

Wild Japan in Winter

Naturetrek Tour Report

18 February - 4 March 2018



Steller's Sea Eagle and White-tailed Eagle, Rausu



Red fox, Hokkaido



Blakiston's Fish Owl. Yoroushi

Report compiled by Philip Thompson
Images courtesy of Val Perrin



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Introduction

This report starts with the Kyushu pre-tour extension, which commenced on 18th February, and then covers the Wild Japan in Winter tour which ran from 22nd February to 4th March 2018

Extension Day 1

Sunday 18th February

Group members on the pre-tour extension flew into Tokyo, where we directly transferred onto a domestic flight to Kumamoto on the island of Kyushu. We were met by our local guide and interpreter and led to our comfortable coach that was soon underway, heading south towards Yatsushiro. We broke the journey with a stop alongside the Kuma River at the Osozo Ryokuchi Park.

We were soon enjoying some stimulating birding and making our first encounters with several species of which we were to become familiar during the trip. Our attention was almost immediately caught by a dashing Northern Goshawk, rapidly passing over. Next we were held by a smart male Daurian Redstart close by feeding from an isolated tree. The wooded slope at our backs overlooking the river held a small roosting flock of Black-crowned Night Herons that provided excellent viewing, whilst circling overhead numerous Black-eared Kites joined the noisy throng of Thick-billed Crows. On the far side of the river a single distant Black-faced Spoonbill put in a fly-past appearance, which at the time we were delighted with, as this rare bird was one of the main target species for the area. A rather unexpected sighting was a single Caspian Tern passing along the river. The agricultural fields, farms and woods inland provided sightings of a range of new species such as Dusky Thrush, Japanese White-eye, Grey-capped Greenfinch and White-cheeked Starling, joining a number of species familiar from home such as Brambling, Tree Sparrow, Common Snipe and Northern Lapwing. Our main focus of attention was on the exposed mudflats where we were delighted to encounter an unconcerned feeding Black-faced Spoonbill only 30 metres away that rather eclipsed our initial sighting! The views of birds on the mudflats was rather hampered by the light direction and distances involved, but we did pick out a few Curlew and dabbling ducks that included a good number of Eastern Spot-billed Ducks.

With the day drawing on, we retraced our steps back to the coach and continued our journey to Izumi, where our first hotel of the trip lay. After checking in we were soon heading out to enjoy our first encounter with an authentic Japanese meal to puzzle and delight us.

Extension Day 2

Monday 19th February

We were up early to arrive in good time at the Crane Observation centre where we were met by not only the resident centre administrator and guide, but also a multitude of many thousands of cranes! The majority of the birds present were Hooded Cranes, among which smaller numbers of larger White-naped Cranes were mixed. Initially these proved tricky to pick out as we were focusing our attention on the heads and necks of the birds, expecting these to be easily diagnostic. However once we noticed that the white feathered rear end of the White-naped Cranes stood out they became almost obvious among the massed throng of birds. The protected area at the centre regularly puts out food for the wintering cranes that understandably attracts numerous other birds eager to join in the freely available supplies. These included large numbers of dabbling ducks and corvids, with

smaller numbers of egrets with several scavenging Black-eared Kites constantly passing over the assembled masses.

After having spent most of the early morning admiring this bird spectacle, we then took to the coach to drive around the general area, reaching the Highashi Protected Area. The weather was unfortunately rather indifferent (pouring with rain) but we stuck at it as best we could. We firstly took a stop to walk alongside a drainage dyke alongside some agricultural fields. It was here that a rare wintering Naumann's Thrush had been resident for some time. In the far from ideal conditions, we connected with the bird as it fed in the open field before flying out of sight behind some ramshackle farm buildings, during which the characteristic chestnut tail was clearly seen and noted by many of the group.

We next drove on to stop alongside the Highashi Protected Area where, after some careful scanning of the many thousands of Hooded Cranes, we picked out a small party of Sandhill Cranes close to the road and fence line. The single Common Crane in the area took some luck and patience to find, but once discovered it showed well close by. In the wet agricultural fields smaller passerines mainly comprised Skylarks and Buff-bellied Pipits, but we did connect with a small number of Eastern Yellow Wagtails feeding within the narrow drainage ditches.

With the conditions making birding tricky we returned to the centre for lunch and to wait out the rain. This proved a successful strategy as we could observe the birds in the comfort of the warm and dry observation tower as the weather gradually eased and eventually stopped on cue for a second excursion out into the surrounding area. Bird highlights seen during our drive were a flock of Russet Sparrows and a group of spoonbills on a reed-lined creek edge that, on examination, proved to be a mix of Black-faced and Eurasian Spoonbills.

We finished with a walk alongside the sea wall overlooking a mix of flooded and dry arable fields. We got off to a good start with the sighting of a Bull-headed Shrike in company with a Daurian Redstart. Small groups of cranes were evident throughout the area and nice to see away from the artificial feeding areas. Several parties of buntings among the reeds initially gave us some identification problems as they comprised several tricky female Black-faced Buntings and Common Reed Bunting, that here were very pallid in colouring to catch us out. Rather easier were the striking handsome Meadow Buntings that, after some patience, gave some great views. A Chestnut-eared Bunting only gave itself up to one of us before vanishing, unfortunately. A passing female Hen Harrier was rather easier but did not linger in the strong wind. A fortunate scan of a passing flock of corvids proved to contain a single juvenile Daurian Jackdaw, a species the area is known for, although rarely of the striking piebald adult.

Elated after our first day in the area, we returned to the hotel to freshen up and venture out once more to a local restaurant for dinner.

Extension Day 3

Tuesday 20th February

Another early start found us waiting on an access road between the Highashi and the Arasaki Protection Areas just before sunrise. This was to experience the fly over of the many thousands of Hooded and White-naped Cranes as they left one area to arrive for the distribution of grain at the Arasaki centre. We were very fortunate with the weather today, with clear skies and a wonderful sunrise appearing from behind a distant range of mountains, just as the cranes were undertaking their commuter flights metres above our heads. The bugling calls

of the birds amongst themselves made for a magical couple of hours! Other birds present included numerous Skylarks, singing with a rather different local dialect to our birds at home.

Flushed with success having had a wonderful experience with these magical birds, we boarded the coach to head towards the Observation Centre. With the conditions vastly improved upon yesterday, we stopped en route to try for the Naumann's Thrush once more. We soon picked the bird up in its favourite field corner, from where we were able to enjoy some fine telescope views of this handsome vagrant. Also seen here was a very large flock of Brambling numbering almost 1000 birds that periodically flew up from feeding on the ground to swirl around before resettling.

