

Japan: 24th February – 8th March

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For anyone that has read a few trip reports they will immediately know that Japan is a terrific birding destination, particularly in winter. After discussing a potential trip with Rich and Chris whilst in Egypt 18 months ago, it didn't take me long to gain enthusiasm for visiting this exotic destination.

Many people have the impression that Japan is a very expensive destination, and I expect some tour group prices of £3,500+ perpetuate this idea. However, this really isn't the case; our trip came to approximately £1,700 per person all in (including spending money, direct flights from the UK, a ferry, four internal flights and five separate hire cars). We found the majority of prices out there to be cheaper than the UK, a hotel on average would cost us £35 a night, petrol roughly 75p a litre and food was definitely cheaper, although alcohol was similarly priced.

There are obvious language barriers that need to be overcome, but 95% of the time we were able to get around this by using an array of techniques from pointing to drawing! Many restaurants have models of their dishes, handily allowing you to be able to just show the waiter/waitress what you want. Only on one or two occasions did we venture into a restaurant and have absolutely no idea what we were ordering, however we found this just added to the fun.

We flew directly from Heathrow to Narita Airport with Virgin Atlantic. Our internal flights were with Japanese airline Ana. Due to the island hopping nature of our trip we had several separate cars, using a variety of companies depending on the best price. The main car hire companies consistently were Toyota, Mazda and Nissan Car Hire, and due to having five of us we had to opt for expensive MPVs in order to be able to fit us and our gear in. All MPVs supplied were 4x4s, which proved incredibly useful in the snowy terrain of both Hokkaido and the Japanese Alps.

The vast majority of the credit for planning and arranging the trip goes to Rich. Our final itinerary was as shown below.

Itinerary

Sun 24th Feb: Arrive Narita Airport c10am. Lake Imbamuma then area around Tsukuba until early afternoon, Koyoma Dam (near Mito) until dusk, then drove to Karuizawa. Night at Apa Hotel, Karuizawa.

Mon 25th Feb: Karuizawa area all day. Night at Apa Hotel, Karuizawa.

Tue 26th Feb: Karuizawa area in the morning, river at Saku until early afternoon then drove to Kotoku-Namu prior to dusk. Boarded ferry at Oarii, bound for Tomokomai, Hokkaido. Night on ferry.

Wed 27th Feb: Ferry from Oarii to Tomokomai, arriving c19:30. Night at Hotel Central Plaza in Tomokomai.

Thu 28th Feb: Drove from Tomokomai to Kushiro. Birded Akan Crane Centre then drove to Furenko. Night at the Minshuku Furen (contact email matsuo-t@plum.plala.or.jp).

Fri 29th Feb: Birded Cape Nosappu-Misake until mid late morning. Birded Nemura-wan Peninsular and nearby Shibetsu Harbour until dusk.

Sat 1st Mar: Birded wooded area south of Furenko at dawn, then birded Cape Nosappu-Misaki then Ochiisi-Misaki before driving to Rausu Harbour for late afternoon. Drove to Abashin after dusk, night at Grand Plaza Hotel, Abashin.

Sun 2nd Mar: Drove to Memanbetsu airport, flight to Kagoshima Airport, Kyushu, via Tokyo Haneda Airport. Birded Lake Miike until dusk, then drove to Araseki Crane Reserve. Night at Araseki Crane Observatory.

Mon 3rd Mar: Birded Araseki until late morning, then Yatsushiro Estuary until early afternoon. Drove to Kadogawa Dam, arrived just before dusk and birded until dusk. Drove to Lake Miike, night near Miike at Takaharu-cho.

Tue 4th Mar: Birded Lake Miike at dawn, then drove to Kagoshima airport. Flight to Naha, Okinawa. Drove to Yanburu area, where birded until dusk. Night drive around Yanburu area, and night at Yanburu Hotel.

Wed 5th Mar: Birded Yanburu area in morning, then Kijyoka paddies early afternoon. Birded Yanburu area until dusk, then night drive around Yanburu. Night at Yanburu Hotel.

Thu 6th Mar: Birded Yanburu area in morning, then drove to Naha. Flight to Tokyo Haneda. Express train from Tokyo to Sendai, arriving midnight. Night in Sendai.

Fri 7th Mar: Birded Kitakami River until late morning, then drove south to Tonegawa. Birded there until dusk. Night at Narita.

Sat 8th Mar: Flight back to London.

Sunday 24th

We arrived at Narita Airport, several kms east of Tokyo, at 10am following our 12 hour flight direct from Heathrow. Less sleep was had on the plane than had been originally planned, thanks mainly to the many films on offer during the course of the flight!

On arrival we picked up our hire car without any problems, we were even able to get the staff to program in our first destination for us on the sat nav, Lake Imbamuma. Here we met local birder and ex-pat Richard Carden, who had kindly agreed to accompany us for the day and show us round some local sites and try for some potentially tricky species.

At Lake Imbamuma there was a good number of species, with the highlights being our first Japanese Wagtails, 4 Oriental Greenfinches, c200 Falcated Duck and c12 Smew.

We then moved onto to a small park in the Tsukuba area, where a modest lake held 12 Baikal Teal amongst the many Mallards, Spot-billed Ducks and Northern Pintail. The surrounding parkland held our first 2 Japanese White-eyes and Black-faced Buntings and despite being common we all spent a lot of time looking at the Dusky Thrushes, which enabled us to also locate a Pale Thrush. A couple of Bull-headed Shrikes also vied for attention but some calling Chinese Bamboo Partridges remained out of sight. Some nearby dried up rice paddies yielded 3 Grey-headed Lapwings, unsurprisingly our only sighting of this species on the trip.

From here we drove north up the motorway to Koyoma Dam, near Mito. This was the site of an overwintering Siberian Accentor, which after a couple of hours of searching eventually showed well in the company of Meadow Buntings. This site also gave us our first Japanese Accentors, whilst a 'back-up' cast included 2 Daurian Redstarts and a Brown Dipper.

From Koyoma we headed inland to a very snowy Karuizawa, our base for the next couple of days, and checked in at the Apa Hotel in the centre of the town.

Monday 25th

By dawn we were driving the road from Hoshino Onsen towards Kose Onsen. We made several attempts at negotiating our way along until we eventually admitted defeat on the icy, snow covered lanes and instead drove back to the village and parked up, deciding instead to head on foot the 4km or so to Kose Onsen. En-route we started picking up a few local specialties, including 2 Japanese Grosbeaks, several Varied Tits, 6+ Japanese Pygmy Woodpeckers, several Japanese Green Woodpeckers, 2 Long-tailed Rosefinches and at least 6 Red-flanked Bluetails.

Richard had given us detailed directions where a Solitary Snipe had overwintered at Kose Onsen in previous years, and using his gen we headed through knee-deep snow along a small stream. The snipe was located a bit further down than we were expecting, but trekking a few extra metres had an added benefit when we inadvertently flushed a female Copper Pheasant from the stream's edge, unfortunately the bird flew straight away from us, over the nearest hill and subsequently out of view. The walk back to the car was uneventful, and we drove to the nearby Shobitu Onsen to warm ourselves up with a cup of coffee.

Shobitu Onsen has the advantage of a few well stocked feeders and bird tables that can be easily viewed whilst sat enjoying your coffee. The tables here provided the most interest with about 17 Japanese Grosbeaks scrambling for the best feeding position and making an amusing spectacle in the process. Also in the area were a Japanese Accentor, several Varied Tits and 2 Japanese Pygmy Woodpeckers.

