Bird trip to Japan
February - March 2018

Oystein Storkersen, Norway

Tokyo 23.2
Hokkaido 24.2-1.3
Karuizawa 1.-3.3
Yamanouchi 3.-4.3
Joetsu 4.3
Sado 4.-5.3
Tokyo 5.-6.3

Adult crested ibis in breeding plumage. Its grey-coloured plumage is created with self-produced oil from glands on the head and this ibis is the only bird species in the world with this capability. Sado Island
This is a report from a private trip with myself and my wife to Honshu and Hokkaido, with birdwatching and photography as primary objectives. A huge thank you to those who assisted us before and during this trip, notably Haruko Okusu, the Wild Bird Society of Japan and the Toki Forest Park center.

**Localities & travel hints**

**Main sites in Hokkaido**

- **Tsurui village** area for red-crowned cranes
  - Ito Tancho Sanctuary in the centre of Tsurui village
  - Tsurimidai, another crane feeding locality 15 mins south of Tsurui next to the highway
  - Akan Crane Visitor Centre, the most famous place and with a visitor centre, 30 mins drive to the southwest of Tsurui
  - Otowa bridge (across Setsurigawa river), 10 mins drive south of the centre of Tsurui village
  - Kussharo Lake, 1hr drive to the north of Tsurui

Red-crowned cranes (called Tancho by the locals) can be seen by the hundreds at each of the feeding stations around Tsurui and at the roost in the Setsurigawa river. The resident Hokkaido population is now ca 2000 birds from a low of less than 30 birds in the 1920ies.
The global population is probably twice this number. A few occasional common cranes can be seen among the flocks of red-crowned cranes. In this region red-crowned cranes can also be seen many places here and there in the cultural landscape. Early morning to photograph red-crowned cranes roosting in the middle of the Setsurigawa river as seen from the Otowa bridge is a classical site and a must for the visiting birder. During our morning visits to Otowa bridge, we were told that coaches with mostly Chinese photographers arrived either the night before or at 3AM to erect their photo tripods and then had a long wait in their vehicles for the sunrise. Late arrivers will only find less optimal space for their tripods at each end of the line up on the pedestrian bridge crossing the river. Expect crowds of 50-100 or more. There are parking lots on both sides of the bridge. We arrived after 5AM and took stand on the middle part of the foot-bridge behind the early risers, and still got good pictures (between their shoulders). Be prepared for low temperatures, as it was down to -16 centigrades during our visit. Beware that some mornings with higher temperatures there are no frost smoke over the river, as is usually wanted by the photographers. A variety of other birds besides the cranes sleeping the night away in the middle of the river can be seen, such as smew, goosander, short-eared owl, marsh tits, Japanese wagtail, brown dipper, nuthatch, great spotted woodpecker, Steller's sea-eagle and white-tailed eagle, buzzards, black-eared kite and we also recorded Japanese grosbeak.

Red-crowned cranes at Tsurui.

The warm, waters of Kussharo-ko (lake), is most famed for wintering whooper swans and is a classical site for pictures with steaming waters and swans. Early morning is a must to get good light conditions and to avoid the crowds.

Coastal sites from Kushiro and northwards
Akkeshi village and Akkeshi-ko (lagoon). This is a shallow brackish bay/lake, easily accessible next to the village and a must for the visiting birder. Upon arriving at Akkeshi take the road downhill into the village and you can drive to the end of the road (next to boathouses/fishing industry). Here you might on a good day find tens of thousands of wintering ducks, swans and gulls. Some feeding of swans and gulls occur and birds are quite approachable. Hundreds of black scoters can be seen and this species was one of the most
common wintering diving ducks in NE-Hokkaido. White-winged scoters also made an appearance here and there along the coast.

Kiritappu Misaki (the cape with a lighthouse). The site has easy access through the village and is a must for the visiting birder. The plains around the village is a potential site for Asian rosy finch, dusky thrush and many species of dabbling ducks. From the tip of the peninsula and scanning the waters from just below the lighthouse you can spot species like red-faced cormorant, pelagic cormorant, different alcids and harlequins. A few spotted seals and an adult sea otter with a juvenile playing around in the seaweed was also recorded.