Back at the Visitor Centre we settled to enjoy once more the spectacle of the thousands of cranes as they fed in the wet fields, joined by a throng of ducks and crows as yesterday. A smart Bull-headed Shrike was using the fence below our lofty viewing windows to hunt, giving better views than the individual seen previously. We ate our lunch here with a coffee, whilst continuing to enjoy the ever-changing melee of birds from the large windows.

For the afternoon we headed out to visit Kogawa Dam, located approximately ten kilometres from Izumi. We were interrupted soon after setting out with the sighting of a Blue Rock Thrush on the concrete river wall that necessitated a quick stop! Moving on, we soon arrived at our destination where we then took a circular route around the lake, taking a number of stops and short walks as we went. The first stop produced a Varied Tit and Japanese Pygmy Woodpecker in the evergreen forest trees above our heads. It took a little while to get the entire group onto them. On the lake itself a couple of small groups of Common Pochard floated in the open water, whilst a couple of large flocks of Mandarin Ducks flew across the lake into sheltered bays. Carefully scanning the heavily shaded banks found many more of these ducks perched on tree roots and the banks. It was a pleasure to see this stunning, but familiar naturalised bird of home, here in its natural environment. We were shown a number of prime spots for Crested Kingfisher by our guide from the Crane Centre but without actually seeing one! Rather frustrating. We did connect with a couple of new birds, notably a couple of female Red-flanked Bluetails and towards the end of our time a stunning male, and an obliging Pale Thrush feeding on fruit seeds in a leafless tree above us. Our kingfisher hunt continued but we succeeded only in several sightings of Common Kingfisher, attractive as they were.

After a full and eventful day, we next headed back to the hotel to repeat our previous itinerary.

Extension Day 4

Wednesday 21st February

Today was our transfer day back to Tokyo but it was full of birding action nonetheless. We began with a walk from the hotel down to the Komenotsu River that runs through the centre of the town. This was a five minute walk from our base, during which we spotted a Peregrine resting and hunting from a tall radio mast in the town, and it carried out a couple of forays as we passed.

Reaching the river, we were met with the wonderful spectacle of a large flock of Falcated Ducks mixed with Teal, Wigeon, Mallard and Eastern Spot-billed Duck. The light was perfect to admire this array of wildfowl (although the comment that the Falcated Duck was only somewhat more attractive than a Mallard proved to haunt the utterer during the trip!). In the rough tangled vegetation on the concrete embankments several Black-

faced and Meadow Buntings were feeding, giving periodic good views. Overhead we were surprised at this wintery time of year to spot both Barn Swallow and Asian House Martin. Moving along the river we reached an area with numerous large boulders and shingle islands within the flow. Here we spotted our first handsome Japanese Wagtails feeding among the boulders. At the walk's end we reached a weir system below which our main target of Long-billed Plover was sighted, sleeping and inactive on a patch of shingle. Refusing to perform for the assembled group, we switched our attentions to the small number of Common Sandpipers, among which a single Green Sandpiper fed, giving an excellent side-by-side comparison for identification purposes.

After this morning's excellent beginning, we headed back to the coach waiting at the hotel to board and head off. After missing Crested Kingfisher yesterday afternoon, we opted to return today to see if this would prove more productive. This proved to be the case with up to four birds seen at a couple of the spots previously visited. We all enjoyed some great views of this large and charismatic kingfisher as it perched on a number of overhanging branches at the lake edge. We celebrated with a picnic lunch in the quiet of the lake and its surrounding forests. We then set out to continue our transfer journey, only to soon spot another Crested Kingfisher right by the main road overlooking the Komenotsu River. It just shows you need a little luck, and you can sometimes look in all the right places but still come up empty, only to chance on what you were after when you least expect it!

Our journey led south where we reached the town of Satsuma, where we stopped by the river to take a walk followed by a coffee from a nearby café. As we arrived, an Osprey drifted by along the river on the lookout for prey but failed to make a plunge. In the rocky islands at the water's edge we spotted another Blue Rock Thrush and Daurian Redstart, whilst in the water's flow a couple of Japanese Wagtails were actively prospecting for food. We kept a careful lookout for Long-billed Plover, known to occur here, but failed to spot one, making our earlier success all the sweeter. Finally having enjoyed a pleasant hour or so followed by our coffee, we reboarded the coach to complete our journey to Kagoshima Airport, where we had plenty of time in which to buy some dinner from one of the many restaurants within. We then safely caught our domestic flight back to Tokyo, arriving in the early evening where we were met by another coach to transfer us to our hotel and a well-earned rest after a very successful tour extension.

Extension Day 5 / Main Tour Day 1

Thursday 22nd February

With group members starting the main tour en route to Tokyo, those in the extension group had the opportunity for a lazy morning whilst the arriving members were met at the airport and hotel. Once contact had been established with everyone, we took a late morning excursion into Tokyo and visited Kasai Rinkai park and pleasure gardens on the northern edge of Tokyo Bay.

Having safely negotiated the busy and, for the recently arrived, rather confusing train network, we arrived without any problem at the park. The weather had turned rather inclement with occasional light rain and very cold wind. Some of the group were a little under-dressed for the conditions having saved their thermals for Hokkaido, but we braved the chill and enjoyed a varied walk through the gardens, coastal breakwaters, open bay waters and the dedicated 'wild bird' reed-lined lagoons. The gardens held numerous tame Oriental Turtle Doves and Dusky Thrushes, with individuals of Daurian Redstart and Pale Thrush. We were delighted with the discovery of a pair of indifferent Japanese Pygmy Woodpeckers feeding openly within feet from us for an extended period, joined by a couple of Japanese Tits. We headed first to the sheltering breakwaters that were accessible over a large pedestrian footbridge. We were initially struck by the huge flock of Greater Scaup floating

just offshore, joined by an almost equal number of Great Crested Grebes. Patient searching through the flock found a single Goldeneye, four Red-breasted Merganser and half a dozen Black-necked Grebes. Amazingly we found a trio of the rare and endangered Black-faced Spoonbills (birds we had been especially seeking earlier on Kyushu during the extension) feeding quietly on the shoreline of the restricted breakwater. Feeding on the exposed mud were small numbers of waders, most of which were Dunlin but also included a few individual Kentish Plovers. Patrolling the water, a single Western Osprey was spotted, with other raptors seen including Peregrine, Northern Goshawk and Eastern Buzzard.