We spent the afternoon wandering the trails around Hoshino Onsen but added little in the way of new species before retiring back to the Apa Hotel for the night.

Tuesday 26th

Dawn saw us back at Hoshino Onsen, where we took the trail from the main path by the stream. We hadn't walked far when our attention was drawn to a superb male Copper Pheasant strutting around on the path ahead of us which was subsequently joined by two females. On our appearance the birds walked up the slope and eventually out of view, but not until we had all had great views. We were very surprised when another female ran out from the ditch by the stream a few metres on, and even more surprised when another male and several more females appeared! In all we counted nine birds, two of which were males, along a twenty metre stretch of the stream and surrounding slopes. Just as surprising was another Solitary Snipe that was flushed further along the stream.

We spent a further two or three hours wandering the trails, looking for our two missing target species, Pallas's Rosefinch and Japanese Waxwing. However with plenty of sites still to visit we eventually had to give up on these birds and move on. Departing Karuizawa we drove to the nearby town of Saku, just a few miles to the west. A bridge just to the south of the town allows easy access to the River Chikuma, apparently a good site for Long-billed Plover. This certainly proved true as within five minutes of scanning we had picked up three individuals on the pebbled shore. Exploration of the area also produced a number of other commoner species, including c10 Smew, 6 Goosander, a Peregrine and c10 Japanese Wagtails.

From Saku we headed back to the coast ultimately to catch the car ferry from Oarii to Tomokomai. We thought we would have a bit of time to kill before we arrived there so we aimed for Kotoku-namu just to the east of Mito. However we only just arrived before dusk leaving no real time to do the site justice, a quick rush around produced some very tame Falcated Ducks on the lake amongst other equally tame wildfowl, a Grey Bunting, Yellow-throated Bunting and Green Pheasant, although stupidly we all split up and each of these birds were seen by different people, meaning all of these target species still needed to be seen later in the trip! As dusk fell at least 3 Ural Owls were vocal in the woods around the lake, with one bird being seen in flight as it left its roost site.

We then drove to Oarii where, after meeting up with Richard again, who was to join us for the next day, we boarded the ferry for our 19 hour crossing to Tomokomai on Hokkaido, and got our heads down for some sleep in advance.

Wednesday 27th

We were up and on deck just prior to dawn. It was pretty damn cold outside and we ended up varying our viewing positions from the stern to port or starboard sides, depending on the direction of the wind, spray and sun. Overall we spent most of the day on deck, taking the odd half hour break to warm ourselves up and get some food – be aware though that there is no canteen here, the only food and drink on offer was from a variety of vending machines in a dining area, although free cold water and green tea is available.

Our first bird of note was a dark shearwater, but in the half-light at dawn we weren't able to clinch an ID, it also happened to be the only Sooty/Short-tailed we saw!

We spent the next few hours watching from the stern as this gave us the best overall view of the sea although it was a bit more exposed to the wind and spray. Not long into the voyage we had our first albatross, a distant adult Laysan. Streaked Shearwaters were an almost constant companion, whilst unfamiliar dark morph Fulmars did their best to confuse us. Soon after the Laysan sighting we then had an adult Black-footed Albatross, again a little distantly but the views were decent enough. Not satisfied with this another albatross, this time much closer, approached the boat. As it banked we all suddenly realized it was a juvenile Short-tailed, the enormous pink bill, coupled with the white flashes on the upperwing left no doubt. Unbelievably, in a couple of hours we had observed three albatrosses, one of each possible species!

As we headed further north alcids became very much in evidence, until it reached a point when we were almost constantly surrounded by large flocks. Ancient Murrelets (c2000) and Least Auklets (c250) were far outnumbered by Crested Auklets, of which we saw an estimated 5500. At times it was possible to scan along one side of the boat and see a constant line of Crested's as far as the eye could see. The best views of most auklets were obtained by viewing from the port or starboard sides as you were able to get good views from close birds flushed by the boat.

Approximately 70 guillemots were observed, of which 40+ were Brunnichs and c30 were Common, whilst Rhinoceros Auklets numbered about 10. A second, much closer Laysan Albatross was also highly appreciated as were 2 Long-billed Murrelets. Other species included one each of Red-throated and Pacific Divers and a pale phase Pomarine Skua.

As we neared the northern tip of Honshu our luck hit again as we located a Fork-tailed Storm-petrel alongside the boat, another soon followed. As dusk approached so did a heavy snowstorm and this was our cue to call an end to a fabulous day's birding that had far exceeded our original expectations. We arrived in a very snowy Tomokomai at about 8pm and proceeded to the Hotel Central Plaza for a well deserved meal and sleep.

Thursday 28th

Most of the day was earmarked for driving east across Hokkaido to Furen-ko and our minshuku for the next couple of nights. Soon after leaving Tomokomai and saying goodbye to Richard for the final time we were extremely fortunate to come across 3 Pallas's Rosefinches feeding in some trees right next to the road. The birds, which included a stunning adult male, seemed completely unperturbed by our presence as we pulled up right next to them, however our position on a blind bend unable to get off the road meant any photographic opportunities were missed. We also had a flyover from a solitary Bean Goose (a very large individual, was possibly of the race *middendorfi*). The rest of the drive proved fairly uneventful, although the snow covered bleak landscape proved dramatic and was difficult to take your eyes off at any point.

Shortly before Kushiro a flock of waxwings flew across the road, and whilst they failed to settle in view the stop did enable us to jam in on a Mountain Hawk Eagle circling over a nearby hill. Other raptors included several White-tailed and Steller's Sea Eagles, although we would get much better views of these later.

We arrived at the Akan Crane Station, Kushiro, mid afternoon, unfortunately just missing the 3pm feed but still getting great views of at least 40+ Red-crowned Cranes in this rather dudey environment.

From here we headed to the popular (amongst visiting birders at least) minshuku at Furen-ko, run by Takeyoshi Matsua. Taki is very welcoming and knowledgeable about the birdlife of Hokkaido and records sightings made by birders in the area. After a very decent dinner we headed to the nearby Hattaushi Bridge in the search for one of our most wanted targets. Upon arrival a bird could be heard calling, evidently not very far from the road. We waded into the snow and were soon face to face with a magnificent male Blakiston's Fish Owl, which sat atop a pole above our heads calling frequently. Pretty chuffed with this we retired back to the minshuku and to our beds.

Friday 29th

After a good breakfast we made our way along the hour or so drive to get to Nosappa-misaka cape. Arriving at the headland we were pretty impressed by the pack ice, it ended right at the point, meaning the sea to the north was totally covered but to the south it was mainly ice free. Large numbers of alcids and seaduck were concentrated along the edge of the pack ice and this made for an excellent morning's birding. The close flocks of

Harlequins, Long-tailed Ducks and Black Scoters provided superb views on the millpond like sea. Most of the alcids were a little further out but still gave good views nonetheless, the most common species being Spectacled Guillemot, with smaller numbers of Ancient Murrelet, Least and Crested Auklets and Common Guillemots, although we found the best auks present to be 2 Pigeon Guillemots. Whilst watching the sea c10 Asian Rosy Finches came and sat conveniently amongst the rocks and a juvenile Steller's Sea Eagle sat on a nearby telegraph pole.

Heading back towards Furen-ko we made several stops along the coast. The only stop of note was by Habomai Harbour, barely three miles west of Nosappa-misaka. Here we quickly picked out a smart drake American Wigeon amongst a decent sized flock of Eurasian Wigeon whilst a White-billed Diver flew past the harbour.

