

**JAPAN**  
**19TH FEBRUARY-7TH MARCH 2009**  
by  
**Ian Fisher**

This was a winter trip that I undertook with three friends; Anne Middleton, Martin Davison and Richard Dunn, to see the Japanese winter spectacles of the cranes on Kyūshū & Hokkaido, Blakiston's Fish Owl & eagles on Hokkaido and the seabirds off Hokkaido and Honshu. On all four counts the trip was a huge success! In addition, several surprise species were also noted. The only downside to the whole trip was in the autumn of 2008, the economy crashed and with a weak pound, the cost of everything went up by about a third!

## **Logistics:**

### **Trip reports**

Planning for this trip started a year beforehand, as much preparation is required. Several trip reports were consulted for the itinerary, the most useful of which was Ian Merrill's excellent report posted on Surfbirds [http://www.surfbirds.com/trip\\_report.php?id=1131](http://www.surfbirds.com/trip_report.php?id=1131) whose trip I decided to replicate. Ian was also very helpful when emailed with various queries.

### **Car Hire**

We booked three cars through ToCoo Travel: a car hire company with a website in English [http://www2.tocoo.jp/?file=rentcar\\_inbound/main](http://www2.tocoo.jp/?file=rentcar_inbound/main) (car hire sites in English are not easy to find). The hiring bit takes a bit of working out, but with patience can be done. It is worth putting in the comments box that you need the car to fit 5 people if there are 4 people in the group and you need a bit of space! We didn't make this request with our first car and were given a car the size of a Micra for our group + all luggage!! We had to upgrade all three of our pre-booked cars (two at an extra cost). All hire cars come with a built in Sat Nav. Ask at the car hire place to show you how to put in the telephone number of your destination (if known) and it will guide you to the door! This works well for reserves and hotels, but not for private residences such as Lodge Furen. You will need to get an International driving license before arriving in Japan. I had to get mine from the main Post Office in Newcastle.

### **Flights**

As we wanted to visit all the main Islands in Japan, we decided to take three internal flights. There is a deal that is offered to non residents with ANA (Visit Japan Fare [http://www.ana.co.jp/wvs/uk/e/wvs\\_common/fare/special/visit.html](http://www.ana.co.jp/wvs/uk/e/wvs_common/fare/special/visit.html) ). You have to have a minimum of two internal flights to make use of this deal and each flight costs 13000 JPY. There is an additional consumption tax in addition to the price of the flights. I have to say this was a bit of a fuff to book as it involved faxing copies of my passport etc and several phone calls to the English booking centre! Eventually I got there and it was all sorted.

### **Language**

English is not widely spoken in Japan but with a bit of patience and politeness we never really had a problem making our intentions understood. A phrase book certainly helped at some restaurants though.

### **Accommodation**

We booked several nights accommodation before we left. I can thoroughly recommend the Edohara Pension at Karuizawa if you plan to do the Japanese Alps specialties <http://www.karuizawa.ne.jp/~edohara/e-home.htm>. The pension's owner's son Daisuke speaks good English and the whole family was very helpful and friendly. The food was also superb.

I can also recommend staying at Lodge Furen on Hokkaido. The owner Takeyoshi Matsuo ([matsuo-t@plum.plala.or.jp](mailto:matsuo-t@plum.plala.or.jp)) speaks very good English and is a birder. His knowledge on where to find certain species on our wants list was spot on. He also will know what has been seen recently in the area. Be warned that the food he serves is total sashimi (raw fish). If you are not too keen on this he will change his menu to suite if given prior warning. He was also extremely helpful in booking our stay at Inn Washino-yado near Rausu for Blakiston's Fish Owl and at Tsurumi-tei (+81-0996-83-3944) at Arasaki as neither of these locations have websites or speak English. Note that the Minshuku at Tsurumi-tei also serves sashimi food.

The remaining hotels were booked on line through various websites. Not all hotels in some of the areas we visited appear to have websites i.e. we only found one hotel for Hyūga online which wasn't the one we stayed in, so finding accommodation in most areas shouldn't be a problem.

### **Money:**

Take plenty of Japanese Yen to cover your daily expenses as credit cards aren't readily accepted in most areas. Most hotels and the car hire companies do accept them as well as the trains and ferries. Cash is required at petrol stations, cafés, shops, reserves and Minshukus etc. We ordered ours at our local banks/post office (a much better rate than at the airport kiosks!) before we left.

### **Food:**

Cuisine in Japan is usually centered on the sea, backed up with mountains of rice. At three of the places we stayed (Edohara Pension, Lodge Furen and Tsurumi-tei) we were treated to sashimi seafood, which is basically raw fish etc. It would be worth while mentioning when booking these places if (like me) you don't like seafood as they will go out of their way to provide alternate fare. At Inn Washino-yado we were treated to King Crab and I got a steak (Matsuo-san had kindly forewarned the owner that I didn't eat fish!). In restaurants however, there is usually photographic picture menus, where you can see what you are ordering and many will have very realistic plastic replica dishes situated in the restaurants window, where you just go out with the waiter/waitress and point to what you wish to order. We only really had one problem, when we stumbled into a totally Japanese restaurant which had no picture menus/plastic dishes etc neither did they speak English! Here a phrase book was invaluable, although my chicken got lost somewhere in translation and never arrived, still I had a stock of chocolate bars back at the hotel to fall back on, and everybody seemed to understand what beer was!

### **Books:**

If you can get hold of a copy, Mark Brazils *A Birdwatchers Guide to Japan* is essential in pre-trip planning. Even though it is out of print and over 20 years old, it also provided the phone number for Katano Kamo-ike, which meant we didn't get lost and waste time when trying to find it from the maps we had! Mark Brazils *Birds of East Asia* is also essential, and the only recent English field guide to the area. We also took the *Shobunsha 1:250000 road atlas*, which also was a great help when planning the routes and mileages for each day.

### **Itinerary:**

#### **Day 1 - 19th February**

We arrived at Narita Airport at ca 1015. Once customs were cleared we got picked up by the Mazda car hire people and were driven to the car hire office. We were dismayed to see the size of the car we were given - it was way too small for four people and luggage (especially the amount we had!), but that may have been our fault when we were booking the car (we didn't specify on the first car that we needed a five seater car!). We soon got upgraded to the next size of car (at a price), were shown how to put in a telephone number into the sat nav and were on our way to the Japanese Alps and our destination for the next few days of Karuizawa. Following the sat nav was fairly easy, although we did make a few wrong

turns during our trip, but generally the maps were straight forward to follow. Driving through the suburbs around Tokyo was depressing to say the least! A very un-inspiring skyline, which was regularly broken with monstrous golf driving range nets, which towered above everything! As soon as we got away from the suburbs we pulled into a rest area to sort out our birding gear and saw our first new birds. Soon the road started to climb through the hills and the scenery became much more pleasant, although there appear to be wires spoiling the view everywhere you look! Eventually we climbed the Usui Pass and got our first un-wired view of the still smoking Mt Asamayama! Several Meadow Buntings and a pair of Long-tailed Rosefinch were nice distractions, but soon we pressed onto Karuizawa and Edohara Pension, our digs for the next three nights. Daisuke (the owner's son) speaks good English and was very helpful during our stay. His weather forecasting skills are less good however - "you'll be lucky and it will not snow tonight" were his comments when asked about the weather for the following day.

## **Day 2 - 20th February**

After a good nights sleep we awoke at 0600 to be greeted with heavy snow with several inches already on the ground - so much for our local weather forecaster! A walk around the immediate area of the pension in the snow did not bode well for looking for our first target species later in the morning, but we returned for an excellent breakfast and decided on our plan for the day. Soon we were stationed at the bird feeding station at the Picchio Nature Centre in the Hoshino Onsen complex. Having paid our entrance fee (JPY500) we were soon in the downstairs bit watching Hawfinches, Japanese Grosbeaks, Oriental Greenfinches and Japanese Woodpeckers amongst others at point blank range as they fed on well stocked feeders just outside the darkened windows. After an hour or two we left the centre and started to walk the trails where Copper Pheasants had been seen over the preceding months. It had now stopped snowing and was a beautiful day. Although no pheasants were seen we did catch up with Nuthatch, Varied and Willow Tits and Bullfinch. After lunch (and our first can of hot coffee) from the 7/11 store in Karuizawa, we headed off to try and find a park that Daisuke's father had noted on a map during breakfast. We failed to find the park (I think) but stumbled upon Lake New Town, which provided good views of Pale Thrush and Green Pheasant. Still driving around the area, we came upon the small village of Shimocochi, which was lifting with birds! Bull-headed Shrike, Azure-winged Magpie, White-cheeked Starling and some very approachable Hawfinches were the highlights here. It was starting to get dark by the time we left this area and after a quick look at Lake Shiozawako, we headed back to the pension and a corking evening meal.

## **Day 3 - 21st February**

A pre-breakfast walk around the Hoshino Onsen trails for Copper Pheasant was rewarded with point blank views of a female (although unfortunately my camera refused to focus on this bird!). It slowly walked up the hill a bit and out of view. At breakfast back at Edohara Pension a Pale Thrush lingered briefly outside the window. With Copper Pheasant in the bag, we decided to try our luck further south and visited the well stocked bird feeders at Oneyama Shinrin Koen. On the way, we stopped at Sakomato/Usuiko Lake where the biting wind nearly cut us in half! It was well worth the stop as we caught up with three Japanese Accentors (the only ones seen on the trip) and our first Snow Monkeys (Japanese Macaques). The drive up the valley produced a largish (30+) flock of Black-eared Kites. On arrival at the car park and feeders, the warden came out of his office and pointed to where we should stand to see the birds which come down to a well baited area by the centre. With us in place, he put out a fair amount of seed and started to whistle! Within a few minutes many Brambling and several Yellow-throated (Elegant) and Rustic Buntings had appeared and were feeding on the seed. The warden also kindly brought us a cup of green tea to enjoy whilst watching the birds! Other distractions included loads of Varied Tits, Japanese Pygmy Woodpecker and Willow Tit. After a couple of hours we headed back down the hill and jammed into four Asian Rosy Finches by the road side in the forest –

a sight I had not expected! Lunch was obtained in Yokokawa and was consumed by the river. Japanese Wagtail and four Green Pheasants were the highlights here, then it was off up the valley to Myogi-ko. Here our target bird was Mandarin, and eventually we found about 20 of these stunning birds sheltering under the branches on the far side of the lake. A quick look at the Sazanka Tree on the way back to Yokokawa was a bit disappointing as it had just gone out of flower! Back up the Usui Pass produced a large flock of Brambling then it was onto Kose. Parking opposite the road that comes out of Yacho no Mori and just before the toll gate, we headed off along the stream in search of Solitary Snipe. Three of had walked past it, but the sharp eyed Richard spotted in on the deck briefly before it flew off further up the stream. Good flight views were had by all. We decided to drive along the toll road back to Karuizawa and along the road we passed an ice sculpture which was quite impressive and then as we turned the corner, just before the exit toll gate, stunning views of the still smoking Mt Asamayama brought home exactly how close this active volcano was! That night after dinner we all bundled into the car for a night time excursion around the roads of Yacho No Mori in search of Ural Owl. Two birds were found in the car headlights, one in the park and another along the toll road. A very successful day!

