

Wild Japan in Winter

Naturetrek Tour Report

5th – 21st February 2025



Blakiston's Fish Owl



Japanese Macaques



Red-crowned Cranes



Steller's Sea Eagle

Tour report by Barrie Cooper



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Summary

Japan is a fascinating country to visit with great food, scenery, culture and, of course, the wildlife providing a wonderful experience. For example, a snow-covered Hokkaido had bugling and dancing Red-crowned Cranes. The close views of these majestic cranes must be one of the most special of wildlife moments. Stunning views of Steller's Sea Eagles and White-tailed Eagles as they swooped down for fish just metres away provided more memorable highlights. Watching the globally-endangered Blakiston's Fish Owl catching and eating fish was another exciting privilege; we saw this magnificent species three times. On Honshu, the 'snow monkeys' provided entertainment in and around their hot water bathing pool. Birds such as Japanese Accentor and Japanese Green Woodpecker were two of the endemic species that we saw well.

On Kyushu, a few thousand Hooded and White-naped Cranes provided a true spectacle of sight and sound as they flew in to feed at dawn. It was particularly pleasing to see many juveniles of Hooded and White-naped Cranes, as these two rare species attempt to increase their numbers. The globally-endangered Black-faced Spoonbill gave us another of those privilege moments, when one grappled with a large fish for fifteen minutes, just twenty metres away from us. Watching two Japanese Badgers at close quarters was yet another special sight. Japan in winter is excellent at creating marvellous memories, and this trip provided plenty for a great group of people, who had enthusiasm, humour, patience, cooperation and a willingness to embrace the country and have an enjoyable holiday.

Day 1

Wednesday 5th February

The BA flight to Tokyo left on time for Barrie and seven members of the group, for the thirteen-and-a-half-hour flight. It arrived on time the following morning.

Day 2

Thursday 6th February

Kasai Rinkai Park, Tokyo

Sunny, cold wind. 9°C max.

It was a beautiful sunny morning as our flight approached Haneda, so we could fully appreciate the majestic sight of Mount Fuji, either from the aircraft or from the ground once we were in Tokyo. After a smooth journey through the airport, we boarded our coach to make our way through the rush-hour traffic to our hotel. Our final group member was ready and waiting, so after a short break, six of the group joined Barrie for a few hours of birdwatching at Kasai Rinkai Park, which sits on the edge of Tokyo Bay. Two trains later, we arrived at the station opposite the park, picked up some lunch in a convenience store, and made our way into this popular park, with Disneyland just a couple of kilometres away.

The fountain at the entrance provided us with the entertaining sight of an Oriental Turtle Dove having a very thorough shower, making sure its underwings got a soaking like the rest of its body; it was the first opportunity

for a photograph. The ubiquitous Brown-eared Bulbul was everywhere and soon became a familiar bird. The first Black-eared Kite flew over, and this species seemed to be an almost continuous presence during our visit. Approximately twenty Azure-winged Magpies put on quite a show, with several obliging individuals posing in trees in glorious light. They remained the focus of attention for fifteen minutes as we watched their antics at close quarters. Trying to distract our gaze and cameras was a flock of fifty White-cheeked Starlings as they poked around in the leaf litter. Despite the sun, the strong cold wind became even more of a hindrance as we approached Tokyo Bay.

As we crossed the bridge to reach an island, the constant flow of boat traffic was clearly limiting the number of birds that could be seen in the channel between the island and mainland. Nevertheless, a group of Greater Scaup were relatively close and, with good light on them, enabled their identification features to be easily studied. A Common Sandpiper was making its way along the rocky shoreline beneath the bridge. There are only a few trees on the island, but they provided us with close views of Japanese Tits and Warbling White-eyes, both species completely ignoring the tune of “Yesterday” which was blaring out of the loudspeaker just ten metres from the trees: The Beatles are still very popular in Japan! Eurasian Wigeon and Teal were out on the water, but it was a Saunders’s Gull that was the real prize here. We had reasonable views before it drifted off towards Disneyland, rather than in our direction. Approximately sixty Dunlins were on the mud where the gull was first seen. With the wind biting into us, there were no complaints when we headed back over the bridge and headed towards the more sheltered bird reserve part of the park.

A very welcome Osprey flew by as we walked towards the reserve, and was swiftly mobbed by Large-billed Crows. A pond had a good selection of wildfowl including our first Eastern Spot-billed Ducks and Northern Shovelers. Someone spotted a Japanese Pond Turtle lying out on vegetation near some reeds, and followed that up with a Japanese Bush Warbler. The warbler had been “tacking” in an agitated manner, which first grabbed our attention, and we were grateful to see this skulking species. An Eastern Buzzard posed in a tree, enabling everyone to see it. However, two Masked Buntings on the path were flushed by oncoming pedestrians before some of the group managed to see them. After completing a circuit of the bird reserve, it was clear that the combination of jetlag and the cold wind were the signal to bring a pleasant few hours of birdwatching to an end. After negotiating the rail system again, we arrived back at our hotel for a break, before going out to dinner at the local Outback restaurant. After a fine meal, we all hit our beds in search of some much-needed sleep.

Day 3

Friday 7th February

Hokkaido – Tsurumidai Crane Sanctuary, Tsurui Ito Crane Sanctuary, Lake Kussharo

Sunny morning, cloud, then snow. 1°C max.

We made an early start to catch the train to Haneda Airport for our flight to Kushiro. The flight arrived on schedule and we were greeted by a sunny, snow-covered landscape. After collecting our luggage, we met up with our local guide, Masa. We boarded the bus and were soon on our way to our first destination, Tsurumidai, for our first Red-crowned Crane experience. Red-crowned Crane was once considered to be extinct in Japan, until twenty birds were found in this part of Hokkaido in 1924. Protection of the birds and their habitats, along with feeding by local farmers, helped to increase the population from that dangerously low population. There were approximately one hundred and fifty Red-crowned Cranes in the meadow, where they are fed twice a day to help this endangered

species to survive the winter. Most of the cranes were rather subdued, with just occasional calling. There were only eight juvenile cranes visible while we were there, which is a disappointingly low number, indicating a possibly poor breeding season last year.

Apart from the cranes, the only species seen here were Coal Tit and Brown-eared Bulbul, plus the ever-present crows. The bright sunshine made it feel much warmer than it actually was, making our time there even more pleasant. After enjoying our first crane session, we made a short drive to a popular restaurant where we had an excellent lunch.

Another short drive took us to Tsurui Ito Sanctuary which is a crane reserve run by the Wild Bird Society of Japan. We had arrived in time to see the 2.00pm feeding of Red-crowned Cranes. Approximately one hundred and fifty cranes were seen here, but with only four juveniles. Several of the cranes started to get excited and we saw plenty of displaying, with bugling and dancing prompting the photographers to get to work. One of the adult cranes had a wound on its breast, with blood easily visible on the white feathers. Presumably the crane had been in a dispute with another, and this was evidence that those beaks can be powerful weapons. It started snowing while we were there and became progressively heavier, making photos even more atmospheric, but eventually the conditions prompted a slightly earlier departure than planned.