We then headed up the coast to the Notsuka-wan Peninsular, pretty impressed along the whole drive by the solid line of pack ice right along the coast. Along the peninsular a large flock of Asian Rosy Finches was a welcome sight, whilst offshore 41 Stejneger's Scoters were another target species 'in the bag'. A very confiding Red Fox also proved good value as it ran around us on the beach, presumably in search of food. With little else of note on the peninsular we headed to the nearby Shebitsu Harbour, where a roost of c1100 Pelagic Cormorants was an impressive sight. We then drove back to our minshuku at Furen-ko for a hearty meal and a good night's sleep.

Saturday 1st

We made a pre-breakfast attempt for Hazel Hen in the woodland to the south of Furen-ko. Although unsuccessful in our effort, we did add White-backed Woodpecker and Bohemian Waxwing, whilst some close up views of a male *griseiventus* Bullfinch were very welcome. After another top breakfast we retraced our steps from the previous morning and returned to Nosappa-Misaka, only to find the pack ice had shifted further south leaving only small pockets of ice-free sea where a few ducks had congregated. Heading back down the coast we reached the edge of the pack ice at Habomai Harbour, some 3km away from the headland and where it was yesterday. This meant the birds were all concentrated here now instead, with pretty much similar numbers and species to what we had observed yesterday at Nosappa-Misaka. The main addition was 2 Red-faced Cormorants sat on ice within the harbour.

We then made a quick stop at Ochiisi Misaki, where numbers of birds were much lower than further up the coast but another Pigeon Guillemot was good to see as was a Pacific Diver.

From here we drove up the coast to Raasu Harbour arriving late afternoon in a fierce snowstorm. After a bit of birding in the harbour our plan was to go to the minshuku near Rausu famous for the feeding Blakiston's Fish Owls. However, we were due to catch an internal flight early next morning and with the snow as heavy as it was we became a bit concerned with having to drive an hour and a half in the morning after even more snowfall overnight. So, having had cracking views of the Fish Owl already, we decided to head straight to Nembitsu airport, or at least close by, so as to avoid any potential mishaps in the morning. We were able to find a decent hotel in Abashin, about 15km from the airport, and settled here for the night.

Sunday 2nd

Today was mainly a day of travelling, with flights from Nembitsu airport to Tokyo and then from Tokyo onto Kyushu. We arrived in Kyushu mid afternoon, where we had just enough time to get to Lake Miike (after seeing 2 Crested Kingfishers on the Kurishma River en-route) and bird for an hour or so before dusk fell. Unfortunately many of the resident species seemed to have already gone to roost, and despite seeing lots of Black-faced Buntings neither the hoped for Grey or Yellow-throated could be found. The lake did host c75 Mandarin Duck, whilst an uncharacteristically tame and showy White's Thrush on the lawn next to the lake was one of my birds of the trip. We dipped on the overwintering Forest Wagtail and with the light fading departed for Araseki.

The crane observatory at Araseki where we were booked for the night was fairly basic but we were able to get a hot shower and a cold beer to accompany the food, although fish heads, goldfish-like sushi and various tofu's weren't quite to everyone's taste!

Monday 3rd

We were met with the impressive sight of 11,000 cranes outside the Minshuku as dawn broke, the vast majority (c9,500) Hooded but as the light increased hundreds of White-naped could be picked out amongst them, whilst a Common and several hybrid Common x Hooded were feeding close to the road. At least 10-15 Daurian Jackdaws gathered on the nearby wires amongst the more numerous Rooks but unfortunately there were no pale phase birds amongst them.

After taking our fill of the cranes we drove to the nearby reed bed to the west of the observatory where it didn't take long for us to pick out 6 Chinese Penduline Tits. There were a good number of birds in the reeds, with Japanese Bush Warblers seemingly every few metres and several species of bunting including Common Reed and Chestnut-eared, whilst on heading back towards the observatory we all got good views of a male Green Pheasant feeding alongside the road.

Not really being up for sushi, most of us opted out of breakfast and took the opportunity for some photo's whilst also catching up with c180 Russet Sparrows and c30 Eurasian Starlings.

We spent the last couple of hours at Araseki around the cultivated fields east of the observatory, which was the area supposedly favoured by the Sandhill Crane. This was quickly proved true, with the bird found feeding more or less on its own. A couple of Long-toed Stints found feeding on a muddy field were something of a surprise. Before leaving Araseki we birded the shrine area, where we observed a flighty Brown Shrike around the playground and Rich found a Long-billed Dowitcher.

Heading up the coast we reached the Yatsushiro Estuary just gone midday, where we quickly located 15+ Saunders' Gulls at the mouth, whilst further along 4 Black-faced Spoonbills were seen on the sandy islands. Other birds observed here included c25 Shelduck, c100 Japanese Cormorants, a Blue Rock Thrush (of the very attractive *philippensis* race) and a Chestnut-eared Bunting.

With our flights from Kyushu to Okinawa scheduled for late morning the next day, and two sites at opposite ends of the island that we still wanted to visit, we then had a tough choice to make. Did we take a relatively short drive to Lake Miike and bird there the rest of the afternoon, then drive to Kadogawa Harbour for dawn, leaving ourselves a limited period of time there in the morning before driving to Kagoshima Airport, or did we attempt to get to Kadogawa Harbour with enough time to bird before dusk, then go to Lake Miike for the morning thereby giving ourselves much more time there? After experiencing the very slow driving times around Kyushu the latter involved a risk as we may get to Kadogawa too late, thereby having to bird there in the morning and missing Lake Miike out. As it was we decided to risk it and head straight to Kadogawa...

After driving in a style that Carlos Sainz would have been proud of we managed to get to Kadogawa with an hour or so of daylight to spare, where thankfully our target quarry did us proud and vindicated our decision. A pair of Japanese Murrelets were located feeding inside the harbour and were our tenth alcid species of the trip. A Pacific Reef Egret was the only other bird of note around the harbour, and as dusk fell we drove inland where we found a decent hotel in nearby Takaharu-cho.

Tuesday 4th

Having positioned ourselves near to Lake Miike the previous night we were able to spend a fruitful few hours birding there from dawn. Before even getting to the car park several Yellow-throated Buntings were observed feeding on the road amongst the commoner Black-faced Buntings. Around the lake the White's Thrush was still present and showing very well, whilst 2 White-bellied Green Pigeons flew along the canopy. We again dipped the overwintering Forest Wagtail but caught up with our final target species at this site, Grey Bunting, with one or two birds found feeding unobtrusively in the leaf litter in the woodland bordering the road.

The next few hours were spent transferring to Okinawa, where we arrived early afternoon before driving straight to the northern part of the island. We checked in at the Yanburu Hotel, which was well placed around the main birding spots along route 58. As there was a little bit of daylight left in which to try and knock off a few target species we headed down route 58 on foot. The only species which actually obliged was Ryukyu Robin, which seemed to be common in the woods adjacent to the road. A distant drumming was thought to be Okinawa Woodpecker.

We drove the roads along Terubi-rindo, detailed in Brazil's guide, where after making several false starts by heading up tracks that quickly vanished, we eventually found ourselves on a network of tarmaced tracks that crisscrossed the hills. However despite scanning the roadsides fervently for several hours, our only reward was a Woodcock sp that flushed before we could ID it, and several frustrating attempts at trying to locate calling Okinawa Rails – one bird in particular remained invisible despite seemingly in a tree above our heads. Eventually we heard a Ryukyu Scops Owl calling closely and we were able to get spotlighted views of our second Ryukyu endemic, before fatigue got the better of us and we retired to the hotel.