Furen-ko (lagoon). The visitor center on the shores of Furen-ko and the frozen lake itself is the first sight you get of the lake as you approach from the south. From the inside of the center you can enjoy a cup of coffee and eagles being fed during midday. Dozens of eagles will line up in the surrounding trees waiting for feeding hours. Some red-crowned cranes may also put in an appearance looking for food. Unfortunately the center was never open when we were there (too early or too late). There are lots of sika deer around this area, so slow down and beware when driving at dusk. We also had several squirrels looking much darker and bigger than the red squirrel in Europe (a Hokkaido subspecies of red squirrel).

The shallow Furen-ko will be ice-covered during winter, except the entrance to the sea where species like eagles, red-crowned crane (roosting), goldeneye and a variety of dabbling ducks can be found. Shunkunitai island is not so productive for visiting birders during winter time, but a lovely forest with lots of fallen conifer trees with woodpeckers. The Bird Trail along the main road just after the exit to Shunkunitai (driving in the direction of Nemuro) can be recommended. This is supposedly an old growth forest with a mix of mostly
White-backed woodpecker, Furen-ko

Blakiston’s Fish Owl, Furen-ko.

deciduous and a few conifer trees. Look for a large parking lot and a visitor center next to the main road (well before the bridge crossing the outlet from Onneto lake). It will take ca 60 mins leisurely walk along the marked path (start in the direction of the shrine/temple towards the seaside/Shunkunitai) to do a circular tour. Visits must be done early morning at sunrise (ca 6AM). Possible species are great spotted and white-backed woodpecker, grey-
bellied bullfinch, goldcrest, marsh tit, coal tit, nuthatch, treecreeper, Japanese tit, Japanese pygmy woodpecker, the Japanese variety of jay, lots of sika deer, and close to the main road there was a roost for kites with roughly 100 birds. We also had our only goshawk here and pygmy flying squirrels might also occur.

Further on towards Nemuro (ca 500m on) and next to the WBSJ building (before crossing the bridge when driving towards Nemuro), the river flowing from lake Onneto and tidal zone is very productive with ducks and swans. A group of falcated ducks was seen here, and many steller’s sea-eagles roost in the trees along the river mouth and there are many gulls, including common gulls (*camtschatschensis*). Immediately inland from the bridge, Lake Onneto is also frozen over in winter, but with many eagles waiting for left-overs from the ice-fishing activities.

Ochiishi Misaki with the harbor. The light house on the tip of the peninsula is not worthy of a visit during winter as few birds can be expected and the distance from the lighthouse down onto the sea is too large for any decent view of birds. However, you cross through a fine forest to get to the lighthouse (sometimes in deep snow). Probably a better site during summer. Japanese wagtail was also found here. The Ochiishi Nature Cruise out of the harbor is the main attraction and a must for visiting birders. Probably the best place in NE-Hokkaido to get in close contact with high numbers of alcids. 6-7 species of alcids is a possibility (least auklet, ancient murrelet, spectacled guillemot, pigeon guillemot incl. *snowii*, crested auklet, long-billed murrelet, common/Brünnichs guillemots). Many other species are also possible, like brent, peregrine, black-throated diver, red-necked grebe, long-tailed duck, white-winged scoter. The boat trip lasts for approximately 3 hours and circle the two larger islands to the north (Yururi-to and Moyururi-to). Quite a few ducks and the odd spectacled guillemot can be found inside the harbor too. After the morning voyage find the road to the north of the village that brings you to the slopes along the shores. Look for flocks of rosy finches here as they search for seeds on wind swept bare patches. We had 60 birds in one flock here.
Spectacled Guillemot, Ochiishi

Crested auklet, Ochiishi
Asian Rosy Finch, Ochiishi.

The Nosappu Misaki. The cape and the light house is a good place to look for sea birds, like high numbers of alcids and cormorants, as well as good numbers of harlequin and gulls. Scan for the rare rock sandpiper or other waders along the rocky shores. At the lighthouse there is a birdwatching shed that might come in handy if the weather is bad, otherwise it is better to stand outside. As with all seabird watching a telescope is obligatory also here. The drive to Nosappu could be done by a circular route, following the southern road and then the northern road (both through the city of Nemuro).

