

Birding Japan

January-February 2016

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Japan, January 30th - February 14th 2016

Karuizawa – E Hokkaido – S Kyushu – Okinawa – Hachijo-jima

Front cover

Harlequin Duck *Histrionicus histrionicus*, common along eastern Hokkaido coasts. Photo: Måns Grundsten

Participants

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Highlights

- A shy Solitary Snipe in the main stream at Karuizawa.
- Huge-billed Japanese Grosbeaks and a neat '*griseiventris*' Eurasian Bullfinch at Karuizawa.
- A single Rustic Bunting behind 7/Eleven at Karuizawa.
- Amazing auks from the Oarai-Tomakomai ferry. Impressive numbers of Rhinoceros Auklet!
- Parakeet Auklet fly-bys.
- Blakiston's Fish Owl in orderly fashion at Rausu.
- Displaying Black Scoters at Notsuke peninsula.
- Majestic Steller's Sea Eagles in hundreds.
- Winter gulls at Hokkaido.
- Finding a vagrant Golden-crowned Sparrow at Kiritappu at the same feeders as Asian Rosy Finches.
- No less than 48(!) Rock Sandpipers.
- A lone immature Red-faced Cormorants on cliffs at Cape Nosappu.
- A pair of Ural Owls on day roost at Kushiro.
- Feeding Ryukyu Minivets at Lake Mi-ike.
- Fifteen thousand plus cranes at Arasaki.
- Unexpectedly productive Kogawa Dam – Long-billed Plover.
- Saunders's Gulls at Yatsushiro.
- Kin Ricefields on Okinawa, easy birding, lots of birds, odd-placed Tundra Bean Geese.
- Okinawa Woodpecker and Rail within an hour close to Fushigawa Dam, Yanbaru.
- Whistling Green Pigeon eating fruits in Ada Village.
- Vocal Ryukyu Robins.
- Good shorebird diversity in Naha.
- Male Izu Thrush during a short break on Hachijo-jima.
- Triple Albatrosses!
- Bulwer's Petrel close to the ship.

Planning the trip – Future aspects

When planning a birding trip to Japan there is a lot of consideration to be made. And there is a lot of preparation and pre-booking. It's worthwhile since when you're there everything runs very smoothly if you have your itinerary set. When going on a winter trip the first issue will be timing. When scanning Cloudbirders you will find that the most popular month is February. Without digging any deeper into the matter there might be higher risk of heavy snowfall in Hokkaido (and Honshu) in December or January than February. Another factor is that the later in the winter season the higher the chance of drift ice reaching Hokkaido from northern Sea of Okhotsk. Drift ice might push seabirds closer to Hokkaido shores. Another factor would be day length. Altogether I would recommend going late February or early March. Next issue would be which areas to cover and how many days spent on each site. Our Hokkaido-schedule was quite tight although we got the birds we came for. We chose to include Okinawa, another option could have been to continue west from Karuizawa to western Honshu around Komatsu. This winter such megas as Scaly-sided Merganser and Siberian Crane turned up. Baikal Teal would be a guarantee there. However the connection to the Oarai-Tomakomai Ferry would have been difficult then.

Literature

- Birds of East Asia, M Brazil (2009), both printed copy and e-book on tablet.
- Birds of South-East Asia, C Robson (2014), e-book on tablet.
- Many trip-reports from Cloudbidders.com, most informative being: Hottola (2010, 2014 & 2015), Hendriks (2013), Lopez (2008), Babic (2006), Anderson (2006 & 2002), Talbot (2001).



Fig 1. Black Scoter. One of the most numerous ducks off Eastern Hokkaido shores.

Useful contacts and websites

Japanspecialisten: Travel Agency in Stockholm for Swedish travellers. Very helpful. Helped us booking all domestic flights (you need to book domestic flights through a travel agent to get the cheaper tourist air pass fares from ANA), hotel at Tokyo and Tomakomai, both ferries and train tickets (waited for us at Tomakomai hotel) from Tomakomai to Kushiro. Thank you Louise.

Website: www.japanspecialisten.nu

E-mail: booking@japanspecialisten.se

Tommy Onita, Japanbirdwatching.com: Most helpful in booking accommodation for foreign birders. Takes a small affordable charge for his services. Helped us book accommodation at Karuizawa, Izumi and Okinawa. Reliable. As we left Izumi for Kagoshima Airport I realised I had lost my watch in the hotel room at Izumi. I mailed Tommy about the problem. He quickly got in touch with the hotel staff who had found the watch. Another guide and friend of his, Thomas Holvdet (japanbiking@gmail.com), based in Izumi helped out and posted the watch back to Sweden. Fantastic helpful attitudes, thank you Tommy, and thank you Thomas!

E-mail: booking@japanbirdwatching.com

Takeyoshi (Take-san) Matsuo, Lodge Furen: Very friendly birder at Lake Furen. Runs Lodge Furen with his wife. Can arrange staying at Washi-no-yado Guest House and also arrange boat trips from Ochiishi for auks. Serves

great food at the lodge, and was able to provide useful birding information, especially regarding Ural Owl at Kushiro Airport.

E-mail: matsuo-t@plum.plala.or.jp

MOL Ferry Co., Ltd: Ferries between Oarai and Tomakomai. The time table for trips in early February 2016 was not released until early January, which meant our itinerary wasn't decided until very late. The night ferry that leaves Oarai 1.45 am (check-in at Oarai 21-23 and boarding around 22.30-23) and arrives Tomakomai 7.45 pm departs every night except nights between Sundays and Mondays (Feb 2016).

Website: www.sunflower.jp/english/

Tokai Kisen Co., Ltd: Ferries between Tokyo and Hachijo-jima or Miyake-jima.

Website: www.tokaikisen.co.jp/english/shipinfo/searoute/

Japan Nature Guides: General (and some specific information) about birding in Japan.

Website: www.japannatureguides.com

HyperDia: English search engine for trains in Japan. Accurate as far as we learned.

Website: www.hyperdia.com/en/

Sea ice condition chart: Look how far south the drift ice has reached around Hokkaido.

Website: www1.kaiho.mlit.go.jp/KAN1/drift_ice/ice_chart/ice_calendar.html

Tide tables: Important to be at Yatsushiro at low tide (at least not high!). Also sites around Naha best at low tide, maybe Triangle Pond is best at high tide? Kin Ricefields probably better at high tide.

Website: www.tidetime.org/asia/japan/yatsushiro.htm

Website: www.tide-forecast.com/locations/Naha-Okinawa-Japan/tides/latest

Kantori mailing list: Birding news from all over Japan. You need to subscribe, which is advisable.

Website: kantirilode.weebly.com/

Ebird: Explore ebird for recent observations (although rather few Japanese users), also check out Birding Hotspots.

Website: ebird.org/content/ebird/

Car rental and driving

All three cars were rented from Times Car Rental and booked via hyrbil.se which is a branch of rentalcars.com. For Hokkaido (c.33300¥) we chose a winter-gearred Mazda CX-5 (a real pleasure to drive), on Kyushu (c.28800¥) a Toyota Corolla and on Okinawa (c.19400¥) a Subaru. There was a small additional cost in Kyushu for returning the car at Kagoshima when picking it up at Miyazaki. Everything with Times Car Rental went very smoothly. As stated everywhere it is mandatory to have an international driving license. For all cars we added GPS, which of course was in Japanese only and therefore pretty useless. Our solution was very efficient, we brought a tablet with GPS to which we had downloaded a Japanese Road Map. This worked out perfectly. Driving is on the left and very relaxed since speed limits are low and most Japanese drive carefully.

Itinerary

- 30.1 **Tokyo – Karuizawa:** Mid-day arrival at Narita Airport. Train via Tokyo to Karuizawa. Afternoon birding around Karuizawa. Night at Pension Karuizawa Forest.
- 31.1 **Karuizawa:** Full day birding Karuizawa. Night at Pension Karuizawa Forest.
- 1.2 **Karuizawa – Oarai:** Full day birding around Karuizawa. Late afternoon train to Oarai via Tokyo (Ueno and Mito). Boarding ferry. Night on ferry.
- 2.2 **Ferry: Oarai – Tomakomai:** Full day birding on deck from the ferry. Evening arrival at Tomakomai. Night at Grand Hotel New Oji, Tomakomai.
- 3.2 **Tomakomai – Kushiro – Tsurui – Rausu:** Morning train from Tomakomai to Kushiro via Chitose. Pick up rental car at Kushiro train station. Drive to Tsurui and further on to Shibetsu and to Rausu. Night at Washi-no-yado Guest House.
- 4.2 **Rausu – Notsuke – Cape Nosappu:** Birding along coast from Rausu to Notsuke and then to Cape