Wednesday 5th

With most of the endemics still to see we were up prior to dawn and positioned at a Rail site along Route 2 that we had been told about. Unfortunately no rails obliged although Ryukyu Robins again provided a welcome distraction. Heading a bit further down the road our attention was peaked by some close drumming, and soon enough a male Okinawa Woodpecker was observed close to the road as it fed and drummed constantly. With one of the 'big' endemics in the bag we carried on trying for the rail by driving up and down the road and scanning the verges, before heading to the nearby fishing village of Ada, where the mangroves on the riverside are also known as a good site. However luck still wasn't with us and after scouting out the area we headed back to the hotel for breakfast.

Wanting a slight change of scenery (and phone reception so we could contact a local birder that Richard had told us off) we headed to the west coast and the village of Kijyoka, where the nearby paddies provided some very decent birding for a couple of hours. Amongst the highlights were a Ruddy-breasted Crake, several Cinnamon Bitterns, 2 Intermediate Egrets and a White-breasted Waterhen, whilst the paddies were filled with Snipe, mostly Common, but also a few Pin-tailed and at least 2 presumed Swinhoe's, although best of all were a pair of Greater Painted-Snipe. We were also able to get hold of Richard's contact, Dan, who was able to give us another rail site that is apparently good at dusk.

After this change, it was back to forest birding to try to catch up with the remaining endemics. 3 Ryukyu Minivets were eventually observed along one of the Okini-rindo forest tracks but otherwise little else was seen and with dusk drawing closer we decided to head back down to Ada village and try Dan's rail site. Before arriving at the site we bumped into a Brown-headed Thrush, a species we hadn't caught up with so far on the trip. The site at Ada is on the opposite side of the river to the village and is reached by crossing the bridge at the river mouth (which was a popular site for Pacific Swallows) then taking the first right onto a dirt track as soon as you have crossed the bridge. Follow the track for 30 metres or so and graves will start to appear on your left, you should stop just before the large graves that are built into the cliff side. According to Dan the rails come down the hillside prior to dusk to bath in the river before going to roost and he has a good record of seeing them here. Needless to say we didn't score, despite hearing the rails calling on the hillside they failed to show and we returned to the hotel for an energy boosting meal before heading onto the tracks again at night.

As with the previous night we spent several hours driving the tracks and roads around Okini-rindo. The highlight was a Japanese Scops Owl which showed well right above the car, but again Amami Woodcock and Okinawa Rail eluded us, potentially even more frustratingly than the night before as we seemed to be right next to a rail in a tree but couldn't find it roosting.

Thursday 6th

We were up before dawn again and back at Ada Village, where we located the last of the resident owl species – Northern Boobook, in trees off the main entrance to the village. Despite then spending a few hours driving round and checking sites for Okinawa Rail, our only sighting was a half second untickable view as three of us saw one vanish off the road ahead of us and into the undergrowth, never to re-emerge. A Whistling Green Pigeon was seen perched in distant canopy from the rail site near Ada village.

We spent an hour or so at Fungawa Dam, picking up a Japanese Woodpigeon and 2 Ryukyu Minivets. With recent news of a Siberian Crane on the mainland near Sendai, some 400km north of Tokyo, myself, Rich and Geoff had decided earlier on in the trip that we were going to cut short our time in Okinawa by one day and spend our last full day trying for the crane. This meant our afternoon was to be spent flying to Tokyo whilst Chris and John had another 24 hours to try and nail Okinawa Rail before flying on to Taiwan for a week.

So the rest of our day was spent being dropped at the airport and flying to Tokyo, whilst Chris and John went back north. After landing in Tokyo we had to organise car hire and then drive the 400km or so north to Sendai. This proved to be the only hassle we had the entire trip...

Despite there being three hire car receptions we were unable to get a car due to either no cars being left or it being 8pm and the offices were shutting. So we were left with the option of either getting a train or staying in Tokyo and getting a train first thing in the morning, which would obviously mean we would be able to twitch the Crane but do little else. After a prolonged discussion with the information centre we were told the last train had already left for Sendai but we could get an overnight bus from the train station. Heading to the station we found there to be several trains that were scheduled to go to Sendai that night! So we eventually managed to purchase tickets (approx £50 each) and navigate our way to the right platform (no mean feat) where we boarded the train for an extremely smooth two and a half hour ride north. On arrival we booked into one of the many hotels right outside the train station, got details about relevant car hire and got our heads down for the night.

Friday 7th

We managed to get to the Nissan car hire centre with no trouble, get across we wanted to return the car to Tokyo (which incurred a significant extra charge) and then we were on our way for the remainder of the 60km journey to the Kitakami River. Incidentally whilst we were negotiating car hire details Chris and John were finally getting to grips with Okinawa Rail at the site given to us by Dan, they had excellent views of two birds along the track by the graves.

The later-than-desired start to the day (as we had to wait until 8:30 for the car hire to open) meant we didn't get to the site until mid-morning, but on arrival the juvenile Siberian Crane was instantly in view as it fed at a distance of not more than 30 metres on cultivated fields next to the Kitakami River. A Rough-legged Buzzard was an unexpected flyover at this site. We spent a while getting our fill of this exceptional bird, before starting the long journey back south towards Tokyo. We had been planning to visit Tonegawa and Chosi in the afternoon, but as it was we arrived at Tonegawa with only an hour or so left of light and therefore not enough time to do Chosi.

We parked up by the reedbed adjacent to the river and quickly jammed in on Japanese Marsh Warbler, with at least 2 individuals present and moving unobtrusively low through the reeds. Many Reed Buntings were present, mostly Common but with some Japanese mixed in as well. Also observed in the hour of daylight we had left were a Green Pheasant and an Eastern Marsh Harrier.

With this came the last birding of our trip, we headed back to Tokyo where we stayed in nearby Narita, on the outskirts of the city near to the airport.

NMC = Nosappu-Misaki Cape
NWP = Netsuka-wan Peninsular

Pacific Diver

1 Oarai to Tomakomai Ferry, 27th Feb; 1 Ochiisi Misaki, 1st Mar; 2 Kitakami River, 7th Mar

Red-throated Diver

1 Oarai to Tomakomai Ferry, 27th Feb;

White-billed Diver

1 east past Habomai Harbour, 29th Feb

Great Crested Grebe

c30 Lake Imbamuma, c10 Tsukuba area, 24th Feb; 5 Yatsushiro Estuary, 3 Kadogawa Harbour, 3rd Mar; 3 Kitakami River, 7th Mar

Red-necked Grebe

1 Oarai to Tomakomai Ferry, 27th Feb; 1 NMC, 1 Habomai Harbour, 29th Feb; c20 Habomai Harbour, 1st Mar; 1 Yatsushiro Estuary, 3rd Mar;

Little Grebe

2 Lake Imbamuma, 24th Feb; c10 Araseki, 3rd Mar; 2 Lake Miike, 4th Mar; 1 Kitakami River, 7th Mar

Slavonian Grebe

1 Habomai Harbour, 1st Mar

Laysan Albatross

2 (ad) Oarai to Tomakomai Ferry, 27th Feb

Short-tailed Albatross

1 (imm) Oarai to Tomakomai Ferry, 27th Feb

Black-footed Albatross

1 (light ad) Oarai to Tomakomai Ferry, 27th Feb

Northern Fulmar

c25 (mainly dark phase, c3 light phase) Oarai to Tomakomai Ferry, 27th Feb

Streaked Shearwater

c30 Oarai to Tomakomai Ferry, 27th Feb

Sooty/Short-tailed Shearwater

1 (in near darkness) Oarai to Tomakomai Ferry, 27th Feb

Fork-tailed Storm-petrel

2 Oarai to Tomakomai Ferry, 27th Feb

Great Cormorant

Several Lake Imbamuma, 1 Tsukuba area, 24th Feb; Several Hoshino Onsen, Karuizawa, 25th Feb; 3 Saku, 26th Feb; c500 Yatsushiro Estuary, 3rd Mar; c20 Kitakami River, 7th Mar

