



Sunrise Birding LLC



JAPAN

Feb 06 – Feb 16, 2020

TRIP REPORT



Photo: Group on the Notsuke Peninsular looking rather cold!

JAPAN - 2020

06th Feb – 16th Feb 2020

HIGHLIGHTS

Either for rarity value, excellent views or simply a group favourite.

- Steller's Sea Eagle
- Blakiston's Fish Owl
- Red-crowned Crane
- Japanese Murrelet
- Asian Rosy Finch
- Japanese Waxwing
- Ural Owl
- Chinese Penduline Tit
- Grey-headed Woodpecker
- Hooded Crane
- Harlequin Duck
- Spectacled Murrelet
- Common Crane
- Long-billed Plover
- Chestnut-eared Bunting
- Ruddy-breasted Crake
- Snow Bunting
- White-tailed Eagle
- Baikal Teal
- Saunders's Gull
- Black-faced Spoonbill
- Crested Kingfisher
- White-naped Crane
- Falcated Duck
- White-backed Woodpecker
- Demoiselle Crane
- Ancient Murrelet
- J. Pygmy Woodpecker
- Varied Tit
- Sandhill Crane
- Smew
- Stejneger's Scoter
- Thayer's Gull
- Grey Bunting
- Pigeon Guillemot
- Japanese Green Woodpecker
- Daurian Jackdaw
- Warbling White-Eye
- Dusky Thrushes
- Red-flanked Bluetail
- Japanese Grosbeak
- Brown Dipper
- Russet Sparrow
- Grey-bellied Bullfinch
- Japanese Macaque
- Siberian Weasel
- Serow
- Red Fox
- Spotted Seal
- Sea Otter
- Sika Deer

SUMMARY:

Japan in winter is a magical destination with many wildlife and nature experiences you only dream about. Our 2020 tour featured up to 15,000 Cranes which for us comprised 5 species including a rare Demoiselle. Then there was the Attenborough's famous "Snow Monkeys" bathing in the hot thermal pools surrounded by snow. A gorgeous Ural Owl catching the morning rays and the world's largest owl, the impressive Blakiston's Fish Owl seen on both evenings before 6.00pm. Our very short boat trip into Hyuga Harbor was an experience never to be forgotten as we had super close views of Japanese Murrelet swimming and then diving just under the water surface as they chased small fish around. We even heard them calling to each other since they were so close and the conditions were perfectly calm and sunny. And to top it off, the "dancing" Red-crowned Cranes in a snowy setting gave an amazing show. The trip concluded at Rausu, where there was no ice in the bay when we arrived, but the next morning the ice-pack had appeared making for one of nature's all-time best experiences. We sailed for 20 minutes to the edge of the ice and here we were confronted by 300 eagles, with slightly more Steller's Sea Eagles than White-tailed Eagles all sat around on the ice, and then flying back and forth as the boatmen threw fish out to them. It was nothing short of mind-blowing with so many majestic eagles all around us. The people of Japan are so nice and friendly; they take pride in their country and what they do. We had many wonderful meals, stayed in some very unique places and saw incredible wildlife. What more can you say except Sunrise Birding can't wait to return in February 2021 and also add our new Spring Japan Tour!



Tokyo - Nagano - 06th Feb

With everyone arriving a day or so before, we were all eager to go straight after breakfast today. A ride through Tokyo took us to the central train station where we then caught the Bullet Train to Karuizawa. Here after a bit of trouble with our minibuses, we set off towards Yudanaka. A lunch break in a small park in Karuizawa we found a couple of White Wagtails of the race commonly known as “Black-backed Wagtail” and in a small patch of trees we saw Brown-eared Bulbul, a Eurasian Jay of the endemic subspecies “*japonicus*”, a brief Japanese Tit and then a fabulous group of 10 **Japanese Waxwings**, a bird that does not breed in Japan and shows up in varying numbers from year to year in winter. It was a great start as this bird can easily be missed and we got great views of it on our first stop. From here we visited a pond that held a few delightful Smew, plus a variety of other ducks including Common Pochard, Eurasian Teal, Northern Pintail, Eastern Spot-billed Duck, a Great Crested Grebe, and even a Bull-headed Shrike. It was decidedly cold so we continued on to Yudanaka our stop for tonight.