Returning to the mainland, we headed round to the wild bird lagoon that held a few wildfowl and some very tame Black-faced Buntings in the adjoining ornamental shrubberies. One of us was fortunate in spotting a group of Azure-winged Magpies whilst exploring alone, that the rest of the group unluckily missed.

With the chill not diminishing, the light rain returning and the day drawing on, we headed back into Tokyo and the shelter of our hotel before meeting up for an evening meal.

Day 2

Friday 23rd February

Another early start found us back at Tokyo's Haneda Airport, where we caught a domestic flight to Kushiro on the northern Japanese island of Hokkaido. We were now entering a wintry landscape in stark contrast to our earlier time spent on Kyushu. Snow lay all around as we boarded our comfortable coach and headed north from the airport.

Our journey took us past Tsurumidai, one of the Red-crowned Crane feeding sites. As it was clear that the many white statues spread throughout the roadside field were in fact the real thing, we pulled over to feast our senses on these iconic birds of Japan, unconcernedly wandering about a mere 20-30 metres from us. Scarcely believing our eyes, we soon needed to move on to our lunch appointment at a small independent restaurant located well off the beaten track. We entered the unpretentious farm building to find a haven of warmth and good food, which we all enjoyed while watching the birds coming to feeders outside the window. From here we travelled a short distance to a roadside stop followed by a short walk into the leafless forest, towards an obvious large hollow tree. From the dark hole at its top looked out a sleepy Ural Owl! This was of the very pale grey subspecies *japonica*, and what a stunner it was, in wonderful neutral lighting giving stunning views through the telescopes.

With the day proving to be forever memorable, we moved on to the town of Tsurui and the second feeding centre Tsurui-ITO. This was begun by a local farmer and is now supported by the government, where grain is regularly put out to help the birds through the harsh winters. As at the previous site, the many hundreds of Red-crowned Cranes were apparently unconcerned by the throng of photographers and admirers lining the fence line overlooking the field, and were going about their lives quite happily. There was plenty of activity to keep us occupied including a little dancing and courtship displays. Birds were regularly coming and going with birds passing overhead on several occasions, proving the cue for a cacophony of camera shutter action! Rather at odds among these elegant white visions parading slowly about the 'arena' was a single Common Crane, a little lost and looking rather drab by comparison.

For our next destination we drove on to stop at Sunayu alongside Lake Kussharo. This seemingly unprepossessing spot on the largely frozen lake held a hot volcanic spring on which an open air bathing spa had been constructed (complete with brave Japanese enjoying the waters). The hot waters flowed up and into the lake keeping a small area of water ice-free within which a large number of beautiful Whooper Swans were to be found, gently honking and bugling to themselves as they picked at grain scattered for their benefit. It was possible to approach these birds to within metres, much as we would a Mute Swan at home, to literally look these elegant birds in the eye! Fantastic!

We moved further on around the lake to Kotan where we stopped at another flow of heated water that had created a similar spectacle, with rather more Whoopers than before. Having admired these birds with a soft sunset behind the mountains on the opposite lake shore, we then completed our journey to the first of our traditional Onsen hot spring hotels used on Hokkaido. This was all traditional with only Japanese style rooms which were quite a delight, fully fitted out with their tatami mats and strict 'no outdoor shoes' policy. Once checked in and having had some time to relax, we met up for the first of several elaborate and delicious Japanese meals set out on low tables with cushions to sit on. After a little explanation of the various dishes and what, how and when to eat them from our local interpreter/guide, we all set to as best we could with chopsticks, all accompanied by green tea.

Day 3

Saturday 24th February

Not wanting to break a habit, we had another early start from the hotel to give us time to travel to Otowa Bridge, to admire the roosting cranes in the shallow unfrozen river, silhouetted against a rising sun. There was already quite a crowd of keen photographers already set up when we arrived, but we were still able to find good viewing positions among the tripods! 'Unluckily' the morning was not particularly cold; pleasant for us, but resulting in none of the sought-after rising mist to cloak the birds for the photographers. During our time here, whilst we watched and waited for the birds to fly up and away from the roost over our heads, we entertained ourselves with picking up on other birds in the area. These included several Goosander and Goldeneye on the river, a couple of small parties of Marsh Tit, Nuthatch and Great Spotted Woodpecker in the bankside trees, and soaring in the distance a couple of Steller's Sea Eagles. The cranes proved reluctant to move off with only a few individuals taking to the wing during our stay, so we moved on to return to Tsurui-ITO to satiate ourselves with the cranes feeding there. The local school children were on hand to answer questions and provide information about the history of the cranes in the area and how they are now protected, increasing and cherished by the local community.

We travelled a short distance into the town where we had an appointment for lunch in a local restaurant in the form of the typical Bento box packed lunch, again accompanied by plentiful green tea.

Our next stop was more of a geological/scenic nature with a visit to Lake Mashu, which is a huge caldera lake formed in an extinct volcano. This lake is famous for its crystal clear waters, which we took on trust as, at the time of our visit, the lake surface was completely frozen! The views from the platforms constructed at the crater rim were stunning, both into the lake and out into the wider countryside.

Our final stop of the day was a visit to the incredible volcanic sulphur fumeroles on the flanks of Mount Ito a short distance away. As we neared the volcano we could see the clouds of steam rising into the cold wintry air,

but were somewhat unprepared for the spectacle of the hissing sulphurous gas rushing from the many bright yellow fumaroles that we were able to walk up close to. Luckily the prevailing wind was carrying the fumes uphill and away from the viewing areas so we could approach incredibly closely. Among the fumaroles were a couple of small eruptions of boiling water bubbling like little kettles at our feet. Large areas of the mountainside were bereft of vegetation as well as areas of ground free of snow as a result of the underground warmth. We all thoroughly enjoyed the drama of the spot, amply demonstrating the volcanic nature of much of Japan, something we are very much unaccustomed to in the UK. We then returned to the hotel in anticipation of another stunning meal ahead of us.

