distant birds roosting on rocks at Oze beach.

**Oriental Pratincole** *Glareola maldivarum* A flock of ten were on the short grass on Miyakejima airstrip.

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

**Gull-billed Tern** *Gelochelidon nilotica* Non-leader.

**Whiskered Tern** *Chlidonias hybrida* A small number on Ishigakijima.

**Black-naped Tern** *Sterna sumatrana* Some lovely examples seen on Ishigakijima and in the seas around there.

**Roseate Tern** *Sterna dougallii* A colony on rocky islands on Ishigakijima.

**Greater Crested Tern** *Thalasseus bergii* Six or so seen on Ishigakijima.

**Black-headed Gull** *Chroicocephalus ridibundus* Non-leader.

**Black-tailed Gull** ♦ *Larus crassirostris* Umi Neko, the 'Sea Cat'

**Slaty-backed Gull** ♦ *Larus schistisagus*

**Parasitic Jaeger (Arctic Skua)** *Stercorarius parasiticus* A single flew by at Shibetsu.

**Rhinoceros Auklet** ♦ *Cerorhinca monocerata* In good numbers off the Hokkaido coasts.

**Red-throated Loon (R-t Diver)** *Gavia stellata* One seen off the east coast.

**Pacific Loon** ♦ (P Diver) *Gavia pacifica* Several seen off Rausu including two on the water.

**Laysan Albatross** ♦ *Phoebastria immutabilis* A single from the Izu ferry.

**Black-footed Albatross** ♦ *Phoebastria nigripes* At least 12 seen from the Izu ferry.

**Streaked Shearwater** ♦ *Calonectris leucomelas* Countless thousands around Miyakejima and from the Izu ferry.

**Sooty Shearwater** *Ardenna grisea* Non-leader.

**Short-tailed Shearwater** ♦ *Ardenna tenuirostris* A handful seen from the Izu ferry and thousands seen from shore off Rausu.

**Bulwer's Petrel** ♦ *Bulweria bulwerii* Two seen from the ferry between Ishigaki and Iriomote.

**Brown Booby** *Sula leucogaster* Four seen from shore on Miyakejima.

**Pelagic Cormorant** ♦ *Urile pelagicus* Just a couple seen on Hokkaido.

**Japanese Cormorant** ♦ *Phalacrocorax capillatus* Good numbers seen around the Hokkaido coast, at Shibetsu and at Hanasaki harbour.

**Great Cormorant** *Phalacrocorax carbo*

**Black-faced Spoonbill** ♦ *Platalea minor* Two on the beach at Oze.

**Eurasian Bittern** ♦ *Botaurus stellaris* Heard-only, at Omigawa.

**Cinnamon Bittern** *Botaurus cinnamomeus* Several birds seen around the paddy fields of Ishigakijima.

**Black-crowned Night Heron** *Nycticorax nycticorax*

**Malayan Night Heron** ♦ *Gorsachius melanolophus* An immature on Ishigakijima seen in the open briefly, then hiding in the thicket were another three that didn't show well.

**Pacific Reef Heron** *Egretta sacra* Plenty in the islands, both white and grey birds available.

**Chinese Egret** ♦ (Swinhoe's E) *Egretta eulophotes* Two on the rocks at Ohama beach on Ishigakijima.

**Little Egret** *Egretta garzetta*

**Chinese Pond Heron** *Ardeola bacchus* One in the fields at Ada village on Okinawa was a surprise.

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

**Medium Egret** *Ardea intermedia* Breeding plumage birds seen well at Omigawa, a couple also on Ishigakijima.

**Eastern Cattle Egret** *Ardea coromanda*

**Grey Heron** *Ardea cinerea*

**Purple Heron** *Ardea purpurea* Seen on Ishigaki and Iriomote.

**Osprey (Western O)** *Pandion [haliaetus] haliaetus*

**Black-winged Kite** *Elanus caeruleus* Three seen on Ishigakijima, a recent colonists and a write-ins for the tour.

**Crested Honey Buzzard (Oriental H B)** *Pernis [ptilorhynchus] orientalis* Non-leader.

**Ryukyu Serpent Eagle** ◊ (Crested S E) *Spilornis [cheela] perplexus* Split or not, we had excellent and very close views of both adult and immature on Ishigakijima.