A one-hour drive through the snow and declining visibility brought us to Lake Kussharo. Normally, much of the lake is frozen at this time of year; however, only a small area was frozen today. Nevertheless, there were still good numbers of Whooper Swans close to the shoreline. At our first stop there were sixty Whooper Swans, with a few family groups, including one with four juveniles. Our next stop had even more Whooper Swans, with approximately a hundred, with some on the land, possibly in the hope of being fed. The soft calls of the Whoopers are always a great sound, and there was certainly plenty of vocal action here today. Some other new birds for the trip were taking advantage of the unfrozen lake, with two female Common Goldeneyes, eight Common Pochards and a male Goosander relatively close in the gathering gloom. After enjoying the birds of Lake Kussharo, it was a ten-minute drive to our *onsen* hotel for our first night in snow-covered Hokkaido.

Day 4

Saturday 8th February

Otowa Bridge, Tsurui Ito Sanctuary, Tsurumidai Crane Sanctuary, Lake Mashu, Mount Ito

Sun in early morning, cloud, snow and windy in the afternoon. -1°C max

It was a 5.30am start for our drive to the famous Otowa Bridge. We made a brief stop at a convenience store for coffee and supplementary breakfast items, before arriving at the bridge around 6.45am. We managed to see our first Steller's Sea Eagle during the journey. There were already plenty of photographers stationed on the bridge that crosses the geothermally-heated Setsuri-gawa River which is a winter roost site for some of the Red-crowned Crane population. Approximately forty cranes were seen from the bridge, including a family of three which were quite close. Many of the cranes would move to the sanctuaries we were visiting later, and photographers hope to see them fly over the bridge on the way to their breakfast locations. Ironically, most of the photographers had already gone when some of the cranes flew over. For those who averted their attention away from the cranes, there were other birds to be seen, including Little Grebe, Goosander and Eastern Spot-billed Ducks in the river. Three

Meadow Buntings in reeds eventually moved to a closer patch enabling some of the group to gain improved views. A couple of Marsh Tits were in the trees near the buntings. A Japanese Wagtail was seen by some of the group.

After a pleasant session, we drove the short distance to the Ito Sanctuary to watch the 9.00am feed. Approximately two hundred Red-crowned Cranes were seen during our visit, including the one with the breast wound that we had seen yesterday. Ten juveniles were present among the feeding throng, possibly learning that this is a place to return when they become independent from their parents. There was plenty of displaying during feeding time, almost as though a few grains of maize gave them the energy and willpower to do some dancing. Once things quietened down, we made our way to Tsurumidai Crane Sanctuary in the hope of finding a bird that had eluded us yesterday. To our delight, the bird could be seen among the Red-crowned Cranes before we got off the bus. We quickly moved to the observation area for closer views of our target bird: a White-naped Crane. This vagrant should be further south in Kyushu, but this individual must have tagged on to the wrong species of crane when it migrated and found itself on Hokkaido. It was here last year and created so much interest that it was shown on national television. The White-naped Crane called several times while we were there but, if it was hoping to attract one of its kind, it would have been disappointed. One hundred and ten Red-crowned Cranes were here, including seven juveniles. After enjoying excellent views of the White-naped Crane, we drove to see another star of the morning.

A five-minute walk through a forest took us to an area where we could look at a Ural Owl sitting in a cavity in an old tree. This must be the most photographed Ural Owl in the world, and is probably visited by every birdwatcher and photographer who comes to this part of Hokkaido in winter. There used to be two owls here so, although it was good to see this one, it was rather sad to think that the other had probably perished. A visit to a gift shop later in the day had postcards for sale, with the pair of them posing in the cavity. After appreciating our views of the Ural Owl, we drove to Tsurui for lunch. As we were a little early, we had time to visit some feeders near an art gallery. Japanese and Marsh Tits showed well at the feeders, but a Hawfinch in some trees was only seen by a couple of group members.

After a pleasant *bento* lunch, we had a one-hour drive to Lake Mashu. Our driver spotted a Red Fox in a roadside cemetery and stopped the bus to enable us to watch it. Fortunately, the fox came towards us, crossed the road and then moved along the verge. We all had excellent views of this Ezo subspecies, which is larger than the one seen elsewhere in Japan and looks particularly attractive in its thick winter coat. It had started snowing around lunchtime, and the snow became progressively heavier as we drove north. Unfortunately, when we arrived at Lake Mashu, the snow was horizontal due to the strong wind, and visibility was poor. It was impossible to see the caldera lake and to appreciate its beauty. We had to take sanctuary in the visitor centre to get out of the biting wind, but with no sign of an improvement in the weather, we drove back down the mountain to our final destination. The landscape of Mount Io, with its amazing vents spouting sulphur-tinged steam into the cold air, and boiling water bubbling up to the surface, is an incredible sight. The strong smell of sulphur, the bubbling springs and the sulphur-covered rocks provide a fascinating experience. Fortunately, the visibility was better here and although we had snow and the biting wind, the amazing geological activity here took our minds off the weather for a few minutes. After soaking up the experience, we made our way back to the bus and made an earlier than planned arrival back to the hotel. The extended break enabled some group members to have a relaxing *onsen* before another fine Japanese dinner.

Day 5

Sunday 9th February

Shibetsu Harbour, Rausu Harbour, Washi No Yado

Cloudy morning, snow and strong winds in the afternoon and evening. -3°C max

We made a slightly later start this morning with breakfast at the hotel. Snow had continued to fall during the night and vehicles were out early to clear the roads. By the time we set off, the roads were clear enough to make good progress to Shibetsu Harbour. A Red Fox, some male Sika Deer and the occasional Steller's Sea Eagle and White-tailed Eagle were seen during the journey. The harbour was quite productive, with good numbers of Pelagic Cormorants, Harlequin Ducks, Goldeneyes, and Common and Red-breasted Mergansers. Greater Scaup, Eurasian Wigeon and Great Crested Grebe were also present, but in smaller numbers. Slaty-backed was the commonest gull, but there were also a few Glaucous and Glaucous-winged Gulls. A stop for lunch supplies at a convenience store in Shibetsu was followed by a drive north along the coastal road to Rausu.

Despite horizontal light snow, the boat trip went ahead and, after making a circuit around the harbour, we went a short distance into the Sea of Okhotsk. The boat trip lasted just less than an hour, but it was very memorable. Good numbers of Steller's Sea Eagles and White-tailed Eagles were continually around the boat, because they knew that free food was on offer. Once the crew started throwing fish into the sea, it was a continuous flow of eagle after eagle swooping down and grabbing fish, with the photographers trying to get some memorable photographs. It was quite a spectacle to have these huge eagles less than twenty metres away. Looking up into the sky was also impressive, with dozens of eagles soaring over the boat, eyeing their opportunity to descend for fish. The return journey into the harbour enabled Vega Gull to be added to the day's gull list. We had time to kill before checking into our hotel, so some of the group braved the horizontal snow to walk to a bridge over the river. We didn't have to wait long, and one eagle-eyed client took the prize for being the first person to spot a Brown Dipper on the edge of the river. A few Tufted and Harlequin Ducks were also on the river. Checking the sea before returning to the bus enabled us to find the *kamtschatschensis* subspecies of Common Gull and a few Black-headed Gulls. We then drove up the river to check into our hotel and have a break, before the evening session targeting Blakiston's Fish Owl.