Day 4

Sunday 25th February

Today we transferred north to the port of Rausu. After breakfast was completed we were soon loaded onto the coach and travelling east to reach the coast at the port of Shibetsu, where we stopped in the harbour to look for sheltering sea duck. Drifting among the docked fishing fleet we had a great selection of species to admire that included several Greater Scaup, Goldeneye, Red-breasted Merganser, Goosander and Tufted Duck. Not a bad selection! Checking through the gulls, we found a couple of Vega, Glaucous and Glaucous-winged Gulls among the many hundreds of Slaty-backed Gulls. A notable highlight was an imperious Steller's Sea Eagle perched on the harbour wall, like some huge mythical guardian to the harbour entrance.

From here we then headed north following the coast, taking a quick stop to check a flock of Black Scoter on the way. We were soon arriving in the fishing port of Rausu where we were to catch a boat from the jetty to take a short trip out of the harbour in search of eagles.

Once aboard we were soon slowly making our way out of the harbour, passing another fine selection of sea duck that included several beautiful Harlequin Ducks in their breeding finery. Perched along the harbour wall a small number of Steller's and White-tailed Sea Eagles waited patiently. Outside the confines of the harbour the boat took a short circular route and soon the crew began to throw fish in our wake. It was not long before the ever-present cloud of gulls following us was joined by much larger shapes shadowing our movements. These were mainly the powerful and dominant Steller's Sea Eagles that casually swept down to pluck the discarded fish from the sea surface. Joining them were numbers of White-tailed Sea Eagles looking rather diminished in size by comparison. All too soon our little taster of the eagle bonanza drew to a close, but not before a final climax of the show, when the boat pushed into the frozen harbour waters and again began to cast fish from the deck. Here we were presented with the spectacle of numerous eagles of both species resting on the blocks of frozen sea water, periodically scampering across to snatch a fish whilst the gulls and Large-billed Crows bravely, and at times rashly, tried to sneak in and join in grabbing some of the spoils. Viewing these impressive birds at such close quarters was surely a great privilege that the group will hopefully always remember.

Arriving back at the jetty, we next boarded the coach to complete the transfer to our next hotel, located inland on the outskirts of Rausu. We had time to relax and settle in to our rooms before we met up at 4.30pm for the short journey to Washi no Yado, where we had booked space within the viewing hide at this well-known Blakiston's Fish Owl spot. Settling ourselves at the viewing windows, we prepared ourselves for, hopefully, not too long a vigil in the rapidly cooling temperatures. Previous groups and advice had been successful with sightings around 5pm whilst there was still a modicum of daylight, producing a degree of expectation and suppressed tension/excitement within the assembled watchers. As this time slot came and went with no bird

arriving we became increasingly despondent and doubting of our chances (a typical 'twitch' in other words!), but we hung on as long as possible before we needed to return to the hotel for our dinner slot. Not too downhearted, over dinner we reflected on the successes of the day and a plan of action for our second attempt at the owl tomorrow.

Day 5

Monday 26th February

Once more, a very early start found us on the jetty of Rausu harbour to board the boat for our longer cruise out into the Sea of Okhotsk in search of birdlife. Our early start had been requested by the Captain as necessary in order to reach the pack ice that lay to the north between Hokkaido and Kunashir, the largest and most southerly of the disputed territory of the Kuril Islands (which are currently under Russian jurisdiction). This unpredictable phenomenon is at the mercy of winds and tides and can move to and fro considerably, meaning the distance from the port can vary enormously resulting, at times, in insufficient time available to reach it. Today we were in luck and we headed out at full speed into open water with occasional passing Steller's Sea Eagles heading in a similar direction for company. Temperatures were 'chilly' so we were grateful for their full complement of thermals and thick outer layers to keep bodies warm. One of the group was fortunate in sighting a pod of Pacific White-sided Dolphins as we made good progress.

After some time we could at last detect in the distance a line of other cruise boats alongside a white mass spanning the horizon. We'd made it! As we continued to close on the pack ice, the sea became calm with floating slush before we finally nudged into the broken blocks of ice and stopped. What a sight lay before us! All around were many hundreds of Steller's and White-tailed Sea Eagles sitting amongst the ice. Now stationary, the crew of the boat began to cast fish onto the nearby ice resulting in attracting these birds to gather in greater numbers close alongside. Watching and photographing this spectacle was an amazing experience, only tempered by the cold gradually creeping into our fingers and toes! We enjoyed plentiful time here to observe the interactions and behaviour of the birds before we slowly withdrew from the ice back into open water and headed back to the port. Several of us took advantage of the heated cabin on the return to thaw out after this spectacle.

We were land-based for the afternoon with a journey south to the Notsuke Peninsular. This narrow finger of land juts out into the Straits of Nemuro, sheltering a large shallow bay that is frozen at this time of year. We soon stopped to admire a small group of large Sika stags by the road. Several other large herds of female and adolescents were also seen as we slowly drove along the peninsular road. A number of stops were taken to sea watch on the calm waters to the north. A number of excellent finds were made in perfect conditions and light giving optimum views, despite some birds being rather distant. Highlights included numerous Spectacled Guillemots, Long-tailed Duck and flocks of Black Scoter.

We stopped for a while at the visitor centre to eat lunch, relax and view the sea before driving to the end of the road, where we had a short walk. On our return we paused to watch a group of photographers on the frozen water lying in the snow whilst a Red Fox closely approached them, presumably as the result of some kind of bait. We were lucky to see another fox strolling past at very close range on the bay shore. At almost our last stop of the afternoon, another careful scan of a small flock of roosting Black Scoter produced a quartet of Asian White-winged Scoters *Melanitta deglandi stejnegeri*. Despite their being asleep, the perfect calm conditions had allowed them to be noticed by the white underlining of the eye, something that usual scoter viewing on rough seas and overcast conditions would preclude!

We then returned to Rausu where we firstly had a coffee and then spent a little time birding the harbour and being blown away by the beautiful Harlequin Ducks swimming close by, with the now familiar selection of ducks and gulls also present. From here we were transported back to Washi no Yado for a second attempt at the Blakiston's Fish Owl. Some of the group had taken up the option of buying a packed dinner, thus allowing them to remain at the hide 'as long as it takes' and skipping the hotel dinner. So, once more, we settled ourselves and waited. And waited. For the less keen/hungry/sane, our time ran out once more and we were forced to return to the hotel with our tails between our legs with only the delights of a wonderful Japanese dinner to look forward to. For the keen/stoic/crazy remainder of the group, they hung on as long as they could but were whittled down to a single member who was finally rewarded at midnight with a sighting of this much sought after charismatic bird! He diplomatically remained quietly elated the following morning, not wishing to 'rub salt in the wounds' of his fellow travellers!