**Japanese Sparrowhawk** ◊ *Tachyspiza gularis* Non-leader.

**Eurasian Sparrowhawk** *Accipiter nisus* A single near Nemuro.

**Eastern Marsh Harrier** *Circus spilonotus* A couple seen at Omigawa, and also at Kushiro marsh.

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

**White-tailed Eagle** *Haliaeetus albicilla* Fairly numerous on Hokkaido.

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

**Northern Boobook** ◊ *Ninox japonica* At least four birds flying about in the early morning on Ishigakijima, then a couple seen on night drives on Okinawa.

**Ryukyu Scops Owl** ◊ *Otus elegans* Seen in daytime on Amami Oshima and on Ishigakijima, and by night on Okinawa.

**Japanese Scops Owl** ◊ (Pryer's S O) *Otus [semitorques] pryeri* A great close view of one of these red-eyed beasts on Okinawa.

**Blakiston's Fish Owl** ◊ *Ketupa blakistoni* A good show at Washi No Yado, with the first visit at 1945, followed by a second bird, then a third visit half an hour later. Voted as our 'Bird-of-the-trip'.

**Ruddy Kingfisher** ◊ *Halcyon coromanda* Great looks at two birds at roost on Amami Oshima, showing their purple bloom in the torch light, also another two seen very well in the daytime. Also seen on Ishigaki and Okinawa.

**Common Kingfisher** *Alcedo atthis*

**Japanese Pygmy Woodpecker** ◊ *Yungipicus kizuki* Not uncommon with multiple sightings.

**Lesser Spotted Woodpecker** *Dryobates minor* An unexpected thrill at Akan at the very end of the tour, a male flew in and gave some views before continuing on its way. A Japan lifer for the leader!

**Great Spotted Woodpecker** *Dendrocopos major*

**Okinawa Woodpecker** ◊ (Pryer's W) *Dendrocopos noguchii* A great look at one near Ada, plus a few glimpses of other birds in the forests around there.

**White-backed Woodpecker** *Dendrocopos leucotos* A surprise find of a drumming male in the woods at Akan.

**White-backed Woodpecker** ◊ (Owston's W, Amami W) *Dendrocopos [leucotos] owstoni* Three birds together put on a good show at 'Amami Natural Forest Park'.

**Black Woodpecker** *Dryocopus martius* Two birds showed well in the forest at Akan.

**Japanese Green Woodpecker** ◊ *Picus awokera* Just two seen, both at Karuizawa.

**Common Kestrel** *Falco tinnunculus*

**Eurasian Hobby** *Falco subbuteo* A single seen en route from Kushiro.

**Ashy Minivet** ◊ *Pericrocotus divaricatus* Several seen well in the Karuizawa area.

**Ryukyu Minivet** ◊ *Pericrocotus tegimae* A surprise one in a village at Mt Fuji, then commonly on Amami, also on Okinawa and Iriomote.

**Black Paradise Flycatcher** ◊ (Japanese P F) *Terpsiphone atrocaudata* Great views on Okinawa, also on Amami and Ishigakijima.

**Bull-headed Shrike** ◊ *Lanius bucephalus*

**Eurasian Jay** *Garrulus glandarius* Good views of the *japonica* subspecies on Mt Fuji.

**Lidth's Jay** ◊ (Ryukyu J) *Garrulus lidthi* A few seen in the forests on Amami Oshima, and six birds seen roosting on roadside wires during our night drive there.

**Azure-winged Magpie** ◊ (Asian A-w M) *Cyanopica cyanus* A single from the car en route to Karuizawa.

**Northern Nutcracker** *Nucifraga caryocatactes* One seen well on Mt Fuji.

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

**Large-billed Crow** *Corvus macrorhynchos*

**Large-billed Crow** ◊ (Ishigaki C) *Corvus [macrorhynchos] osai*

**Coal Tit** *Periparus ater*

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

**Owston's Tit** ◊ (Izu T) *Sittiparus owstoni* A few seen on Miyakejima, but always a bit shy.

**Iriomote Tit** *Sittiparus olivaceus* The focus of our visit to Iriomote, we were incredibly fortunate to find this after just one hour along a forest trail, though they stayed up in the tops of the trees. A Birdquest lifer.