Along the coast towards Shiretoko peninsula
At Hakuchodai (before the turn to Notsuke peninsula) there is a visitor center famed for high numbers of whooper swans (5000) and is situated next to the main road to Notsuke Hanto and further on Rausu. We made a brief stop there and at several fishing ports along the coast. At Hakuchodai there were only a few hundred swans, ducks and gulls during our visit, probably due to the lack of drift ice. Generally gulls, ducks and swans abound along many sites along the coast and visits to harbors were more interesting than at Hakuchodai. Common species on different coastal sites were hundreds of goosanders, black scoters, scaups, glaucous gulls, glaucous-winged gulls and slaty-backed gulls. Many gulls looking like Herring gulls were probably Vega gulls.
Notsuke Hanto. Along the road onto the sandbar of the Notsuke peninsula we did not see that many species, some auks along the shorelines and the odd and very obliging Hokkaido variety of red foxes (Ezo fox) and Sika deers. Still it is a nice drive with not many oncoming cars/trucks. Possibly the end of the road towards Todowara nature visitor center/birdwatching tower could be more productive?
Ezo fox, Notsuke

Shiretoko peninsula and Rausu. The main fame of Rausu is the congregation of huge numbers of Steller’s sea-eagles and white-tailed eagles (+ a lot of tourists and a few birdwatchers too). The global population of Steller’s sea-eagles have been calculated at 6000 birds, mostly breeding in Kamchatka. Ca 2500 of these winter on the Shiretoko-peninsula. Eagles can be seen everywhere along the coast and roosting in trees the first few km along the road north of Rausu. It is necessary to join a boat trip out to the drift ice to get close encounters with both species of eagles (they can also be seen quite close up inside the harbor of Rausu). This is a must for visitors, but do your bookings and expect crowds for each departure. The light will be in your back with the departure after 12hrs, while the morning lights will be more in your face as the eagles sit on the drift ice towards Kunashir island. It is probably a good idea to do both trips for photography to get the most out of the variation of light. A few alcids were recorded (crested auklet, spectacled guillemots and a few common /Brünnichs guillemots flying past), otherwise very few other bird species were seen on the cruise in and out of Rausu harbor, except gull species. Around and inside the harbor there were many eagles, harlequin, red-breasted mergansers, glaucous, glaucous-winged and slaty-backed gulls.
The second attraction of Rausu is the Blakiston’s fish owl, and the famous spot for it is at Minshuku Washi no yado, just north of Rausu (immediately after the first tunnel). The global
population of this owl is now calculated at around 500 and ca 100-150 of these live in Hokkaido. Such is the attraction of this owl and site at Washi no yado that bookings for seats and the better photo-angles is recommended a year head. It is also possible to only come to photograph the owl and/or also have a meal. In other words you can book a room at another place and not necessarily at Washi. The line of linked together barracks are heated, but as the time for the owls to appear comes, the windows will be removed. You are advised to place your tripod well ahead of the onslaught of punters (mainly Chinese photographers). During our visit the noisy Chinese kept the birds at bay and nothing happened before 1AM. When the owl finally showed itself, about 90% of the guests had left. According to other British birders the same happened the night before. The owl appeared again at 3AM and again at 4.30AM. You get a few minutes to take your photographs each time. At Washi there is a LED-light system continuously flood-lighting the site and according to the proprietors you need to synchronize your camera (1/80sec and ca ISO 4000-5000). The most desired seats are inside the bus-wreck (kerosene heaters there too) and possibly also the front room of the small minshuku-building next to the barracks. Most visitors have to contend with the row of barracks (expect a crowd of 30 persons or more inside). In this scenic valley and along the river you can also get close encounters with brown dipper. The Blakiston’s fish owl occurs at other sites in the Rausu-area, for instance along rivers and river-mouths or ponds stocked with fish and several hotels offer close encounters, e.g. the upmarket Daiichi lodge (pictures have to be taken through windows at several of these sites though). You will probably need local guidance to find them at other and more unspoilt sites in Hokkaido. They are often vocal (double ´bo-uhh´) and at Washi the one owl called each time before appearing at the fish pond in the middle of the river, but you need to be quiet and relatively close to hear it.