A ten-minute drive from the hotel brought us to the internationally famous Washi No Yado, with its entire setup focussed on enabling people to see the globally-endangered Blakiston's Fish Owl. We arrived when it was still light and a few Sika Deer were near the car park. As the light began to fade, Venus was visible in a clear patch of sky, but it soon disappeared as the snow became more persistent. The show really began at 5.40pm when a Blakiston's Fish Owl flew in to a tree opposite to where we were sitting. After a few minutes, the world's largest owl flew from the tree down to the pool in search of an easy meal. It didn't take long before the owl pounced and came out with a fish, swallowed it and then flew off. We were delighted at this showing and we only had to wait another ten minutes before the owl returned to the same tree. Once again, it flew down to the pool and took another fish before flying off. The owl was ringed, and photos showed it to be B2, a young Blakiston's Fish Owl that hatched in 2022. As the population is so low on Hokkaido, it's good to see a young owl surviving. The two sightings were the only ones while we were there, but we were delighted with our session.

Day 6

Monday 10th February

Rausu Harbour, Sea of Okhotsk, Notsuke Peninsula, Washi No Yado

Cloudy with snow showers, breezy. -2°C max.

It was an early start for our 6.00am boat trip, this one timed to see the rising sun...in the land of the rising sun. After a windy night, fortunately it was much calmer this morning with only a few patches of cloud. The boat left the harbour but didn't go too far before stopping for the eagle spectacle. During the next hour we were treated to the sight of dozens of Steller's Sea Eagles and White-tailed Eagles swooping down to take the fish thrown from the boat. As the light improved, the opportunities for photographers became better. On returning to the harbour, the boat positioned itself along the sea wall where there were many eagles waiting patiently for the next feeding session. Both species of eagles were just a few metres away, as fish were thrown onto the seawall next to the boat. The sun had now risen sufficiently to provide very good light and, with the birds so close, camera phones were also put into action. After ninety minutes, we returned to dock at the end of a memorable boat trip.

After breakfast back at the hotel, a blizzard was raging when we set off to the Notsuke Peninsular. Fortunately, the snow ended soon after we left Rausu, only to return in the afternoon. As we headed south down the coast, we managed to see a group of ten Steller (sic) Sea Lions quite close to the shoreline. After calling in to a convenience store in Shibetsu, we were soon on the Notsuke Peninsula. The inland freshwater marsh and open water area had some unfrozen areas, which is unusual for this time of year. Meanwhile, on the side exposed to the Sea of Okhotsk, the lack of pack-ice may have explained why divers and guillemots were absent from the viewpoints we checked. The high waves were another factor which made seawatching difficult. Nevertheless, we did manage to see a few rafts of Black Scoters, and some of these were quite close once we arrived at the lighthouse area. A good range of gulls were seen, including Slaty-backed, Kamchatka and Vega. There were noticeably many more Glaucous Gulls here than there had been at Rausu, and we had excellent views of this attractive species. Sika Deer grabbed a lot of attention and some fine stags with impressive antlers did a lot of posing near the road. The highlight of our exploration of Notsuke was the regular sightings of Asian Rosy Finches. These attractive migrants from Russia seemed to be everywhere and we had excellent views, including some bathing in meltwater at the side of the road. The finches seemed to be scattered in groups in several areas of the peninsula, rather than in one large flock, making sightings much more frequent than on some previous visits. The rough sea and high water created some spectacular waves crashing over the coastal defences before we left to return to our hotel. As we approached Rausu, three groups of Steller Sea Lions were spotted, making it an excellent way to finish our daylight observations.

After a break back at the hotel, we returned to Washi No Yado for some evening entertainment. As darkness descended, the sense of anticipation grew. The occasional cloud-free area of sky enabled us to catch glimpses of Venus, Orion and Sirius. At 6.40pm, we finally had views of a Blakiston's Fish Owl when B2, the same young bird as yesterday, flew in to a tree before descending to the pool. After a brief study of the scene, the owl jumped into the pond and came out with a small Cherry Salmon. The fish was swiftly swallowed before the owl did the same again. Seemingly satisfied with two fish, the Blakiston's Fish Owl flew off, and that was our final sighting before we had to leave to return to our hotel for dinner. It had been a cold, but productive session.

Day 7

Tuesday 11th February

Shibetsu Harbour, Notsuke Peninsula, Yorouchi Onsen

Cloud, occasional snow showers. -2°C max.

After checking out of our hotel in Rausu, we headed south along the coast. We managed to find a place to take the bus off the main road, and fortunately found three Steller Sea Lions and a Harbour Seal close enough to identify. As we drove further down the coast, another six Steller Sea Lions were spotted from our moving bus. We called into Shibetsu harbour to see if there was anything new. As the sea was calmer than a few days ago, there were fewer birds sheltering in the harbour, so we didn't hang around for too long. A drive along the Notsuke Peninsula produced similar species to yesterday, with dozens of Sika Deer and small groups of Asian Rosy Finches feeding close to the road. The same Red Foxes we had seen yesterday were seen again, with one of them approaching people doing some ice-fishing, in the hope of some free food. A pair of foxes that had been mating yesterday were still taking the opportunity to propagate their species. Three Long-tailed Ducks were seen by some of the group, before they flew off into the distance, never to be seen again. After a pleasant lunch at a restaurant in Shibetsu, we made the one-hour journey to our excellent hotel at Yorouchi.

As soon as we entered the lounge area of the hotel we could see the feeding station, and we didn't need to wait long for the action to start. A Nuthatch was the first bird to appear, soon followed by Marsh and Japanese Tits. A pair of the local subspecies of Great Spotted Woodpecker came to the feeders and stayed around for several minutes. A Wren of the local subspecies was on the bank of the river and a female Grey-bellied Bullfinch browsed around the same bank. It was an excellent welcome to this marvellous place.

Later in the afternoon, a Japanese Pygmy Woodpecker came to the feeders. A Brown Dipper feeding in the river, opposite the lounge, was an entertaining sight. While we watched the dipper, a Crested Kingfisher flew past and landed in trees just forty metres away. Seeing the kingfisher so soon after arrival was a real bonus. We then had a wait in anticipation of seeing a Blakiston's Fish Owl, but without any luck before dinner. After a fine meal, some members of the group stayed around in the hope of getting lucky. The adult male finally appeared at 9.30pm, staying in a tree opposite the lounge for a few minutes before flying down to the small pool where some fish had already been placed. It didn't take long for this magnificent bird to catch its first fish and promptly swallow it. After another couple of minutes, it caught another fish and stood with it for a minute before flying off down the river. Considering the owl was fewer than ten metres from the lounge window, it was a particularly rewarding experience.