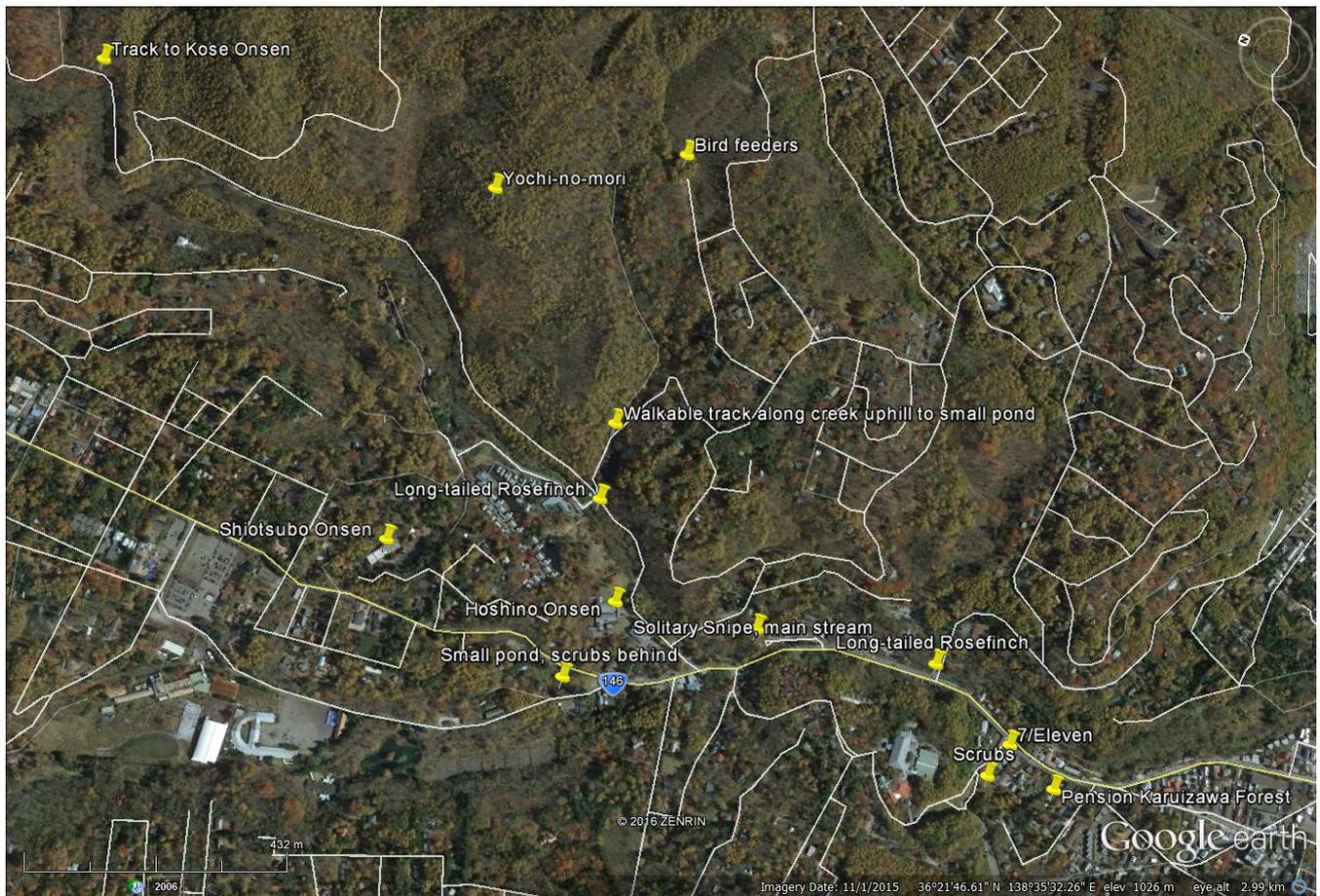
- Nosappu. Night at Lodge Furen.
- 5.2 **Cape Kiritappu – Cape Nosappu:** Morning birding at Cape Kiritappu, via Ochiishi and Nemuro to Onnemoto harbour and Cape Nosappu. Night at Lodge Furen.
- 6.2 **Kushiro – Tokyo(Haneda) – Miyazaki – Sadowara-cho Shimotonda Ponds:** Early morning transport to Kushiro. Ural Owl stake-out at Kushiro Airport. Flight to Tokyo (Haneda) and on to Miyazaki. Pick up rental car. Drive to Sadowara-cho Shimotonda Ponds north of Miyazaki. Night at Pumping Surf Guest House (south of Hyuga, booked at agoda.com).
- 7.2 **Cape Hyuga – Lake Mi-ike:** Morning birding at Cape Hyuga. Transport to Lake Mi-ike, birding until 5 pm. Transport to Izumi. Night at Hotel Tsuru 2 goukan.
- 8.2 **Arasaki:** Full day birding around Arasaki. Night at Hotel Tsuru 2 goukan.
- 9.2 **Kogawa Dam – Yatsushiro:** Morning birding around Kogawa Dam. Mid-day transport to Yatsushiro. Birding until evening. Transport back to Izumi. Night at Hotel Tsuru 2 goukan.
- 10.2 **Satsuma – Kagoshima – Okinawa(Naha) – Kin Ricefields – Kunigami:** Early morning transport to Satsuma. Short birding along Sendai River. Transport to Kagoshima Airport. Flight to Naha, Okinawa. Pick up rental car. Birding Triangle Pond and various tidal sites around Naha. Drive to Kin Ricefields. Late afternoon transport to Kunigami. Short night drive around Yanbaru (mostly windy!). Night at Kunigami Kariyushi Hotel.
- 11.2 **Yanbaru – Ada – Kijoka Ricefields – Yanbaru:** Morning birding around Fushigawa Dam. Short mid-day visit at Cape Hedo, unproductive sea-watching for 30 minutes. Early afternoon at Kijoka Ricefields. Afternoon birding at Ada Village. Night at Kunigami Kariyushi Hotel.
- 12.2 **Yanbaru – Kin Ricefields – Naha – Tokyo:** Pre-light owling at Terukubi Rindo track. Morning at Ada Village. Mid-day birding at Kin Ricefields. Afternoon birding Triangle pond and tidal sites at Naha. Late afternoon flight (1h30min delay) to Haneda. Train to Hamamatsucho station. Walk to ferry terminal, late evening boarding. Night on ferry.
- 13.2 **Ferry to Hachijo-jima – Tokyo:** Full day on deck birding from Hachijo-jima back to Tokyo via Miyake-jima. 35-40 min birding on land on Hachijo-jima. Night at Shiba Park Hotel, Tokyo.
- 14.2 **Tokyo – Narita:** Morning transport to Narita Airport. Mid-day international flight to Sweden.

Birding Localities - Strategy

Karuizawa

One of the best spots in Japan for Copper Pheasant. During winter also good for a few sought-after passerines, unfortunately two them Pallas's Rosefinch and Japanese Waxwing were absent this winter. Birding is done along the stream from Naka-karuizawa up to Hoshino Onsen and then along tracks and paths inside the large Yochi-no-mori forest. Prior to our visit there had been snowing more than a lot and the forest was thick with snow, initially making all paths unwalkable (and thereby limiting access to pheasants...), during our second day we made it from Hoshino Onsen up to Kose Onsen and back (White-backed Woodpecker along the track), although all forest paths were too snowy. On our last day, trekkers had made a small circular path walkable from Hoshino Onsen and back via the small pool close to the forest bird feeding station. Copper Pheasant should be present, although we never had a hunch on its presence, not even tracks in the snow. The scrub behind the 7/Eleven should be checked regularly since we had a lot of nice birds there (our only Rustic Bunting (*Fig 29*) of the trip, Azure-winged Magpie, Daurian Redstart, Japanese Grosbeak (*Fig 28*), Bull-headed Shrike. Green Pheasant has been reported here) and there was an obvious turn-over. Japanese Accentor sometimes shows up here or at apparent feeders at Shiotsubo Onsen (latter knowledge came to us after our visit...). By mere luck we had a shy Solitary Snipe immediately close to the road and the set of restaurants by the main stream just below Hoshino Onsen. There is no need to have your own vehicle while you are birding in Karuizawa, all places can be reached on foot.

Directions: Located not more than 1h20min from Tokyo Station with Shinkansen, access is pretty straightforward. At Narita Airport we bought (on recommendation) a JR TOKYO Wide Pass (10,000¥ per person) valid for three consecutive days (suited us perfect since we went on from Karuizawa to Oarai). From Narita to Karuizawa it took 2h40min and from Karuizawa to Oarai (via Ueno and Mito) it took 3h45min. Shinkansen stops at Karuizawa from here you could go on with a local train one station to Naka-karuizawa, or as we did, take a cab (2,200¥, 15 min) to your guest house.



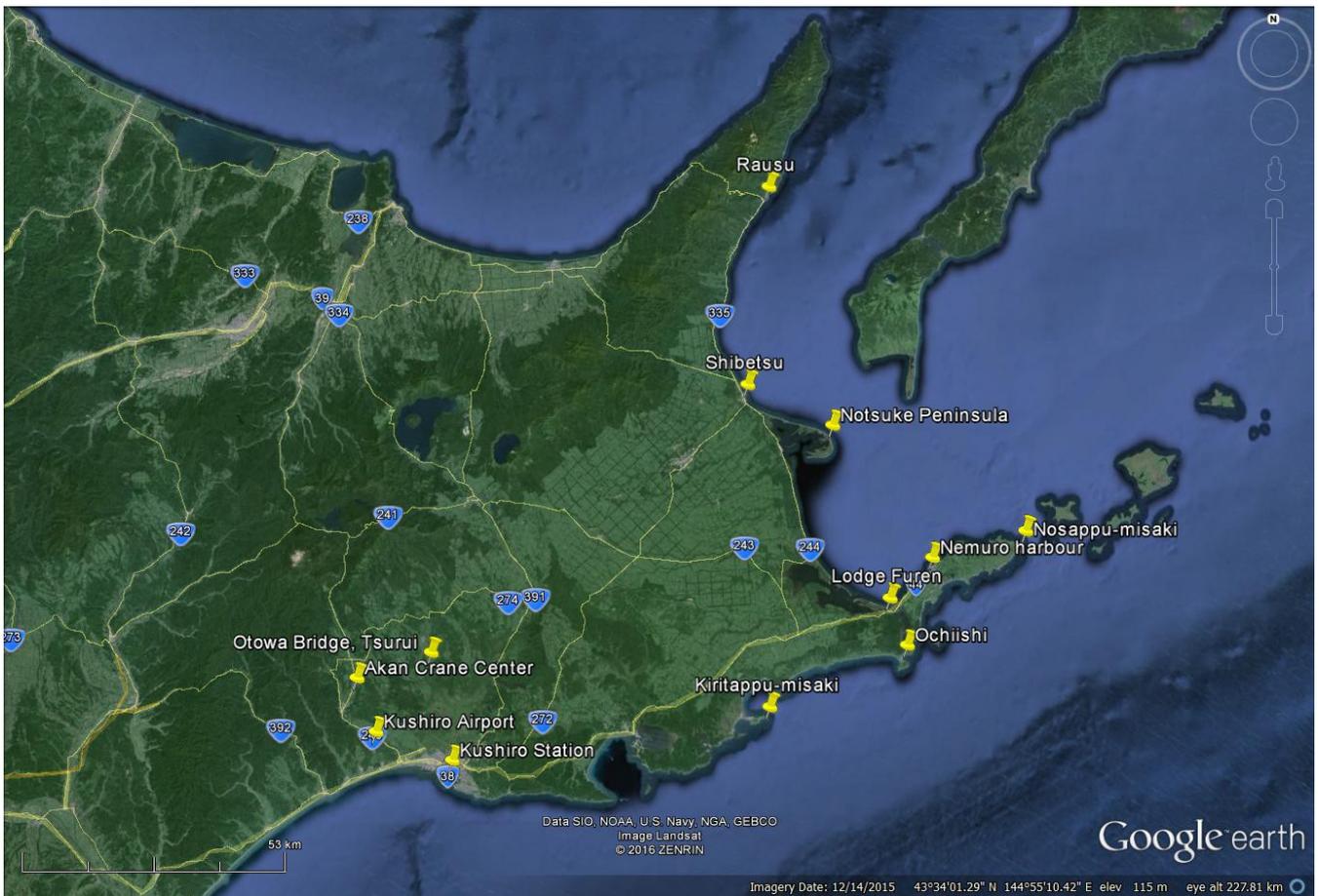
Map 1. Karuizawa, NW of Tokyo.

Ferry Oarai – Tomakomai

MOL Ferries run this stretch on an almost daily basis. We booked a 4 bed cabin (Casual Room, c. 13,000¥ per person) which actually was rather comfortable. There is no kitchen or dining room that serves food on the ferry, however there is an extensive selection of vending machines. Nothing to write home about, but at least you could warm up with a hot cup of noodles when having a break from sea-watching. In most reports people choose to take the ferry in the opposite direction (southward). In general, going north means more auks and going south means more seabirds and chances of albatrosses. Since we already had intended to include the Hachijo-jima ferry it was an easy decision to go in the northern direction. It was quite possible to use the tripods, however vibrations were not insignificant and we had to move around a bit to find a place with as little vibrations as possible. During the day it was a bit windy early in the morning, then very calm for an hour (we had hundreds of auks (mostly Rhinoceros Auklets (*Fig 52*)) on the water then). At late afternoon the northwesterly wind picked up again and we also sailed through a few blizzards. Crested Auklets only started to appear during the last hours as we reached and passed northern Honshu. They were always in large tight flocks. Our best finding was three Parakeet Auklets (*Fig 53*). In all we had more than 3000 auks of 7 species! In Tomakomai we took a cab from the ferry terminal to our hotel (15 min).