**Honshu**

Karuizawa lies roughly 1,5hrs from Tokyo with the shinkansen (i.e the bullet train). This is a leisure/skiing village on the slopes below snow clad Mt. Asama, dominated by cabins, large gardens, smaller areas of cultivated land and mostly deciduous forests. Down town there are two train stations, one for the shinkansen and one for the local train (Naka Karuizawa). Distances are not far here, and you might easily get around with a taxi or call/ask the lodge you are staying at if they offer a free shuttle service (walking from the Naka Karuizawa uphill to the better birding area is also an option). The forested hills around Hoshino onsen, known as the Yacho no mori - Wild Bird Forest, probably have some kind of protection regime (though very few old trees can be found) and logging is still an ongoing activity both inside and outside of what they called a protected area. If you drive, there are parking lots before Hoshino and at Hoshino onsen (payment fees applies). As you approach the entrance to the Hoshino onsen (situated immediately next to the road and there is a huge signboard by the main road), turn right here to leave the main road and press on past Hoshino onsen ca 500m until you reach signs for the wild Bird Park and 3 roads/paths at the same juncture. One path going to the ice rink just 50 m above to the right, the middle path is the best and then the third option is the logging road straight on. The path should take you 3 hours walking and chances of good birds like varied tits and Ural owl, and Japanese giant flying squirrels. Many roads into the area with cabins and cultivated plots to the left across the street from the Hoshino onsen were also productive. These areas can be covered by driving around and stopping here and there. We had species like long-billed plover, green pheasant, pallas
rosefinch, Japanese grosbeak, Japanese accentor from the roads. The entrance road and the area around Hoshino onsen is also very productive with birds, like rustic bunting, varied tit, Japanese hawfinch, Japanese pygmy woodpecker, grey-headed greenfinch, meadow bunting, long-tailed tits, Japanese tits, nuthatch, willow tit, Japanese green woodpecker, brown dipper, wren and flocks of dusky thrush. Hoshino onsen also cater for a bird feeding table worthy of a check. So give this stretch ample time and very early morning from sunrise, importantly before the crowds appear. Both inside the forest along the bird park path (or the logging road) or other open sites, the prize bird is copper pheasant. The pheasant is not easy to locate and therefore be continuously alert and scan all slopes and gullies, preferably at a distance. We had three coppers together.

South of Karuizawa there are also lots of cabins, large gardens and small artificial ponds and rice paddies with spot-billed ducks, great egrets, blue-winged magpie, meadow bunting, dusky thrushes and we also had Japanese waxwing there. No Lathams snipe though.

Japanese snow monkeys can be seen at Jigokudani (literally ‘Hell Valley’) up in the hills above Nagano. The journey from Nagano to Yamanouchi-village takes roughly 1 hour by the local snow monkey train. Then the last leg to Jigokudani (i.e. the entrance gate to the monkeys), is from the train station by bus-shuttle. The monkeys are fed and therefore remain in the area to the entertainment of huge numbers of daily visitors. This area can be covered as a day trip from Tokyo (incl by public transport). Few other birds of interest seem to occur in the forested reserve for the monkeys.
Joetsu (with Naoetsu harbor) and the coastline. South of Joetsu there are fishing ports with hundreds of black-tailed gulls, and on the outside of the harbor piers you can see thousands of mallards, scaups, pochards, grebes and the odd falcated duck. On the sea there are lots of divers, mostly red-throated, but also the odd yellow-billed diver along with many crested grebes and spectacled guillemots. Ancient auklet was seen inside the Noetsu harbor and this area with channels around the ferry port was quite productive, including a falcated duck. The site was easily accessible with few access restrictions and many locals fishing from the piers. The ferry trip to Sado was less productive than expected, except the odd Kittiwake. Ogi harbor had quite a few black-necked grebes.
Sado island

This biodiversity rich island is most famed for the work on saving the crested ibis, the toki. When artificial breeding started from late 1990ies the world population was 6 birds in Japan (5 on Sado) and 7 in China. Today there are 290 birds on Sado and two other back-up sites in Honshu, and ca 1000 in China. The main sites for crested ibis on Sado are the rice fields between Yashii and Sadoshi to the NE of road no 81. During our visit the ibises were easy to locate with either white juveniles or the grey plumaged adults and the salmon red sheen for both when flying. Early morning they left the roosts from pockets of trees among the paddy fields near the Toki forest park (Toki no mori), a visitor center with breeding aviaries (this was where the first captive breeding started). Most birds were seen close to this center in smaller fields along forest edges and not on the more open and wide stretching paddy fields. Probably because there were more prey to be found there.

The Kamoko brackish lagoon near the ferry harbor of Ryotsu was packed with thousands of greater white-fronts, ducks, swans and grebes (incl. black-necked grebes). A lone bull-headed shrike was also seen nearby.
Japanese Pygmy Woodpecker. A widespread and common species. This one was photographed near Karuizawa.