Day 8

Wednesday 12th February

Yorouchi Onsen, Tsurumidai Crane Sanctuary

Sunny all day. 1°C max.

It was a relaxed start to the day as the buffet breakfast was taken in the dining room overlooking the river. The feeders were very busy, initially dominated by Eurasian Jays of the distinctive *brandtii* subspecies, with their russet-brown heads. Once their numbers dwindled, the smaller birds came to feed, including Japanese and Marsh Tits,

Nuthatch and Great Spotted Woodpecker. A Red Squirrel appeared and took temporary residence of a bird table and became king of the castle for a few minutes. A female Bullfinch showed in a branch overhanging the river but, unfortunately, she didn't have a male with her. A Brown Dipper behaved in typical fashion on the river in front of the lounge, and came up with some decent-sized invertebrates. After leaving this excellent *onsen* hotel, our drive to Tsuruimidai included sightings of White-tailed Eagle and a few family groups of Red-crowned Cranes. We only had time for a fifteen-minute stop at the crane sanctuary, but it was sufficient to get good views of the White-naped Crane, which was relatively close when we first arrived. There were 96 Red-crowned Cranes, including six juveniles, and they were quietly feeding with no bugling or displaying today. After our short but sweet visit, we made the thirty-minute drive to Kushiro Airport for our flight to Tokyo. We said our goodbyes to Masa-san (our local guide) and Endo-san (our driver). There was a tinge of regret at leaving this beautiful, snow-covered island. Hokkaido has something for every visitor and the wildlife is something special.

Day 9

Thursday 13th February

Imperial Gardens, Tokyo

Sunny, very strong winds. 10°C max.

We had a leisurely breakfast before leaving our hotel for a fifteen-minute walk to the Imperial Gardens, the home of the Emperor of Japan. This site has several moats which are attractive to wildfowl, particularly in winter. It didn't take long before we saw our first Falcated Ducks, with the heads of the attractive males revealing their glossy heads when moving in the sunshine. A few species of waterbirds were around the moats, including Eastern Spot-billed Ducks, Eurasian Teal, Gadwall, Northern Shoveler, Coot and Little Grebe. White-cheeked Starlings were seen in a few places, and mobile Warbling White-eyes tested the photographic skills of the group. It always seems bizarre to see species such as Little Egret and Grey Heron in the centre of Tokyo, with skyscrapers in every direction.

Oriental Turtle Doves, White Wagtails and Brown-cheeked Bulbuls were common, with the latter species seemingly everywhere. A Pale Thrush gave good views in a grassy area with small bushes, before disappearing into a wooded section of the gardens. Some tits flew into the tops of some trees and lingered long enough to be identified as Varied and Japanese Tits. Bird of the day was a male Daurian Redstart which perched on a low horizontal branch to give everyone good views; this attractive migrant was clearly spending the winter in the centre of this great metropolis. A Black-eared Kite flew over before we left the gardens to walk back to the hotel to eat our convenience store lunch. It had been a sunny morning, but the very strong wind made birdwatching rather challenging; nevertheless it had been quite a productive morning. After lunch, we took the 3.24pm *shinkansen* to Nagano and, on arrival, crossed the road from the station to our hotel. A pleasant meal in Logic Trattoria restaurant ended the day.

Day 10

Friday 14th February

Jigokudani, Tatsumi Park, Zenkoji Temple

Sunny. 8°C max.

It was a beautiful sunny morning and it remained like this all day. We met Haruna (our local guide) and boarded the coach for the one-hour drive to the hot spring reserve called Jigokudani, which translates as Hell Valley. The landscape had recently been refreshed by plenty of snow and was looking rather beautiful. A Common Kestrel and a few Black-eared Kites were seen during the journey. Today was noticeably warmer than what we had experienced during the last week, making our visit even more pleasant. After leaving our coach at the entrance, we put on our snow grips and made the two-kilometre walk to the warm pool where the 'snow monkeys' bathe. A Eurasian Jay of the Honshu subspecies was spotted at an *onsen* on the other side of the river, but otherwise it was relatively quiet.

On arrival at the pool, the group split up to take their many photos and videos of these endearing animals. The Japanese Macaque is the most northerly-dwelling primate in the world (apart from human beings), and there were plenty dotted around the mountain slopes, along the river and in the area near their favoured *onsen*. An area near the river came up trumps with Japanese Accentor. Initially, three were watched for several minutes in an area between the path and river, but then another one flew in to make a grand total of four Japanese Accentors, which is impressive. Unfortunately, no Japanese Serows were seen today, and only a few Sika Deer. Most of the group eventually made their way back down the valley, with some of the group spotted a naked man entering an *onsen* on the other side of the river, while some of us continued to look for wildlife! We enjoyed a pleasant lunch in a café near the start of the trail. French fries and apple pie was a popular choice for several clients.

A drive back towards Nagano brought us to Tatsumi Park, a small lake in the suburbs. The location is quite remarkable and always has an interesting range of species. Wildfowl on the lake included Eastern Spot-billed Duck, Eurasian Wigeon, Northern Pintail, Northern Shoveler and Common Pochard. A juvenile Black-crowned Night Heron was roosting on an island in the lake. This island also had a Japanese Bush Warbler that showed well for a couple of minutes. Another island had Great Egret and Grey Heron. Two Azure-winged Magpies gave good views, perching on the top of a tree and then on nearby power lines. Just as we were leaving, an Eastern Buzzard soared over the park, low enough to see its markings quite well. A short drive took us to Zenkoji Temple where Haruna gave us an interesting guided tour. Another short drive took us to our hotel, where we had a short break before heading off to dinner.

Day 11

Saturday 15th February

Karuizawa Wild Bird Sanctuary

Sunny. 8°C max.

It was a ninety-minute drive from Nagano to Karuizawa, where we were dropped off near a convenience store, while the bus went to park elsewhere. Immediately we had got off the bus, we were greeted by a male Meadow Bunting singing on roadside wires, providing us with good views and a fine start. An Oriental (Grey-capped)

Greenfinch was at the top of a nearby conifer tree, and three more flew over. A little way up the side road, a male Daurian Redstart posed, as if to show us his beautiful plumage. A Black-eared Kite soared overhead and a few Japanese Tits were around. Two Great Spotted Woodpeckers were drumming in the forest, but some Rustic Buntings were easier to see, with a couple of them showing well in trees near a car park.