#### **Day 4 – 22nd February**

Up and around Yacho No Mori again before breakfast. This time a male Copper Pheasant was seen high-tailing it away from us in road-runner fashion by the bird-watching cabin! Packed up our gear after breakfast and said goodbye to Daisuke and his family – I can thoroughly recommend Edohara Pension as a place to stay. Dice's farther even reduced our bill because of the way the exchange rate was at the time – a much appreciated gesture as the price of the trip had gone up a third!! We drove along the expressways to Jigokudani and the Snow Monkey valley. Although the phone number in the Sat Nav took us to the road that was closed during the winter, luckily there was a map which showed us the route to the correct parking place on the other side of the valley! Soon in place we trekked the 1.6 km top the kiosk where we paid (JPY500 each) for an audience with the Snow Monkeys. I have to say, if you go to Jigokudani, try and avoid a weekend! We had no alternative and it was crowded with people! As most had cameras, trying to take a photograph with out getting people etc in the background was very frustrating! The whole scenario was very artificial and in a way I was glad we had seen Snow Monkeys 'in the wild' before coming here. After a couple of hours we made our way back to the car and left to drive to the W coast and our base for the night the Castle Inn in Kanazawa.

#### **Day 5 – 23rd February**

We awoke to leaden grey skies and after breakfast and packing the car we headed S to Katano Kamo-ike. The geese had left for their feeding grounds before we arrived, but the pond in front of the reception centre still had plenty of birds on it! Mallards covered the pond and in amongst them we managed to locate Falcated Duck, Smew and Baikal Teal – the latter including some stunning drakes. A Bull-headed Shrike showed well outside the centre and a walk along the road produced some stunning Dusky Thrushes but not a lot else. We decided to try and find some geese on their feeding areas, so with the rough area marked on the map we headed S to check the rice paddies around Awashi and Sakai-shi. A brief stop at the mouth of the Daishōji River produced a few duck and a very close Black-necked Grebe. This area was huge! After driving around the grid system of paddies of what seemed like ages we eventually found about 60 White-fronted Geese! These were very flighty though and soon flew off! Stunning views were also had here of Japanese Wagtail. Next stop was at the coast. We headed off towards Tōjinbō and came across Mikuni Harbour. The birding here was good, with various gulls, ducks to look through and our only definite Temminck's Cormorants and our first stunning male Blue Rock Thrush. At Tōjinbō the hoped for seabirds didn't materialize, but we did see loads of Black-eared Kites and Daurian Redstart, Dusky Thrush and 3-4 Pacific Reef Egrets. As the wardens at Katano Kamo-ike said we could return to wait for the geese to come back in to the reserve (it is closed from 1700) we headed back to the reserve. Whilst waiting for the geese to arrive we

counted more Falcated Ducks, loads of Cormorants, a stunning male Bull-headed Shrike and jammed in a brief sighting of Raccoon Dog, which unfortunately disappeared before it could be photographed! Eventually the geese arrived, about 1500-2000 in total. A tremendous sight which got even better when the warden pointed out the seven Lesser White-fronted Geese that had just pitched in in front of the visitor centre! It was by now very dark, so we bid farewell to the wardens and headed off to Komatsu to find some digs. We chose the Hyper Hotel and ate out at the restaurant across the road. This was a totally Japanese experience, with no English spoken or picture menus, but with the aid of a phrase book, we managed to order. Unfortunately for me, something got lost in translation and my chicken never arrived! This was the only problem we had in a restaurant!

### **Day 6 – 24th February**

More grey skies greeted us in the morning as we checked out of the Hyper Hotel and we eventually found the car rental place, after Richard had worked out how to move the map, to return the hire car (the sat-nav seemed intent on taking us to the covered market!). The flight left on time and after a pleasant journey we landed in Kyūshū – and boy was it humid! We found the car hire place and after several attempts to fit our entire luggage in the boot, the staff took pity on us and gave us a free upgrade – result! A quick(ish) blast down the freeway and we were soon looking for the right turn for the Yatsushiro area. We took a wrong turn and ended on the northern side of the ‘island’, but we located some spoonbills in the distance, and after a quick scoot round, tremendous views were had of four Black-faced Spoonbills. Now on the right ‘island’ we birded the area of paddies, getting Zitting Cisticola, Buff-bellied Pipit in the process, we worked our way round to the estuary and located the gull watching spot. We soon found our target bird – Saunders’s Gull, including several in full summer dress. We left the area shortly before dusk and drove south to Arasaki, where we arrived to the full-on raw fish experience (which as a non fish eater, I was somewhat not looking forward to!). Still there was plenty of rice and a quick bit of mix and match, meant that everyone found something to eat! We retired to the traditional Japanese rooms (tatami mats and futon quilts) to get some sleep listening to the thousands of cranes calling occasionally outside.

### **Day 7 – 25th February**

Unfortunately, the day started somewhat earlier than planned! Sometime at stupid o’clock there was an almighty bang of thunder (two of the party thought that a near-by volcano had erupted!), an amazingly bright flash of sheet lightening and a torrential downpour for several minutes. Then all went quiet, only for the same thing to happen again half an hour later! This went on for several hours, so at about 0500 RD and I got up to watch the storm and look for cranes during the split seconds of the lightening flash! Eventually daylight dawned grey and wet, but the sight of over 10,000 cranes in the field just across the road from the Minshuku was a sight (and sound) to behold! Photography was going to be difficult in these conditions, and so it proved. After a breakfast watching cranes, we ventured out in the wet and soon found five species of crane including the sought after Siberian. As the morning wore on it gradually became brighter, and we managed to find Chestnut-eared Bunting and Skylark in the fields around the reserve. After lunch at the Crane centre café, we toured the surrounding area, finding a huge flock of Russet Sparrows, and jammed in on a Goshawk, Long-billed Plover, Japanese Bush Warbler, six Sandhill Cranes, a Bean Goose and a Bewick’s Swan. We ended the afternoon at the mouth of a near-by river mouth with several Ospreys flying overhead. Soon our time was up and we headed E across the island to the fishing port of Hyūga (where the Hotel Hayata was our chosen night stop), stopping at a pond by the side of the 447 (several Mandarins were the highlights here).

### **Day 8 – 26th February**

Up early and skipped breakfast so we were at the port of Kadogawa breakwater first thing. Not really

knowing where to go we headed out along the breakwater scanning all the time for our quarry – Japanese Murrelet. I walked out to the end and eventually saw two birds swimming underwater!! They surfaced nearby giving me excellent views. By the time I had alerted the other three they had flown out of the harbour and flew past them as they raced along the breakwater, giving only brief flight views. As they pitched in near the fishing area of the port we headed round only to find they had disappeared again! Stunning views of a male Hawfinch and a Pale Thrush were scant compensation, so we headed around to the fish quay area and birded there. About 100 Black-eared Kites were on the wires around the quay, and a few gulls and a Little Egret posed for photographs as did a pair of Meadow Buntings and several Dusky Thrushes and a female Blue Rock Thrush. Eventually the Murrelets were re-found, giving very distant views. A quick look in the quay market produced some strange looking fish and several huge Yellow-finned Tuna. By now it was breakfast time, so a quick(ish) stop at a café type place did the job, then it was south towards the crater lake volcano of Mi-ike. We arrived at Mi-ike early afternoon and birded the campsite area seeing Black-faced Bunting, Ryukyu Minivet, Olive-backed Pipit and White-bellied Green Pigeon amongst others. A walk along one of the trails into the forest surrounding the lake, produced Japanese Bush Warbler and eventually in the gloom of the forest some very distant (and bad) views of Grey Bunting. As the light faded and the rain started we started the drive to Kagoshima, dropping off the hire car and checking into the very expensive Kagoshima Airport Hotel.

### **Day 9 – 27th February**

Today was essentially a travel day and as it was still raining when we awoke a lie in was called for! After breakfast we arrived at the airport and checked-in for our two flights which would take us to the frozen north. We asked for window seats on the left hand side of the first aircraft as we were keen to see Mt Fuji, as I believe good views can be had from the aircraft on the decent into Haneda Airport! After a walk around the terminal (looking for something that would cure my cold!) and an ice-cream, it was still raining as we took off. However once above the clouds, it was a beautiful day and we all looked forward to crippling views of Mt Fuji as we came into land at Haneda. Unfortunately we landed in low cloud and rain so dipped! This was the second volcano I have dipped due to low cloud as I have also dipped Mt Egmont in New Zealand! We were only on the ground a short time, enough though to pick up some food and then we were on our way to Hokkaido. We landed in Kushiro just before sunset and the reality of the temperature drop in this frozen landscape hit as soon as we stepped out of the terminal to sort out the car hire – it was freezing! Soon we were on our way and arrived at Lodge Furen at 2000.