Eastern Hokkaido (general)

It's generally easy birdwatching on Hokkaido during the winter. You mainly look for large birds, ducks, auks and seabirds. Eastern Hokkaido is sparsely populated and traffic is often quiet. For ducks and gulls we think the best parts were from Rausu to Notsuke peninsula. We made multiple roadside stops and also tried our luck at most harbours along this stretch. The coastline along the Nemuro peninsula is a bit more rocky and not as easy to approach. White-tailed and Steller's Sea Eagles (*Fig 35*) are easily seen throughout. Red-crowned Cranes were also easy to find in the Otowa Bridge/Tsurui area. Note that the crane is not present from Rausu to Nemuro (including Lake Furen) during winter. In order to see the winter specialities on Hokkaido our itinerary was sufficient, however, it was very pleasant birding and Lodge Furen was a cosy place to stay, so another day would have been nice. Since we had great success on the Oarai-Tomakomai ferry it was not necessary for us to join a boat trip out from Ochiishi harbour for auks.



Map 2. Eastern Hokkaido.

Nosappu-misaki

Cape Nosappu or Nosappu-misaki is a very good place for seawatching, there is a small observation hut at the lighthouse. We spent two consecutive late afternoons here. The prime target is Red-faced Cormorant. We had an immature bird on cliffs just west of the lighthouse. On our second afternoon visit there was only one cormorant sitting on those cliffs when we arrived, and it was the immature Red-faced (*Fig 38*), later in the evening it was joined by hundreds of Pelagic Cormorants. There were good amounts of auks around, mostly Spectacled Guillemots, also a few Pigeon Guillemots. The second important target for Nosappu is Rock Sandpiper which can be found a bit further west. Some years a few birds appear on off-shore rocks just west of Onnemoto harbour. There is another observation hut here. Remember to be patient, we were just about to leave (after maybe 40 minutes) when suddenly 4 birds stood on the eastern-most rock, not long after a larger flock flew in (they had been out of sight on the far side of the rock). And we counted an impressive 48 birds. This is as far as I've learned pretty much the only reliable place for Rock Sandpiper in Japan.



Fig 2. Asian Rosy Finch, Kiritappu-misaki.



Fig 3. Blakiston's Fish Owl, Rausu.



Map 3. Cape Nosappu or Nosappu-misaki. Eastern Hokkaido.

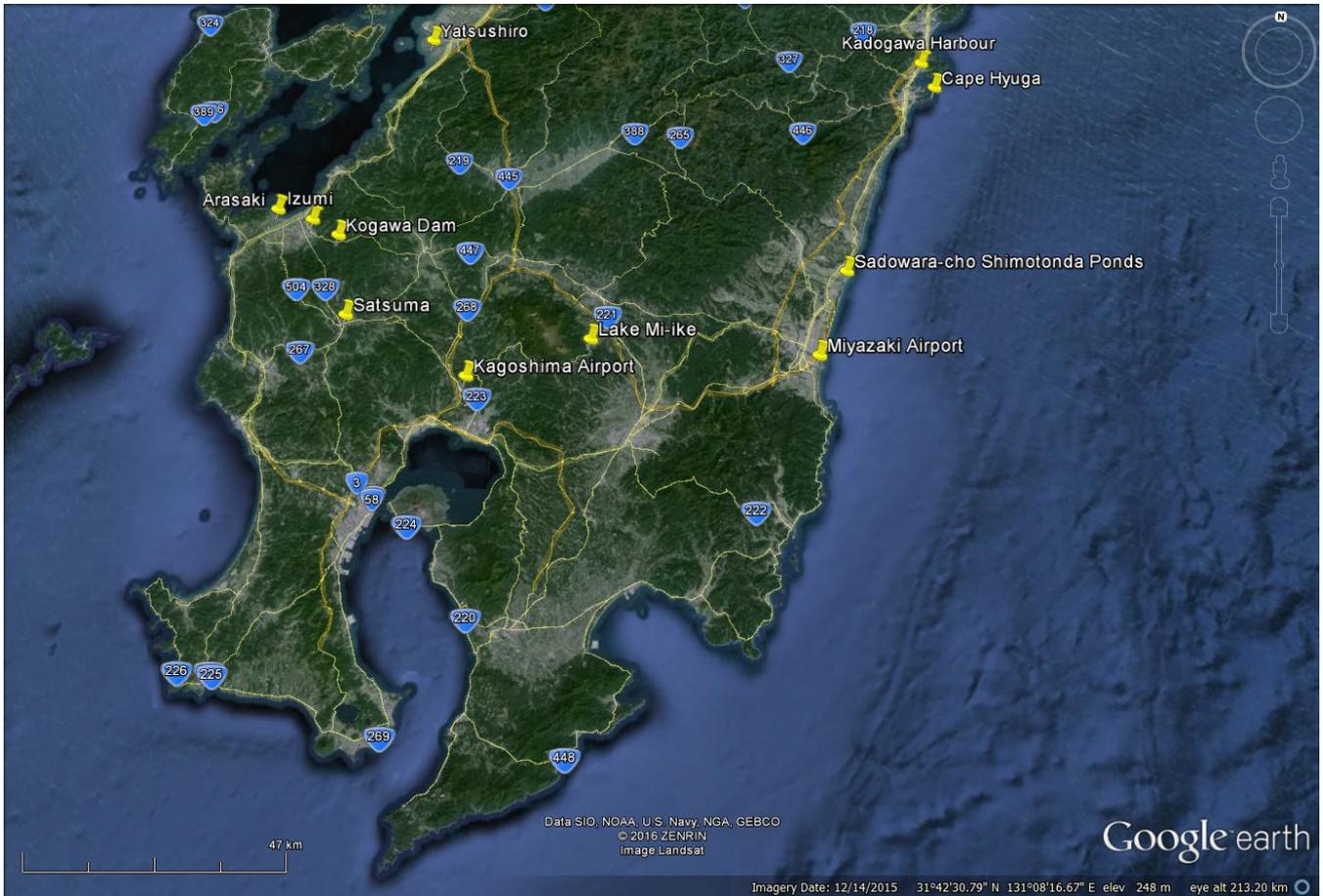
Kiritappu-misaki

A picturesque place with decent seawatching possibilities (however a bit unfavorable light conditions during morning hours). Close to the tip there is a small guest house which have feeders in their gardens. From the public road it was easy to watch the flock of 40+ Asian Rosy Finches (*Fig 2*), that apparently comes back here on yearly(?) basis. Unfortunately the owner of the house is known to be a bit aggressive towards visitors (maybe a few yen could cool down the situation...). Unaware of this we were quietly watching the flock of Rosy Finches when another grey bunting-like bird appeared quickly, we watched it mostly from the back, both Japanese Accentor and even(!) an North American sparrow crossed our mind. The head was rather greyish and unmarked, no obvious supercilium or distinct crown-stripes, also the belly was greyish, the back heavily streaked, and strangely enough two distinct white wing-bars. At that very moment (one of us managed to get a record shot) the house owner came out and shouted on us to leave, we had no alternatives other than jump in the car a drive off. We (wrongly!) thought the bird was a Grey Bunting (which non of us had seen before) knowing it would be a good bird on Hokkaido during the winter. But it was not until we really saw Grey Buntings on Kyushu at Lake Mi-ike and better still at Kogawa Dam that we realised our mistake! We quickly scrutinized the record shots and concluded the bird at the feeders at Kiritappu actually was a Golden-crowned Sparrow! (*Fig 39*) The bird has obvious white wingbars and on the record shot also white tips to the tertials are obvious, both good characters for a *Zonotrichia*-sparrow. The weak black streakings on the sides, and the lack of distinct crown-stripes or eye-brow (seen, but not possible to confirm on the photo) as well as dull-colored bill (maybe slightly pinkish to the base of the lower mandible, but not entirely pink or yellow bill) ruled out White-crowned Sparrow. We posted the observation on the Kantori Mailing List and at least one birding group was able to refind the bird a week later.

Southern Kyushu (general)

More people and definitely more traffic stands southern Kyushu in stark contrast to Hokkaido. Our most important advise would be to whenever possible use the toll roads! There seemed to be a lot of infrastructure projects ongoing, and on more than two occasions our in-car GPS wasn't updated on the latest highways. From Hyuga/Kadogawa there is a toll road going almost all the way to Lake Mi-ike, and also a small part of the road from Izumi to Yatsushiro is a toll road (and more are under construction). However from Lake Mi-ike to Izumi you

still need to take slower roads. Upon arrival from Miyazaki we drove north along the coast to ponds and the river at Sadowara-cho Shimotonda using public roads, and it was a mistake. There were zillion of red lights and we never exceeded 50 km/h. So even though there is a big detour it's always much faster to use the toll roads. The central parts of southern Kyushu is rather mountainous and holds Copper Pheasants, we never had time to do a focused search though (other than at Lake Mi-ike).



Map 4. Southern Kyushu.

Sadowara-cho Shimotonda Ponds

North of Miyazaki (some 45min-1h north of Miyazaki airport) the large Hitotsuse-gawa river flow into the ocean. At the mouth there is larger waterbodies holding good amounts of ducks during the winter, especially good is a certain pond (see *Map 5*) on the south end of the river mouth. We had a great evening here with lots of ducks, grebes, herons, Black-faced Spoonbills, a lone Long-billed Dowitcher (*Fig 5*) and some birds in adjacent fields. The pond was easy to scan from surrounding roads. Along the river upstream toward the Hyuga-ohashi bridge there was a Light-vented Bulbul of unknown origin in riversides trees.



Map 5. Hitotsuse-gawa Estuary.

Cape Hyuga – Kadogawa harbour

In order to see Japanese Murrelet the best place might be Kadogawa harbour where you should walk out on the northern pier and scan surrounding waters. They breed nearby late winter/early spring. When windy some Murrelets might seek shelter at Hososhima Bay which is located south of Kadogawa just north of Cape Hyuga. We tried early morning at Cape Hyuga and soon found a few flying (a bit distant) murrelets. After considering our options we decided to skip Kadogawa harbour and drive directly to Lake Mi-ike to have more time there. In case you want better views of Japanese Murrelet we advise you to go to Kadogawa instead. Cape Hyuga was a scenic place and there was quite a lot of birds in the thick forests, lots of Pale Thrushes, a group of Red-billed Leiothrix, and a possible fly-by Japanese Wood Pigeon here also. Sea-watching wasn't productive (besides the murrelets).

Lake Mi-ike

On the eastern slope of Mt Takachiho this crater lake is a nice birding spot on the way to Izumi. We spent one day from c.10.30 AM until evening birding here. There is a large forest (Yacho-no-mori) on the eastern slopes which is criss-crossed with a decent trail-system running from the camping site on the northwestern shores of Lake Mi-ike. This temperate deciduous forest holds a good section a birds: Copper Pheasant is difficult here but should be present, during summer months this is a classic site for Fairy Pitta (although present status is uncertain) and Japanese Paradise Flycatcher. Resident birds also include Ryukyu Minivet (*Fig 8*), White-bellied Green Pigeon, Japanese Wood Pigeon, White-backed Woodpecker. The crater lake itself holds wintering ducks, rarely Baikal Teals and even Baer's Pochard have been recorded. The best area for birding during a winter-visit is probably around the camping area, the parking lot, the surrounding scrubs and Yacho-no-mori. We walked the circular track around the lake along the eastern shore where there is a small park area. We didn't see anything special along the shores so the circular track can be skipped in our opinion. Grey Bunting was found close to the camping ground and three birds well inside the forest. Olive-backed Pipits (*Fig 41*) usually winter in the camping area and a single Forest Wagtail (*Fig 45*) has been returning to the parking area for at least 2 winters in a row.