Walking further up the road, we came across a mixed tit flock which included Japanese Pygmy Woodpecker and Eurasian Nuthatch. We were pleased with the showy Varied Tits, which provided us with much better views than a couple of days ago in Tokyo. Willow Tit and a solitary Long-tailed Tit were also in the small flock. But the best was yet to come! A client spotted a woodpecker fly into a tree. Further investigation revealed it to be the endemic Japanese Green Woodpecker, less than twenty metres away from us. The male woodpecker remained in the same part of the tree, searching for food and lingered for about ten minutes, making it a highly satisfactory experience. As we continued our walk, a few Eurasian Jays were seen in gardens or on roof tops.



Japanese Green Woodpecker



White-naped Cranes

Upon our arrival at the Wild Bird Sanctuary, Grey Wagtail and Eurasian Wren were on or near the river. At the visitors centre, several clients had a mug of hot chocolate and a sit down before we set off again. We walked up the hillside trail, which was surprisingly free of snow in several areas. After about ten minutes, we arrived at the top of the trail and were rewarded with excellent views of Mount Asama, an active volcano which provided a very picturesque scene set against the blue sky. Just prior to reaching the top, we had reasonable views of two Long-tailed Rosefinches, with the male eventually showing quite well for a short time. Satisfied with our hike to the viewpoint, we descended through the forest and eventually made our way back to the convenience store, where we picked up some lunch. It was then a three-and-a-half-hour drive back to Tokyo, where we first dropped off two clients who were staying an extra day. We said our goodbyes and continued to our hotel, where we then said farewell to our guide, Haruna. Today was the end of the tour for two further clients, so we said our goodbyes to them after our evening meal. We had seen some fantastic wildlife, splendid scenery and had had a great time. Everyone had super memories of another wonderful tour of Japan in winter.

Kyushu Extension Day 1

Sunday 16th February

Tokyo, Kumamoto (Kyushu), Yatsushiro, Izumi

Sunny. 13°C max.

The remaining members of the group took an early morning shuttle bus from the hotel to the airport and were soon on a flight heading south to the island of Kyushu. We arrived a few minutes late, but we soon had our luggage

and met up with our local guide, Kiyoko. A half-hour drive took us to a motorway service station where we picked up some lunch, before continuing our journey to Yatsushiro. We alighted the bus next to the River Kuma, where some familiar waterbirds were seen. A Meadow Bunting and a couple of Common Sandpipers showed well, but a Common Kingfisher just gave us a fleeting flight view. There were plenty of vocal Black-eared Kites around, but it was some Black-crowned Night Herons roosting in trees near the road that created the biggest interest. We studied them for several minutes as the occasional one preened to show us its head and full plumage. A couple of Pale Thrushes flew swiftly through the trees but were missed by some of the group. We continued walking down the river to reach the mouth where the mudflats were exposed due to it being low tide. A couple of Saunders's Gulls were the first of around twenty seen during our visit. Three Reed Buntings flew in to reeds below us, and Little and Great Egrets were out on the mud. Three Ospreys were seen with fish, one in flight and the other two on posts out in the estuary. The fields held species such as Siberian Pipit, Eurasian Skylark and Oriental Greenfinch, with Dusky Thrush and Daurian Redstart offering a contrast. Waders were in short supply, but a Green Sandpiper flew out of a drainage ditch and a few Grey and Kentish Plovers were on the mudflats. Unfortunately, despite the warm sunshine providing perfect conditions, we had to bring the session to an end and board the bus for the one-hour journey to our hotel in Izumi, which is opposite the rail station with its crane-inspired roof.

Kyushu Extension Day 2

Monday 17th February

Arasaki

Sunny, windy. 8°C max.

It was an early start today so that we could be on the roof of the observation centre at Arasaki Crane Reserve before the 7.00am feeding. There were already some Hooded and White-naped Cranes waiting noisily in the polders as we made our way onto the roof. As the light improved, more and more cranes flew in, with most coming from the east; so they had the rising sun as their backdrop as we watched them approach. It was a spectacular sight and sound as thousands arrived to feed on the wheat that was being thrown out for them. A little later, blocks of frozen fish were left out as a source of protein to help them build up their reserves for their migration to breeding grounds in Russia, China or Mongolia. Three Common Cranes were found among the masses, and a hybrid with Common and Hooded parentage was also found. The crane census from the previous day had counted 4263 Hooded and 1988 White-naped Cranes, which revealed that some birds had already left Arasaki to begin their migration. During the day we had more time and closer views to study the cranes, and it was particularly pleasing to see many juveniles of both Hooded and White-naped Cranes, indicating a good breeding season for these rare birds.

When on the roof of the observation centre, we had good views of a few thousand Rooks of the eastern subspecies. However, it was the Daurian Jackdaws which gained more attention, with at least twelve birds seen, with more than half being juveniles. Black-faced and Eurasian Spoonbills were roosting in the distance, but rarely lifted their beaks as they caught up with their beauty sleep. Northern Lapwings, Eurasian Skylarks, Siberian Pipits and several species of familiar wildfowl were also seen from the roof.

The cold wind had penetrated us during our time on the roof, so it was a welcome relief to board the bus and explore the polders. Three Sandhill Cranes were found quite close to the road and another Common Crane gave us much better views than we had had earlier in the morning. Flocks of Oriental Greenfinches were seen in a few

places, as was the occasional Dusky Thrush. After the early start, we needed a coffee and food, so a timeout at a convenience store was taken before we continued our exploration. A spot of seawatching enabled us to find a Brown Booby behaving in typical gannet fashion and diving spectacularly into the sea. Several Ospreys were around, and a couple gave us good views.

As we walked alongside the river, a male Daurian Redstart in a garden posed on various posts. It was the reedbeds adjacent to the river which were our main focus, and eventually everyone managed to see Chinese Penduline Tit, with five of them feeding on *Phragmites* seeds just twenty metres away. A Warbling White-eye was also in the reeds. Two Eastern Marsh Harriers quartered the reedbed on the other side of the river, creating panic with the various waterbirds. A Pale Thrush seemed irritated with the Brown-eared Bulbuls and eventually found a quiet place to feed in full view. A couple of Meadow Buntings here completed a very satisfactory session. A short bus drive took us to an area where a Japanese Bush Warbler was singing, but it remained hidden. We returned to Fukunoe where the tide was out, but where we finally managed decent views of Black-faced Spoonbills feeding in the shallow water. Satisfied, we returned to the hotel for a break.

Kyushu Extension Day 3

Tuesday 18th February

Arasaki, Kogawa Dam, Komenotsu River

Sunny, windy. 4°C max.