Japanese Cormorant

c10 Araseki, c100 Yatsushiro Estuary, 3rd Mar; 5 Kitakami River, 7th Mar

Pelagic Cormorant

c80 NMC, 29th Feb; c30 NMC, c100 Habomai Harbour, c20 Ochiisi Misaka, 1st Mar

Red-faced Cormorant

1 NMC, 1 Habomai Harbour, 1st Mar

Cinnamon Bittern

3+ Kijyoka, 5th Mar

Black-crowned Night Heron

1 Kijyoka, 1 Ada Village, 5th Mar;

Cattle Egret

1 Kijyoka, 5th Mar

Great Egret

1 Lake Imbamuma, 24th Feb; 2 Araseki, 3rd Mar; 3 Kitakami River, 7th Mar

Intermediate Egret

2 Kijyoka, 5th Mar

Little Egret

1 Kurishima River, 2nd Mar; 5 Yatsushiro Estuary, 3rd Mar; 3 Kijyoka, 5th Mar; 1 Kitakami River, 7th Mar

Pacific Reef-Heron

1 Kadogawa Harbour, 3rd Mar; 2 Hentona, 5th Mar

Grey Heron

1 Lake Imbamuma, 24th Feb; 1 Hoshino Onsen, Karuizawa, 25th Feb; 1 Karuizawa, 25th Feb; 20 Araseki, 6 Yatsushiro Estuary, 3rd Mar; 3 Kijyoka, 5th Mar; 16 Kitakami River, 7th Mar

Black-faced Spoonbill

4 Yatsushiro Estuary, 3rd Mar

Whooper Swan

16 just before Kushiro, 28th Feb; c100 NWP, 29th Feb; c200 NWP, 1st Mar

Bean Goose

1 (prob ssp *middendorfi*) near Tomokomai, 28th Feb

Black Brant

7 NMC, 1 Habomai Harbour, 29th Feb; 1 Habomai Harbour, 1st Mar

Common Shelduck

c25 Yatsushiro Estuary, 3rd Mar

Mandarin Duck

C75 Lake Miike, 2nd Mar;

Falcated Duck

c200 Lake Imbamuma 24th Feb; 20+ Kotoku-numa, 26th Feb; 1 Yatsushiro Estuary, 3rd Mar; 9 Kitakami River, 7th Mar

Baikal Teal

c12 Tsukuba area 24th Feb

Common Teal

Common Lake Imbamuma, common Tsukuba area 24th Feb; 10+ Saku, common Kotoku-numa, 26th Feb;

Eurasian Wigeon

c50 Kotoku-numa, 26th Feb; c70 Habomai Harbour, 29th Feb; c30 Habomai Harbour, 1st Mar; c40 Lake Miike, 2nd Mar; c20 Araseki, c1000 Yatsushiro Estuary, 3rd Mar; c15 Lake Miike, 4th Mar; c20 Kitakami River, 7th Mar

American Wigeon

(1 hybrid x Eurasian Wigeon Kotoku-numa, 26th Feb); 1 (ad male) Habomai Harbour, 29th and again 1st Mar

Northern Pintail

6 Tsukuba area 24th Feb; 1 Habomai Harbour, 29th Feb; 4 Habomai Harbour, 1st Mar; c20 Kitakami River, 7th Mar

Mallard

Common Lake Imbamuma, common Tsukuba area 24th Feb; Common Saku, common Kotoku-numa, 26th Feb; c70 Lake Miike, 2nd Mar; c50 Lake Miike, 4th Mar; c10 Kitakami River, 7th Mar

Gadwall

4 Saku, 26th Feb;

Spot-billed Duck

Common Lake Imbamuma; common Tsukuba area 24th Feb; 10 Lake Miike, 2nd Mar; several Araseki, c50 Yatsushiro Estuary, 3rd Mar; 4 Kijyoka, 5th Mar; c100 Kitakami River, 7th Mar

Northern Shoveler

c8 Lake Imbamuma 24th Feb;

Common Pochard

c30 Saku, 26th Feb; 10 Araseki, 3rd Mar;

Tufted Duck

c20 Saku, 26th Feb; c70 Araseki, 3rd Mar;

Greater Scaup

3 Saku, 26th Feb; c20 NMC, c30 Habomai Harbour 29th Feb; c50 Habomai Harbour, c10 Ochiisi Misaki, c10 Raasu Harbour, 1st Mar; c300 Kitakami River, 7th Mar

Harlequin Duck

c300 NMC, c20 Habomai Harbour, 29th Feb; c300 Habomai Harbour, c50 Ochiisi Misaki, 1st Mar

Long-tailed Duck

c30 NMC, 10+ Habomai Harbour, 29th Feb; c50 Habomai Harbour, c20 Ochiisi Misaki, 1st Mar

Common Goldeneye

6 on river near Kushiro, 28th Feb; c50 NMC, c20 Habomai Harbour, 29th Feb; c100 NMC, c50 Habomai Harbour, c20 Ochiisi Misaki, 1st Mar

Black Scoter

1 Oarai to Tomakomai Ferry, 27th Feb; c200 NMC, c500 Habomai Harbour, c50 NWP, 29th Feb; c400 Habomai Harbour, c100 Ochiisi Misaki, 1st Mar

Stejneger's Scoter

41 NWP, 29th Feb; 1 Habomai Harbour, 1 Ochiisi Misaki, 1st Mar

Smew

c12 Lake Imbamuma 24th Feb; c10 Saku, 26th Feb

Red-breasted Merganser

c100 Oarai to Tomakomai Ferry, 27th Feb; c50 NMC, 29th Feb; c40 Habomai Harbour, c40 Raasu Harbour, 1st Mar; c20 Kitakami River, 7th Mar

Goosander

6 Saku, 26th Feb; c10 NMC, 98 Shebitso Harbour, 29th Feb; c20 Habomai Harbour, c40 Raasu Harbour, 1st Mar

Osprey

1 Araseki, 15 Yatsushiro Estuary, 3rd Mar; 4 between Naha and Yanumura, 4th Mar; 1 Kijyoka, 5th Mar; 3 between Yanumura and Naha, 6th Mar

Black Kite

Several Karuizawa, 25th Feb; common all sites, 26th Feb; common between Tomokomai and Kushiro, 28th Feb; common all sites, 29th Feb; common all sites, 1st Mar; 4 Lake Miike, 2nd Mar; common all sites, 3rd Mar; 1 Hentona, 6th Mar; common all sites, 7th Mar

Steller's Sea Eagle

c3 between motorway and Kushiro, 28th Feb; c10 across coastal sites, 29th Feb; 2 NMC, 8 Raasu Harbour, 1st Mar

White-tailed Sea Eagle

c6 between motorway and Kushiro, 28th Feb; c15 across coastal sites, 29th Feb; 3 NMC, 4 Habomai Harbour, 21 Raasu Harbour, 1st Mar

Mountain Hawk Eagle

1 (ad) c20km NW of Kushiro, 28th Feb

Grey-faced Buzzard

3 between Naha and Yanumura, 4th Mar; 2 Ada Village, 5 Kijyoka, 5th Mar; 3 Hentona, 6th Mar