Day 6

Tuesday 27th February

Once more we were transferring hotels this morning, but for a change not at the crack of dawn! Before we headed off, most took advantage of a chance to check the river weir behind the hotel, where a pair of Brown Dippers were showing regularly for those paying a visit.

We then headed south along the coast, stopping first at Matsunori harbour to check out any sheltering sea duck. Small numbers of a couple of the familiar species were present, but our stop paid off with the discovery of a single redhead Smew that flew out of the harbour, only to return in the company of a mix of ducks and swim close by at the base of the protective seawall. Moving on, we returned to Shibetsu where we similarly checked the harbour. A familiar mix of ducks and gulls were present, noteworthy in the wonderful views we were able to obtain of these birds, many of which we were familiar with from home. The calm waters, clear sharp backlit conditions and close proximity made for some wonderfully enjoyable observation and admiration.

Our next stop was a local restaurant where we enjoyed another splendid lunch of traditional fare, served immaculately by the friendly and polite staff.

Refreshed we continued on our journey, now heading in from the coast and arriving in the early afternoon at our next destination of Yoroushi Onsen. This was a particularly attractive traditional onsen inn with a wonderful picture gallery of art lining the corridors to admire. We had the remainder of the afternoon to relax and watch the birds coming to the feeders just the other side of the large picture windows. Our peaceful spell of relaxation was only interrupted with the cry that 'the Snipe is back!' Most of us then raced to grab our optics and warm clothing before stumbling into boots and out the front door. After a short rush down the road to a bridge crossing the river, we were able to admire the elusive Solitary Snipe, concealed among the rocks in the river edge. After a little patient watching it stirred from its reverie to begin feeding, carrying out a curious bobbing of its legs, rather like a Jack Snipe. It continued to forage quietly among the shallow pools among the rocks for a while before stopping to rest once more. With the cold beginning to penetrate our hastily grabbed clothing, we returned to the comfort of the onsen and a warming cup of coffee.

After our tribulations of seeing the Blakiston's Fish Owl previously, we were left with our last opportunity of seeing this bird, as it was a regular visitor to the feeding area just the other side of the lobby windows, entailing a little plan of action. Our stay had coincided with a Dutch group of birders so the dilemma of keeping the

observation windows closely monitored while we ate dinner was resolved with the discovery that our group were booked to eat first at 6pm, followed by the Dutch group at 7pm. We were reassured by the Dutch that if the bird showed whilst we were eating they would fetch us immediately. This calmed the nerves a little, especially after checking the calendar log of sightings seemed to indicate that the bird was regularly turning up at 6.45pm! And so it proved to be, with a rallying call reaching our table right on cue, bringing forth a dash from our almost completed dinner to gaze in awe at this incredible bird stepping into the baited pool with spread wings as it fished with its talons in the shallow water. It made a number of dips, each time stepping out of the water clutching a small gasping trout, before gulping it down whole, all only a few feet from the window! Its stay did not last too long so we were able to return and finish dinner feeling happy that we had been successful in seeing the bird (and for most without the arduous and cold wait as at the previous site). Which of the two experiences would the purist prefer – let's leave it to each respective group member to decide.

With our dinner completed at leisure, we returned to the lounge windows to hopefully await a second appearance of the owl. A cry went up from a couple of guests viewing from another window that a Sable had been caught in a Mink trap beneath the windowsill and requesting one of the staff to come and release it. This was soon accomplished and this very rarely seen mammal shot off under the wooden decking, only to reappear a short while later and clamber onto the bird feeders against the window to eat its fill. It spent a considerable time feeding before scampering among the trees and decking and away once more. A rather warmer and more comfortable vigil then continued, rewarded at 11.30pm with a second visit by the owl, this time spending quite some time longer on view to make for a fitting end to the day.

Day 7

Wednesday 28th February

After our single night in the rather delightfully luxurious Yoroushi Onsen, we were today transferring back to Tokyo. We set off in good time heading south-east to visit Lake Furen. An emergency stop and return to the hotel to pick up a lost passport lost us a little time, but luckily our journey to the lake did not take quite as long as we expected. This allowed us time to take an initial walk through some wintry deciduous woodland to reach a viewpoint looking out into the Nemuro Bay. Several tame Sika Deer were feeding within the wood and allowed a close approach; otherwise bird activity was confined to a few Great Spotted Woodpeckers. From the viewpoint we obtained a sight of a wonderful panorama of the frozen lake and marshes on land, and large areas of frozen sea with open areas. A couple of pairs of Red-crowned Cranes could be heard first and then spotted in the marshes. On the unfrozen river, small numbers of Whooper Swans swam sedately, whilst in the frozen bay several large flocks of Black Scoter and Goldeneye could be seen. A number of the Goldeneye drakes were already performing courtship displays to the attendant females.

Viewing back towards the lake we could see a gathering throng of mixed sea eagles in the forest trees that began to come down to the ice opposite a nearby café that provided frozen fish to aid the birds and make some money from the gathered admiring photographers! We hastily returned to the coach and headed off to watch this spectacle. Having 'paid the man' we walked down to the lake edge where a short distance from us was gathered possibly several hundred Steller's and White-tailed Sea Eagles in an even mix. It was soon quite clearly evident who was the 'top dog' here, with the Steller's dominating the blocks of frozen fish, the White-tailed having to submissively look on hungrily. The Large-billed Crows were doing somewhat better, with their quick wits and intelligence they hung around close by and nipped in when a chance arose to snatch a morsel. The enormous Steller's Sea Eagles were either too slow or deigned to consider the crows worthy of a rivalry as they sat

imperiously atop their prized block of fish. Plenty of intra-specific clashes occurred with another less obvious hierarchy in place among the various ages and individually dominant individuals of Steller's Sea Eagle. Overhead the lightweight scavenging Black-eared Kites kept a watchful eye for any opportunity. To complete the picture of animal dominance, a Red Fox slunk around the field edge and made a couple of forays into the bustle of birds, only to meet it's match in the talons of an irate and defensive Steller's Sea Eagle. The fox beat a hasty retreat! It was fascinating to watch the 'hunched shoulder' stomp of a competing Steller's Eagle march up to a block of fish in an attempt to intimidate it's owner and seize the prize. All in all there was plenty of action to keep us entertained as we viewed these birds once more in near perfect conditions, resulting in mind-blowing views through the telescope.