The weather forecast was spot on today, with the chilling wind making a dip into some of the Hokkaido wardrobe necessary. It was another early start, but everyone agreed it was worth it. We positioned ourselves near the eastern polders before sunrise because thousands of cranes gather there before flying to the Arasaki Crane Observatory for the 7.00am feed. The sight and sound of the cranes continuously flying over was truly spectacular. It really was an incredible experience as we watched the cranes fly over in an orderly fashion, with the high-pitched calls of the juveniles contrasting with those of the adults. Perhaps in response to the calling cranes, a Eurasian Skylark rose into the chilled air and performed its magnificent song from its lofty position. Some cranes returned to the polders while we were there, having had their free breakfast. A walk along the road was the next strategy, and it quickly resulted in another outstanding highlight. A Black-faced Spoonbill was walking along the drainage channel next to the road, sweeping its spatula-shaped beak in the traditional way. After a few minutes it came up with a big prize: a fish that must have been at least thirty-five centimetres in length, possibly more. We watched the spoonbill struggle with the fish for at least fifteen minutes, as it tried to manipulate it in its beak, before dropping it back in the water and picking it up again in the hope of overcoming the fish and getting it into an appropriate swallowing position. Unfortunately, despite its persistence, the spoonbill dropped the fish into the water one time too many. Despite more sweeping, the spoonbill didn't recover the fish while we there. A Grey Heron would probably have swallowed the fish within a couple of minutes, but the Black-faced Spoonbill may have had to settle for smaller prey after we'd gone. Watching a globally endangered species like this in such an intimate way was one of those privileged moments.

We continued our walk up the road and found the Sandhill Cranes in the same area as yesterday, and a few Common Snipe were seen in this area. After a very successful early morning session, we drove the short distance to the warmth of the observatory to look at more feeding cranes. Three Common Cranes were found among the White-naped and Hooded Cranes. A Pale Thrush showed well near the centre, but most of the corvids had already

left the area. A quick visit to the mouth of the Kouchi River gave us our first views of some distant Black-tailed Gulls, but nothing else was new there. On the drive back to Izumi, a pair of Bull-headed Shrikes posing on posts in perfect light gave us our best views so far; another one was seen a few minutes later.



Japanese Badger



Black-faced Spoonbill

After picking up lunch in Izumi, we headed towards Kogawa dam, stopping at the river on the way. The walk along the river was another successful mission, with a male Common Kingfisher showing well on rocks. Grey and White Wagtails preceded good views of a pair of Japanese Wagtails as they posed on rocks in the river. A female Red-flanked Bluetail was the next good bird to be seen on the rocks, as it used them as a vantage point to do some flycatching. It was then harassed by a female Daurian Redstart, so the Red-flanked Bluetail moved to some more rocks, twenty metres up the river. As we walked backed to the bridge, another female Red-flanked Bluetail was behaving in a similar way. A short drive took us up to the reservoir and, after leaving the bus, we walked along a track off the road. After five minutes of walking, we were stunned when we spotted a young Japanese Badger walking ahead of us on a slope next to the track. As we were downwind, the badger was unaware of our presence, and we continued to follow as it grubbed about in leaf litter in search of food. Incredibly, a larger badger then came down the slope to join it. In total silence, we watched the two badgers lie down and groom each other. They lay together for at least five minutes before they walked ahead of us, again searching for food. The larger badger eventually climbed higher up the slope to look for food on the edge of the forest. The smaller badger continued to give us stunning views before it went a little higher and lay down on a flat area of the slope. It looked down at us but clearly wasn't bothered, as it put its head down to have a rest. We continued to walk down the track and when we returned fifteen minutes later, the badger was clearly asleep. Wow! Yet another privileged moment in this memorable day.

The walk along the road in that section of the reservoir enabled us to see species such as Mandarin Duck, Red-billed Leiothrix, Bull-headed Shrike, Pale Thrush and Meadow Bunting. We decided to board the bus and head on back, but as we were driving along the main road, Barrie spotted a Crested Kingfisher in a tree overlooking the river. Our willing bus driver did an emergency stop and reversed back. The reversing alarm on the bus spooked this large black-and-white kingfisher to take off, but everyone saw it as it flew off downriver.

Back in Izumi, some of the group visited the Komenotsu River with a particular target in mind. Once at the river, it didn't take long to find our prize: a Long-billed Plover looking for titbits washed down the river. Fortunately, the light on the plover was perfect and we had great views through the scope. A couple of Common Sandpipers were feeding nearby, while two pairs of Falcated Ducks were on a more open part of the river. Japanese, Grey and White Wagtails were within twenty metres of each other on the river, from the same vantage point we had been watching the other birds. Four Barn Swallows were flying over the river, but the temperature was definitely not

summer-like! Further along, a group of Warbling White-eyes dropped into some reeds before we headed back to the hotel to complete an exceptional day.

Kyushu Extension Day 4

Wednesday 19th February

Kogawa Dam, Lake Miike

Sunny, windy. 5°C max.

Once again, the strong wind made birdwatching a challenge at times, but some forested areas provided a little shelter. Our first destination was Kogawa Dam, where we started our walk. We saw the first of several of the day's Pale Thrushes below the dam as soon as we headed off towards the eastern side of the reservoir. A party of Varied and Japanese Tits in trees next to the track was the first real action. A few Red-flanked Bluetails were seen, including a gorgeous male. A Grey Bunting on the track disappeared before some of the group had a chance to see it, but a Chinese Bamboo Partridge was seen by everyone as it "exploded" from the edge of the track. One client managed to get brief views of a Japanese Marten before it scampered up the forested slope and disappeared out of view; this was another good mammal for the Kyushu extension. After a pleasant walk, we drove to Lake Miike, stopping at a viewpoint to admire this caldera lake.

One of the first birds we saw at the Miike campground was a male Japanese Woodpecker, pecking away on the side of a large tree and enabling us to have good, but brief, views. Three Olive-backed Pipits were strutting around near the chalets, while a group of Red-billed Leiothrix were in bushes near the lake. Other birds around the campground included Long-tailed Tit, Oriental Greenfinch, Daurian Redstart, Red-flanked Bluetail and two Yellow-throated Buntings. An old woodpecker hole was occupied by a Eurasian Nuthatch that was removing shavings from the cavity. A twenty-minute drive took us to Kirishima Jingo Shrine where we had a few minutes to visit the shrine that has occupied the site for seven hundred years. The viewpoint enabled us to see the active volcano on the island opposite Kagoshima. The volcano was 'smoking', enhancing the scene. We completed our journey to Kagoshima Airport for our flight to Tokyo. Once back at the airport hotel we said our goodbyes to one client who was staying on to extend his holiday further.

Kyushu Extension Day 5

Thursday 20th February

Tokyo to Heathrow

The remaining members of the group joined Barrie on the morning flight to Heathrow. It had been an excellent trip with lots of good memories of a wonderful time in the excellent country of Japan. The enthusiasm and support of the group helped to make this a very enjoyable trip to Japan in winter.