Map 6. Lake Mi-ike.

Arasaki

Crane mecca located west of Izumi. This year a record 17,000 cranes had been counted, the vast majority being Hooded Cranes (Fig 42) but also including a few thousand White-naped Cranes, usually a handful Sandhill (Fig 46) and Common Cranes mix in. This year rare cranes (Siberian or Demoiselle) were absent. The cranes are fed on daily basis at the Arasaki Crane Center, the rest of the day the spread out to adjacent fields, e.g. Eastern Reclamation Area (see Map 7). Besides the crane-show Arasaki area is really birdy. Huge numbers of ducks. Along channels, reeds, scrubs a lot of wintering passerines can be found. Japanese Green Pheasant should be present in the area, although we failed to connect with one. Daurian Jackdaw winter in the area, not too numerous though, we only had a handful birds around the crane center. Fields around the crane center are also birdy with pipits, wagtails, lapwings, buntings (Chestnut-eared Bunting and Richard's Pipit (Fig 48) was only seen here during our trip). A full day was a minimum of time spent in this fabulous area.



Fig 4. Common Reed Bunting (ssp pyrrhulina), Arasaki.



Fig 5. Long-billed Dowitcher, Sadowara-cho Shimotonda.



Map 7. Arasaki.

Kogawa Dam

A short drive from Izumi takes you to this large dam surrounded by forest of varied condition. Copper Pheasant is said to occur in the area although probably rare. There is a tarmac that circles the dam (during our stay a bridge was under reparation and therefore closed). Close to the dam in nearby scrubs we had a few Grey Buntings early morning. A nice surprise was a White-bellied Green Pigeon which we had given up on after failing at Lake Mi-ike. At an open area at the far end of the reservoir there were Brown Dipper, Japanese Wagtail (*Fig 7*) and best of all two cooperative Long-billed Plovers (*Fig 6*). Driving back on the east side we had two elusive Crested Kingfishers. While looking for one of them by driving further east trying to head off upstream there was a Striated Heron briefly standing in a small creek, a nice bonus. Given the immediate proximity to Izumi, Kogawa Dam is worth a visit.



Fig 6. Long-billed Plover, Kogawa Dam.



Fig 7. Japanese Wagtail, Kogawa Dam.



Map 8. Kogawa Dam.

Yatsushiro

Around 1h30min drive north from Izumi along the coast to Yatsushiro mudflats. When we arrived tide was still pretty high why we decided to climb the small nearby hill to a small shrine (Obari). A cool place with a large flock of Bramblings and a male Red-flanked Bluetail. Close to hundreds of Black Kites also gathered around the small hill. During migration this spot must be a magnet for passerines. Mudflats were soon visible and birds started to gather. The main target Saunders's Gull was easily spotted. The same with Black-faced Spoonbills. We scanned the mudflats both from north and from east and stayed in the area until sunset. During the last 30-40 minutes as the tide was raising again a lot of waders were pushed closer to land and we could find a Terek Sandpiper and two Lesser Sand Plovers, not so commonly seen here during the winter. There seems to be an ongoing road construction south from Yatsushiro, so maybe in the future the driving time from and to Izumi will be less.



Fig 8. Ryukyu Minivet, Lake Mi-ike.



Fig 9. Sometimes you have to sacrifice. Going after Crested Kingfisher at Kogawa Dam.



Map 9. Yatsushiro.



Fig 10. Red-necked Stint and Temminck's Stint (left), Kin Ricefields.



Fig 11. Long-toed Stint, Kin Ricefields.

Naha

Busy capital of Okinawa in central Ryukyu Islands (Nansei Shoto). Okinawa is home to two pure endemics: Okinawa Rail and Okinawa Woodpecker, there is an additional set of endemics shared with the other Ryukyu Islands e.g. Ryukyu Scops Owl, Whistling Green Pigeon, Owston's Flycatcher and Ryukyu Robin. During low tide there are a lot of reefs and muddy areas exposed along the western shores of Naha. Since the airport is close by it was easy for us to give it some time on both arrival and departure. The best site is probably the small well-known Triangle Pond, there were two Pied Avocets here, a female Garganey and a few Black-faced Spoonbills. We tried our luck at three or four other sites where conditions looked promising, it took some manoeuvring through rather dense traffic and it was a bit of a challenge to find good parking spots. Best shorebirds found were: Grey-tailed Tattler, Greater and Lesser Sand Plovers, Long-toed Stint and a single 'variegatus'-Whimbrel. When driving from Naha to Yanbaru it's important to quickly get up on the Okinawa Expressway to avoid jams.



Map 10. Naha. Triangle Pond. Tidal sites. South of Naha Airport.



Fig 12. Tundra Bean Geese, Kin Ricefields. Far from tundra.



Fig 13. Ryukyu Robin, Terukubo-Rindo, Yanbaru. A beauty!



Map 11. Naha. Tidal sites south of Triangle Pond.

Kin Ricefields

Very exciting place and extremely easy birding. You could preferably use the car to slowly drive between paddies and scan for wintering birds and at the same time having great photographic opportunities. Our most odd observation was three seemingly out-of-place Tundra Bean Geese (Fig 12) in a small paddy. Both Red-billed and White-shouldered Starlings (both scarce Chinese winter-stragglers) have been reported here.



Fig 14. Brown-headed Thrush, Kin Ricefields.



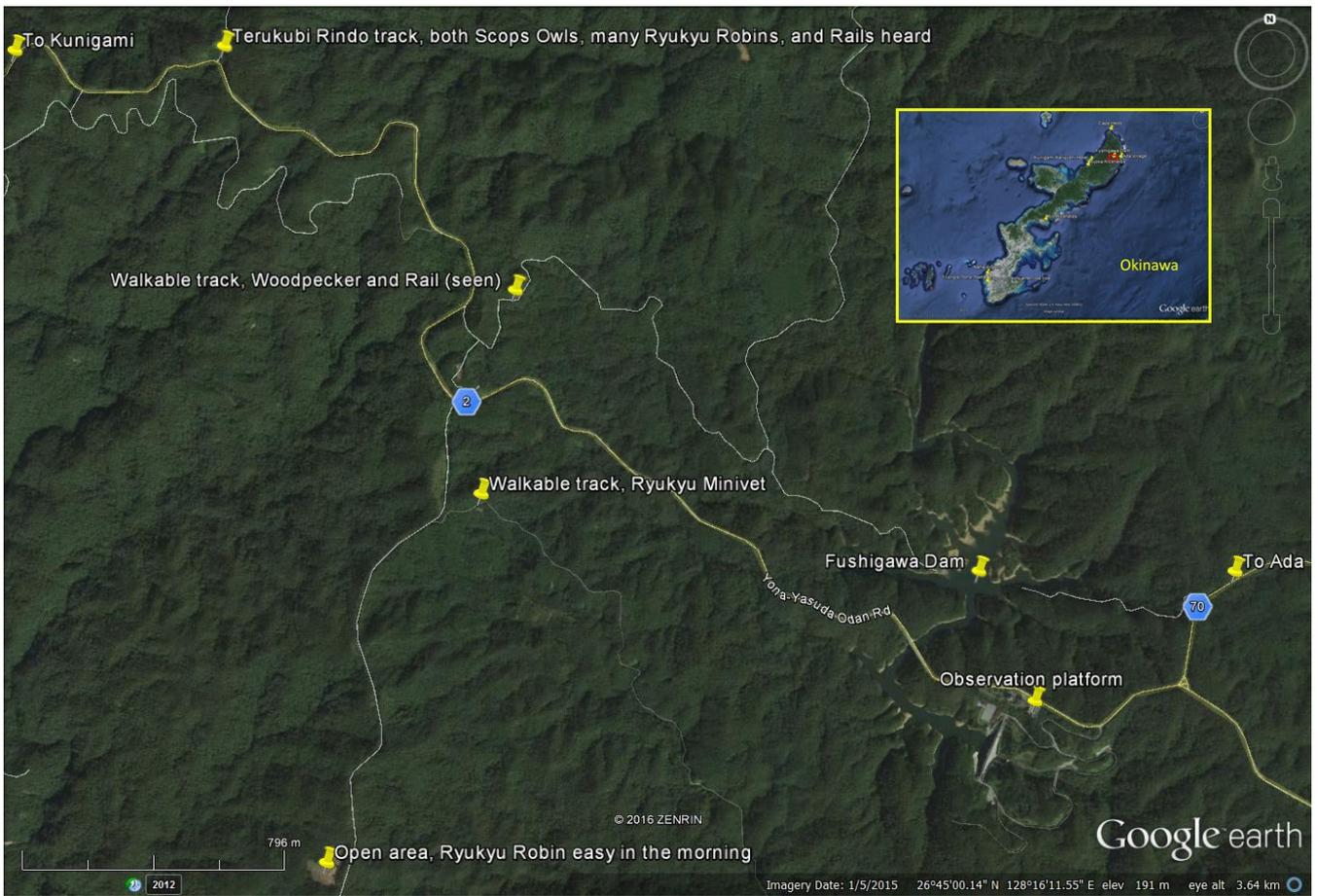
Fig 15. Scanning western parts of Kin Ricefields.



Map 12. Kin Ricefields.

Yanbaru – Ada Village

The hilly northern parts of Okinawa is still covered with natural forest. Birding was mostly slow in the forest, I guess a later spring or summer visit should produce more activity. We walked two different tracks (both undrivable, see *Map 13*). The southern one went mainly downhill, a smaller section on the right hand side has been partly cleared improving visibility, Okinawa Woodpecker has been reported here. We saw Japanese Pygmy Woodpecker and Varied Tit and heard a Ryukyu Minivet. On the way back also a male Red-flanked Bluetail. The second track we walked, the northern one, was equally quiet, however after just a few hundred meters we connected with a rather shy Okinawa Woodpecker! (*Fig 17*) Just before turning back we glimpsed a Okinawa Rail responding to tape. Ryukyu Robin (*Fig 13*) was easily seen and heard on multiple locations however only during dawn. We only found one Whistling Green Pigeon (*Fig 19*), it was in a lone fruiting tree next to the tarmac bordering Ada village (*Fig 18*). An Eurasian Hoopoe (*Fig 51*) was briefly in a garden here also, a scarce migrant on Okinawa. We spent some time at the observation platform at Fushigawa Dam (*Fig 16*) and also stood on the bridge over the dam to try to scan for pigeons. Unfortunately it was quite windy during our two night stay preventing any serious chances of owls. On our last morning we got lucky with some activity (although still windy) along Terukubo-Rindo track. We heard several (mostly distant) Japanese Scops Owls and finally a Ryukyu Scops Owl with a double whistle. We were just about to locate the owl in a nearby tree when a short rain shower forced us back to the car and silenced the owl.



Map 13. Area around Fushigawa Dam, Yanbaru.