### **Day 10 – 28th February**

Up at 0600 for a quick pre-breakfast walk around the lodge. Things looked good with a White-tailed Eagle perched in a tree just across the road and our first distant looks at the amazing Steller's Sea Eagle. After an excellent breakfast (including the world-renowned six home-made jams) at the lodge, our host Takeyoshi Matsuo (Taki for short) told us that the restaurant owners about a ¼ mile along the road feed the eagles at 0800 – hooray, no need to walk miles out onto the frozen ice as previous trips had to do!!! We arrived just as the owners were dumping the boxes of fish a little way out onto the frozen lake. Myriads of Black-eared Kites wheeled around awaiting their breakfast, and soon the Eagle fest began! In perfect light, hundreds of White-tailed and Steller's Sea Eagles pitched in and squabbled over the food a couple of hundred feet away with the Black-eared Kites stealing in to grab the fish. Along with the Cranes at Arasaki, the Eagles of Hokkaido is one of the avian sights you must see before you die! Awesome is an over-used word in birding, but with these birds it is well justified. After a couple of hours filling CF card after CF card, the eagles had had their fill and started to drift off to rest in the trees along the lake edge. We too decided to head east along the Nemuro Peninsular to Cape Nosappumisaki. We drove along the south side visiting the harbour at Hanasaki where close views of

various gulls, Black and Asian White-winged Scoter, Ancient Murrelet and Harlequin Duck were the highlights. Then it was onward to the seawatching point at Cape Nosappu. The landscape is fairly bleak to say the least, but we eventually arrived at the Cape where the biting N wind immediately cut us in half! We located to the sheltered side of the lighthouse and scanned the sea. Apart from a few auks and some sea duck it was fairly quiet, so we started the drive back to Furen after an unsuccessful look for the stack that the Red-faced Cormorants live on! We lunched at the 'Eagle' restaurant and then started the long drive along the Shiretoko Peninsular to Rausu for our evening with Blakiston's Fish Owl. On the way two Red-crowned Cranes flew over the car and we pitched up at Inn Washino-yado just before dusk. With the car left in position for the evening vigil, we dumped our gear in the Minshuku and awaited the arrival of some Taiwanese photographers before the evening meal of King Crab etc. We were positioned in our car by 1900, with the windows down and about every bit of spare clothing on that we all could find as the owner put in the fish bait into the specially made pool across the other side of the stream! Things didn't look too promising with two of the Taiwanese photographers walking around the place chatting loudly and others fiddling with bits of kit, but eventually everyone settled down and a Fish Owl came in at 2100 and gave amazing views amongst all the flash bulbs going off. It caught a fish and flew off back up valley and reappeared again at 2140 for a slightly longer performance. After it flew off we decided to call it a day, as Matsuo-san had booked us onto the early boat trip to the pack ice, which necessitated getting up at 0400! A truly memorable day, which ranks as one of the best in my birding career so far!

### **Day 11 – 1st March**

Up very early and down to the harbour for the 0430 boat. We left for the pack ice just after 0500 and arrived just after dawn 1 ½ hrs later! It's a long way along the Shiretoko Peninsular!! The pack ice was situated just off the tip of the peninsular, so we missed the shots of eagles against the rising sun! The spectacle was very different to that of yesterday. Much closer views of the eagles, with White-tailed down to a few meters! Again many photographs were taken of these majestic birds. Very few Glaucous-winged Gulls was also a surprise, but there were plenty of Slaty-backed and Glaucous and one that was either a Vega or a *cachinnans* type! Whilst we were stuck in the ice, first a pod Killer Whales then about half a hour later a pod of Baird's-beaked Whales swam north just off the ice flow. We left about 0830 and sped back down to Rausu for a late breakfast at the Minshuku, then after packing the car we birded around the harbour and then back along to Lake Furen via Nakashibetsu for the Ural Owl stakeout (no joy), but we did score whilst driving along the town high street when we jammed into two Japanese and a single Bohemian Waxwing and a couple of *griseiventris* Bullfinches. A quick stop at Odaitō for good views of Pintail, some gulls and a Red Fox, then it was back to Lodge Furen where it was a pleasant surprise to find an old friend, Steve Votier staying for the night!

### **Day 12 – 2nd March**

After breakfast, another session at the restaurant is in order, with more White-tailed Eagles this time and then another trip along the Nemuro Peninsular to find some of the species we missed on 28th. First though we have to find a camera shop in Nemuro city as we are having a mini crisis with our photo storage capability! Two hard drives have either died or are broken with the third full! After a run around various shops a small net-book is secured by RD! First stop was Hanasaki Harbour, where a few sea duck and a pair of Falcated Duck are the highlights, but it is also the scene of a puncture! We limped to the nearest garage, and once the employees understood that we had a puncture and didn't just need air, the puncture was fixed within 10 minutes and we were on our way. Next stop was Habomai Harbour where the day before Parakeet Auklet and Long-billed Murrelet had been seen. No joy with them, but 100's of Harlequins including some in the harbour (unfortunately one had been caught in, and cut out of, some fishing net), also good views of Red-necked Grebe. At Cape Nosappu, the snow had started, and combined with the biting wind, we decided lunch was in order so we retired to the

nearest open café and thawed out for an hour or so until the weather brightened up. At the cape I disastrously missed the 8 Rock Sandpipers seen by the other three in flight, but some compensation was had with a Hen Harrier and three juvenile Red-faced Cormorants on the stack. Returned for our final evening at Lodge Furen where we got the net-book up and running(ish) even if all the icons were in Japanese!

### **Day 13 – 3rd March**

Today, we leave Hokkaido! After breakfast we said goodbye to Matsuo-san and started our car, train and ferry journey back to Honshu, and ultimately, Tokyo. After *ca.* 2 ½ hrs we reached our first port of call the Tancho no Sato Crane Observatory near Akan. There were about 100 birds dotted about the fields, with a supporting cast of *ca.* 70 Whooper Swans. The cranes were obviously used to people, some walking within 20 feet of the assembled photographers. Photography was quite tricky, with wandering birds getting in the way of ‘that perfect shot’ on many occasions! The only other bird of note was a fly over Crested Kingfisher (the only one of the trip). We had planned to leave before feeding time at 1400, but at the last minute decided to stay. A guy wanders around the field amongst the cranes throwing fish and then the spectacle begins! White-tailed Eagles float effortlessly over the throng and then suddenly dive in amongst the cranes to steal fish. One Steller’s Sea Eagle was also present, but kept a respectable distance. Time was then up and we had to press on to Kushiro railway station to drop off the hire car and find our way to the railway station. Here Martin and Anne did battle getting the train tickets sorted, whilst Richard and I watched over the gear and then we were off. We caught the Super Ozora to Minami-chitose (3 ½ hrs) and then the Super Hautouka to Tomakomai. Here we took a taxi (JPY1200) to the ferry terminal where I picked up the tickets that Matsuo-san had kindly reserved for us. With time on our hands till the departure at 0130 we sat around drinking beer and uploading photos onto Richards’s net-book!

### **Day 14 – 4th March**

The ferry left on time and we were shown to our cabin! The crew must have taken pity on Anne as she was offered her own cabin! After not much sleep we (well three of us) were on deck at 0630. Birding was slow as it was flat calm – not looking good for seeing shearwaters or Albys! Mid-morning proved me wrong however when Richard screamed Albatross, as a Laysan Albatross flew elegantly past the boat. A few auks, mainly Brünnich’s Guillemot and a pod of Killer Whales kept the interest going, but as things dwindled off, we broke for lunch at 1230. Lunch consisted of some microwavable noodles and defrosted chips out of a vending machine with green tea – lovely! Desert was a vending machine Ice Cream. After lunch, all four were back on deck as the wind picked up and we started to see Streaked Shearwaters, and soon, more Laysan Albatross. We also saw more auks with Rhinoceros and Least Auklets, Brünnich’s Guillemot and Ancient Murrelets zooming past. Martin also picked up a Fork-tailed Storm Petrel, which unfortunately eluded two of the group. As it was now raining, we broke for tea, but as soon as we got into the café area two Fulmars and a Pomarine Skua went past the window and Anne saw an all dark shearwater go past. We all hurried back onto deck to see more skua’s, another all dark shearwater and annoyingly a black, grey and white *Pterodroma* petrel which decided to fly down the wrong side of the ferry! We docked at Oarai on time and caught a taxi to Mito where we were pre-booked into the Sannomaru Hotel.

### **Day 15 – 5th March**

Today was the start of winding down after a hectic schedule over the past two weeks. Anne had wanted to see a Japanese garden and it just so happened that one of the top 3 gardens in Japan was at Mito, and it just happened to be the Cherry blossom time, so our destination today was Kairakuen Park. Entry is free and soon after entering the park our only new bird (if you don’t count feral Mute and ornamental



Black Swans) was Brown-headed Thrush. It pays to get here early, as the park soon filled up with tourists and locals and by mid-day was heaving! Dusky Thrushes were common and fairly approachable and we had a fly-over heard of 71 Bewick's Swans on their way back north. Other birds seen in the attractive park included Daurian Redstart, Oriental Turtle Dove and Japanese White-eye. Richard also got collared by some Japanese making a film for some Talk Show! A walk back to the hotel via the lake provided three other species of Swan (Whooper, Mute and Black) and good views of Little Egret, Pintail, Wigeon, *lugens* White Wagtail and White-cheeked Starling.

### **Day 16 – 6th March**

We awoke to grey skies and torrential rain. Martin and Anne braved the elements to seek out the car hire place and arrived back stressed after their car hire ordeal an hour later! Today we headed down to Chōshi – a gull Mecca! Most of the morning was taken up with working the area from the comfort (!) of the car as it was 'tipping it' down. Many photos were taken of the various plumages of Kamchatka, Vega, Glaucous-winged, Slaty-backed Gulls and Kittiwake then it was off to find a place for lunch and to dry out. Most of the crew were 'fished out' by this time, so we opted for Coco's. Our last port of call was to be the temple and ornamental park complex at Narita San Koen not too far from the airport. Unfortunately, with the weather deteriorating even further prospects weren't good for seeing many birds, but on entering the park, point blank views of Grey Bunting were had in the gloom, making up for the views at Mi-ike. Most birds were either hiding from the downpour or had gone to roost early, so with rising damp, we cut our losses and headed to find the car hire place and the shuttle bus to the Hilton Hotel. This proved more difficult than expected and after several wrong turns (including getting into a restricted part of the airport where we really didn't want to be!) we eventually got to the car hire port and dropped off the car and caught the shuttle bus back to the Hilton Hotel. This was easily the cheapest place we stayed during the whole trip, but boy did they make up for it with the food! Two beers and two evening meals cost *ca.* £70!

### **Day 17 – 7th March**

After a lie-in and a leisurely breakfast we pack our bags for the last time and headed to the airport and caught our flight home via Amsterdam after what had been a very successful trip.