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Species lists – main tour

Birds (H = Heard only)

E=Endemic, N=Near-endemic, I=Introduced		February 2025										
Common name	Scientific name	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
Whooper Swan	<i>Cygnus cygnus</i>		160	2								
Northern Shoveler	<i>Spatula clypeata</i>	✓							✓	✓		
Gadwall	<i>Mareca strepera</i>								✓			
Falcated Duck	<i>Mareca falcata</i>								✓			
Eurasian Wigeon	<i>Mareca penelope</i>	✓			✓		✓		✓	✓		
Eastern Spot-billed Duck	<i>Anas zonorhyncha</i>	✓		2					✓	✓		
Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
Northern Pintail	<i>Anas acuta</i>											
Eurasian Teal	<i>Anas crecca</i>	✓							✓			
Common Pochard	<i>Aythya ferina</i>		8							✓		
Tufted Duck	<i>Aythya fuligula</i>				✓	✓	✓		✓			
Greater Scaup	<i>Aythya marila</i>	✓			✓	✓	✓					
Harlequin Duck	<i>Histrionicus histrionicus</i>				✓	✓	✓					
Black Scoter	<i>Melanitta americana</i>					✓	✓					
Long-tailed Duck	<i>Clangula hyemalis</i>						3					
Common Goldeneye	<i>Bucephala clangula</i>		2		✓	✓	✓					
Goosander (Common Merganser)	<i>Mergus merganser</i>		1	✓	✓	✓	✓					
Red-breasted Merganser	<i>Mergus serrator</i>	✓			✓	✓	✓					
Feral Rock Dove - I	<i>Columba livia</i>	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Oriental Turtle Dove	<i>Streptopelia orientalis</i>	✓							✓	✓		
Eurasian Coot	<i>Fulica atra</i>	✓							✓	✓		
White-naped Crane	<i>Antigone vipio</i>			1				1				
Red-crowned Crane	<i>Grus japonensis</i>		300+	330+				120				
Little Grebe	<i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>	✓		1					✓			
Great Crested Grebe	<i>Podiceps cristatus</i>	✓			✓	✓	✓					
Common Sandpiper	<i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>	2										
Dunlin	<i>Calidris alpina</i>	✓										

E=Endemic, N=Near-endemic, I=Introduced		February 2025											
Common name	Scientific name	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	
Saunders's Gull	<i>Saundersilarus saundersi</i>	1											
Common Gull	<i>Larus canus kamtschatschensis</i>				✓	✓	✓						
Black-headed Gull	<i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>				✓	✓	✓						
Vega Gull	<i>Larus vegae</i>	✓			✓	✓	✓						
Glaucous Gull	<i>Larus hyperboreus</i>				✓	✓	✓						
Glaucous-winged Gull	<i>Larus glaucescens</i>				✓	✓	✓						
Slaty-backed Gull	<i>Larus schistisagus</i>				✓	✓	✓						
Pelagic Cormorant	<i>Urile pelagicus</i>				✓	✓	✓						
Great Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>	✓							✓	✓			
Black-crowned Night Heron	<i>Nycticorax nycticorax</i>									1			
Little Egret	<i>Egretta garzetta</i>								✓				
Great Egret	<i>Ardea alba</i>								1	2			
Grey Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>	✓							1	✓			
Osprey	<i>Pandion haliaetus</i>	1											
Black-eared Kite	<i>Milvus migrans lineatus</i>	6							1	✓			
Steller's Sea Eagle	<i>Haliaeetus pelagicus</i>			2	✓	✓	✓						
White-tailed Eagle	<i>Haliaeetus albicilla</i>		1		✓	✓	✓	1					
Eastern Buzzard	<i>Buteo japonicus</i>	1								1	1		
Blakiston's Fish Owl	<i>Ketupa blakistoni</i>				1	1	1						
Ural Owl	<i>Strix uralensis</i>			1									
Crested Kingfisher	<i>Megaceryle lugubris</i>						1						
Japanese Pygmy Woodpecker	<i>Yungipicus kizuki</i>						2				4		
Great Spotted Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos major</i>						✓	✓			✓		
Japanese Green Woodpecker - E	<i>Picus awokera</i>										1		
Common Kestrel	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>									1			
Peregrine Falcon	<i>Falco peregrinus</i>							1					
Bull-headed Shrike	<i>Lanius bucephalus</i>								1				
Eurasian Jay	<i>Garrulus glandarius</i>							✓		✓	✓		
Azure-winged Magpie	<i>Cyanopica cyanus</i>	20								2			
Carrion Crow	<i>Corvus corone</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		

E=Endemic, N=Near-endemic, I=Introduced		February 2025										
Common name	Scientific name	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
Large-billed Crow	<i>Corvus macrorhynchos</i>	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Coal Tit	<i>Periparus ater</i>		2								✓	
Varied Tit	<i>Sittiparus varius</i>								1		✓	
Marsh Tit	<i>Poecile palustris</i>			✓			✓	✓				
Willow Tit	<i>Poecile montanus</i>										✓	
Cinereous (Japanese) Tit	<i>Parus cinereus</i>	✓		✓			✓	✓	2		✓	
Brown-eared Bulbul	<i>Hypsipetes amaurotis</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Japanese Bush Warbler	<i>Horornis diphone</i>	1								1		
Long-tailed Tit	<i>Aegithalos caudatus</i>										1	
Warbling White-eye	<i>Zosterops japonicus</i>	✓							✓			
Eurasian Wren	<i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>						✓				1	
Eurasian Nuthatch	<i>Sitta europaea</i>						✓	✓			✓	
White-cheeked Starling	<i>Spodiopsar cineraceus</i>	✓							✓	✓	✓	
Pale Thrush	<i>Turdus pallidus</i>								1			
Dusky Thrush	<i>Turdus eunomus</i>	1				1						
Daurian Redstart	<i>Phoenicurus aureus</i>								1		1	
Brown Dipper	<i>Cinclus pallasii</i>						1	1				
Eurasian Tree Sparrow	<i>Passer montanus</i>	✓	✓		✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	
Japanese Accentor - N	<i>Prunella rubida</i>									4		
Grey Wagtail	<i>Motacilla cinerea</i>										1	
(Black-backed) White Wagtail	<i>Motacilla alba lugens</i>	✓							✓	✓	✓	
Japanese Wagtail - N	<i>Motacilla grandis</i>			1								
Hawfinch	<i>Coccothraustes coccothraustes</i>			1				1				
(Grey-bellied) Eurasian Bullfinch	<i>Pyrrhula pyrrhula griseiventris</i>						1	1				
Asian Rosy Finch	<i>Leucosticte arctoa</i>					50+	30					
Siberian Long-tailed Rosefinch	<i>Carpodacus sibiricus</i>										2	
Oriental Greenfinch	<i>Chloris sinica</i>										✓	
Meadow Bunting	<i>Emberiza cioides</i>			3							2	
Rustic Bunting	<i>Emberiza rustica</i>										4	
Masked Bunting	<i>Emberiza personata</i>	2										

Mammals

E=Endemic		February 2025										
Common name	Scientific name	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
Japanese Macaque - E	<i>Macaca fuscata</i>									✓		
Eurasian Red Squirrel	<i>Sciurus vulgaris</i>							2				
Sika Deer	<i>Cervus nippon</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓		
Red Fox	<i>Vulpes vulpes</i>			1	1	3	5					
Steller Sea Lion	<i>Eumetopias jubatus</i>					16	9					
Harbour Seal	<i>Phoca vitulina</i>						1					