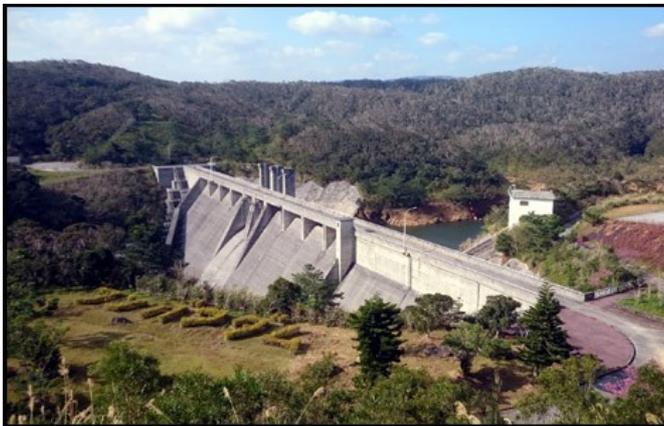


Fig 16. Fushigawa Dam, Yanbaru. Good view of the surrounding forest from the observation platform. No flying pigeons though. Cherry trees in blossom mid-February.



Fig 17. Okinawa Woodpecker, the worlds rarest woodpecker. According to IUCN it was close to extinction in 1930s and by 1990s the total population was estimated at 146-584 birds. It is classified as Critically Endangered.



Fig 18. Lone fruiting tree, Ada Village, Yanbaru.



Fig 19. Whistling Green Pigeon, Ada Village, Yanbaru.



Map 14. Ada Village.

Ferry Tokyo – Hachijo-jima – Tokyo

In order to see Short-tailed Albatross (Fig 20) this regular ferry (Tachibana-Maru) run by Tokai Kisen Co Ltd might be the best option. During winter months they are regularly seen together with Black-footed (Fig 21) and Laysan Albatrosses (Fig 22) north of Miyake-jima in fair numbers. We chose a 2nd Class Cabin, fortunately we had the 8-man cabin by ourselves. The cabins are really small and sized to fit Japanese people not westerners (if our cabin would have been fully booked it would have been a total impossibility to fit us all in...). There was one uncomfortable pillow per person provided and there was a possibility to rent blankets. We rented four(!) each, folding three of them as a mattress and used the forth as blanket. Still we slept ok and didn't made notice of the rough sea too much. On deck, vibrations was a real problem, and we had to move around a bit before finding a decent spot on the boat where there were less vibrations and still away from wind and spray. There was a small restaurant on board, however, when it opened around noon a massive queue soon built up so we (once again) chose a cup of noodles from the ever present vending machines... Seabirds were seen between Hachijo-jima

and Mikaru-jima and north of Miyake-jima. Besides the albatrosses there was quite a few Streaked Shearwaters (Fig 22) and a few Pomarine Skuas and Red Phalaropes. Bulwer's Petrel was a good find. Sometimes it was a bit frustrating since birds disappeared quickly and often were hard to follow in the rough sea. Light conditions was pretty good throughout, scanning mostly on starboard side with sun in the back.

On Hachijo-jima we only had 30-35 minutes before the ferry returned north. We quickly made our way closer to the hillside at the southern outskirts of the village. Inside a small palm plantation MA made a heroic discovery of a male Izu Thrush (Fig 24) which the rest of us was able to connect with. One Japanese Wood Pigeon was found briefly sitting on top of a dead tree on the same hill side. The most macabre experience was watching a youngster with a fishing pole in the harbour battling a Sea Turtle for at least fifteen minutes. He was trying to wind up the hook with the turtle which was too strong and too heavy for the pole. Finally the string snapped off and the turtle escaped (with a large hook) to an inevitable slow death...



Fig 20. Short-tailed Albatross, adult, Hachijo-jima.



Fig 21. Black-footed Albatross, Hachijo-jima.



Fig 22. Streaked Shearwater, Hachijo-jima.



Fig 23. Laysan Albatross, over 150 seen, Hachijo-jima.



Fig 24. Izu Thrush, male, in a palm plantation, Hachijo-jima.



Fig 25. Approaching Hachijo-jima.

List of birds: Japan, January 30th - February 14th 2016

Following IOC World Bird List 6.1 (January 2016) (www.worldbirdnames.org). In total: 208 species, including 2 heard onlys (HO), 27 species on The IUCN Red List for Threatened Species (2014.3). Subspecies notations are foremost literature-based.

- 1 **Tunda Bean Goose** *Anser serrirostris serrirostris*
3 Kin Ricefields 10.2.
- 2 **Whooper Swan** *Cygnus cygnus*
25 Tsurui 3.2, 50 Rausu-Notsuke 4.2, 25 Nemuro 5.2, 3 Kushiro 6.2, 2 Arasaki 8.2.
- 3 **Common Shelduck** *Tadorna tadorna*
30 Sadowara-cho Shimotonda 6.2, 30 Arasaki 8.2, 20 Yatsushiro 9.2, 1 Triangle Pond, Naha 10 & 12.2.
- 4 **Mandarin Duck** *Aix galericulata*
1 pair Lake Mi-ike 7.2.
- 5 **Gadwall** *Anas strepera strepera*
4 Dam NW Karuizawa 1.2, 40 Arasaki 8.2, 3 Kogawa Dam 9.2, 2 Satsuma 10.2.
- 6 **Falcated Duck** *Anas falcata* **NT**
15 Ochiishi harbour 5.2, 1 m Kogawa Dam 9.2, 2 Yatsushiro 9.2.
- 7 **Eurasian Wigeon** *Anas penelope*
Seen on 10 days, max 8000 Arasaki 8.2 and 1000 Yatsushiro 9.2.
- 8 **Mallard** *Anas platyrhynchos*
Seen on 10 days, max 1000 Arasaki 8.2.
- 9 **Eastern Spot-billed Duck** *Anas zonorhyncha*
Seen on 8 days, max 200 Sadowara-cho Shimotonda 6.2 and 200 Arasaki 8.2.
- 10 **Northern Shoveler** *Anas clypeata*
Seen on 6 days (not on Hokkaido), max 30 Arasaki 8.2.
- 11 **Northern Pintail** *Anas acuta*
Seen on 7 days, max 500 Sadowara-cho Shimotonda 6.2 and 500 Arasaki 8.2.
- 12 **Garganey** *Anas querquedula*
1 f Triangle Pond, Naha 10.2.
- 13 **Eurasian Teal** *Anas crecca*
Seen on 11 days, max 1500 Arasaki 8.2.
- 14 **Common Pochard** *Aythya ferina* **VU**
Seen on 6 days, e.g. 40 Sadowara-cho Shimotonda 6.2, 20 Kogawa Dam 9.2, 1 f Kin Ricefields 12.2.
- 15 **Tufted Duck** *Aythya fuligula*
Seen on 9 days, max 20 Lake Mi-ike 7.2.
- 16 **Greater Scaup** *Aythya marila*
8 Shibetsu 3.2, 30 Notsuke 4.2, 175 Ochiishi-Nemuro 5.2, 1 f Sadowara-cho Shimotonda 6.2. Strange to find one in a pond on Kyushu.
- 17 **Harlequin Duck** *Histrionicus histrionicus*
25 Shibetsu-Rausu 3.2, 200 Rausu-Nosappumisaki 4.2, 100 Kiritappumisaki-Nosappumisaki 5.2.
- 18 **White-winged Scoter** *Melanitta deglandi stejnegeri*
40 Shibetsu-Nosappumisaki 4.2, 50 Nemuro-Nosappumisaki 5.2.
- 19 **Black Scoter** *Melanitta americana* **NT**
2 to Tomakomai 2.2, 150 Shibetsu-Rausu 3.2, 2000 Rausu-Nosappumisaki 4.2, 500 Kiritappumisaki-Nosappumisaki 5.2.
- 20 **Long-tailed Duck** *Clangula hyemalis* **VU**
300 Notsuke-Nosappumisaki 4.2, 50 Kiritappumisaki-Nosappumisaki 5.2.
- 21 **Bufflehead** *Bucephala albeola*
1 m Rausu 4.2. A returning male in a flock of Goldeneyes just south of the southern pier at Rausu harbour.
- 22 **Common Goldeneye** *Bucephala clangula*
Seen on 5 days, max 100 Rausu-Nosappumisaki 4.2.
- 23 **Smew** *Mergellus albellus*
13 N Shibetsu 3.2, 25 N Shibetsu-Notsuke 4.2.
- 24 **Common Merganser** *Mergus merganser*
40 Shibetsu-Rausu 3.2, 200 Rausu-Nosappumisaki 4.2, 10 Nemuro-Nosappumisaki 5.2.
- 25 **Red-breasted Merganser** *Mergus serrator*
Seen daily on Hokkaido, max 150 Rausu-Nosappumisaki 4.2, 2 Yatsushiro 9.2.
- 26 **Red-throated Loon** *Gavia stellata*

- 1 to Tomakomai 2.2, max 4 daily on Hokkaido 3-5.2.
- 27 **Black-throated Loon** *Gavia arctica viridigularis*
1 to Tomakomai 2.2, 1 Nosappumisaki 5.2.
- 28 **Pacific Loon** *Gavia pacifica*
9 to Tomakomai 2.2, 1 Nosappumisaki 5.2.
- 29 **Laysan Albatross** *Phoebastria immutabilis* NT
80 Hachijo-jima ferry 13.2.
- 30 **Black-footed Albatross** *Phoebastria nigripes* NT
40 Hachijo-jima ferry 13.2.
- 31 **Short-tailed Albatross** *Phoebastria albatrus* VU
30 Hachijo-jima ferry 13.2.
Albatross sp *Phoebastria sp*
c 150 Hachijo-jima ferry 13.2. Many distant north of Miyake-jima.
Storm Petrel sp *Oceanodroma sp*
1 dark bird Hachijo-jima ferry 13.2.
Petrel sp *Pterodroma sp*
2 probable Bonin Petrels between Hachijo-jima and Miyake-jima 13.2.
- 32 **Streaked Shearwater** *Calonectris leucomelas* NT
20 Hachijo-jima ferry 13.2.
Shearwater sp *Ardenna sp*
1 dark shearwater Hachijo-jima ferry 13.2.
- 33 **Bulwer's Petrel** *Bulweria bulwerii*
1 Hachijo-jima ferry 13.2. Between Hachijo-jima and Mikura-jima.
- 34 **Little Grebe** *Tachybaptus ruficollis poggei*
Seen daily on Kyushu, max 30 Lake Mi-ike 7.2 and 30 Arasaki 8.2.
- 35 **Red-necked Grebe** *Podiceps grisegena holbollii*
6 to Tomakomai 2.2, 3 Nosappumisaki 4.2, 4 Nosappumisaki 5.2.
- 36 **Great Crested Grebe** *Podiceps cristatus cristatus*
Seen on 4 days on Kyushu, max 5 Sadowara-cho Shimotonda 6.2.
- 37 **Black-necked Grebe** *Podiceps nigricollis nigricollis*
2 Nosappumisaki 4.2, 5 Kiritappumisaki-Nosappumisaki 5.2, 4 Sadowara-cho Shimotonda 6.2, 3 Yatsushiro 9.2.
- 38 **Eurasian Spoonbill** *Platalea leucorodia leucorodia*
5 Arasaki 8.2, 2 Naha 10.2.
- 39 **Black-faced Spoonbill** *Platalea minor* EN
4 Sadowara-cho Shimotonda 6.2, 2 Arasaki 8.2, 4 Yatsushiro 9.2, 8 Naha (including 4 in Triangle Pond) 10.2, 5 Naha 12.2.
- 40 **Cinnamon Bittern** *Ixobrychus cinnamomeus*
1 m Kijoka 11.2.
- 41 **Black-crowned Night Heron** *Nycticorax nycticorax nycticorax*
2 imm Sadowara-cho Shimotonda 6.2, 1 imm Arasaki 8.2, 1 imm Kijoka 11.2.
- 42 **Striated Heron** *Butorides striata amurensis*
1 Kogawa Dam 9.2. In a small stream east of the Dam.
- 43 **Eastern Cattle Egret** *Bubulcus coromandus*
1 Kin Ricefields 10.2, 2 Kijoka 11.2, 4 Kin Ricefields 12.2.
- 44 **Grey Heron** *Ardea cinerea jouyi*
Seen on 10 days, max 60 Sadowara-cho Shimotonda 6.2.
- 45 **Great Egret** *Ardea alba*
Seen on 7 days, max 15 Sadowara-cho Shimotonda 6.2.
- 46 **Intermediate Egret** *Egretta intermedia intermedia*
1 Sadowara-cho Shimotonda 6.2, max 7 Okinawa 10-12.2.
- 47 **Little Egret** *Egretta garzetta garzetta*
Seen on 7 days, max 25 Arasaki 8.2.
- 48 **Pacific Reef Heron** *Egretta sacra sacra*
3 Hyugamisaki 7.2, 4 Ada 11.2, 1 Naha 12.2.
- 49 **Pelagic Cormorant** *Phalacrocorax pelagicus pelagicus*
5 to Tomakomai 2.2, 250+ daily Hokkaido 3-5.2.
- 50 **Red-faced Cormorant** *Phalacrocorax urile*
1 imm Nosappumisaki 4-5.2.