## **Systematic List**

The order, sub-specific identifications and nomenclature follows the newly published book by Mark Brazil - *The Birds of East Asia*, with the more familiar names in parenthesis.

**Copper Pheasant** *Syrmaticus soemmerringii* probably either *scintillans* or *subrufus*

**Honshu:** Only looked for in the Japanese Alps. A female was seen at close range around the trails at Yacho No Mori, Hoshino Onsen, Karuizawa on 21st February with a male seen more distantly there the next day.

**Japanese Green Pheasant** *Phasianus versicolor* probably *tohkaidi*

**Honshu:** A male was seen around Lake New Town, nr Karuizawa on 20th February, with a male and three females seen by the river at Yokokawa the next day.

**(Taiga) Bean Goose** *Anser fabalis middendorffii*

**Kyūshū:** One was in fields near the Arasaki Crane reserve on 25th February.

**Hokkaido:** Along the Nemuro Peninsular, seven flew over Cape Nosappumisaki on 28th February.

**Greater White-fronted Goose** *Anser albatross frontalis*

**Honshu:** 60 were located in fields around Sakai-shi with ca. 2000 arriving at dusk to the lake at Katano Kamo-ike on 23rd February.

**Lesser White-fronted Goose** *Anser erythropus*

**Honshu:** Seven came in at dusk, separate to the Greater White-fronted Geese at Katano Kamo-ike on 23rd February.

**Mute Swan** *Cygnus olor*

**Honshu:** Ten of this introduced species were on the lake at Mito on 5th March.

**Whooper Swan** *Cygnus cygnus*

**Honshu:** 50 were on the lake at Mito on 5th March.

**Hokkaido:** On 28th February, singles were at Lake Furen (by the restaurant) and at Shibetsu, on the way to Rausu. Four adults with two Juveniles were in Rausu Harbour on 1st March with 100's between Rausu and Odaitō the same day. On 3rd, 60 were at the Tancho No Sato Crane reserve nr Akan.

**Bewick's Swan** *Cygnus columbianus bewickii*

**Honshu:** A heard of 71 flew over Kairakuen gardens, Mito early morning on 5th March.

**Kyūshū:** An adult was in fields near to the Arasaki Crane reserve on 25th February.

**Common Shelduck** *Tadorna tadorna*

**Kyūshū:** ca. 22 were in the Yatsushiro area on 24th February.

**Mandarin Duck** *Aix galericulata*

**Honshu:** 20 were on the lake at Myogi-ko on 21st February.

**Kyūshū:** At least two were on a pond by the 447 on the way to Hyūga on 25th February.

**Gadwall** *Anas strepera strepera*

**Honshu:** Five were at Mikuni on 23rd February.

**Falcated Duck** *Anas falcate*

**Honshu:** At Katano Kamo-ike on 23rd February, two were seen on the reserve in the morning with 12 in the evening.

**Hokkaido:** A pair were in Hanasaki Harbour on the south side of the Nemuro Peninsular on 2nd March.

**Eurasian Wigeon** *Anas penelope*

**Honshu:** Several were on a small pond on the way out of Karuizawa on 22nd February with 20 in the Sakai-shi area (S of Katano Kamo-ike) on 23rd whilst on 5th March, 60 were on the lake at Mito .

**Kyūshū:** On 24th February, 6000+ were at Yatsushiro with 700+ in the Arasaki area the next day. ca. 70 were on the crater lake at Mi-ike on 26th.

**Hokkaido:** 20 were in Hanasaki Harbour on the south side of the Nemuro Peninsular on 2nd March.

**Mallard** *Anas platyrhynchos platyrhynchos*

**Honshu:** One was at Lake Shiozawako (nr Karuizawa) on 20th February. Birds were present at Lake Myogi-ko the next day with 300+ in the Katano Kamo-ike area and 1000+ in the Daishōji River area on 23rd. 30 were also on the lake at Mito on 5th March.

**Kyūshū:** Two were at Yatsushiro on 24th February with 150 in the Arasaki area the next day.

**Hokkaido:** 25 were at the Tancho No Sato Crane reserve nr Akan on 3rd March.

**Eastern Spot-billed Duck** *Anas zonorhyncha*

**Honshu:** Two were at Lake New Town with 33 on Lake Shiozawako (both nr Karuizawa) on 20th February. The next day, 30 were on Lake Myogi-ko. Several were also on a small pond on the way out of Karuizawa on 22nd and at Mito on 5th March.

**Kyūshū:** 200+ were in the Yatsushiro area on 24th February with 40 in Kadogawa Harbour on 26th.

**Northern Shoveler** *Anas clypeata*

**Honshu:** 25 were at Katano Kamo-ike on 23rd February.

**Kyūshū:** One was at the Arasaki Crane reserve on 25th February.

**Northern Pintail** *Anas acuta*

**Honshu:** One was at Katano Kamo-ike on 23rd February. 100+ were on the lake at Mito on 5th March.

**Kyūshū:** Two were at Yatsushiro on 24th February with one at Arasaki the next day.

**Hokkaido:** 20 were at Hanasaki Harbour on the south side of the Nemuro Peninsular on 28th February with ten there on 2nd March. 40+ were also at Odaitō on 1st March.

**Baikal Teal** *Anas formosa*

**Honshu:** 28 were seen distantly at Katano Kamo-ike on 23rd February.

**Eurasian Teal** *Anas crecca*

**Honshu:** 200 were in the Katano Kamo-ike area on 23rd February with ten in the Chōshi area on 6th March.

**Kyūshū:** 200 were in the Arasaki Crane reserve area on 25th February.

**Hokkaido:** Four were in Hanasaki Harbour on the south side of the Nemuro Peninsular on 2nd March.

**Common Pochard** *Aythya farina*

**Honshu:** On 23rd February, four were at Katano Kamo-ike and at the mouth of the Daishōji River. Three were also on the lake at Mito on 5th March.

**Hokkaido:** A male was at Hanasaki Harbour on the south side of the Nemuro Peninsular on 2nd March.

**Tufted Duck** *Aythya fuligula*

**Honshu:** 20 were at the mouth of the Daishōji River on 23rd February.

**Hokkaido:** Ten were in Hanasaki Harbour on the south side of the Nemuro Peninsular on 2nd March.

**Greater Scaup** *Aythya marila nearctica*

**Honshu:** ca. 600 were at Chōshi on 6th March.

**Hokkaido:** Along the Nemuro Peninsular, ca. 100 were in Hanasaki Harbour on the S side of the peninsular on 28th February with ca. 200 between Cape Nosappumisaki and Lodge Furen along the N side of the peninsular the same day. About 100 were still in Hanasaki Harbour on 2nd March with 35 in Habomai Harbour the same day.

**Harlequin Duck** *Histrionicus histrionicus*

**Hokkaido:** Along the Nemuro Peninsular, 12 were in Hanasaki Harbour on 28th February with 25+ at Cape Nosappumisaki the same day. 100 were around Habomai Harbour with 70+ at Cape Nosappumisaki on 2nd March. On 1st March, ca. five were at Rausu with 20 dotted between there and Odaitō.

**White-winged Scoter** *Melanitta deglandi stejnegeri*

**Hokkaido:** Along the Nemuro Peninsular, Ten were in Hanasaki Harbour on 28th February.

**Black Scoter** *Melanitta americana*

**Honshu:** ca. 20 were at Chōshi on 6th March.

**Hokkaido:** Along the Nemuro Peninsular, 30 were in Hanasaki Harbour on 28th February with 100 at Cape Nosappumisaki the same day. On 2nd March, 50 were at Hanasaki Harbour with 250 at Habomai Harbour and ca. 100 at Cape Nosappumisaki. On 1st March ca. 100 were between Rausu and Odaitō.

**Long-tailed Duck** *Clangula hyemalis*

**Hokkaido:** Along the Nemuro Peninsular, 25+ were noted at Hanasaki Harbour on 28th February with 40 there on 2nd March. Ten were at Cape Nosappumisaki on 28th with similar numbers there on 2nd. 20 were at Habomai Harbour on 2nd.

**Common Goldeneye** *Bucephala clangula clangula*

**Hokkaido:** Ten were in the Lodge Furen area on 28th February.

**Smew** *Mergellus albellus*

**Honshu:** Two F/imm were at Katano Kamo-ike on 23rd February with another F/imm on the lake at Mito on 5th March.

**Hokkaido:** A F/imm was at Rausu on 1st March.

**Goosander** *Mergus merganser orientalis*

**Hokkaido:** Six were on Lake Furen by the restaurant on 28th February with a male between Rausu and Odaitō on 1st March.

**Red-breasted Merganser** *Mergus serrator*

**Honshu:** 11 were seen during the morning from the Tomakomai to Ōarai Ferry on 4th March.

**Kyūshū:** A male was at Yatsushiro on 24th February.

**Hokkaido:** Five were in the Lodge Furen area with 15 at Cape Nosappumisaki on 28th February. ca. 100 were between Rausu and Odaitō on 1st March and six were in Hanasaki Harbour with two in Habomai Harbour (both along the south side of the Nemuro Peninsular) on 2nd.

**Diver sp** *Gavia sp*

**Honshu:** 13 (six am & seven pm) were seen from the Tomakomai to Ōarai Ferry on 4th March.

**Black-throated Diver** *Gavia arctica viridigularis*

**Honshu:** Two were seen during the morning from the Tomakomai to Ōarai Ferry on 4th March.

**Pacific Diver** *Gavia pacifica*

**Honshu:** ca. Ten were seen from the Tomakomai to Ōarai Ferry on 4th March.

**Laysan Albatross** *Phoebastria immutabilis*

**Honshu:** Nine (one am & eight pm) were seen from the Tomakomai to Ōarai Ferry on 4th March.

**Northern Fulmar** *Fulmarus glacialis rodgersii*

**Honshu:** Single light and dark phase birds were seen from the Tomakomai to Ōarai Ferry on 4th March.

**Gadfly Petrel sp** *Pterodroma sp*

**Honshu:** A Black, grey & white bird was seen from the Tomakomai to Ōarai Ferry on 4th March, but unfortunately flew down the wrong side of the boat to where we were watching from so couldn't be identified!