**Tokyo**

The Tokyo Port Wild Bird Park, run by the Wild Bird Society of Japan (WBSJ) and visitor center lies very near Haneda Airport. A normal bird list for a couple of hours in February will contain around 30-35 species, including several easily seen Japanese bush-warblers, Japanese white-eyes and Daurian redstarts. Their web pages has a daily list of recorded species and you can check the log on specific dates years back. In Tokyo city proper, we can recommend Shinobazu-no ike lake in the Ueno park, with its lotus swamps and hundreds of ducks (mostly pintail, shoveler, scaup and tufted ducks), black-headed gulls, slaty-backed gulls, Vega gulls and black-tailed gulls, little egret, great egret, kingfishers and a breeding colony of greater cormorants (50 nests). The other park of Meiji Jingu was a bit crowded when we arrived at 8AM, but the interesting forest produced a few species like a pale thrush, a red-flanked bluetail and many dusky thrush, but no mandarin ducks in the ponds. Meiji should be visited for birds as soon as they open in the morning (ca 5.30AM, check the web) due to the crowds. Unfortunately strong winds and rain started as we approached the Imperial palace moats and we had to find shelter instead.
Weather
All of Hokkaido was more or less snow covered. At most fields there were only a thin layer of snow and all roads were usually without snow. Beautiful weather and cloud free skies also meant low night temperatures, with an average of -10 early mornings (but quite often around -15). However, soon after sunrise the temperatures would quickly rise and daytime temperatures would normally be around zero or +5 to +10. Proper winter boots is probably the most important gear to bring. Several layers of warm clothes and/or down jackets/trousers can also come in handy on those cold mornings. A termos flask for warm drinks are also useful for morning waits. On Honshu the temperatures was as expected much higher with up to +18 in Tokyo, with ca +10 in the mornings. On higher grounds in Karuizawa snow was evident again and temperatures were ca 0 during nights and +10 during the days, and we had snowfall covering the ground during the night (melted during the day). On the coast around Joetsu, Niigata and Sado temperatures was on the rise with +10-15 during the day, but still 0 at night. In Tokyo some cherries just started to blossom, but the main period will be a few weeks later from end of March.
Accommodation

Most of our lodgings included breakfast and dinner. Very traditional, plentiful and very tasty and lunch was never necessary for us (neither did we have time to spare). Compared to western prices both accommodation and food were reasonably priced. Small and local minshukus, onsens and ryokans are a bargain and opting for local and small accommodation is therefore recommended. It is a bonus that these often have gardens with bird feeders. Some lodgings have their own web pages with English information, while some need to be called on from back home. Booking ahead can be essential as space can be limited at the smaller accommodations and the interest to visit Hokkaido during winter is high. Average prices for traditional accommodation was around 80 euros (or lower) for two with breakfast and dinner. If you have the possibility, do try to call on each accommodation the day before your arrival, seemingly something they appreciate.

For correct information, assistance with booking (e.g. if seemingly full or for advice on availability in the neighborhood) I recommend to use the accommodations own web pages rather than the international hotel web pages for booking.
The following were our accommodations:

**Tsurui:** Heart’n Tree on the hills just outside of the Tsurui village. Basic room, including breakfast and dinner, but rich and traditional food. Here is your chance for Japanese cooking lessons too. English web pages for bookings.

**Furen-ko:** Furen-so lodge guesthouse. Lone house, surrounded by forests, near the lake and a couple of km from the visitor center. Japanese style home, including rich breakfast and dinner. Preferable to call to make a reservation.

**Rausu:** Washi no Yado. They have several options. Basic rooms, including simple breakfast, however the dinner was lively, rich and traditional. English web info and bookings possible. Do call if seemingly full or to arrange only to wait for the fish owl without booking a room and/or having a meal.

**Karui:zawa:** Ikoi Sanso Onsen a Japanese style inn. Included traditional rich breakfast and dinner, very friendly. Nice traditional hot bath. Near entrance to Hoshino onsen a km up the road. English web pages for bookings. They offer free shuttle pick up to and from the city center and to Hoshino onsen upon request.

**Yamanouchi:** Koishya Ryokan, less traditional on food, but Japanese style rooms and traditional hot bath. A la carte dinner (not very interesting, i.e. could have been much better) and basic breakfast which was ok and western style. Dinner and breakfast will cost you extra. English web pages for bookings. Phone number does not match the address (if you use the tel no for your car’ sat nav).