Eastern Marsh Harrier

1 Tsukuba area 24th Feb; 1 Kotoku-numa, 26th Feb; 1 Tonegawa, 7th Mar

Common Buzzard

1 Tsukuba area, 1 Koyama Dam 24th Feb; Several Karuizawa, 25th Feb; 2 Common Buzzard Saku, 26th Feb; 2 Kushiro, 28th Feb; 1 Lake Furenko, 29th Feb; 2 Kitakami River, 7th Mar

Rough-legged Buzzard

2 central Hokkaido, 28th Feb; 1 Kitakami River, 7th Mar

Peregrine

1 Saku, 26th Feb; 1 Oarai to Tomakomai Ferry, 27th Feb; 1 Araseki, 3rd Mar; 1 Hentona, 5th Mar

Eurasian Kestrel

1 near Kadogawa, 3rd Mar; 2 Kijyoka, 5th Mar;

Chinese Bamboo-Partridge (heard only)

Tsukuba area 24th Feb; Araseki 3rd Mar

Copper Pheasant

1 fem Kose Onsen, Karuizawa, 25th Feb; 9 (2 male, 7 fem) Hoshino Onsen, Karuizawa, 26th Feb

Green Pheasant

1 Kotoku-numa, 26th Feb; 1 Araseki, 3rd Mar; 1 Kitakami River, 1 Tonegawa 7th Mar

Siberian Crane

1 (imm) Kitakami River, 7th Mar

Sandhill Crane

1 Araseki, 3rd Mar

Common Crane

1 Araseki, 3rd Mar; (& 2 hybrid Common x Hooded Araseki)

White-naped Crane

c250 Araseki, 3rd Mar

Hooded Crane

c8000 Araseki, 3rd Mar

Red-crowned Crane

40+ Akan feeding centre, 28th Feb;

Common Coot

Common Lake Imbamuma, common Tsukuba area 24th Feb; Common Saku, common Kotoku-numa, 26th Feb; c10 Kitakami River, 7th Mar

Common Moorhen

1 Araseki, 3rd Mar; 30+ Kijyoka, 5th Mar

White-breasted Waterhen

1 Kijyoka, 5th Mar

Okinawa Rail

2 Ada Village, 7th Mar (CB and JR)

Ruddy-breasted Crake

1 Kijyoka, 5th Mar

Northern Lapwing

c5 Lake Imbamuma 24th Feb; 10 Yatsushiro Estuary, 3rd Mar; 12 Tonegawa, 7th Mar

Grey-headed Lapwing

4 Tsukuba area 24th Feb

Grey Plover

8 Yatsushiro Estuary, 3rd Mar

Long-billed Plover

4 Saku, 26th Feb

Kentish Plover

c15 Yatsushiro Estuary, 3rd Mar

Little Ringed Plover

3 Kijyoka, 5th Mar

Woodcock sp

1 Terubi-rindo, 4th Mar

Common Snipe

2 Araseki, 3rd Mar; 30+ Kijyoka, 5th Mar

Pintail Snipe

c4 Kijyoka, 5th Mar

Swinhoe's Snipe

2+ Kijyoka, 5th Mar

Solitary Snipe

1 Kose Onsen, Karuizawa, 25th Feb; 1 Hoshino Onsen, 26th Feb

Greater Painted-Snipe

2 Kijyoka, 5th Mar

Dunlin

6 Habomai Harbour, 1st Mar; 10 Araseki, c40 Yatsushiro Estuary, 3rd Mar;

Long-toed Stint

2 Araseki, 3rd Mar

Temminck's Stint

1 Araseki, 3rd Mar

Greenshank

1 Kijyoka, 5th Mar

Long-billed Dowitcher

1 Araseki, 3rd Mar

Wood Sandpiper

c8 Kijyoka, 5th Mar

Common Sandpiper

1 Saku, 26th Feb; 2 Araseki, 1 Yatsushiro Estuary, 3rd Mar; 10+ Kijyoka, 5th Mar; 2 Ada Village, 6th Mar

Green Sandpiper

1 Saku, 26th Feb; 1 Araseki, 1 Yatsushiro Estuary, 3rd Mar; 1 Kijyoka, 5th Mar

Pomarine Skua

1 (light phase) Oarai to Tomakomai Ferry, 27th Feb;

Black-tailed Gull

Common Oarai to Tomakomai Ferry, 27th Feb; 1 NWP, 1 Raasu Harbour, 1st Mar; 5 Kadogawa Harbour, 3rd Mar; c20 Kitakami River, 7th Mar

Mew Gull

c50 Oarai to Tomakomai Ferry, 27th Feb; 2 NMC, 1 Habomai Harbour, 29th Feb; c6 Habomai Harbour, 1 Raasu Harbour, 1st Mar;

Glaucous-winged Gull

4 Oarai to Tomakomai Ferry, 27th Feb; 1 Habomai Harbour, 3 Shebitso Harbour, 29th Feb; c6 Habomai Harbour, c10 NWP, c30 Raasu Harbour, 1st Mar;

Heuglin's Gull

1 Araseki, c10 Yatsushiro Estuary, 3rd Mar

Vega Gull

Common Oarai to Tomakomai Ferry, 27th Feb; 2 NMC, 29th Feb; c20 (including several ssp *tamirynesis*) Yatsushiro Estuary, 3rd Mar;

Glaucous Gull

3 Oarai to Tomakomai Ferry, 27th Feb; 1 Kushiro, 28th Feb; common NWP, 29th Feb; 2 NMC, c40 Raasu Harbour, 1st Mar

Slaty-backed Gull

Common Oarai to Tomakomai Ferry, 27th Feb; common along Hokkaido coast, 28th Feb; common NMC, common Habomai Harbour, 29th Feb; common all sites, 1st Mar; c5 Kitakami River, 7th Mar

Black-headed Gull

Several Lake Imbamuma 24th Feb;

Saunders' Gull

15+ Yatsushiro Estuary, 3rd Mar

Black-legged Kittiwake

Common Oarai to Tomakomai Ferry, 27th Feb

Brunnich's Guillemot

40+ Oarai to Tomakomai Ferry, 27th Feb; 1 Habomai Harbour, 1st Mar

Common Guillemot

c30 Oarai to Tomakomai Ferry, 27th Feb; 12 NMC, 1 Shebitso Harbour, 29th Feb; 12 Habomai Harbour, 2 Ochiisi Misaki, 1st Mar

Pigeon Guillemot

2 NMC, 29th Feb; 1 Ochiisi Misaki, 1st Mar

Spectacled Guillemot

c200 NMC, 1 NWP, 29th Feb; c200 Habomai Harbour, c50 Ochiisi Misaki, 1st Mar

Long-billed Murrelet

2+ Oarai to Tomakomai Ferry, 27th Feb

Ancient Murrelet

c2000 Oarai to Tomakomai Ferry, 27th Feb; c15 NMC, 29th Feb; 20+ Habomai Harbour, 1st Mar

Japanese Murrelet

2 Kadogawa Harbour, 3rd Mar

Crested Auklet

c5500 Oarai to Tomakomai Ferry, 27th Feb; c50 NMC, 29th Feb; 200+ Habomai Harbour, 7+ Ochiisi Misaki, 1st Mar

Least Auklet

c250 Oarai to Tomakomai Ferry, 27th Feb; c30 NMC, 29th Feb; 100+ Habomai Harbour, 7+ Ochiisi Misaki, 1st Mar