All too soon our available time drew to a close and we needed to board the coach one last time to complete the journey to Kushiro Airport, with only a comfort stop on the way. Once back at the airport we had plenty of time to get lunch before our flight. Once back in Tokyo, after the short flight, we had only to negotiate the underground train system to Shinagawa where our next hotel lay.

Day 8

Thursday 1st March

We enjoyed another rather leisurely start to the day in Tokyo, where we took a trip to visit the Imperial Palace grounds and gardens. After safely negotiating the local trains and keeping the group together, we began with a walk from the Tokyo Station down the broad avenue to the surrounding moat enclosing the impressive and monumental stonework of the outer wall of the palace complex. The first bird we saw on leaving the station was a Western Osprey passing high overhead through the tall tower blocks; rather unexpected to say the least!

On reaching the moat and surrounding manicured grounds, we began to encounter a rich selection of birds for a city centre. The most notable species seen were several Falcated Ducks on the water, drifting about unconcernedly like your typical town centre Mallard of home. Cracking views were obtained to convince the entire group what a stunning bird this is. An initially identified pair of thrushes as a Dusky and a Pale proved, on closer examination and subsequent photographic analysis, to be another Naumann's Thrush (perhaps they're not as rare as we were led to believe?). We were fascinated to watch the park's maintenance crews hard at work up ladders using secateurs and fingers to sculpt and remove the dead needles of every one of the many hundreds of pine trees in the grounds: truly a herculean task with an undoubtedly immaculate giant bonsai effect, something that seems ingrained in the Japanese culture, the attention to detail.

After having admired some of the vast timbered gateways and a vibrant mix of birds, we retraced our route to enter the Imperial Gardens where we were free to wander individually with an agreed rendezvous point and time. Once more the meticulous care and attention bestowed on the gardens was impressive and a delight as we wandered the numerous paths. Blossom had already burst forth on the mix of Plum varieties with only the earliest variety of Cherry in bloom, that were attracting numerous Japanese White-eyes to feed on the nectar within the flowers that were approachable to only inches at times.

With an eye on the time we regrouped to return to the hotel and collect our luggage, from where we headed out to catch the Bullet Train taking us north to Nagano. Our rather overly cautious timing found us at the platform with plentiful time to spare, which was usefully utilised with a quick sandwich and drink for lunch whilst enjoying a bit of people watching in the bustling Tokyo Station. Once on the platform, we eagerly awaited the arrival of

the sleek and futuristic train, which pulled into the station with barely a whisper. The journey was soon complete and we arrived in Nagano in the late afternoon. After a little confusion over the correct exit from the station, we soon found our next hotel a short walk across the main road. This was another western style hotel, very recently built, and immaculate inside providing a very comfortable base for the next two nights.

We ate dinner in the Nagano Station food hall, choosing from a selection of restaurants another interesting and tasty meal.

Day 9

Friday 2nd March

Our first destination this morning was the Snow Monkey Park in the mountains near to Nagano. As we drove up we passed through an area of fruit orchards and were impressed by the meticulous pruning, training and winter protection around every tree.

Arriving at the main car park, we walked up through a housing area before starting on a forest track. Underfoot was very icy so we were glad of the boot chains to provide a safe grip. The path rose slowly before we reached the park entrance. Nearby a noisy geyser of super-heated steam was bursting from a pipe; part of the geothermic activity that keeps the waters unfrozen and has resulted in a number of hot steam bath Onsen being built here. On the slopes opposite a couple of adolescent Japanese Macaques could be seen scampering and wrestling among themselves. The short remainder of the route soon brought us to the warm pools provided for the 'Snow Monkeys' to dip into when the weather conditions turned extremely cold. On the morning of our visit it was cold for us soft humans, but for the Macaques clothed in a thick fur pelt, it was not regarded as cold enough to need a hot soak. There were plenty of Macaques about walking among the gathered tourists without a care, allowing us to observe plenty of typical primate behaviour and interactions.

We spent a rewarding time with the monkeys in the hope that we might observe the iconic image of one relaxing in the hot waters, but were only able to witness one individual settling into the water, resulting in rather hysterical beckoning cry going up from a Japanese lady to her group, that seemed to spook it so it was only immersed for a few seconds before leaping out and away. During our time a Golden Eagle was spotted soaring overhead on a couple of occasions, but this sighting was eclipsed by the very lucky appearance of a Japanese Serow on the slope above the monkey pool. This strange looking endemic seems an odd mix of goat, antelope and deer. It was also glacially slow in moving. It was feeding within some scrubby bushes resulting in only partial views of bits of the body with the head appearing from time to time. Its colouration was very cryptic making it very easy to miss. Patient waiting for it to move from cover and allow an unfettered view were dashed due to its remaining stock still for long periods as it chewed and masticated endlessly on its obviously tough diet! Views of its face topped by two short black horns evoked images of some woodland sprite. We half expected it to break cover and reveal itself with the torso of a man, goats' legs and playing some Pan pipes.

We headed back to have a light lunch in one of the cafes before continuing back to the coach. We then drove back to Nagano to visit the important Buddhist temple of Zenkoji. Our local interpreter/guide passed on an abundance of information about the complex involving the main temple and numerous surrounding buildings. We had somewhat of a whirlwind tour due to time constraints, but the area was fascinating with an abundance of things to admire and enquire about. The work crews were up their ladders here also, meticulously removing all the old faded pine needles and carefully pruning the shape with scateurs.

Day 10

Saturday 3rd March

Our final day in the field involved taking a coach trip from Nagano to travel to Karuizawa, a journey of a little over an hour. Here we entered the Wild Bird Sanctuary, an area of forest designated as protected in 1974 following the promotion of the area by Godo Nakanishi, who was the founder of the Wild Bird Society of Japan and creator of the word 'yacho', meaning wild bird; a word not previously existing in the Japanese language! The area is renowned for its rich birdlife. At the time of our visit, at the tail end of winter, the forest was clearly going to be pretty quiet but we remained confident of making a few good discoveries.

We got off to a good start when we connected with a flock of Japanese Grosbeaks. A few of us took a while to pick up on the birds, but views through the telescope for some were striking before the flock melted away into the forest. Dusky Thrushes were plentiful alongside various tit species. A couple of Meadow Buntings were found followed by hearing some song from the male. We paused to have a quick 'elevenses' in a wooden arbour during which time we watched a Eurasian Wren sunbathing on a log, noting the various differences in plumage between our own race of the same species at home.