**Streaked Shearwater** *Calonectris leucomelas*

**Honshu:** 50+ were seen during the afternoon watch from the Tomakomai to Ōarai Ferry on 4th March.

**Shearwater sp** *Puffinus sp*

**Honshu:** Two all dark shearwaters were seen from the Tomakomai to Ōarai Ferry on 4th March.

**Fork-tailed Storm-Petrel** *Oceanodroma furcata furcata* or *plumbea*

**Honshu:** One was seen from the Tomakomai to Ōarai Ferry on 4th March.

**Little Grebe** *Tachybaptus ruficollis poggei*

**Honshu:** Singles were at Lake Shiozawako (nr Karuizawa) on 20th February, Katano Kamo-ike and on the Daishōji River on 23rd. 19 were on the lake at Mito on 5th March and finally, four were at Chōshi on 6th.

**Red-necked Grebe** *Podiceps grisegena holboellii*

**Honshu:** Three were seen during the morning from the Tomakomai to Ōarai Ferry on 4th March.

**Kyūshū:** One was in the Kadogawa Harbour area on 26th February.

**Hokkaido:** Along the Nemuro Peninsular, four were at Cape Nosappumisaki on 28th February with six there on 2nd March. Also on 2nd, one was in Hanasaki Harbour with two in Habomai Harbour.

**Great Crested Grebe** *Podiceps cristatus cristatus*

**Honshu:** Two were at Mikuni on 23rd February. One was seen during the morning from the Tomakomai to Ōarai Ferry on 4th March, whilst four were on the lake at Mito the next day and two were at Chōshi on 6th March.

**Kyūshū:** Six were at Yatsushiro on 24th February, whilst eight were in the Kadogawa Harbour area on 26th.

**Black-necked Grebe** *Podiceps nigricollis nigricollis*

**Honshu:** One was at the mouth of the Daishōji River on 23rd February and two were at Chōshi on 6th March.

**Kyūshū:** Four were in the area around the crane reserve at Arasaki on 25th February.

**Spoonbill sp** *Platalea sp*

**Kyūshū:** One was in the fields around the Arasaki Crane reserve on 25th February. It remained asleep at all times, thus avoided being identified.

**Black-faced Spoonbill** *Platalea minor*

**Kyūshū:** Four were seen in the Yatsushiro area on 24th February.

**Grey Heron** *Ardea cinerea jouyi*

**Honshu:** One-three were seen at several sites around the Japanese Alps between 19th-21st February. Three were at Katano Kamo-ike on 23rd. One was also at Chōshi on 6th March.

**Kyūshū:** Birds were present at Yatsushiro on 24th February whilst 26+ were around Arasaki on 25th.

**Great White Egret** *Casmerodius albus albus*

**Honshu:** Singles were at Shimocochi on 20th and at Lake Myogi-ko on 21st February, with three at Katano Kamo-ike on 23rd. One was also at the lake at Mito on 5th March.

**Kyūshū:** 20 were at Yatsushiro on 24th February with five in the Arasaki area the next day.

**Little Egret** *Egretta garzetta garzetta*

**Honshu:** Two were around the lake at Mito on 5th March with one seen between Mito and Chōshi the next day.

**Kyūshū:** Six were in the Yatsushiro area on 24th February with 12 in the Arasaki area the next day. 60+ were around Kadogawa Harbour on 26th.

**Pacific Reef Egret** *Egretta sacra sacra*

**Honshu:** Two were at Tōjinbō Headland (nr Mikuni) on 23rd February.

**Great Cormorant** *Phalacrocorax carbo hanedae*

**Honshu:** Inland, singles were by the Golf course nr the Usui Pass on 19th February with others at the river at Yokokawa and on Lake Myogi-ko on 21st. 100+ were at Mikuni and ‘lots’ were at Tōjinbō Headland (nr Mikuni) on 23rd February when 300+ roosted at Katano Kamo-ike. Eight were on the lake at Mito on 5th March and 600+ were at Chōshi the next day.

**Kyūshū:** 1000 were in the Yatsushiro area on 24th February with 40 in the Kadogawa Harbour area on 26th.

**Temminck’s Cormorant** *Phalacrocorax capillatus*

**Honshu:** One was identified at Mikuni on 23rd February.

**Pelagic Cormorant** *Phalacrocorax pelagicus pelagicus*

**Honshu:** One was at Mikuni with three at Tōjinbō Headland (nr Mikuni) on 23rd February. Three were also at Chōshi on 6th March.

**Hokkaido:** At Cape Nosappumisaki, 80+ were on a stack to the south of the Cape on 28th February with 200 on a stack at the point on 2nd March. 20 were also at Hanasaki Harbour on 2nd.

**Red-faced Cormorant** *Phalacrocorax urile*

**Hokkaido:** Three juveniles were eventually found on the stack just to the NW of the lighthouse at Cape Nosappumisaki on 2nd March.

**Eurasian Kestrel** *Falco tinnunculus interstinctus*

**Honshu:** Singles were seen on the way to Karuizawa on 19th February and around Sakai-shi on 23rd.

**Kyūshū:** One was at Yatsushiro on 24th February.

**Merlin** *Falco columbarius insignis*

**Kyūshū:** One was in the Yatsushiro area on 24th February.

**Peregrine Falcon** *Falco peregrines japonensis*

**Honshu:** One was at Tōjinbō Headland (nr Mikuni) on 23rd February.

**Kyūshū:** One was in the Yatsushiro area on 24th February.

**Hokkaido:** A juvenile was found perched on a telegraph pole at Hanasaki Harbour (Nemuro Peninsular) on 28th February.

**Osprey** *Pandion haliaetus haliaetus*

**Honshu:** One was at Katano Kamo-ike on 23rd February.

**Kyūshū:** Ten were at Yatsushiro on 24th February with eight at a river mouth near Arasaki the next day. One was also seen between Tsuno-cho to Takanabe on 26th.

**Black-eared Kite** *Milvus lineatus*

**Honshu:** One-three were seen at several locations around the Japanese Alps between 19th-22nd February. 30 were noted on the way to Oneyama Shinrin Koen on 21st. Several were seen from the car on 22nd and 23rd and 20+ were at Tōjinbō Headland (nr Mikuni) on 23rd. Two were also over the Kairakuen gardens at Mito on 5th March.

**Kyūshū:** ca. 40 were around the Arasaki Crane reserve on 25th February with 100+ at Kadogawa Harbour the next day.

**Hokkaido:** Up to 150 were in the Lodge/Lake Furen area on 28th February/1st-2nd March. Several were seen from the car between Rausu and Odaitō on 1st March and six were present at feeding time at the Tancho No Sato Crane reserve nr Akan on 3rd March.

**White-tailed Eagle** *Haliaeetus albicilla albicilla*

**Hokkaido:** 80+ were in the Lodge/Lake Furen area on 28th February, most coming to food by the restaurant ¼ mile west of Lodge Furen. Another 21 were seen along the Nemuro Peninsular on 28th. 50+ were on the Pack Ice to the N of the Shiretoko Peninsular on 1st March with a single over Inn Washino-yado later in the morning. On 2nd March 60+ were by the restaurant at Lake Furen with another nine being seen along the Nemuro Peninsular. Three were noted on the way to Akan with eight coming in at feeding time at the Tancho No Sato Crane reserve nr Akan on 3rd. One of the highlights of the trip!

**Steller's Sea Eagle** *Haliaeetus pelagicus*

**Hokkaido:** 100+ of these stunningly beautiful eagles were in the Lodge/Lake Furen area coming into feed on the fish left on the ice by the restaurant owners on 28th February. Very good views were had in perfect light - for me, the highlight of the whole trip! 17 were along the Nemuro Peninsular the same day. 40+ were on the Pack Ice to the N of the Shiretoko Peninsular on 1st March with several being seen on the journey back to Lodge Furen. 70+ were back at the restaurant on 2nd March with another five noted along the Nemuro Peninsular the same day. Finally, one was at the Tancho No Sato Crane reserve nr Akan on 3rd.

**Hen Harrier** *Circus cyaneus*

**Honshu:** Three were over the fields at Sakai-shi on 23rd February.

**Hokkaido:** A F/imm flew past Cape Nosappumisaki on 2nd March.

**Eurasian Sparrowhawk** *Accipiter nisus nisosimilis*

**Honshu:** Birds were seen on 22<sup>nd</sup> February at Karuizawa & at an unrecorded location the next day.

**Northern Goshawk** *Accipiter gentilis fujiyamae*

**Kyūshū:** One was over fields near the Arasaki Crane reserve on 25th February.

**Eastern Buzzard** *Buteo japonicus* probably *menzbieri*

**Honshu:** One was seen on the way to Karuizawa on 19th February with four on the way to Oneyama Shinrin Koen on 21st. One was also on the way to Kanazawa on 22nd. An injured bird was around the temple at Kairakuen Gardens, Mito on 5th March.

**Hokkaido:** One was seen between Rausu and Odaitō on 1st March with two at the Tancho No Sato Crane reserve nr Akan on 3rd.

**Common Coot** *Fulica atra atra*

**Honshu:** Up to four were at Katano Kamo-ike on 23rd February and 50+ was on the lake at Mito on 5th March.

**Siberian Crane** *Grus leucogeranus*

**Kyūshū:** An adult and a Juvenile were wintering at the Arasaki Crane reserve and were eventually seen at point blank range on 25th February.

**Sandhill Crane** *Grus canadensis canadensis*

**Kyūshū:** Six+ were found in the fields around the Arasaki Crane reserve on 25th February.

**White-naped Crane** *Grus vipio*

**Kyūshū:** 3010 was the wintering total on the board at the Arasaki Crane reserve on 25th February.

**Common Crane** *Grus grus lilfordi*

**Kyūshū:** Two were seen amongst the myriads of cranes at the Arasaki Crane reserve on 25th February.

**Hooded Crane** *Grus monacha*

**Kyūshū:** 10383 was the wintering total on the board at the Arasaki Crane reserve on 25th February. Two hybrids with Common Crane were also found amongst the flock.

**Red-crowned Crane** *Grus japonensis*

**Hokkaido:** Two were at Shibetsu on the way to Rausu on 28th February with a pair at Lake Furen on 1st March. Two-four were at a different part of Lake Furen the next day and ca. 100 were showing at point blank range at the Tancho No Sato Crane reserve nr Akan on 3rd March.