- 51 **Great Cormorant** *Phalacrocorax carbo*
Seen on 5 days, max 150 Arasaki 8.2.
- 52 **Japanese Cormorant** *Phalacrocorax capillatus*
3 to Tomakomai 2.2, 5 Hyugamisaki 7.2.
- 53 **Western Osprey** *Pandion haliaetus haliaetus*
Seen on 7 days, max 7 Arasaki 8.2.
- 54 **Eurasian Sparrowhawk** *Accipiter nisus nisosimilis*
Singles on 5 days.
- 55 **Northern Goshawk** *Accipiter gentilis*
1 e.r. 30.1, 1 Arasaki 8.2.
- 56 **Hen Harrier** *Circus cyaneus*
2 f-type Arasaki 8.2.
- 57 **Black Kite** *Milvus migrans lineatus*
Seen on 11 days, max 100 Arasaki 8.2.
- 58 **White-tailed Eagle** *Haliaeetus albicilla albicilla*
Max 20 daily on Hokkaido 3-5.2.
- 59 **Steller's Sea Eagle** *Haliaeetus pelagicus* VU
Max 200 daily on Hokkaido 3-5.2.
- 60 **Grey-faced Buzzard** *Butastur indicus*
Max 10 daily on Okinawa 10-12.2.
- 61 **Rough-legged Buzzard** *Buteo lagopus menzbieri*
1 e.r. 3.2, 1 Kiritappumisaki 5.2.
- 62 **Eastern Buzzard** *Buteo japonicus japonicus*
2 Karuizawa 30.1, max 3 daily Hokkaido 3-6.2, 1 (ssp *toyoshimai*) Hachijo-jima 13.2.
- 63 **Okinawa Rail** *Gallirallus okinawae* EN Endemic to Okinawa
1 seen + 5 heard Yanbaru 11.2, 5 heard Yanbaru 12.2.
- 64 **White-breasted Waterhen** *Amaurornis phoenicurus phoenicurus*
1 Kin Ricefields 10.2.
- 65 **Common Moorhen** *Gallinula chloropus chloropus*
9 Arasaki 8.2, max 30 daily Okinawa 10-12.2.
- 66 **Eurasian Coot** *Fulica atra atra*
Seen on 7 days, max 80 Sadowara-cho Shimotonda 6.2.
- 67 **Sandhill Crane** *Grus canadensis canadensis*
5 Arasaki 8.2.
- 68 **White-naped Crane** *Grus vipio* VU
1000 Arasaki 8.2.
- 69 **Red-crowned Crane** *Grus japonensis* EN
70 Tsurui 3.2.
- 70 **Common Crane** *Grus grus*
6 Arasaki 8.2.
- 71 **Hooded Crane** *Grus monacha* VU
10000+ Arasaki 8.2, 5 e.r. 9.2.
- 72 **Black-winged Stilt** *Himantopus himantopus*
Max 50 Okinawa 10-12.2.
- 73 **Pied Avocet** *Recurvirostra avosetta*
2 Triangle Pond, Naha 10.2, 1 Triangle Pond, Naha 12.2.
- 74 **Northern Lapwing** *Vanellus vanellus*
10 Sadowara-cho Shimotonda 6.2, 100 Arasaki 8.2.
- 75 **Pacific Golden Plover** *Pluvialis fulva*
9 Kin Ricefields 10.2, 40 Kin Ricefields 12.2, 40 Naha 12.2.
- 76 **Grey Plover** *Pluvialis squatarola*
100 Yatsushiro 9.2, 1 Naha 12.2.
- 77 **Long-billed Plover** *Charadrius placidus*
2 Kogawa Dam 9.2, 3 Minamata (seen on concrete river banks just where road 3 crosses the river in Minamata town) 9.2, 2 Satsuma (seen on the Sendai river west of Satsuma town where the river makes a steep turn at the northern end of the Hokusatsu Large Park) 10.2.
- 78 **Little Ringed Plover** *Charadrius dubius curonicus*
100 Kin Ricefields 10.2, 12 Kijoka 11.2, 60 Kin Ricefields 12.2.
- 79 **Kentish Plover** *Charadrius alexandrinus*

- 8 Arasaki 8.2, 100 Yatsushiro 9.2, 15 Naha 10.2, 30 Okinawa 12.2.
- 80 Lesser Sand Plover** *Charadrius mongolus*
2 Yatsushiro 9.2, 5 Naha 12.2.
- 81 Greater Sand Plover** *Charadrius leschenaultii leschenaultii*
1 Naha 10.2.
- 82 Solitary Snipe** *Gallinago solitaria japonica*
1 Hoshino Onsen, Karuizawa 30.1.
- 83 Common Snipe** *Gallinago gallinago*
Seen on 5 days, max 40 Arasaki 8.2, 40 Kijoka 11.2.
- 84 Long-billed Dowitcher** *Limnodromus scolopaceus*
1 Sadowara-cho Shimotonda 6.2, 3 Arasaki 8.2.
- 85 Whimbrel** *Numenius phaeopus variegatus*
1 Naha 10.2.
- 86 Eurasian Curlew** *Numenius arquata orientalis* **NT**
3 Sadowara-cho Shimotonda 6.2, 6 Yatsushiro 9.2, 1 Naha 10.2, 2 Naha 12.2.
- 87 Common Redshank** *Tringa totanus*
1 Kin Ricefields 12.2.
- 88 Common Greenshank** *Tringa nebularia*
2 Arasaki 8.2, 8 Yatsushiro 9.2, 40 Naha 10.2, 50 Naha 12.2.
- 89 Green Sandpiper** *Tringa ochropus*
Seen in small numbers on 6 days.
- 90 Wood Sandpiper** *Tringa glareola*
6 Kin Ricefields 10.2.
- 91 Grey-tailed Tattler** *Tringa brevipes* **NT**
1 Naha 12.2.
- 92 Terek Sandpiper** *Xenus cinereus*
1 Yatsushiro 9.2.
- 93 Common Sandpiper** *Actitis hypoleucos*
Seen on 6 days.
- 94 Ruddy Turnstone** *Arenaria interpres interpres*
3 Naha 12.2.
- 95 Red-necked Stint** *Calidris ruficollis* **NT**
1 Kin Ricefields 12.2.
- 96 Temminck's Stint** *Calidris temminckii*
7 Kin Ricefields 10.2, 1 Kijoka 11.2, 5 Kin Ricefields 12.2.
- 97 Long-toed Stint** *Calidris subminuta*
5 Naha 10.2, 25 Kin Ricefields 10.2, 30 Kin Ricefields 12.2.
- 98 Rock Sandpiper** *Calidris ptilocnemis*
48 Onnemoto harbour 5.2.
- 99 Dunlin** *Calidris arctica*
30 S Odaito 4.2, 1 (long-billed!) Ochiishi harbour 5.2, 80 Arasaki 8.2, 500 Yatsushiro 9.2, 10 Naha 12.2.
- 100 Red Phalarope** *Phalacrocorax fulicarius*
8 Hachijo-jima ferry 13.2. Most between Hachijo-jima and Mikura-jima.
- 101 Black-legged Kittiwake** *Rissa tridactyla pollicaris*
500 to Tomakomai 2.2, 7 Hachijo-jima ferry 13.2.
- 102 Black-headed Gull** *Chroicocephalus ridibundus*
Singles on Hokkaido 3-5.2, 20 Yatsushiro 9.2.
- 103 Saunders's Gull** *Chroicocephalus saundersi* **VU**
20 Yatsushiro 9.2.
- 104 Black-tailed Gull** *Larus crassirostris*
40 to Tomakomai 2.2, max 20 Kysushu 7-9.2, 25 Hachijo-jima ferry 13.2.
- 105 Mew Gull** *Larus canus kamtschatschensis*
40 to Tomakomai 2.2, max 300 Hokkaido 3-5.2, 5 Arasaki 8.2, 1 Hachijo-jima ferry 13.2.
- 106 Glaucous-winged Gull** *Larus glaucescens*
Max 40 Hokkaido 3-5.2. 1 Hachijo-jima ferry 13.2.
- 107 Glaucous Gull** *Larus hyperboreus*
Max 50 Hokkaido 3-5.2.
- 108 Vega Gull** *Larus vegae*
5 to Tomakomai 2.2, 1 Notsuke 4.2, 5 Hyugamisaki 7.2, 15 Arasaki 8.2, 100 Yatsushiro 9.2.