We carried out a circular walk reaching a gravel access road alongside a river. Birdlife here picked up with the sightings of a mix of woodland species very reminiscent of home, with Treecreeper, Nuthatch, Long-tailed Tit and Willow Tit joined by Japanese Pygmy Woodpecker, Varied and Japanese Tits and Brown Dipper. Further on down the track and we got onto another target species, Japanese Woodpecker, with a pair giving reasonable views high in a tree. The telescope helped a few get a decent view.

Back at the visitor centre we were somewhat surprised to find the frozen pond alongside, that was deserted on our arrival, now covered in ice-skating locals! We enjoyed our picnic lunch and coffee watching the show. Inside the centre, live video camera footage showed a sleeping endemic Japanese Giant Flying Squirrel located in a large nest box outside and just above the centre. Conscience prevented us from counting this as a 'sighting' however!

We had time to spend a little more time in the forest after lunch in the hope of picking up something new, unfortunately without success. We then had to board the coach for our transfer to Karuizawa train station where we were due to catch the bullet train back to Tokyo.

Day 11

Sunday 4th March

All that remained was to have a final breakfast before catching the train into Haneda Airport for our mid-morning BA flight home, all of which went smoothly. Due to the time difference, after a 12-hour flight we arrived home still on the 4th March and only midday local time!

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Species Lists

Birds (✓=recorded but not counted; H = heard only; E = Endemic; N = near Endemic)

	Common name	Scientific name	February/March														
			18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	1	2	3	
1	Mute Swan - I	<i>Cygnus olor</i>													6		
2	Whooper Swan	<i>Cygnus cygnus</i>							200+	30	6		30	50			
3	Common Shelduck	<i>Tadorna tadorna</i>		6	4												
4	Mandarin Duck	<i>Aix galericulata</i>			100												
5	Northern Shoveler	<i>Spatula clypeata</i>		✓			6								2		
6	Gadwall	<i>Mareca strepera</i>	✓	✓			20								20		
7	Falcated Duck	<i>Mareca falcata</i>			2	100									20		
8	Eurasian Wigeon	<i>Mareca penelope</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	10				2	1		2			
9	Eastern Spot-billed Duck	<i>Anas zonorhyncha</i>	50	✓	✓	400	20	1						2			
10	Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		2	1					
11	Northern Pintail	<i>Anas acuta</i>		✓	✓						4	4	4				
12	Eurasian Teal	<i>Anas crecca</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓				4			1			
13	Common Pochard	<i>Aythya ferina</i>			8	10	4							1			
14	Tufted Duck	<i>Aythya fuligula</i>				25				6		3		2			
15	Greater Scaup	<i>Aythya marila</i>					2K			25	20	12					
16	Harlequin Duck	<i>Histrionicus histrionicus</i>								40	30	15					
17	White-winged (Stejneger's) Scoter	<i>Melanitta deglandi stejnegeri</i>									4						
18	Black Scoter	<i>Melanitta americana</i>								40	200+	40	300				
19	Long-tailed Duck	<i>Clangula hyemalis</i>									6		4				
20	Common Goldeneye	<i>Bucephala clangula</i>					1		4	20	35	20	30				
21	Smew	<i>Mergellus albellus</i>										1					
22	Goosander	<i>Mergus merganser</i>						2	4	15	25	20	25		1	1	
23	Red-breasted Merganser	<i>Mergus serrator</i>					4			18	60	20	6				
24	Red-throated Diver	<i>Gavia stellata</i>									2						
25	Little Grebe	<i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>	3	✓	6	6	2							4			
26	Great Crested Grebe	<i>Podiceps cristatus</i>					500										
27	Black-necked Grebe	<i>Podiceps nigricollis</i>		1			6										
28	Eurasian Spoonbill	<i>Platalea leucorodia</i>		5													
29	Black-faced Spoonbill	<i>Platalea minor</i>	4	8			3										

	Common name	Scientific name	February/March													
			18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	1	2	3
30	Black-crowned Night Heron	<i>Nycticorax nycticorax</i>	10													
31	Grey Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓								2	
32	Great Egret	<i>Ardea alba</i>		10	6	5	1								1	
33	Little Egret	<i>Egretta garzetta</i>		25	20	6	1									
34	Pelagic Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax pelagicus</i>								4	300	10				
35	Great Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>	✓			2	4							6		8
36	Western Osprey	<i>Pandion haliaetus</i>	1	2	1	1	1							1	1	
37	Eurasian Sparrowhawk	<i>Accipiter nisus</i>	2		3	1								2		
38	Northern Goshawk	<i>Accipiter gentilis</i>	1	1	1		1									
39	Hen Harrier	<i>Circus cyaneus</i>		1												
40	Black-eared Kite	<i>Milvus lineatus</i>	20	20	30	10		6	1	4	8	3	10	2	4	6
41	White-tailed Eagle	<i>Haliaeetus albicilla</i>						1		60	150	30	180			
42	Steller's Sea Eagle	<i>Haliaeetus pelagicus</i>						6	3	40	300	10	120			
43	Eastern Buzzard	<i>Buteo japonicus</i>	2				1	1					3	2		1
44	Golden Eagle	<i>Aquila chrysaetos</i>													1	
45	Common Kestrel	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>		2	2									1	1	
46	Merlin	<i>Falco columbarius</i>	1													
47	Peregrine Falcon	<i>Falco peregrinus</i>			1	1	1								1	
48	Common Moorhen	<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>					1									
49	Eurasian Coot	<i>Fulica atra</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	4							✓		
50	Sandhill Crane	<i>Antigone canadensis</i>		4	4											
51	White-naped Crane	<i>Antigone vipio</i>		300	✓											
52	Red-crowned Crane	<i>Grus japonensis</i>						400	250+			4				
53	Common Crane	<i>Grus grus</i>		1	2			1	1							
54	Hooded Crane	<i>Grus monacha</i>		10K	✓	2										
55	Northern Lapwing	<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>	20	✓	✓											
56	Long-billed Plover	<i>Charadrius placidus</i>				1										
57	Kentish Plover	<i>Charadrius alexandrinus</i>					15									
58	Eurasian Curlew	<i>Numenius arquata</i>	5													
59	Common Greenshank	<i>Tringa nebularia</i>		1			3									
60	Dunlin	<i>Calidris alpina</i>		✓			✓									
61	Solitary Snipe	<i>Gallinago solitaria</i>										1				