**Sado:** Karl Bengs Kominka Minshuki close to the Toki centre. This place was overpriced, rich breakfast included though. English web pages for bookings. The lodge was hopeless to locate, so had to call to find it. Basic accommodation can also be had by contacting the Ibis visitor center.

Finding the accommodations. At the site they were usually found by using the car navigation system and usually by using their telephone numbers. Beware, sometimes telephone numbers do not guide you to the right address. Therefore we sometimes used the mobile GPS/google maps print outs as a back up.

**Cash**

Most shops, petrol stations, hotels, metro etc now accept cards, so no need any more to stock up with cash. ATMs taking western cards are found at post offices and 7-11 convenience stores (there are many 7-11s). ATMs are also found at Haneda and Narita airports. Beware that many other ATMs only accept Japanese bank cards. Some cash will come in handy as the smaller lodgings often only accept cash.

**Car rental/maps:**

Renting a car in Japan is very affordable and for the visiting birdwatcher the only sensible option. We combined travel out of Tokyo with a Japan Rail pass and picked up our car next to Karuizawa station and handed it in at Niigata before taking the train back to Tokyo.

Kushiro Airport: Toyota rent a car was very good and we were shuttled to their office close by. The Toyota English speaking sat nav was very good and relatively easy to use. Toyota offered to fill the tank from their own petrol station upon return with the normal rate for
petrol (ie quite handy as you do not need to fill beforehand and the cost was the normal petrol station rate).

Karuizawa: Nissan rent a car next to the train station and the return in Niigata was easy (also located by the train station). The sat nav of this car was not good (could not turn it off before you actually reached the destination, so had to turn down the volume), with less info in English and the local names were always pronounced with a Japanese voice (shifted between an English voice for directions and a Japanese one for local names, very odd). At this location it was important to fill up the tank before handing in the car and to show the receipt.

Cars must be booked in advance and you must check beforehand on what requirements there are concerning your driving licence. I had to bring an international licence. Roads are generally excellent everywhere, as are road signs which generally include English subtexts and most roads are numbered. An English road atlas for Japan is not widely available and after a thorough search by Japanese friends the best they found was one by the publisher Shobunsha (2005) with a general scale of 1:250,000, but only 1:600,000 for Hokkaido. Not ideal for knowing exactly where you are in Hokkaido, but somewhat handy for the planning ahead and getting to grips with choosing a route. Google maps on your mobile phone and print outs from the web with pinpoint details are a better option for finding your way.

Bird list (ca 130 species) Japan 23.2-5.3.2018 (list as recorded on my mobile)

23.2.2018
Tokyo port wild bird park + environs: Grey heron 8, great egret 1, Large-billed crow 10+, mallard 20+, great cormorant 20+, white-cheeked starling 100+, common reed bunting 2, Japanese white-eye 10, black-faced bunting 4, Japanese tit 10, tufted duck 4, scaup 10, little grebe 10, grey heron, 8, Daurian redstart 2, Japanese wagtail 4, Japanese bush-warbler 10, dusky thrush 4, Eurasian coot 30, oriental turtle-dove orientalis 10, common buzzard 4, common moorhen 1, brown-eared bulbul 10+, buff-bellied pipit 1, common pochard 50, eastern spot-billed duck 2, black-headed gull 21, black-eared kite 2, grey-capped greenfinch 10, Herring/Vega gull 10+, Eurasian tree sparrow 20+.

24.2.2018
Tsurui/Otowa-bridge: Red-crowned crane 500+, common goldeneye 4, common merganser 1, white wagtail 6, large-billed crow 20+, short-eared owl 1, great-spotted woodpecker 1, whooper swan 9, white-tailed eagle 1, steller’s sea-eagle 2.

Tsurui village: Eurasian jay japonicus 2, Eurasian tree sparrow 2, great spotted woodpecker 1, Japanese tit 1, marsh tit 1, white wagtail lugens/Japanese wagtail 1, Eurasian nuthatch 1, black-eared kite 1, Japanese grosbeak 1.
Akkeshi: Whooper swan 1000+, greater scaup 500+, common goldeneye 500+, red-breasted merganser 20+, black scoter 200+, steller’s sea-eagle 1, white-tailed eagle 1, slaty-backed gull 200, glaucous gull 1, black-headed gull 100+, Vega gull 50, glaucous-winged gull 1, common merganser 50+.