Rhinoceros Auklet

c10 Oarai to Tomakomai Ferry, 27th Feb

Japanese Wood Pigeon

1 Fungawa Dam, 6th Mar

Oriental Turtle-Dove

Several Tsukuba area 24th Feb; Several Karuizawa, 25th Feb; Common all sites, 26th Feb; 4 Lake Miike, 2nd Mar; c3 Araseki, c10 Yatsushiro Estuary, 3rd Mar; c10 Lake Miike, 4th Mar; 5+ Kijyoka, 5th Mar; c6 Okini-rindo, 6th Mar; common all sites, 7th Mar

White-bellied Green Pigeon

4 Lake Miike, 4th Mar

Whistling Green Pigeon

1 Ada Village, 6th Mar

Blakiston's Fish Owl

1 Hattaushi Bridge, near Furenko, 28th Feb

Ural Owl

1 Kotoku-numa (+2 heard), 26th Feb

Japanese Scops Owl

1 Okini-rindo, 5th Mar (of the form *pryeri*)

Ryukyu Scops Owl

1 Terubi-rindo, 4th Mar

Northern Boobook

1 Ada Village (+1 heard), 5th Mar; 1 Ada Village, 6th Mar

House Swift

1 Naha, 4th Mar

Crested Kingfisher

2 Kurishima River, 2nd Mar

Common Kingfisher

1 Kadogawa Harbour, 3rd Mar; 1 Ada Village, 5th Mar; 1 Ada Village, 6th Mar

(Japanese) Pygmy Woodpecker

6+ between Hoshino Onsen and Kose Onsen, Karuizawa, 25th Feb; 2 Hoshino Onsen, Karuizawa, 26th Feb; 1 Furen Lodge, 1st Mar; 2 Lake Miike, 4th Mar; 2 1km north of Yanburu Hotel, 5th Mar

Great Spotted Woodpecker

1 Shobitu Onsen, Karuizawa, 25th Feb; c4 Hoshino Onsen, Karuizawa, 26th Feb; 1 Lodge Fuhren, 29th Feb; 2 Furen Lodge, 1st Mar;

White-backed Woodpecker

1 woodland near Furen Lodge, 1st Mar (of the form *subcirris*)

Japanese (Green) Woodpecker

Several between Hoshino Onsen and Kose Onsen, Karuizawa, 25th Feb; 3 Hoshino Onsen, Karuizawa, 26th Feb; 3 Lake Miike, 4th Mar

Okinawa (Pryer's) Woodpecker

1 km north of Yanburu Hotel (+1 heard drumming), 5th Mar

Eurasian Skylark

c5 Tsukuba area; c60 Araseki, 3rd Mar; 3 Kitakami River, 7th Mar

Pacific Swallow

c10 between Naha and Yanumura, 4th Mar; c15 Ada Village, 5th Mar; c10 Ada Village, 6th Mar

Barn Swallow

1 Kurishima River, 2nd Mar; 2 Kadogawa Harbour, 3rd Mar; c3 Kijyoka, 5th Mar;

Asian House Martin

c10 20km east of Araseki, 3rd Mar; c6 10km north of Kagoshima

White Wagtail

Several Lake Imbamuma 24th Feb; Several Hoshino Onsen, Karuizawa, 25th Feb; Common Saku, 26th Feb; 1 Habomai Harbour, 29th Feb; c4 Lake Miike, 4th Mar; 3 Tonegawa, 7th Mar (all sightings of the form *lugens*)

Japanese Wagtail

Several Lake Imbamuma 24th Feb; c19 Saku, 26th Feb;

Grey Wagtail

1 Saku, 26th Feb; 3 Lake Miike, 2nd Mar; 2 Lake Miike, 4th Mar; 10+ Kijyoka, 5th Mar; 1 Kitakami River, 7th Mar

Buff-bellied Pipit

Several Lake Imbamuma 24th Feb; 2 Saku, 26th Feb; c15 Araseki, 3rd Mar; 6 Tonegawa, 7th Mar

Olive-backed Pipit

1 Lake Miike, 2nd Mar; 2 Araseki, 3rd Mar; 8 Lake Miike, 4th Mar

Ryukyu Minivet

2 Okini-rindo, 5th Mar; 2 Fungawa Dam, 6th Mar

Brown-eared Bulbul

Several in various towns near Tokyo 24th Feb; Common between Hoshino Onsen and Kose Onsen, Karuizawa, 25th Feb; Common all sites, 26th Feb; c3 between Tomokomai and Kushiro, 28th Feb; 1 Lodge Fuhren, 29th Feb; 10 Lake Miike, 2nd Mar; several all sites, 3rd Mar; several Lake Miike, 4th Mar; 25 Okini-rindo, 5th Mar; 3 Tonegawa, 7th Mar

Chinese Bulbul

2 Naha, 4th Mar; 2 Kijyoka, 5th Mar; 1 south of Kijyoka, 6th Mar

Brown Dipper

1 Koyama Dam 24th Feb; Common between Hoshino Onsen and Kose Onsen, Karuizawa, 25th Feb; 2 Hoshino Onsen, Karuizawa, 26th Feb;

Bohemian Waxwing

6 woodland south of Furen Lodge, 3 Nemuro, 20+ just west of Nemuro, 1st Mar

Blue Rock Thrush

1 Yatsushiro Estuary, 3rd Mar; common across Okinawa, 4th Mar; c20, several sites on northern Okinawa, 5th Mar; common all sites, 6th Mar

White's Thrush

1 Lake Miike, 2nd Mar and again 3rd Mar; 1 Ada Village, 5th Mar

Pale Thrush

1 Tsukuba area 24th Feb; 1 Karuizawa, 25th Feb; 6+ Lake Miike, 2nd Mar; 5 Araseki, 3rd Mar; 15+ Lake Miike, abundant Yanumura, 4th Mar; abundant all sites, 5th Mar; abundant all sites, 6th Mar

Brown-headed Thrush

1 Ada Village, c3 1km north of Yanburu Hotel, 5th Mar

Dusky Thrush

Several Lake Imbamuma, Tsukuba area and Koyama Dam 24th Feb; Common Karuizawa area, 25th Feb; Common Karuizawa area, 26th Feb; several Tomokomai, 28th Feb; 1 NWP, 29th Feb; c10 Nemuro, 1st Mar; c15 Araseki, 5+ Yatsushiro Estuary, 3rd Mar; 2 Kitakami River, 6 Tonegawa, 7th Mar

Zitting Cisticola

1 Araseki, 3rd Mar; 4+ Kijyoka, 5th Mar;

Japanese Bush Warbler

2 Kotoku-numa, 26th Feb; 5+ Araseki, 3rd Mar; c3 Lake Miike, common Yanumura, 4th Mar; common all sites, 5th Mar; common all sites, 6th Mar; 2 Tonegawa, 7th Mar

Japanese Marsh Warbler

2 Tonegawa, 7th Mar

Goldcrest

2 Lake Miike, 4th Mar

Winter Wren

1 Hoshino Onsen, Karuizawa, 25th Feb; 1 Hoshino Onsen, Karuizawa, 26th Feb; 1 Lake Miike, 4th Mar

Japanese Accentor

2 Koyama Dam 24th Feb; 1 Shobitu Onsen, Karuizawa, 25th Feb;

Siberian Accentor

1 Koyama Dam 24th Feb

Red-flanked Bluetail

c6 between Hoshino Onsen and Kose Onsen, Karuizawa, 25th Feb; 1 Hoshino Onsen, Karuizawa, 26th Feb; 1 Lake Miike, 2nd Mar; 2 Lake Miike, 4th Mar;