	Common name	Scientific name	February/March													
			18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	1	2	3
62	Common Snipe	<i>Gallinago gallinago</i>	2	1												
63	Common Sandpiper	<i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>	1			12										
64	Green Sandpiper	<i>Tringa ochropus</i>				1										
65	Black-headed Gull	<i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>					✓									
66	Common (Kamchatka) Gull	<i>Larus canus</i>					1			3	6	12				
67	Glaucous-winged Gull	<i>Larus glaucescens</i>								2	4	10				
68	Glaucous Gull	<i>Larus hyperboreus</i>								6	3	2				
69	Vega Gull	<i>Larus vegae</i>	✓	✓			✓			2	1	2	6			
70	Slaty-backed Gull	<i>Larus schistisagus</i>								300+	✓	✓	6			
71	Caspian Tern	<i>Hydroprogne caspia</i>	1													
72	Spectacled Guillemot	<i>Cepphus carbo</i>									30					
73	Feral Pigeon	<i>Columba livia</i>													✓	✓
74	Oriental Turtle Dove	<i>Streptopelia orientalis</i>	20	✓	✓	✓	✓							3		✓
75	Blakiston's Fish Owl	<i>Bubo blakistoni</i>									1	1				
76	Ural Owl	<i>Strix uralensis japonica</i>							1							
77	House Swift	<i>Apus nipalensis</i>												12		
78	Common Kingfisher	<i>Alcedo atthis</i>			2	1										
79	Crested Kingfisher	<i>Megaceryle lugubris</i>				4						1	1			
80	Japanese Pygmy Woodpecker	<i>Yungipicus kizuki</i>			1	1	2					1		3	1	3
81	Great Spotted Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos major</i>							1	1		3	1	1		
82	Japanese Green Woodpecker - E	<i>Picus awokera</i>														2
83	Bull-headed Shrike	<i>Lanius bucephalus</i>		2	1	4										
84	Eurasian Jay	<i>Garrulus glandarius</i>				2			1			3	8	H		
85	Azure-winged Magpie	<i>Cyanopica cyanus</i>					4									
86	Daurian Jackdaw	<i>Coloeus dauuricus</i>		1												
87	Oriental Rook	<i>Corvus frugilegus pastinator</i>	✓	✓	✓											
88	Carrion Crow	<i>Corvus corone</i>	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		1	✓
89	Large-billed Crow	<i>Corvus macrorhynchos</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
90	Coal Tit	<i>Periparus ater</i>										1		H		1
91	Japanese Varied Tit	<i>Sittiparus varius varius</i>			2	2					1		1		3	2
92	Marsh Tit	<i>Poecile palustris</i>							3			✓				
93	Willow Tit	<i>Poecile montanus</i>							2	2		✓				10

	Common name	Scientific name	February/March													
			18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	1	2	3
94	Japanese Tit	<i>Parus minor</i>			1	1	2	2	1			✓		4	2	6
95	Eurasian Skylark	<i>Alauda arvensis</i>	4	✓	✓		6									
96	Brown-eared Bulbul	<i>Hypsipetes amaurotis</i>	10	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			1			✓	✓	✓
97	Barn Swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>				6										
98	Asian House Martin	<i>Delichon dasypus</i>				30										
99	Japanese Bush Warbler	<i>Horornis diphone</i>				3										
100	Long-tailed Tit	<i>Aegithalos caudatus</i>				12								2		6
101	Japanese White-eye	<i>Zosterops japonicus</i>	6	6	4	4	4							20		
102	Eurasian Wren	<i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>								1		1				2
103	Eurasian Nuthatch	<i>Sitta europaea</i>							2			3	2			2
104	Eurasian Treecreeper	<i>Certhia familiaris</i>														1
105	White-cheeked Starling	<i>Spodiopsar cineraceus</i>	20	10	2	6	50							12	10	✓
106	Pale Thrush	<i>Turdus pallidus</i>			1		1									
107	Dusky Thrush	<i>Turdus eunomus</i>	4	20	✓	✓	✓						1	2	1	3
108	Naumann's Thrush	<i>Turdus naumanni</i>		1	1									1		
109	Red-flanked Bluetail	<i>Tarsiger cyanurus</i>			2	1										
110	Daurian Redstart	<i>Phoenicurus aureoreus</i>	2	2	2	4	1							2		
111	Blue Rock Thrush	<i>Monticola solitarius philippensis</i>			1	2										
112	Brown Dipper	<i>Cinclus pallasii</i>								3	3	1			1	2
113	Russet Sparrow	<i>Passer rutilans</i>		40		6										
114	Eurasian Tree Sparrow	<i>Passer montanus</i>	12	✓	✓	✓	✓					6		✓		✓
115	Grey Wagtail	<i>Motacilla cinerea</i>	1			3										
116	Eastern Yellow Wagtail	<i>Motacilla tschutschensis</i>		4												
117	White (Black-backed) Wagtail	<i>Motacilla alba lugens</i>	5	✓	✓	✓	✓					1		✓	✓	
118	White Wagtail	<i>Motacilla alba leucopsis</i>	5	✓	✓	✓	✓							✓	✓	
119	Japanese Wagtail - N	<i>Motacilla grandis</i>				4			3							
120	Buff-bellied Pipit	<i>Anthus rubescens</i>	1	6	30											
121	Brambling	<i>Fringilla montifringilla</i>	200	12	1000											
122	Japanese Grosbeak	<i>Eophona personata</i>														12
123	Grey-capped Greenfinch	<i>Chloris sinica</i>	30	150	✓	✓									3	3
124	Eurasian Siskin	<i>Carduelis spinus</i>										2				
125	Meadow Bunting	<i>Emberiza cioides</i>		20	3	10										2

	Common name	Scientific name	February/March													
			18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	1	2	3
126	Chestnut-eared Bunting	<i>Emberiza fucata</i>		1		1										
127	Black-faced Bunting	<i>Emberiza spodocephala</i>		3	6	20	20									
128	Common Reed Bunting	<i>Emberiza schoeniclus</i>	1	✓	✓	✓										

Other Taxa (E = Endemic)

Japanese Macaque - E, *Macaca fuscata*

Harbour Seal, *Phoca vitulina*

Pacific White-sided Dolphin, *Lagenorhynchus obliquidens*

Red Fox, *Vulpes vulpes*

Sika Deer, *Cervus nippon*

Sable, *Martes zibellina*

Japanese Serow - E, *Capricornis crispus*

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Ural owl, Hokkaido



Red-crowned cranes, Hokkaido



Japanese Macaques