- 109 Slaty-backed Gull** *Larus schistisagus*
Seen on 8 days, max 1000 Hokkaido 5.2.
- 110 Pomarine Skua** *Stercorarius pomarinus*
8 Hachijo-jima ferry 13.2.
- 111 Parasitic Jaeger** *Stercorarius parasiticus*
1 Hachijo-jima ferry 13.2
Skua sp *Stercorarius sp*
1 probable Pomarine Skua to Tomakomai 2.2.
- 112 Thick-billed Murre** *Uria lomvia*
30 to Tomakomai 2.2, 3 Nosappumisaki 4.2, 2 Nosappumisaki 5.2.
- 113 Common Murre** *Uria aalge inornata*
4 to Tomakomai 2.2, 30 Nosappumisaki 5.2.
- 114 Pigeon Guillemot** *Cephus columba*
1 darker bird (2cy?) Notsuke 4.2, 4 darker birds (2cy?) + 2 white birds (adult winter?) Nosappumisaki 5.2.
- 115 Spectacled Guillemot** *Cephus carbo*
400 Notsuke-Nosappumisaki 4.2, 200 Kiritappumisaki-Nosappumisaki 5.2.
- 116 Long-billed Murrelet** *Brachyramphus perdix* **NT**
1 N Shibetsu 4.2. At the small river mouth just north of the northern pier of Shibetsu harbour.
- 117 Ancient Murrelet** *Synthliboramphus antiquus*
400+ to Tomakomai 2.2, 7 Nosappumisaki 4.2, 15 Nosappumisaki 5.2, 10 Outer Tokyo Bay 13.2.
- 118 Japanese Murrelet** *Synthliboramphus wumizusume* **VU**
6 Hyugamisaki (in distant flight) 7.2, 2 between Hachijo-jima and Mikaru-jima 13.2.
- 119 Parakeet Auklet** *Aethia psittacula*
1+2 to Tomakomai 2.2.
- 120 Least Auklet** *Aethia pusilla*
15 to Tomakomai 2.2, 1 Nosappumisaki 4.2, 10 Nosappumisaki 5.2.
- 121 Crested Auklet** *Aethia cristatella*
2000+ to Tomakomai 2.2, 1 Nosappumisaki 5.2.
- 122 Rhinoceros Auklet** *Cerorhinca monocerata*
800+ to Tomakomai 2.2
- 123 Rock Dove** *Columba livia* (domest)
Seen on 9 days.
- 124 Japanese Wood Pigeon** *Columba janthina janthina* **NT**
1 Hachijo-jima 13.2.
- 125 Oriental Turtle Dove** *Streptopelia orientalis*
Seen on 11 days, max 60 9.2.
- 126 White-bellied Green Pigeon** *Treron sieboldii sieboldii*
1 Kogawa Dam 9.2.
- 127 Whistling Green Pigeon** *Treron formosae permagnus* **NT**
1 Ada Village 11.2, 1 h Terukubi Rindo 12.2. Split as endemic Ryukyu Green Pigeon in HBW.
- 128 Japanese Scops Owl** *Otus semitorques pryeri* **HO**
5 h Terukubi Rindo 12.2.
- 129 Ryukyu Scops Owl** *Otus elegans elegans* **HO NT** Endemic to Nansei Shoto, Daito Is and Lanyu I
1 h Terukubi Rindo 12.2.
- 130 Blakiston's Fish Owl** *Bubo blakistoni blakistoni* **EN**
1 Washi-no-yado 3.2.
- 131 Ural Owl** *Strix uralensis japonica*
2 Kushiro Airport 6.2.
- 132 Short-eared Owl** *Asio flammeus flammeus*
1 Kiritappumisaki 5.2.
- 133 Common Kingfisher** *Alcedo atthis bengalensis*
1 Lake Mi-ike 7.2, 5 Arasaki 8.2, 5 Kogawa Dam 9.2, 2 Ada Village 11.2, 1 Ada Village 12.2.
- 134 Crested Kingfisher** *Megaceryle lugubris lugubris*
2 Kogawa Dam 9.2.
- 135 Eurasian Hoopoe** *Upopa epops*
1 Ada Village 11.2.
- 136 Japanese Pygmy Woodpecker** *Dendrocopos kizuki*
Max 20 (ssp *nippon*) Karuizawa 30.1-1.2, 10 (ssp *kizuki*) Lake Mi-ike 7.2, 3 (ssp *kizuki*) Kogawa Dam 9.2, 3 (ssp *nigrescens*) Yanbaru 11.2.

- 137 White-backed Woodpecker** *Dendrocopos leucotos*
1 m (ssp *stejnegeri*) Karuizawa (along track to Kose Onsen) 31.1, 3 (ssp *namiyei*) Lake Mi-ike 7.2.
- 138 Great Spotted Woodpecker** *Dendrocopos major japonicus*
Max 6 Karuizawa 30.1-1.2.
- 139 Japanese Green Woodpecker** *Picus awokera* **Endemic to Japan**
Max 6 (ssp *awokera*) Karuizawa 31.1-1.2, 2 (ssp *horii*) Lake Mi-ike 7.2.
- 140 Okinawa Woodpecker** *Sapheopipo noguchii* **CR Endemic to Okinawa**
1 NW Fushigawa Dam 11.2.
- 141 Common Kestrel** *Falco tinnunculus*
Seen on 4 days on Kyushu, max 4 Arasaki 8.2.
- 142 Peregrine Falcon** *Falco peregrinus*
1 Kiritappumisaki 5.2, 1 Ochiishi 5.2, 1 Hyugamisaki 7.2, 2 Arasaki 8.2, 1 Yatsushiro 9.2, 2 Kin Ricefields 10.2, 1 Kijoka (caught a Temminck's Stint mid-air!) 11.2, 2 Kin Ricefields 12.2.
- 143 Ryukyu Minivet** *Pericrocotus tegimae* **Endemic to S Japan and Nansei Shoto**
2 m Lake Mi-ike 7.2, 1 h W Fushigawa Dam 11.2.
- 144 Bull-headed Shrike** *Lanius bucephalus bucephalus*
1 Hoshino Onsen, Karuizawa 31.1, 1 Karuizawa 1.2, 4 Arasaki 8.2, 7 Yatsushiro 9.2, 1 Satsuma 10.2, 2 Hachijo-jima 13.2.
- 145 Eurasian Jay** *Garrulus glandarius*
Max 10 (ssp *japonicus*) Karuizawa 31.1-1.2, 1 (ssp *brandtii*) Rausu 3-4.2, 2 (ssp *brandtii*) Hokkaido 6.2, 3 (ssp *hiugaensis*) Lake Mi-ike 7.2.
- 146 Azure-winged Magpie** *Cyanopica cyanus japonica*
2 Karuizawa 31.1.
- 147 Daurian Jackdaw** *Coloeus dauuricus*
3 Arasaki Crane Center 8.2.
- 148 Rook** *Corvus frugilegus pastinator*
1000+ Arasaki 8.2, 150 Yatsushiro 9.2.
- 149 Carrion Crow** *Corvus corone orientalis*
Seen on 8 days.
- 150 Large-billed Crow** *Corvus macrorhynchos*
Seen on 14 days.
- 151 Coal Tit** *Periparus ater insularis*
Max 15 Karuizawa 30.1-1.2.
- 152 Varied Tit** *Sittiparus varius*
Max 15 (ssp *varius*) Karuizawa 31.1-1.2, 6 (ssp *varius*) Lake Mi-ike 7.2, 2 (ssp *amamii*) Fushigawa Dam 11.2.
- 153 Marsh Tit** *Poecile palustris hensoni*
5 Otowa Bridge, Tsurui 3.2.
- 154 Willow Tit** *Poecile montanus restrictus*
Max 30 Karuizawa 30.1-1.2.
- 155 Japanese Tit** *Parus minor minor*
Seen on 9 days. Max 8 (ssp *okinawae*) Yanbaru 11-12.2.
- 156 Eurasian Skylark** *Alauda arvensis japonica*
200 Arasaki 8.2, 16 Izumi 9.2.
- 157 Light-vented Bulbul** *Pycnonotus sinensis*
1 Sadowara-cho Shimotonda 6.2, 20 S Okinawa 10.2, 8 S Okinawa 12.2.
- 158 Brown-eared Bulbul** *Hypsipetes amaurotis*
Seen on 12 days. Ssp *amaurotis* on Honshu and Hokkaido, ssp *matchiae* on S Kyushu, ssp *pryeri* on Okinawa.
- 159 Barn Swallow** *Hirundo rustica*
5 Sadowara-cho Shimotonda 6.2, 50 e.r. 7.2.
- 160 Asian House Martin** *Delichon dasypus dasypus*
5 e.r. 7.2, 2 Kijoka 11.2.
- 161 Japanese Bush Warbler** *Horornis diphone cantans*
Max 30 Kyushu 6-9.2, max 25 Okinawa 11-12.2.
- 162 Long-tailed Tit** *Aegithalos caudatus*
Max 50+ (ssp *trivirgatus*) Karuizawa 31.1-1.2, 25 (ssp *kiusiuensis*) Lake Mi-ike 7.2, 10 (ssp *kiusiuensis*) Kogawa Dam 9.2.
- 163 Zitting Cisticola** *Cisticola juncidis bruniceps*

- 8 Kin Ricefields 10.2, 4 Kijoka 11.2, 5 Kin Ricefields 12.2.
- 164 Chinese Hwamei** *Garrulax canorus* [Introduced]
2 Karuizawa 31.1, 1 Karuizawa 1.2.
- 165 Red-billed Leiothrix** *Leiothrix lutea* [Introduced]
5 Hyugamisaki 7.2, 15 Lake Mi-ike 7.2.
- 166 Japanese White-eye** *Zosterops japonicus*
Seen on 7 days on Kyushu and Okinawa.
- 167 Goldcrest** *Regulus regulus japonensis*
2 Karuizawa 1.2.
- 168 Eurasian Wren** *Troglodytes troglodytes fumigatus*
Max 5 Karuizawa 30.1-1.2, 4 Lake Mi-ike 7.2.
- 169 Eurasian Nuthatch** *Sitta europea*
Max 8 (ssp *amurensis*) Karuizawa 31.1-1.2, 5 (ssp *roseilia*) Lake Mi-ike 7.2.
- 170 White-cheeked Starling** *Spodiopsar cineraceus*
Seen on 6 days, max 150 Yatsushiro 9.2.
- 171 Common Starling** *Sturnus vulgaris poltaratskyi*
51 Arasaki Crane Center 8.2.
- 172 Pale Thrush** *Turdus pallidus*
Seen on 9 days, max 40 Lake Mi-ike 7.2, max 40 Okinawa 10-12.2.
- 173 Brown-headed Thrush** *Turdus chrysolaus*
4 Kin Ricefields 10.2, 2 Ada Village 11.2.
- 174 Izu Thrush** *Turdus celaenops* **VU** Endemic to Izu Is, Tokara Is and Yakushima
1 m Hachijo-jima 13.2.
- 175 Dusky Thrush** *Turdus eunomus*
Seen on 13 days, max 200 Arasaki 8.2.
- 176 Ryukyu Robin** *Larvivora komadori namiyei* **NT** Endemic to Nansei Shoto
1 seen + 15 h Yanbaru 11.2, 3 seen + 3 h Yanbaru 12.2.
- 177 Red-flanked Bluetail** *Tarsiger cyanurus*
2 m + 4 f Karuizawa 31.1, 3 f Karuizawa 1.2, 4 m + 4 f Lake Mi-ike 7.2, 1 m Yatsushiro shrine 9.2, 2 m Fushigawa Dam 11.2.
- 178 Daurian Redstart** *Phoenicurus aureus aureus*
1 m Karuizawa 31.1, 5 Karuizawa 1.2, max 8 Kyushu 6-10.2, max 5 Okinawa 10-11.2.
- 179 Blue Rock Thrush** *Monticola solitarius philippensis*
4 Arasaki 8.2, 1 Yatsushiro 9.2, max 15 Okinawa 10-12.2.
- 180 Stejneger's Stonechat** *Saxicola stejnegeri*
1 f Kin Ricefields 10.2.
- 181 Brown Dipper** *Cinclus pallasii pallasii*
Max 10 Karuizawa 30.1-1.2, 1 e.r. 3.2, 1 Washi-no-yado 4.2, 2 Kogawa Dam 9.2.
- 182 Russet Sparrow** *Passer rutilans rutilans*
2 Arasaki 8.2, 100 Yatsushiro 9.2.
- 183 Eurasian Tree Sparrow** *Passer montanus montanus*
Seen on 11 days.
- 184 Scaly-breasted Munia** *Lonchura punctulata topela*
17 Kin Ricefields 10.2, 10 Kijoka 11.2.
- 185 Forest Wagtail** *Dendroanthus indicus*
1 Lake Mi-ike (at the parking lot close to the campsite) 7.2.
- 186 Eastern Yellow Wagtail** *Motacilla tschutschensis*
8 Kin Ricefields 10.2, 1 Kin Ricefields 12.2. Most birds ssp *taivana*.
- 187 Grey Wagtail** *Motacilla cinerea cinerea*
Seen on 9 days.
- 188 White Wagtail** *Motacilla alba*
Seen (ssp *lugens*) on 13 days, 5 (ssp *ocularis*) Arasaki 8.2, 5 (ssp *ocularis*) Kin Ricefields 10.2.
- 189 Japanese Wagtail** *Motacilla grandis* Endemic to Japan and South Korea
1 Karuizawa 31.1, 3 Karuizawa 1.2, 1 Kogawa Dam 9.2, 1 Satsuma 10.2.
- 190 Richard's Pipit** *Anthus richardi*
2 Arasaki (paddies just south of the crane center) 8.2.
- 191 Olive-backed Pipit** *Anthus hodgsoni*
3 Lake Mi-ike 7.2, 1 Fushigawa Dam 11.2.
- 192 Red-throated Pipit** *Anthus cervinus*