**Northern Lapwing** *Vanellus vanellus*

**Kyūshū:** 14 were at Yatsushiro area on 24th February with 40 at the Arasaki Crane reserve the next day.

**Grey Plover** *Pluvialis squatarola squatarola*

**Kyūshū:** 26 were at Yatsushiro on 24th February.

**Long-billed Plover** *Charadrius placidus*

**Kyūshū:** An adult was found on the rocky part of a river near the Arasaki Crane reserve on 25th February.

**Kentish Plover** *Charadrius alexandrinus japonensis*

**Kyūshū:** 100+ were on the mudflats in the Yatsushiro area on 24th February.

**Solitary Snipe** *Gallinago solitaria japonica*

**Honshu:** One was along the Kose stream (nr Karuizawa) on 21st February. Seen briefly on the ground by RD, good views were had when this bird flushed whilst RD was trying to alert the rest of us that had walked past it!

**Eurasian Curlew** *Numenius arquata orientalis*

**Kyūshū:** Two were at Yatsushiro on 24th February with a single at Kadogawa on 26th.



**Common Greenshank** *Tringa nebularia*

**Kyūshū:** One was at Yatsushiro on 24th February.

**Common Sandpiper** *Actitis hypoleucos*

**Kyūshū:** One was at Yatsushiro on 24th February with six in the Arasaki area the next day. Three were also at Kadogawa Harbour on 26th.

**Rock Sandpiper** *Calidris ptilocnemis*

**Hokkaido:** Eight were seen by three of the party at Cape Nosappumisaki flying around the headland on 2nd March. Unfortunately they couldn't be relocated.

**Dunlin** *Calidris alpina* either *sakhalina*, *actites* or *arctica*

**Honshu:** 25 were at Mikuni on 23rd February.

**Kyūshū:** ca. 500 were on the mudflats at Yatsushiro on 24th February.

**Black-tailed Gull** *Larus crassirostris*

**Honshu:** Hundreds were at Mikuni on 23rd February. 5000+ were noted in large flocks from the Tomakomai to Ōarai Ferry on 4th March and 1800 were at Chōshi on 6th.

**Kyūshū:** Only four were at Yatsushiro on 24th February and birds were noted as present at Kadogawa on 26th.

**Common Gull** *Larus canus*

**Honshu:** Two adults were at Mikuni on 23rd February. 400+ were noted from the Tomakomai to Ōarai Ferry on 4th March and 600+ were at Chōshi on 6th.

**Hokkaido:** Only one was seen on the Pack Ice N of the Shiretoko Peninsular on 1st March when a first W was in Rausu. Along the Nemuro Peninsular on 2nd, ten+ were at Hanasaki Harbour and two were in Habomai Harbour.

**Glaucous-winged Gull** *Larus glacises*

**Honshu:** A few were noted from the Tomakomai to Ōarai Ferry on 4th March with ten at Chōshi on 6th.

**Hokkaido:** Two were around Lodge Furen with 20 at Hanasaki Harbour (Nemuro Peninsular) whilst several were noted on the drive to Rausu on 28th February. On 1st March, two juveniles were seen on the Pack Ice to the N of the Shiretoko Peninsular with an adult and juvenile at Rausu Harbour (also a bird presumed to be a hybrid was present here) and a juvenile at Odaitō. On 2nd, three were at Hanasaki Harbour with four at Habomai Harbour and ten at Cape Nosappumisaki.

**Glaucous Gull** *Larus hyperboreus*

**Honshu:** 20 were at Chōshi on 6th March.

**Hokkaido:** 70+ were around Lodge Furen with several present at Hanasaki Harbour (Nemuro Peninsular) and 30 between Shibetsu and Rausu on 28th February. On 1st March, 40+ were on the Pack Ice to the N of the Shiretoko Peninsular with many around Rausu Harbour and ca. 100 between Rausu and Odaitō. About a dozen were seen between Lodge Furen/Nemuro Peninsular on 2nd March.

**Vega Gull** *Larus vegae*

**Honshu:** Three were at Mikuni on 23rd February. In March, ten were around the lake at Mito on 5th and 600+ were at Chōshi on 6th.

**Kyūshū:** 60+ were at Yatsushiro on 24th February with 70 around Kadogawa Harbour on 26th.

**Hokkaido:** An adult bird on the Pack Ice off the tip of the Shiretoko Peninsular on 1st March was

either this species or an adult of the *cacchinans* group of gulls.

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

**Honshu:** On 23rd February, one was seen from the car whilst driving to Katano Kamo-ike and three were at Mikuni. 500+ were also at Chōshi on 6th March.

**Hokkaido:** Ten were around Lodge Furen on 28th February when many were also seen along the Nemuro Peninsular. Many were on the Pack Ice to the N of the Shiretoko Peninsular and around Rausu on 1st March when 20 were at Odaitō. The next day, ten were again around Lake Furen with 50+ at Hanasaki and 12+ at Habomai Harbours when 50+ were off Cape Nosappumisaki.

**Black-headed Gull** *Chroiocephalus ridibundus*

**Honshu:** 70 were around the Lake at Mito on 5th March and 200 were at Chōshi the next day.

**Kyūshū:** 80+ were at Yatsushiro on 24th February

**Hokkaido:** Three were at Hanasaki Harbour on 2nd March.

**Saunders's Gull** *Larus saundersi*

**Kyūshū:** 25+ were at Yatsushiro on 24th February.

**Black-legged Kittiwake** *Rissa tridactyla*

**Honshu:** On 4th March, thousands were seen during the pm from the Tomakomai to Ōarai Ferry with about 70 being noted during the am. 20 were also at Chōshi on 6th.

**Pomarine Skua** *Stercorarius pomarinus*

**Honshu:** Six were seen from the Tomakomai to Ōarai Ferry on 4th March.

**Arctic Skua** *Stercorarius parasiticus*

**Honshu:** One was seen from the Tomakomai to Ōarai Ferry on 4th March during the afternoon watch.

**Brünnich's Guillemot** *Uria lomvia*

**Honshu:** On 4th March, 60+ (50+ am & 10 pm) were seen from the Tomakomai to Ōarai Ferry mainly in groups of two-three birds sitting on the water.

**Hokkaido:** Four were seen around the pack Ice on 1st March.

**Pigeon Guillemot** *Cepphus columba*

**Hokkaido:** One was off Cape Nosappumisaki on 2nd March.

**Spectacled Guillemot** *Cepphus carbo*

**Hokkaido:** At Cape Nosappumisaki, ten were seen on 28th February with 50+ on 2nd March. One was also seen from the boat heading back to Rausu on 1st March from the Pack Ice.

**Ancient Murrelet** *Synthliboramphus antiquus*

**Honshu:** 23 were seen flying N during the am and 700+ flying N during the pm from the Tomakomai to Ōarai Ferry on 4th March.

**Hokkaido:** Ten were in Hanasaki Harbour on 28th February, with three there on 2nd March. Ten+ were also seen from Cape Nosappumisaki on 28th with three there on 2nd.

**Japanese Murrelet** *Synthliboramphus wumizusume*

**Kyūshū:** Two were seen at Kadogawa Harbour on 26th February.

**Least Auklet** *Aethia pusilla*

**Honshu:** 61 (31 am & 30 pm) were seen from the Tomakomai to Ōarai Ferry on 4th March.

**Rhinoceros Auklet** *Cerorhinca monocerata*

**Honshu:** 38 (eight+ in am & 30+ in pm) were seen from the Tomakomai to Ōarai Ferry on 4th March.

**Hokkaido:** One was off Cape Nosappumisaki on 28th February.

**Rock Dove/Feral Pigeon** *Columba livia*

**Honshu:** seen most days and generally ignored!

**Kyūshū:** seen most days and generally ignored!

**Hokkaido:** seen most days and generally ignored!

**Oriental Turtle Dove** *Streptopelia orientalis*

**Honshu:** Twos were noted at the service station at Mitsu on 19th February and at the Picchio Nature Centre, Hoshino Onsen, Karuizawa the next day when three were at Shimocochi. Three were also seen on the drive to Katano Kamo-ike on 23rd. 40 were around the Kairakuen gardens and Mito Lake area on 5th March with ten at Chōshi on 6th and a single at the Narita Hilton Hotel on the 7th.

**Kyūshū:** Four were in the Yatsushiro area on 24th February with 20 around Arasaki the next day and two were between Tsuno-cho to Takanabe on 26th.

**White-bellied Green Pigeon** *Treron sieboldii*

**Kyūshū:** One was seen briefly at the campsite at Lake Mi-ike on 26th February.

**Blakiston's Fish Owl** *Bubo blakistoni blakistoni*

**Hokkaido:** An adult was seen twice (at 2100 & 2140) at Inn Washino-yado at Rausu on 28th February.

**Ural Owl** *Strix uralensis*

**Honshu:** Two singles were seen driving around the Yacho no Mori, Hoshino Onsen complex and along the toll road at night on 21st February.

**Common Kingfisher** *Alcedo atthis*

**Kyūshū:** Singles were in the Arasaki area on 25th February and at Mi-ike the next day.

**Crested Kingfisher** *Megaceryle lugubris*

**Hokkaido:** One flew over the Tancho No Sato Crane reserve nr Akan on 3rd March.

**Japanese Pygmy Woodpecker** *Yungipicus kizuki*

**Honshu:** On 19th February, two were at the Mitsu Service area with up to three at the Picchio Nature Centre/Yacho No Mori area, Hoshino Onsen on 20th-21st. Also on 21st, two were coming to the feeders at Oneyama Shinrin Koen. Two were also at Kairakuen gardens, Mito on 5th March.

**Kyūshū:** Two were around the campsite at Lake Mi-ike on 26th February.

**Hokkaido:** One-two were coming to the feeders at Lodge Furen on 28th February/2nd March.

**Great Spotted Woodpecker** *Dendrocopus major*

**Honshu:** One was around Karuizawa with two at the Picchio Nature Centre, Hoshino Onsen on 20th February with a single at Yacho No Mori, Hoshino Onsen the next day and three+ on 22nd.

**Hokkaido:** One-two were in the Lodge Furen area on 28th February/2nd March.

**Japanese Woodpecker** *Picus awokera*

**Honshu:** Five were noted around the Picchio Nature Centre/Yacho No Mori area, Hoshino Onsen on 20th February with a single there the next day. Also on 21st singles were at Oneyama Shinrin Koen and along the Usui Pass.