Others

E=Endemic		February 2025										
Common name	Scientific name	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
Japanese Pond Turtle - E	<i>Mauremys japonica</i>	1										

Species lists – Kyushu extension

Birds (H = Heard only)

E=Endemic, N=Near-endemic, I=Introduced		February 2025			
Common name	Scientific name	16	17	18	19
Common Shelduck	<i>Tadorna tadorna</i>	✓	✓	✓	
Mandarin Duck	<i>Aix galericulata</i>			10	
Falcated Duck	<i>Mareca falcata</i>		✓	✓	
Eurasian Wigeon	<i>Mareca penelope</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓
Eastern Spot-billed Duck	<i>Anas zonorhyncha</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓
Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓
Northern Pintail	<i>Anas acuta</i>	✓	✓	✓	
Eurasian Teal	<i>Anas crecca</i>	✓	✓	✓	
Common Pochard	<i>Aythya ferina</i>		✓	✓	✓
Greater Scaup	<i>Aythya marila</i>		✓	✓	

E=Endemic, N=Near-endemic, I=Introduced		February 2025			
Common name	Scientific name	16	17	18	19
Chinese Bamboo Partridge	<i>Bambusicola thoracicus</i>				1
Feral Rock Dove - I	<i>Columba livia</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓
Oriental Turtle Dove	<i>Streptopelia orientalis</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓
Eurasian Coot	<i>Fulica atra</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓
Sandhill Crane	<i>Antigone canadensis</i>		3	3	
White-naped Crane	<i>Antigone vipio</i>		1988	✓	
Common Crane	<i>Grus grus</i>		4	3	
Hooded Crane	<i>Grus monacha</i>		6251	✓	
Little Grebe	<i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>		✓	✓	✓
Great Crested Grebe	<i>Podiceps cristatus</i>	✓			
Grey Plover	<i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>	✓			
Long-billed Plover	<i>Charadrius placidus</i>			1	
Northern Lapwing	<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>		✓	✓	
Kentish Plover	<i>Anarhynchus alexandrinus</i>	✓			
Common Snipe	<i>Gallinago gallinago</i>			✓	
Common Sandpiper	<i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>	✓	✓	✓	
Green Sandpiper	<i>Tringa ochropus</i>	1			
Saunders's Gull	<i>Saundersilarus saundersi</i>	✓			
Black-headed Gull	<i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>	✓			
Black-tailed Gull	<i>Larus crassirostris</i>			✓	
Vega Gull	<i>Larus vegae</i>	✓	✓	✓	
Brown Booby	<i>Sula leucogaster</i>		1		
Great Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓
Eurasian Spoonbill	<i>Platalea leucorodia</i>		✓	✓	
Black-faced Spoonbill	<i>Platalea minor</i>		✓	✓	
Black-crowned Night Heron	<i>Nycticorax nycticorax</i>	6			
Little Egret	<i>Egretta garzetta</i>	✓	✓	✓	
Great Egret	<i>Ardea alba</i>	✓	✓	✓	
Grey Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>	✓	✓	✓	
Osprey	<i>Pandion haliaetus</i>	✓	✓	✓	
Eastern Marsh Harrier	<i>Circus spilonotus</i>		2		

E=Endemic, N=Near-endemic, I=Introduced		February 2025			
Common name	Scientific name	16	17	18	19
Black-eared Kite	<i>Milvus migrans lineatus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓
Eastern Buzzard	<i>Buteo japonicus</i>		2		
Common Kingfisher	<i>Alcedo atthis</i>	1		1	
Crested Kingfisher	<i>Megaceryle lugubris</i>			1	
Japanese Pygmy Woodpecker	<i>Yungipicus kizuki</i>				1
Japanese Green Woodpecker - E	<i>Picus awokera</i>				1
Common Kestrel	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>		✓		1
Bull-headed Shrike	<i>Lanius bucephalus</i>			4	
Eurasian Jay	<i>Garrulus glandarius</i>				✓
Daurian Jackdaw	<i>Coloeus dauuricus</i>		12		
Rook	<i>Corvus frugilegus</i>		✓	✓	
Carrion Crow	<i>Corvus corone</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓
Large-billed Crow	<i>Corvus macrorhynchos</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓
Varied Tit	<i>Sittiparus varius</i>				✓
Cinereous (Japanese) Tit	<i>Parus cinereus</i>				✓
Chinese Penduline Tit	<i>Remiz consobrinus</i>		5		
Eurasian Skylark	<i>Alauda arvensis</i>	✓	✓	✓	
Brown-eared Bulbul	<i>Hypsipetes amaurotis</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓
Barn Swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>		2	4	
Japanese Bush Warbler	<i>Horornis diphone</i>		H		
Long-tailed Tit	<i>Aegithalos caudatus</i>				✓
Warbling White-eye	<i>Zosterops japonicus</i>		1	✓	✓
Red-billed Leiothrix - I	<i>Leiothrix lutea</i>			✓	✓
Eurasian Nuthatch	<i>Sitta europaea</i>				✓
White-cheeked Starling	<i>Spodiopsar cineraceus</i>	✓	✓	✓	
Pale Thrush	<i>Turdus pallidus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓
Dusky Thrush	<i>Turdus eunomus</i>	✓	✓		
Red-flanked Bluetail	<i>Tarsiger cyanurus</i>			2	6
Daurian Redstart	<i>Phoenicurus aureoreus</i>	✓	1	2	2
Eurasian Tree Sparrow	<i>Passer montanus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓
Grey Wagtail	<i>Motacilla cinerea</i>	✓		✓	✓

E=Endemic, N=Near-endemic, I=Introduced		February 2025			
Common name	Scientific name	16	17	18	19
(Black-backed) White Wagtail	<i>Motacilla alba lugens</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓
Japanese Wagtail - N	<i>Motacilla grandis</i>		✓	✓	
Olive-backed Pipit	<i>Anthus hodgsoni</i>				3
Siberian Pipit	<i>Anthus japonicus</i>	✓	✓	✓	
Oriental (Grey-capped) Greenfinch	<i>Chloris sinica</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓
Meadow Bunting	<i>Emberiza cioides</i>	✓	✓	✓	
Yellow-throated Bunting	<i>Emberiza elegans</i>				2
Grey Bunting	<i>Emberiza variabilis</i>				1
Common Reed Bunting	<i>Emberiza schoeniclus</i>	✓	✓		

Mammals

E=Endemic		February 2025			
Common name	Scientific name	16	17	18	19
Japanese Badger - E	<i>Meles anakuma</i>			2	
Japanese Marten - E	<i>Martes melampus</i>				1

Reptiles and amphibians

E=Endemic	
Common name	Scientific name
Japanese Common Toad - E	<i>Bufo japonicus</i>

Butterflies

Common name	Scientific name
Japanese Oakblue	<i>Arhopala japonica</i>
Indian Red Admiral	<i>Vanessa indica</i>
Asian Comma	<i>Polygonia c-aureum</i>