Kiritappu: Thick-billed murre 1, harlequin duck 20+, glaucous-winged gull 1, slaty-backed gull 20+, pelagic cormorant 10+, red-faced cormorant 2, short-eared owl 1, horned grebe 1, spectacled guillemot 10, red-necked grebe 1, glaucous gull 1, dusky thrush 3, Eurasian wigeon 14, mallard 4, slaty-backed gull 50+, common/Kamchatka gull 20, greater scaup 50+, black scoter 100+, common merganser 10+, red-breasted merganser 2, northern shoveler 2, northern pintail 3, Great cormorant 10+.

25.2.2018
Furen-ko: Thick-billed crow 10+, Marsh tit 10, Eurasian bullfinch griseiventris 4, great spotted woodpecker 12, Eurasian treecreeper 1, Eurasian nuthatch 5, hazel hen 1, coal tit 12, goldcrest 2, Japanese tit 4, Eurasian jay japonicus 4, northern goshawk 1, Eurasian tree sparrow 3, brown-eared bulbul 2, Blakiston’s fish owl 2, steller’s sea-eagle 25+, white-tailed eagle 30+.

Ochiishi and Nature Boat Cruise: Brent goose 1, Japanese wagtail 2, white-winged scoter stenegeri 5, ancient murrelet 10+, least auklet 30+, crested auklet 20+, pigeon guillemot 8, spectacled guillemot 50+, long-billed murrelet 1, common/Brünnich’s guillemots 2, red-necked grebe 2, harlequin duck 50+, black scoter 100+, red-breasted merganser 20+, long-tailed duck 30+, peregrine falcon japonensis 1, common buzzard 1, greater scaup 30+, red-throated loon 1, black-throated loon 1, Asian rosy finch 60.

Nosappu: Pigeon guillemot 10+, spectacled guillemot 50+, least auklet 10, pelagic cormorant 50+, harlequin duck 300+, black scoter 50, horned grebe 1, slaty-backed gull 50+, glaucous gull 20+, glaucous-winged gull 2.

River mouth of Onneto lake (Furen-ko area): northern pintail 8, falcated duck 10, common/Kamchatka gull 30+, glaucous gull 25+, red-crowned crane 6, steller’s sea-eagle 20+, white-tailed eagle 20+, common merganser 100+, common goldeneye 200+, mallard 20+, whooper swan 300, slaty-backed gull 20+, Herring/Vega gull 10+, spectacled guillemot 10.

26.2.2018
Furen-ko: White-backed woodpecker 1.

Along the coast to Notsuke peninsula: Glaucous gull 200+, glaucous winged gull 10, Eurasian teal 4, northern pintail 6, Eurasian wigeon 5, mallard 30, whooper swan 100, glaucous-winged gull 3, red-breasted merganser 200+, common merganser 100+, black scoter 1500, common goldeneye 300, white-winged scoter stenegeri 2.

Rausu and environs: Brown dipper 2, herring/Vega gull 5, steller’s sea-eagle 30+, glaucous gull 100+, slaty-backed gull 300+, white wagtail 2, harlequin duck 50+, greater scaup 20+, glaucous-winged gull 10+, white-tailed eagle 10+.
27.2.2018
Rausu: Blakiston’s fish owl 1, brown dipper 3, steller’s sea-eagle 300+, white-tailed eagle 50+, harlequin duck 30+, red-breasted merganser 2, glaucous-winged gull 4, slaty-backed gull 50, herring/Vega gull 10+, Eurasian tree-sparrow 3.

Shiretoko boat cruise to drift ice (Shiretoko cruise): Steller’s sea-eagle 500, white-tailed eagle 150+, herring/Vega gull 6, glaucous-winged gull 4, slaty-backed gull 50, common/Kamchatka gull 10, glaucous gull 4, large-billed crow 10+, crested auklet 4, common/Brünnich’s guillemot 6, pelagic cormorant 4.

28.2.2018
Otowa bridge area: Smew 1.
Tsurui, a feeding table: brown-eared bulbul 1, Eurasian jay japonicus 1, Eurasian tree sparrow 7, Eurasian nuthatch 2, Japanese tit 2, marsh tit 4. Common crane 1 among the red-necked cranes at Ito, Ural owl japonica 1, red-necked crane 500+.