**Ryukyu Minivet** *Pericrocotus tegimae*

**Kyūshū:** Five were around the campsite at Lake Mi-ike on 26th February.

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

**Honshu:** The first was a single at Usi-Karuizawa on 19th February. Singles were also at Shimocochi the next day, by the Yokokawa River and in the Sazanka Tree area on 21st. Two-three (including a male) were in the Katano Kamo-ike area on 23rd. One was in the Kairakuen Gardens on 5th March and between Mito & Chōshi the next day.

**Kyūshū:** Singles were at Yatsushiro on 24th February and Tsuno-cho and Mi-ike on 26th.

**Eurasian Jay** *Garrulus glanderous*

**Honshu:** Three-four of the race *G. g. japonicus* were at Yacho no Mori, Hoshino Onsen, Karuizawa on 20th-22nd February with one at Jigokudani on the latter date.

**Hokkaido:** Two of the race *G. g. brandtii* were at the Tancho No Sato Crane res nr Akan on 3rd March.

**Azure-winged Magpie** *Cyanopica cyanus japonica*

**Honshu:** One was at Karuizawa on 20th February with 15+ at Shimocochi the same day.

**Common Magpie** *Pica pica sericea*

**Kyūshū:** One was seen from the car between Fukuoka and Yatsushiro on 24th February.

**Rook** *Corvus frugilegus pastinator*

**Kyūshū:** Ten were seen from the car between Fukuoka and Yatsushiro on 24th February with several seen at Arasaki the next day.

**Carrion Crow** *Corvus corone orientalis*

**Honshu:** Twos were at the Mazda car rental place in Tokyo on 19th February and at Shimocochi the next day. 20 were also at Sakai-shi on 23rd and a single was at Kairakuen Gardens, Mito on 5th March.

**Kyūshū:** ca. 200 were at Yatsushiro on 24th February.

**Hokkaido:** Several were at the Tancho No Sato Crane Observatory nr Akan on 3rd March.

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

**Honshu:** On 19th February, 19 were at the Service area at Mitsu with many noted on the drive to Karuizawa. Six were at Shimocochi on 20th with ten+ noted at Tōjimbō Headland (nr Mikuni) on 23rd. 20 were in the Mito area on 5th March with five at the Narita San Koen Temple the next day and four were around the Narita Hilton Hotel on the morning of 4th.

**Kyūshū:** Only one was noted. A single was at Yatsushiro on 24th February.

**Hokkaido:** 50+ were at Lake Furen by the restaurant on 28th February. One was in Rausu Harbour on 1st March.

**Northern Raven** *Corvus corax kamtschaticus*

**Hokkaido:** One was seen whilst out on the Pack Ice N of the Shiretoko Peninsular on 1st March.

**Bohemian Waxwing** *Bombycilla garrulous centralasiae*

**Hokkaido:** One was with two Japanese Waxwings along Nakashibetsu high street on 1st March.

**Japanese Waxwing** *Bombycilla japonica*

**Hokkaido:** Two were with a Bohemian Waxwing along Nakashibetsu high street on 1st March.

**Eastern Great Tit** *Parus minor minor*

**Honshu:** One was at the service area at Mitsu on 19th February. The next day six were in the Karuizawa area and at Lake New Town. Two-three were around Oneyama Shinrin Koen and Karuizawa on 21st-22nd. Six were also at Kairakuen Gardens, Mito on 5th March.

**Kyūshū:** Birds were present at Mi-ike on 26th February.

**Coal Tit** *Periparus ater insularis*

**Honshu:** One was near the Golf Course by the Usui Pass on 19th February with four at Karuizawa the next day. Six were also at Jigokudani on 22nd.

**Varied Tit** *Poecile varius varius*

**Honshu:** Four were at Lake New Town (nr Karuizawa) on 20th February with two at Yacho No Mori, Hoshino Onsen, ten+ at Oneyama Shinrin Koen and a single along the Kose stream on 21st.

**Kyūshū:** Five were around the campsite at Lake Mi-ike on 26th February.

**Marsh Tit** *Poecile palustris hensoni*

**Hokkaido:** One-two were in the Lodge Furen area on 28th February/2nd March with four by the entrance to Inn Washino-yado on 1st March.

**Willow Tit** *Poecile montanus restrictus*

**Honshu:** Singles were at Karuizawa and at the Picchio Nature Centre, Hoshino Onsen with three seen along the trails at Yacho no Mori on 20th February. Two+ were at the feeders at Oneyama Shinrin Koen on 21st with a pair along the trails at Yacho no Mori, Hoshino Onsen on 22nd.

**Barn Swallow** *Hirundo rustica gutturalis*

**Kyūshū:** On 26th February, a single was present at Kadogawa Harbour with three at Hyūga-shi, 21 at Tsuno-cho and 16 between Tsuno-cho and Takanabe.

**Asian House Martin** *Delichon dasypus dasypus*

**Kyūshū:** Five were seen by the café at Tsuno-cho on 26th February.

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

**Honshu:** Birds of the race *A. c. trivirgatus* were noted as follows: On 20th February, 12 were around the Yacho no Mori, Hoshino Onsen complex (with six there on 22nd) with two at Lake New Town.

**Kyūshū:** Four of the race *A. c. kiusiuensis* were at Mi-ike on 26th February.

**Hokkaido:** Birds of the race *A. c. caudatus* were noted at the Swan Observatory (Lake Furen) on 2nd March.

**Eurasian Skylark** *Alauda arvensis prob. japonica*

**Kyūshū:** ca. 100 were in the Yatsushiro area on 24th February with several at Arasaki the next day.

**Zitting Cisticola** *Cisticola juncidis brunniceps*

**Kyūshū:** One was in the Yatsushiro area on 24th February.

**Brown-eared Bulbul** *Microscelis amaurotis amaurotis*

**Honshu:** Four were at the service area at Mitsu on 19th February. Two+ were at Shimocochi the next day with a single at Oneyama Shinrin Koen on 21st. On 22nd birds were seen on the journey to Kanazawa and at Sakai-shi and Tōjinbō Headland on 23rd. 20 were in the Kairakuen Gardens & Mito area on 5th March with a single at Narita San Koen the next day.

**Kyūshū:** 12 were at Yatsushiro on 24th February.

**Hokkaido:** One was at Lake Furen on 2nd March.

**Japanese Bush Warbler** *Cettia diphone cantans*

**Kyūshū:** Two were in the area around the river at Arasaki on 25th February with another two around the lake at Mi-ike on 26th.

**Japanese White-eye** *Zosterops japonicus japonicus*

**Honshu:** Three were at the service area at Mitsu on 19th February. Two were at Tōjinbō Headland on 23rd and in March, 30 were at Kairakuen Gardens, Mito on 5th with six at Narita San Koen the next day.

**Kyūshū:** On 26th February, two were at both Kadogawa Harbour and Lake Mi-ike.

**Goldcrest** *Regulus regulus japonensis*

**Honshu:** One was by the Golf Course near the Usui Pass on 19th February.

**Winter Wren** *Troglodytes troglodytes* either *dauricus* or *fumigatus*

**Honshu:** On 21st February, singles were at Yacho No Mori, Hoshino Onsen, and along the Kose stream, Karuizawa.

**Eurasian Nuthatch** *Sitta europaea*

**Honshu:** One-three of the race *S. e. amurensis* were at Yacho no Mori, Hoshino Onsen, Karuizawa between 20th-22nd with a single at Lake New Town on 20th.

**Kyūshū:** Two of the race *S. e. roseilia* were present at Lake Mi-ike on 26th February.

**Hokkaido:** Singles of the race *S. e. asiatica* were in the Lodge Furen area on 28th February and around the Swan Observatory, Lake Furen on 2nd March.

**White-cheeked Starling** *Sturnus cineraceus*

**Honshu:** Ten were at Shimocochi on 20th February whilst on 23rd; ten were noted on the way to Katano Kamo-ike and around Sakai-shi. Ten were also around the lake at Mito on 5th March and six were at Narita san Koen on 6th.

**Kyūshū:** Six were in the Yatsushiro area on 24th February.

**Pale Thrush** *Turdus pallidus*

**Honshu:** Singles were at Lake New Town and Edohara Pension, Karuizawa on 20th & 21st February. On 23rd singles were in the Katano Kamo-ike area and at Tōjinbō Headland. Two were also at Kairakuen Gardens on 5th March.

**Kyūshū:** One was at Yatsushiro on 24th February with three in the Kadogawa Harbour area and six at Lake Mi-ike on 26th.

**Brown-headed Thrush** *Turdus chrysolaus* probably *chrysolaus*

**Honshu:** Three were in Kairakuen gardens, Mito on 5th March.

**Dusky Thrush** *Turdus eunomus*

**Honshu:** The first were two noted at the Mitsu service area on 19th February with ten seen around Karuizawa and three at Shimocochi the next day. On 21st, ca five were at Yacho No Mori (Hoshino Onsen, with two there on 22nd) with a single at Sakomato Lake, two at Oneyama Shinrin Koen and three by the river at Yokokawa. 15 were in the Katano Kamo-ike area on 23rd with two at Sakai-shi and four at the Tōjinbō Headland (nr Mikuni). On 5th March 30 were present around the gardens at Kairakuen and Lake Mito. One was also at Narita San Koen on 6<sup>th</sup>.

**Kyūshū:** 12 were in the Yatsushiro area on 23rd with two around Kadogawa Harbour on 26th.

**Hokkaido:** The only one seen was a single in the Lake Furen area on 2nd.

**Red-flanked Bluetail** *Luscinia cyanura*

**Honshu:** Two F/imm were around Karuizawa on 20th February with a male along the stream at Yacho no Mori, Hoshino Onsen the next day.

**Daurian Redstart** *Phoenicurus auroreus auroreus*

**Honshu:** A male was seen at Usi-Karuizawa on 19th February with a single heard at Yacho No Mori (Hoshino Onsen) & a male seen at Sakomato Lake on 21st. One was in the Katano Kamo-ike area on 23rd with a female at the Tōjinbō Headland (nr Mikuni). Five were in the Kairakuen Gardens area, Mito on 5th.