**Marsh Tit** *Poecile palustris* A couple at Rausu.

**Willow Tit** *Poecile montanus* Seen around Karuizawa.

**Cinereous Tit (Japanese T)** *Parus [cinereus] minor*

**Cinereous Tit** ◊ (Ishigaki T) *Parus [cinereus] nigriloris* Three seen, and only on Iriomote.

**Eurasian Skylark** ◊ (Japanese S) *Alauda [arvensis] japonica*

**Brown-eared Bulbul** ◊ *Hypsipetes amaurotis*

**Light-vented Bulbul** ◊ (Chinese B) *Pycnonotus sinensis* Common on Ishigakijima, also a few seen on Okinawa.

**Sand Martin** *Riparia riparia*

**Pacific Swallow** *Hirundo javanica* The default Swallow in the Ryukyu islands.

**Barn Swallow** *Hirundo rustica*

**Asian House Martin** *Delichon dasypus*

**Eastern Red-rumped Swallow** *Cecropis daurica* Three on our last morning near Nemuro.

**Japanese Bush Warbler** ◊ *Horornis diphone*

**Asian Stubtail** ◊ *Urosphena squameiceps* One showed very well to us all at Karuizawa.

**Long-tailed Tit** *Aegithalos caudatus*

**Eastern Crowned Warbler** ◊ *Phylloscopus coronatus*

**Ijima's Leaf Warbler** ◊ *Phylloscopus ijimae* Plenty seen and heard in the woods on Miyakejima.

**Sakhalin Leaf Warbler** ◊ *Phylloscopus borealoides* Great looks at a singing bird by our Kushiro hotel, other encounters were more fleeting.

**Japanese Leaf Warbler** ◊ *Phylloscopus xanthodryas* Many heard on Mt Fuji with excellent views there, also seen at Takaminekogen.

**Oriental Reed Warbler** *Acrocephalus orientalis*

**Black-browed Reed Warbler** *Acrocephalus bistrigiceps* Two near Karuizawa, then commonly on Hokkaido.

**Sakhalin Grasshopper Warbler** ◊ *Helopsaltes amnicola* A great first morning on Hokkaido, with good looks at this noisy chap just outside our Kushiro hotel.

**Marsh Grassbird** ◊ *Helopsaltes pryeri* Many seen at Omigawa on our first morning, with birds making repeated songflights over the marsh.

**Middendorff's Grasshopper Warbler** ◊ *Helopsaltes ochotensis* After a slow start, we found these quite commonly in eastern Hokkaido, with progressively better views.

**Styan's Grasshopper Warbler** ◊ *Helopsaltes pleskei* Great looks at these fellows sitting up in the scrub on Miyakejima.

**Lanceolated Warbler** ◊ *Locustella lanceolata* Heard-only, at Kiritappu and Akan.

**Zitting Cisticola** *Cisticola juncidis*

**Warbling White-eye** ◊ (Japanese W) *Zosterops [japonicus] japonicus*

**Red-billed Leiothrix (introduced)** *Leiothrix lutea*

**Chinese Hwamei (introduced)** *Garrulax canorus* A single while en route to Karuizawa.

**Eurasian Wren** *Troglodytes troglodytes*

**Eurasian Nuthatch** *Sitta europaea*

**Eurasian Treecreeper** *Certhia familiaris* Some good looks on Mt Fuji of the *japonica* subspecies which of course sounds completely different to other Eurasian Treecreepers!

**Common Myna** *Acridotheres tristis* Another new colonist of Ishigakijima, quite a few near the airport.

**White-cheeked Starling** ◊ *Spodiopsar cineraceus*

**Chestnut-cheeked Starling** ◊ *Agropsar philippensis* We saw a few near to Karuizawa, and not again until driving back to Kushiro.

**White's Thrush** ◊ *Zoothera aurea* Heard-only. The song, a monotone whistle, heard at Akan.

**Amami Thrush** ◊ *Zoothera major* After the success of our night drive when we saw one roosting on a high wire, it was just amazing to actually find an active nest with the bird sat on it! You lucky people!