7 Kin Ricefields 10.2, 2 Kin Ricefields 12.2.

- 193 Buff-bellied Pipit** *Anthus rubescens japonicus*
60 Arasaki 8.2, 4 Izumi 9.2, 6 Yatsushiro 9.2, 7 Kin Ricefields 10.2, 10 Kin Ricefields 12.2, 2 Hachijo-jima 13.2.
- 194 Brambling** *Fringilla montifringilla*
60 Obari shrine, Yatsushiro 9.2.
- 195 Hawfinch** *Coccothraustes coccothraustes japonicus*
Max 8 Karuizawa 30.1-1.2, 1 Arasaki 8.2.
- 196 Japanese Grosbeak** *Eophona personata personata*
Max 5 Karuizawa 30.1-1.2, 1 Lake Mi-ike 7.2.
- 197 Eurasian Bullfinch** *Pyrrhula pyrrhula griseiventris*
1 m Karuizawa 31.1.
- 198 Asian Rosy Finch** *Leucosticte arctoa brunneonucha*
40 Kiritappumisaki 5.2.
- 199 Long-tailed Rosefinch** *Carpodacus sibiricus sanguinolentus*
Max 4 Karuizawa 31.1-1.2.
- 200 Grey-capped Greenfinch** *Chloris sinica minor*
Seen on 7 days, max 1000 Yatsushiro 9.2.
- 201 Meadow Bunting** *Emberiza cioides ciopsis*
1 f Karuizawa 31.1, 1 Otowa Bridge, Tsurui 3.2, 30 Arasaki 8.2, 6 Yatsushiro 9.2, 7 Satsuma 10.2.
- 202 Chestnut-eared Bunting** *Emberiza fucata fucata*
15 Arasaki 8.2.
- 203 Rustic Bunting** *Emberiza rustica*
1 Karuizawa 1.2.
- 204 Yellow-throated Bunting** *Emberiza elegans elegans*
3 Karuizawa 31.1, 15 Lake Mi-ike 7.2, 4 Kogawa Dam 9.2, 1 Satsuma 10.2.
- 205 Black-faced Bunting** *Emberiza spodocephala*
Seen on 5 days on Kyushu, max 50 (ssp *personata*) Arasaki 8.2, 2 Ada Village 11-12.2.
- 206 Grey Bunting** *Emberiza variabilis variabilis*
4 Lake Mi-ike 7.2, 3 Kogawa Dam 9.2.
- 207 Common Reed Bunting** *Emberiza schoeniclus pyrrhulina*
30 Arasaki 8.2, 2 Yatsushiro 9.2.
- 208 Golden-crowned Sparrow** *Zonotrichia atricapilla*
1 imm Kiritappumisaki 5.2. North American vagrant!

Comments on some other birds NOT seen

<i>American Wigeon</i>	Rare Arasaki or Hokkaido
<i>Baikal Teal</i>	W Honshu, Komatsu area, one male in park in Tokyo during our stay
<i>Baer's Pochard</i>	Returning male, Osaka
<i>Scaly-sided Merganser</i>	Returning bird, Komatsu area, some winters along Sendai River, Kyushu
<i>Chinese Bamboo Partridge</i>	Not uncommon introduced bird, eg Tokyo area
<i>Copper Pheasant</i>	Karuizawa, also possible around Lake Mi-ike and Kogawa Dam, Kyushu
<i>Green Pheasant</i>	Possible Karuizawa and Arasaki
<i>Tristram's Storm Petrel</i>	Possible from Hachijo-jima ferry
<i>Fork-tailed Storm Petrel</i>	Possible from Tomakomai ferry
<i>Northern Fulmar</i>	Possible from Tomakomai ferry
<i>Bonin Petrel</i>	Possible from Hachijo-jima ferry
<i>Japanese Night Heron</i>	One early bird at Miyake-jima during our stay
<i>Mountain Hawk-Eagle</i>	Possible Hokkaido and Kyushu (Lake Mi-ike)
<i>Siberian Crane</i>	One bird wintering W Honshu
<i>Amami Woodcock</i>	Uncertain status on Okinawa
<i>Thayer's Gull</i>	Small numbers winter, Choshi, E Tokyo
<i>Lesser Black-backed Gull</i>	Vega Gull-looking gulls with yellow tinge to legs at Yatsushiro might be <i>heuglini</i> , ' <i>taimyrensis</i> ' or <i>mongolicus</i>
<i>Tufted Puffin</i>	Summer visitor Cape Nosappu, rare during winter
<i>Northern Boobook</i>	Yanbaru area, Okinawa
<i>House Swift</i>	S Kyushu, Okinawa
<i>Ruddy Kingfisher</i>	Should be resident on Okinawa, winter status seem uncertain though

<i>Grey-headed Woodpecker</i>	Difficult E Hokkaido
<i>Japanese Waxwing</i>	Do not reach Japan every winter, Karuizawa is the place
<i>Chinese Penduline Tit</i>	Should winter at Arasaki
<i>White's Thrush</i>	Scarce winter eg Lake Mi-ike
<i>Naumann's Thrush</i>	Rare winter guest
<i>Narcissus Flycatcher (ssp owstoni)</i>	Should be resident on Okinawa, winter status seem uncertain though
<i>Japanese Accentor</i>	Karuizawa (Feeders at Shiotsubo Onsen)
<i>Pallas's Rosefinch</i>	Do not reach Japan every winter
<i>Pine Bunting</i>	Scarce winter guest Hokkaido

Additional trip shots

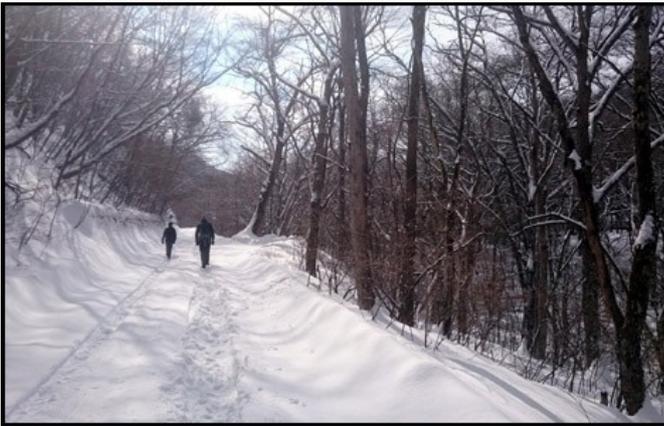


Fig 26. Snowy conditions in Karuizawa this year. Hard to track down any pheasants...



Fig 27. Red-flanked Bluetail, Karuizawa.



Fig 28. Japanese Grosbeak, Karuizawa.



Fig 29. Rustic Bunting, Karuizawa. The only one of the trip!



Fig 30. Long-tailed Rosefinch, Karuizawa.



Fig 31. Japanese Green Woodpecker, Karuizawa.



Fig 32. Nailing down auks from the Oarai-Tomakomai ferry.



Fig 33. Large flocks of Black-legged Kittiwakes (*ssp pollicaris*) as we left Honshu.



Fig 34. Bufflehead, male, Rausu harbour. Photo: MGe



Fig 35. Steller's Sea Eagle, abundant Rausu-Notsuke.



Fig 36. Easy birding along east Hokkaido coasts.



Fig 37. Short-eared Owl mobbed by Large-billed Crow, Kiritappu-misaki.



Fig 38. Red-faced Cormorant, immature, and Pelagic Cormorant (below), Nosappu-misaki. Photo: MA



Fig 39. Golden-crowned Sparrow, immature, Kiritappu-misaki. Photo: MA

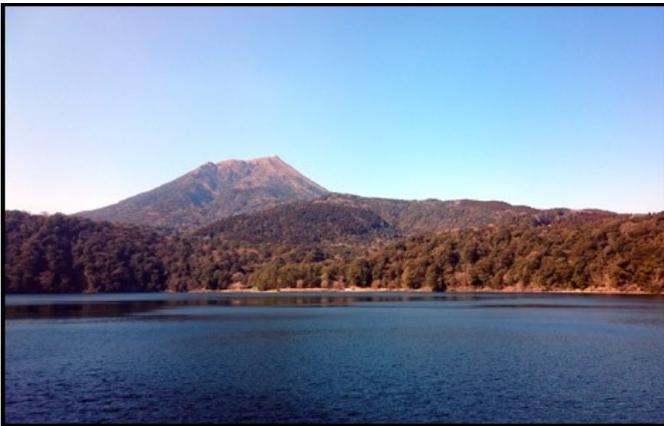


Fig 40. Lake Mi-ike and Mt Takachiho.



Fig 41. Olive-backed Pipit, Lake Mi-ike campsite.



Fig 42. Hooded Crane, Arasaki.



Fig 43. Meadow Bunting, Satsuma.



Fig 44. Black-faced Bunting (*ssp personata*), Arasaki.



Fig 45. Forest Wagtail, Lake Mi-ike campsite.



Fig 46. Sandhill Crane, Arasaki.



Fig 47. Lovely weather at Arasaki. Great birding!



Fig 48. Richard's Pipit, Arasaki Crane Center.



Fig 49. Daurian Jackdaw, first winter, Arasaki Crane Center.
Photo: MGe



Fig 50. Grey-faced Buzzard, Kin Ricefields, Okinawa.



Fig 51. Eurasian Hoopoe, Ada Village, Okinawa. Scarce migrant on Okinawa. Photo: MGe



Fig 52. Rhinoceros Auklet, Oarai-Tomakomai Ferry. Photo: MGe



Fig 53. Parakeet Auklet, Oarai-Tomakomai Ferry. Scarce winter-guest to Japan. Photo: MGe



Fig 54. Saunders's Gull, Yatsushiro, red listed east Asian mud flat specialist.



Fig 55. Thick-billed Murre, Oarai-Tomakomai Ferry.