**Kyūshū:** A pair were in the Kadogawa Harbour area on 26th February.

**Blue Rock Thrush** *Monticola solitarius philippensis*

**Honshu:** A stunning male was at Mikuni on 23rd February when three were at the near-by Tōjinbō Headland.

**Kyūshū:** Two males and a female were around Kadogawa Harbour and port on 26th February.

**Brown Dipper** *Cinclus pallasii pallasii*

**Honshu:** Singles were around Yacho no Mori, Hoshino Onsen, Karuizawa on 20th & 22nd February.

**Hokkaido:** One was in the stream outside Inn Washino-yado on 1st March.

**Russet Sparrow** *Passer rutilans rutilans*

**Kyūshū:** A flock of about 1000 was found in fields near the Arasaki Crane reserve on 25th February.

**Eurasian Tree Sparrow** *Passer montanus montanus*

**Honshu:** Ten+ were at the Mitsu service area on 19th February whilst 25+ were at Shimocochi on 20th. Birds were present at Oneyama Shinrin Koen on 21st and 100+ were at the Tōjinbō Headland (nr Mikuni) on 23rd. 50+ were at Kairakuen gardens, Mito on 5th March with 30 at Narita san Koen, Narita the next day.

**Kyūshū:** Birds were present at Yatsushiro on 24th February.

**Hokkaido:** 20 were at the Tancho No Sato Crane reserve nr Akan on 3rd March.

**Japanese Accentor** *Prunella rubida*

**Honshu:** Three were around Sakomatu Lake on 21st February.

**Grey Wagtail** *Motacilla cinerea robusta or melanope*

**Honshu:** One was at Kairakuen gardens, Mito on 5th March.

**Kyūshū:** Two were in the Arasaki area on 25th February.

**White (Black-backed) Wagtail** *Motacilla alba lugens*

**Honshu:** The first bird of the trip was a single at Narita airport on 19th February. On the way to Karuizawa, two were at the rest/service area at Mitsu. On 21st singles were on the way to Oneyama Shinrin Koen and along the river at Yokokawa. Five were also around the rice paddies at Sakai-shi on 23rd. Eight were around the lake at Mito on 5th March and a single was at Chōshi on 6th.

**Kyūshū:** Four were around Yatsushiro on 24th February with ten at Kadogawa Harbour on 26th.

**Hokkaido:** A single was by the restaurant at Lake Furen on 28th February.

**Japanese Wagtail** *Motacilla grandis*

**Honshu:** On 20th February, two were at Lake New Town (nr Karuizawa) with two along the river at Yokokawa the next day. Two were well seen in the rice fields at Sakai-shi on 23rd. A single was in the gardens at Kairakuen on 5th March.

**Olive-backed Pipit** *Anthus hodgsoni* prob. *hodgsoni*

**Kyūshū:** Three were around the campsite at Lake Mi-ike on 26th February.

**Buff-bellied Pipit** *Anthus rubescens japonicus*

**Kyūshū:** 80+ were at Yatsushiro on 24th February with 12 around Kadogawa Harbour on 26th.

**Hokkaido:** One was at Lake Furen on 2nd March.

**Brambling** *Fringilla montifringilla*

**Honshu:** On 20th February, one-two were around Yacho no Mori, Hoshino Onsen. These birds were unusual in that they had white throats. 50+ were at Oneyama Shinrin Koen the next day with another 50+ around the Usui Pass.

**Kyūshū:** A huge flock of 800+ was mixed with the Russet Sparrow flock in the area around Arasaki on 25th February.

**Oriental Greenfinch** *Carduelis sinica kawarahiba* or *minor*

**Honshu:** On 20th February, three were around the feeders at the Picchio Nature Centre (Hoshino Onsen, Karuizawa) with 20+ at Shimocochi. Three were at Sakomato Lake and birds were in mixed flocks with Brambling along the Usui Pass the next day. Eight were around Yacho No Mori on 22nd.

**Kyūshū:** Birds were present in the fields and in the area around the Arasaki Crane Reserve on 25th February. Three were around Kadogawa Harbour the next day.

**Hokkaido:** Ca. 50 were noted in small flocks along the N side of the Nemuro Peninsular from Cape Nosappumisaki to Lodge Furen on 28th February.

**Asian Rosy Finch** *Leucosticte arctoa brunneonucha*

**Honshu:** Four, found amongst the trees when coming down the mountain at Oneyama Shinrin Koen on 21st was a surprise.

**Hokkaido:** Seven were around Lodge Furen on 28th February with nine there on 2nd March. A single was at Hanasaki Harbour (Nemuro Peninsular) on 28th February and three ‘small parties’ were seen at Shibetsu the same day.

**Long-tailed Rosefinch** *Uragus sibiricus sanguinolentus*

**Honshu:** A male was seen briefly in the area of the Golf Course at the Karuizawa end of the Usui Pass on 19th February. The next day a pair was seen on the early morning walk in the Edohara Pension area with a female at Shimocochi. A female was also in the Katano Kamo-ike area on 23rd.



**Common Crossbill** *Loxia curvirostra japonica*

**Honshu:** 15 were at Yacho no Mori, Hoshino Onsen, Karuizawa on 20th.

**Eurasian Bullfinch** *Pyrrhula pyrrhula*

**Honshu:** Two of the race *P. p. rosacea* were seen along the trails at Yacho no Mori (Hoshino Onsen) on 20th February.

**Hokkaido:** Three of the race *P. p. griseiventris* were along the main street in Nakashibetsu on 1st march.

**Hawfinch** *Coccothraustes coccothraustes japonicus*

**Honshu:** On 21st February, one was at the Picchio Nature Centre, Hoshino Onsen, Karuizawa with 22 at Shimocochi. Three were around Katano Kamo-ike on 23rd. Five were also at Kairakuen gardens, Mito on 5th March.

**Kyūshū:** A male was at Kadogawa on 26th February.

**Japanese Grosbeak** *Eophona personata personata*

**Honshu:** One was at the feeders at the Picchio Nature Centre, Hoshino Onsen, Karuizawa on 20th February.

**Kyūshū:** A single flock of 80+ were seen in a tree at Takanabe on 26th February.

**Meadow Bunting** *Emberiza cioides ciopsis*

**Honshu:** On 19th February, groups of six birds were noted at two locations at the Karuizawa end of the Usui Pass. The next day a single was at the Picchio Nature Centre (Hoshino Onsen) with eight at Shimocochi. At least one was along the river by Yokokawa on 21st.

**Kyūshū:** Two males & a female were around the port at Kadogawa Harbour on 26th February.

**Hokkaido:** A single was in the Lake Furen area on 2nd March.

**Chestnut-eared Bunting** *Emberiza fucata fucata*

**Kyūshū:** A single was at Yatsushiro on 24th February with three at Arasaki the next day.

**Rustic Bunting** *Emberiza rustica*

**Honshu:** 15+ were in the area around the Golf Course at the Karuizawa end of the Usui Pass on 19th February with singles at Lake New Town and Shimocochi the next day. On 21st three were around the feeders at Oneyama Shinrin Koen and along the river at Yokokawa. 13 were in the Kairakuen gardens area on 5th March.

**Elegant (Yellow-throated) Bunting** *Emberiza elegans elegans*

**Honshu:** Five+ were at Oneyama Shinrin Koen on 21st February.

**Kyūshū:** Four were at Lake Mi-ike on 26th February.

**Black-faced Bunting** *Emberiza spodocephala personata*

**Honshu:** Two were at Kairakuen gardens, Mito on 5th March with two more at Narita san Koen, Narita the next day.

**Kyūshū:** Five were at Arasaki on 25th February with seven at Lake Mi-ike the next day.

**Grey Bunting** *Emberiza variabilis variabilis or musica*

**Honshu:** Six+ were showing well at the temple complex at Narita san Koen, Narita on 6th March. It was a pity it was teeming it down at the time!

**Kyūshū:** Three were seen very badly in the gloom at Mi-ike on 26th February.

**Common Reed Bunting** *Emberiza schoeniclus pyrrhulina*

**Kyūshū:** 12 were in the Yatsushiro area on 24th February.

**ESCAPES**

**Black Swan** *Cygnus atratus*

**Honshu:** Ten, with two single cygnets were at the lake by Kairakuen gardens, Mito on 5th March.

**Critters and things**

**Baird's-beaked Whale** *Berardius bairdii*

**Hokkaido:** Eight+ were in a pod just off the Pack Ice to the N of the Shiretoko Peninsular on 1st March.

**Killer Whale** *Orcinus orca*

**Honshu:** Six moved N past the Tomakomai to Ōarai Ferry on 4th March.

**Hokkaido:** Six-eight were in a pod just off the Pack Ice to the N of the Shiretoko Peninsular on 1st March.

**Minkie Whale** *Balaenoptera bonacrensis acutorostrata*

**Honshu:** One was seen from the Tomakomai to Ōarai Ferry on 4th March.

**Porpoise** *Phocoena phocoena*

**Honshu:** Three were seen from the Tomakomai to Ōarai Ferry on 4th March.

**Turtle sp**

**Honshu:** One was seen from the Tomakomai to Ōarai Ferry on 4th March.

**Northern Fur Seal** *Callorhinus ursinus*

**Honshu:** 50-100 were seen from the Tomakomai to Ōarai Ferry on 4th March.

**Spotted Seal** *Phoca largha*

**Hokkaido:** Up to 12 were off Cape Nosappumisaki on 28th February and 2nd March.

**Japanese Squirrel** *Sciurus lis*

**Honshu:** One was at Karuizawa on 22nd February.

**Raccoon Dog** *Nyctereutes procyonoides*

**Honshu:** One was seen briefly at Katano Kamo-ike just before dusk on 23rd February.

**Red Fox** *Vulpes vulpes*

**Hokkaido:** One was seen during the drive from Hanasaki Harbour to Cape Nosappumisaki on 28th February with another single noted on the drive from Rausu to Odaitō the next day. On 3rd March two were seen between Lodge Furen and Akan with two at the Crane Reserve.

**Sika Deer** *Cervus nippon yesoensis*

**Hokkaido:** At least one was at Inn Washino-yado on 1st March and two were at Lake Furen the next day.

**Japanese Macaque (Snow Monkey)** *Macaca fuscata*

**Honshu:** The first were seen walking through gardens whilst driving through Karuizawa on 19th February. Ten were at Sakomatu Lake on 21st and *ca.* 200 were at Jigokudani the next day.