1.3.2018
Karuizawa and Yacho no mori (Wild Bird Forest): Grey heron 1, large-billed crow 10+, Japanese hawfinch 2, long-tailed tit 10, rustic bunting 1, Brambling 4, dusky thrush 20+, Japanese tit 10, Eurasian jay japonicus 2, Japanese pygmy-woodpecker 3, Ural owl hondoensis 1, Eurasian nuthatch 2, marsh tit 10, willow tit 2, great tit 2, varied tit 1, copper pheasant 3, brown dipper 6, grey-capped greenfinch 1. Ponds to the south of Karuizawa: eastern spot-billed duck 50+, tufted duck 10+, pintail 4, Eurasian lapwing 2, great cormorant 2, meadow bunting 4, dusky thrush 10, great egret 1.

2.3.2018
Karuizawa: Long-billed plover 1, rustic bunting 10+, Japanese accentor 1, green pheasant 2, Japanese green woodpecker 2, meadow bunting 2, Eurasian wren 1, varied tit 4, coal tit 2, grey-capped greenfinch 3, oriental turtle dove orientalis 1, blue-winged magpie 2, Japanese tit 4, willow tit 2, Japanese grosbeak 4, brown dipper 2.

Along the road between Karuizawa-Nagano-Yamanouchi: Japanese waxwing 2, white-cheeked starling 20+, blue-winged magpie 1, thick-billed crow 10+.

3.3.2018
Joetsu and 30km south along the coast: great egret , black-tailed gull 700+, slaty-backed gull 50+, Japanese wagtail 2, great crested grebe 10, great cormorant 15, black-throated loon 4, yellow-billed loon 1, red-throated loon 15+, black-eared kite 50, falcated duck 1, Eurasian wigeon 12, eastern spot-billed duck 200+, ancient murrelet 1, spectacled guillemot 2, little grebe 1, mallard 2000, grey heron 5, herring/Vega gull 1. Ferry crossing to Sado from Naoetsu: black-legged kittiwake 1, ancient murrelet 10. Ogi port at Sado: Black-necked grebe 10+, eastern spot-billed duck 200+, mallard 100+, Herring/Vega gull 30, great cormorant 100+, Eurasian wigeon 100+, white-winged scoter stejnegeri 3, grey heron 3, meadow bunting 3.
Sado/Yashii: The first crested ibis’ (young white birds) in flight near Sadoshi to a roost in the evening.

4.3.2018
Sado: thick-billed crow 10+, crested ibis 20+ (adults and young birds), bull-headed shrike 1, great egret 4, meadow bunting 4, Japanese hawfinch 2.


Tokyo. Meiji park: Common kingfisher 1, large-billed crow 20+, Japanese hawfinch 1, pale thrush 1, red-flanked bluetail 1, dusky thrush 20+, grey-capped greenfinch 4, oriental turtle dove orientalis 8. Shinobazu-no ike lake in Ueno park: Northern pintail 50+, common kingfisher 2, Eurasian coot 30, tufted duck 200, eastern spot-billed duck 1, white wagtail 1, black-headed gull 100, black-tailed gull 10, herring/Vega gull 8, little grebe 1, great cormorant 100+, common pochard 10, little egret 1, white-cheeked starling 30+, great egret 1, brown-eared bulbul 30, large-billed crow 10+.

Ural Owl was recorded both at Hokkaido and Honshu. This one was photographed near Tsurui.
Mammals
Tsurui:
Ezo red fox 2 (*Vulpes vulpes schrencki*)
A mouse (*Microtus* spp)
Sika deer 20+ (*Cervus nippon*)
Siberian flying squirrel 1 (*Pteromys volans*)
Kiritappu:
Ezo red fox 2 (*Vulpes vulpes schrencki*)
Spotted seal 4 (*Phoca larga*)
Sea otter 2 (*Enhydra lutris*)
Sika deer 50 (*Cervus nippon*)
Furen-ko:
Sika deer 100 (*Cervus nippon*)
Red squirrel 2 (*Sciurus vulgaris orientis*)
Notsuke:
Ezo red fox (*Vulpes vulpes schrencki*)
Sika deer 100 (*Cervus nippon*)
Karuiwaza:
Japanese giant flying squirrel 2 (*Petaurista leucogenys*)
Jigokoudani
Japanese macaque 50 (*Macaca fuscata*)
Sado:
Japanese raccoon dog 1 (*Nyctereutes procyonoides viverrinus*)