**Japanese Thrush** ◊ *Turdus cardis* A great view of a bird at Karuizawa, also seen at Akan and Kushiro marsh.

**Brown-headed Thrush** ◊ *Turdus chrysolaus* First encounters at Takaminekogen, also seen at Mt Fuji, Shiretoko and Akan on Hokkaido.

**Izu Thrush** ♦ *Turdus celaenops* Many seen on Miyakejima, always staying in the shadows!

**Asian Brown Flycatcher** *Muscicapa dauurica*

**Blue-and-white Flycatcher** ♦ *Cyanoptila cyanomelana*

**Siberian Rubythroat** *Calliope calliope* **A singing male** at Kiritappu marsh, then two showing among the Giant Butterbur banks near Nemuro on our last day.

**Siberian Blue Robin** *Larvivora cyane* A couple of nice sightings at Karuizawa and at Shiretoko, with many others heard.

**Japanese Robin** ♦ *Larvivora akahige* We had a great look near the Shiretoko pass, the only one of the tour.

**Izu Robin** ♦ *Larvivora tanensis* Commonly heard and several seen well on Miyakejima.

**Ryukyu Robin** ♦ *Larvivora komadori* Some great views of this stunning bird on Amami Oshima.

**Okinawa Robin** ♦ *Larvivora namiyei* Some stunning encounters with this lovely bird on Okinawa.

**Narcissus Flycatcher** ♦ *Ficedula narcissina*

**Ryukyu Flycatcher** ♦ *Ficedula owstoni* Seen well on Amami Oshima.

**Red-flanked Bluetail** *Tarsiger cyanurus* Good looks at confiding birds on Mt Fuji.

**Daurian Redstart** ♦ *Phoenicurus aureus* A surprise to see a pair attending a nest at Takaminekogen.

**Blue Rock Thrush** *Monticola [solitarius] philippensis*

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

**Brown Dipper** *Cinclus pallasii* Seen at Karuizawa, and good views at Washi No Yado at Rausu.

**Russet Sparrow** *Passer cinnamomeus* A male at Kushiro marsh.

**Eurasian Tree Sparrow** *Passer montanus*

**Scaly-breasted Munia (introduced)** *Lonchura punctulata* Seen on Okinawa.

**Japanese Accentor** ♦ *Prunella rubida* A good show and great views of five at various points around Mt Fuji.

**Grey Wagtail** *Motacilla cinerea*

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

**Japanese Wagtail** ♦ *Motacilla grandis* Nice views near Karuizawa and on the Chikuma river.

**Olive-backed Pipit** *Anthus hodgsoni*

**Japanese Grosbeak** ♦ *Eophona personata* Treetop views at Karuizawa, better views with multiple birds at Mt Fuji.

**Grey-bellied Bullfinch** ♦ (Eurasian B) *Pyrrhula [pyrrhula] griseiventris* Seen at Takaminekogen, Mt Fuji, and in the Rausu area.

**Siberian Long-tailed Rosefinch** ♦ *Carpodacus sibiricus* Plenty of good looks at these stunning birds on Hokkaido.

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

**Meadow Bunting** ♦ *Emberiza cioides*

**Chestnut-eared Bunting** ♦ *Emberiza fucata* Several seen well near Karuizawa, another on Hokkaido.

**Yellow Bunting** ♦ *Emberiza sulphurata* They played hard to get at Karuizawa, but we eventually all had good views of a male.

**Masked Bunting** ♦ *Emberiza personata* Fairly common by voice on Hokkaido and often seen.

**Grey Bunting** ♦ *Emberiza variabilis* Up to its old tricks – we heard several on Shiretoko pass but only one offered some brief looks.