Daurian Redstart

2 Koyama Dam 24th Feb; 1 Saku, 26th Feb; 3 Lake Miike, 2nd Mar; 2 Yatsushiro Estuary, 3rd Mar; 2 Lake Miike, 4th Mar;

Ryukyu Robin

1 c1km north of Yanumura, 4th Mar; 8+ Okini-rindo, 5th Mar; c20 Okini-rindo, 6th Mar

Long-tailed Tit

c15 between Hoshino Onsen and Kose Onsen, Karuizawa, 25th Feb; c15 Karuizawa area, 26th Feb (birds at Karuizawa of the form *trivirgatus*); 3 Furen Lodge, 1st Mar (birds on Honshu of the form *japonicas*, part of the *caudatus* group); 3 Lake Miike, 4th Mar (birds on Kyushu of the form *kiusiuensis*)

Marsh Tit

2 Lodge Fuhren, 29th Feb; 4 Furen Lodge, 1st Mar

Willow Tit

Common between Hoshino Onsen and Kose Onsen, Karuizawa, 25th Feb; c20 Karuizawa area, 26th Feb;

Coal Tit

3 Shobitu Onsen, Karuizawa, 25th Feb; 2 Karuizawa area, 26th Feb;

Great Tit

Common between Hoshino Onsen and Kose Onsen, Karuizawa, 25th Feb; Common Karuizawa area, 26th Feb; 2 woodland south of Furen Lodge, 1st Mar; 4+ Lake Miike, 4th Mar

Varied Tit

Common between Hoshino Onsen and Kose Onsen, Karuizawa, 25th Feb; c10 Karuizawa area, 26th Feb; several Lake Miike, 2nd Mar; 2 Lake Miike, 4th Mar; 2 Okini-rindo, 6th Mar

Eurasian Nuthatch

Several between Hoshino Onsen and Kose Onsen, Karuizawa, 25th Feb; 2 Karuizawa area, 26th Feb (birds at Karuizawa of the form *amurensis*); 1 Lodge Fuhren, 29th Feb; 4 Furen Lodge, 1st Mar (birds on Hokkaido of the form *asiatica*);

Eurasian Treecreeper (heard only)

1 woodland south of Furen Lodge, 1st Mar

Chinese Penduline Tit

6 Araseki, 3rd Mar

Japanese White-eye

c3 Kose Onsen, Karuizawa, 25th Feb; 2 Karuizawa area, 26th Feb; c6 Lake Miike, 2nd Mar; c20 Araseki, 3rd Mar; 3 Lake Miike, 4th Mar; common all sites, 5th Mar; c30 Fungawa Dam, 6th Mar

Bull-headed Shrike

2 Tsukuba area 24th Feb; 1 Yatsushiro Estuary, 3rd Mar

Brown Shrike

1 Araseki, 3rd Mar

Hwamei (heard only)

Koyoma Dam, 24th Feb

Red-billed Leiothrix

3 Lake Miike, 2nd Mar;

Eurasian Jay

2 between Hoshino Onsen and Kose Onsen, Karuizawa, 25th Feb; 2 Karuizawa area, 26th Feb; 2 woodland south of Furen Lodge, 1st Mar;

Daurian Jackdaw

10-15 Araseki (all dark phase), 3rd Mar

Rook

c400 Araseki, 3rd Mar;

Carrion Crow

Several between Hoshino Onsen and Kose Onsen, Karuizawa, 25th Feb; several Karuizawa, 26th Feb; common across Hokkaido, 28th Feb; common all sites, 1st Mar;

Large-billed Crow

Several Lake Imbamuma, Tsukuba area and Koyama Dam, 24th Feb; common Saku, 26th Feb; common across Hokkaido, 28th Feb; common all sites, 29th Feb; common all sites, 1st Mar; common Lake Miike, 2nd Mar; common all sites, 3rd Mar; common all sites, 4th Mar; common all sites, 6th Mar; common all sites, 7th Mar

White-cheeked Starling

Several in towns near Tokyo 24th Feb; several Saku, 26th Feb; c15 Araseki, 3rd Mar; c15 Kitakami River, 7th Mar

Eurasian Starling

c30 Araseki, 3rd Mar

Russet Sparrow

c180 Araseki, 3rd Mar

Tree Sparrow

c30 Tsukuba area 24th Feb; 2 Shobitu Onsen, Karuizawa, 25th Feb; several between Saku and Mito, 26th Feb; c30 Akan feeding centre, 28th Feb; common all sites, 29th Feb; common all sites, 1st Mar; 300+ Araseki, 3rd Mar; 3 Lake Miike, 4th Mar; 2 Kijyoka, 5th Mar; common all sites, 7th Mar

Asian Rosy-Finch

c10 NMC, c50 NWP, 29th Feb; 7 NMC, 1st Mar

Common Redpoll

3 Lodge Fuhren, c20 Shebitso Harbour, 29th Feb;

Eurasian Bullfinch

3 Hoshino Onsen, Karuizawa, 26th Feb; 6 woodland south of Furen Lodge, 1st Mar; (all birds of the form *griseiventris*)

Oriental Greenfinch

4 Lake Imbamuma 24th Feb; several Shobitu Onsen, Karuizawa, 25th Feb; c20 Hoshino Onsen, Karuizawa, 26th Feb; c500 Araseki, c100 Yatsushiro Estuary, 3rd Mar; 4 Lake Miike, 4th Mar;

Scaly-breasted Munia

12 Kijyoka, 5th Mar

Japanese Grosbeak

2 between Hoshino Onsen and Kose Onsen, c17 Shobitu Onsen, Karuizawa, 25th Feb; 2 Hoshino Onsen, Karuizawa, 26th Feb;

Hawfinch

Common Karuizawa area, 25th Feb; common Hoshino Onsen, Karuizawa, 26th Feb; 30+ near Tomokomai, 28th Feb; 2 Furen Lodge, 1st Mar; 2 Lake Miike, 4th Mar;

Pallas' Rosefinch

3 (1 ad male, 1 ad fem and 1 1st winter male) 20km east of Tomokomai, 28th Feb;

Long-tailed Rosefinch

2 between Hoshino Onsen and Kose Onsen, 25th Feb; c7 Hoshino Onsen, 26th Feb

Meadow Bunting

c6 Koyama Dam 24th Feb; 2 Hoshino Onsen, Karuizawa, 25th Feb; 5 Saku, 26th Feb; 1 Lake Miike, 2nd Mar; 2 Araseki, 2 Yatsushiro Estuary, 3rd Mar;

Chestnut-eared Bunting

2 Araseki, 1 Yatsushiro Estuary, 3rd Mar;

Rustic Bunting

1 Hoshino Onsen, Karuizawa, c50 Kotoku-numa, 26th Feb;

Black-faced Bunting

2 Tsukuba area 24th Feb; 2 Kotoku-numa, 26th Feb; c6 Lake Miike, 2nd Mar; 5+ Araseki, 3rd Mar; c5 Lake Miike, 4th Mar;

Yellow-throated Bunting

1 Kotoku-numa, 26th Feb; 4 Lake Miike, 4th Mar;

Grey Bunting

1 Kotoku-numa, 26th Feb; 1 Lake Miike, 4th Mar;

Eurasian Reed Bunting

10+ Araseki, c5 Yatsushiro Estuary, 3rd Mar; c5 Tonegawa, 7th Mar

Japanese Reed Bunting

c6 Tonegawa, 7th Mar

Wild Boar – 2 Kose Onsen, Karuizawa, 25th Feb;