**Japanese Reed Bunting** ♦ (Ochre-rumped B) *Emberiza yessoensis* Two males seen at Omigawa on our first morning.

**Common Reed Bunting** *Emberiza schoeniclus* Seen at Kiritappu marsh.

## MAMMALS

**Common Raccoon Dog** *Nyctereutes procyonoides* A surprise to see one at the roadside at Mt Fuji.

**Red Fox** *Vulpes vulpes*

**Brown Bear** *Ursus arctos* A brief glimpse of one on the Shiretoko pass.

**Sea Otter** *Enhydra lutris* Close views of one at Cape Nosappu.

**Japanese Weasel** *Mustela itatsi* Two seen along the roads on Miyakejima.

**Eurasian Wild Pig** *Sus scrofa* One seen on Okinawa.

**Sika Deer** *Cervus nippon*

**Baird's Beaked Whale** *Berardius bairdii* At least three seen from the Izu ferry.

**Short-finned Pilot Whale** *Globicephala macrorhynchus* Two groups seen from the Izu ferry.

**Killer Whale** *Orcinus orca* Two groups seen distantly from shore near Rausu.

**Pacific White-sided Dolphin** *Lagenorhynchus obliquidens* A group of at least 12 seen from shore near Rausu.

**Indo-Pacific Bottlenose Dolphin** *Tursiops aduncus* A pod seen from the Izu ferry.

**Ryukyu Flying Fox** *Pteropus dasymallus* Several seen on our Okinawa night drives.

**Japanese Macaque** *Macaca fuscata* Seen on the bird table at Karuizawa.

**Amami Rabbit (A Black R, Ryukyu R)** *Pentalagus furnessi* Just one seen on our Amami Oshima night drive.

**Siberian Chipmunk** *Eutamias sibiricus* One in the forest at Akan near Kushiro.

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

**Ryukyu Islands Tree Rat (R Long-haired R)** *Diplothrix legata* One walking on a phone wire on our Amami Oshima night drive.

**Amami Spiny Rat** *Tokudaia osimensis* Seen on our Amami Oshima night drive.

**Black Rat** *Rattus rattus* The small 'rat-shaped' rats on our Amami Oshima night drive.

#### OTHER TAXA

**Otton's Frog** *Babina subaspera* The larger frogs on Amami.

**Ryukyu Kajika Frog** *Buergeria japonica* The small frogs on Amami.

**Amami Tip-nosed Frog** *Odarrana amamiensis* On Amami.

**Amami Sword-tailed Newt** *Cynops ensicauda ensicauda* On Amami.

**Okinawa Sword-tailed Newt** *Cynops ensicauda popei* On Okinawa.

**Okinawa Five-lined Skink** *Plestiodon marginatus* On Okinawa.

**Okinawa Tree Lizard** *Japalura polygonata* On Okinawa

**Ryukyu Odd-toothed Snake** *Lycodon semicarinatus* On Amami.

**Loggerhead Turtle** *Caretta caretta* Seen from the Izu ferry.



Okinawa Robin (image by Dave Farrow)



*Amami Woodcock (image by Dave Farrow)*



*Amami Thrush (image by Mike Buckland)*



*Ryukyu Green Pigeon (image by Dave Farrow)*



*Blakistons Fish Owl (image by Dave Farrow)*



*Ryukyu Serpent Eagle (image by Dave Farrow)*



*White-backed Woodpecker (image by Dave Farrow)*



*Slaty-backed Gull (image by Dave Farrow)*



*Black-faced Spoonbills (image by Dave Farrow)*



*Siberian Rubythroat (image by Dave Farrow)*



*male Siberian Long-tailed Rosefinch (image by Dave Farrow)*



*Short-tailed Shearwater (image by Dave Farrow)*



*Sea Otter (image by Dave Farrow)*



*Latham's Snipe (image by Dave Farrow)*



*Ryukyu Serpent Eagle (image by Dave Farrow)*



*Ryukyu Scops Owl (image by Dave Farrow)*



*Ruddy Kingfisher (image by Dave Farrow)*



*Red-crowned Crane (image by Dave Farrow)*



*Okinawa Rail (image by Mike Buckland)*





*Masked Bunting (image by Dave Farrow)*



*Lidth's Jay (image by Dave Farrow)*



*Japanese Scops Owl (image by Mike Buckland)*



*Japanese Accentor (image by Dave Farrow)*



*Iriomote Tit (image by Mike Buckland)*



*Green Pheasant (image by Dave Farrow)*



*Eastern Crowned Warbler (image by Dave Farrow)*



*Chestnut-cheeked Starling (image by Dave Farrow)*



*Blue Admiral (image by Dave Farrow)*



*Blakiston's Fish Owl (image by Dave Farrow)*



*Black-tailed Gull (image by Dave Farrow)*



*Birdquest Group (image by Dave Farrow)*



*Baird's Beaked Whale (image by Mike Buckland)*