Snow Monkeys - Karuizawa - 07th Feb

This morning we awoke to a clear blue sky over freshly snow-covered mountains. After our breakfast we set off on the short journey to the Jigokudani Snow Monkey Park. We walked a woodland trail for about a mile to reach the hot thermal pools where the **Snow Monkeys** hang out. Correctly named Japanese Macaques, these monkeys can be seen soaking in the thermal hot pools and playing around the hills and stream. We enjoyed watching the many antics of these famous animals and of course got plenty of chances to take photos. After about an hour with the monkeys, we returned along the track seeing some Sika Deer on the hillside and then a couple of Eurasian Jays. Back near the car park and after a cup of hot chocolate we found some Large-billed Crows and in a nearby tree we watched a bunch of Coal Tits and a couple of Willow Tits. We returned to the hotel where we packed our bags and set off back towards Karuizawa. A stop at the pond we visited yesterday saw a few more birds present including about 8 Smew, lots of other ducks including single Gadwall and Common Goldeneye, as well as several Common Mergansers. In the trees and bushes were Dusky Thrush, Bull-headed Shrikes, a flock of 25 Rustic Buntings, Meadow Buntings and Black-faced Buntings of the subspecies *personata* which is sometimes split as “Masked Bunting”. Eventually we arrived at our very pleasant hotel just before dusk.



Karuizawa - 08th Feb

This morning before breakfast we had two different activities going on. The early group were up and set off to drive a winding mountain road in search of the very elusive Copper Pheasant. The other half of our group had a more leisurely start watching the hotel bird feeders with some hot coffee in hand. The first group slowly travelled the mountain road trying to spot a brown bird amongst millions of brown

leaves on the ground, a daunting task. A nice find in the freezing conditions was a **Japanese Serow**, an endemic ungulate that looks a little odd to say the least. We also found a few Grey-capped



Greenfinches, Japanese Pygmy Woodpecker and some Varied Tits. Pretty much as expected, the elusive Copper Pheasant was not seen, and it rarely is but you have to give it a shot. Those back at the hotel feeders enjoyed a frenzy of activity with Varied, Japanese, Willow, Coal and Long-tailed Tits, plus Eurasian Nuthatch, Japanese Pygmy Woodpeckers, Dusky Thrush and a Pale Thrush, even a Japanese Squirrel. After a 5 course breakfast, we then set off for the nearby park. A walk along the side of a wooded stream produced several Eurasian Jays plus Dusky Thrush and a showy female **Red-flanked Bluetail**. Further on in the park we found two Brown Dippers plus Japanese Green Woodpeckers, some more Japanese Waxwings and in the low undergrowth we spotted a Eurasian Wren, male Meadow

Bunting, and a very smart looking male Red-flanked Bluetail. It was now near lunchtime so we headed out and got our supplies and then drove back to the hotel to eat, while watching the feeders.

After a bit of a break we then went back out and tried a short track that went through a nice forest. It was exceptionally quiet but as we returned to the bus we saw two Japanese Wagtails and another Dusky Thrush on the edge of a small pond. We then checked out the local park again seeing the two Dippers, plenty of tits including Long-tailed and Willow Tits. Another Japanese Green Woodpecker was found and a Black Kite flew overhead. We decided to return to the hotel along a short-cut, where earlier in the day two of our group got superb views of a Japanese Grosbeak.



Karuizawa - Tokyo - Kagomshima - 09th Feb

This morning was our second early morning drive up to the winding mountain road. It had snowed during the night and all the roads were white, allowing us to see many small mammal footprints. We soon found a pair of Japanese Serow, followed by some Sika Deer and then a very obliging **Red Fox**. Amongst the few birds that were moving we found a White-backed Woodpecker and three Grey-bellied Bullfinches. We then returned to the hotel for breakfast where some of our group had been busy watching the feeders seeing many of the now regular species plus perched Eurasian Jay, Oriental Turtle Doves and some of the group got a single Brambling. With breakfast over we then made our way to the train station to get the Bullet Train back to Tokyo. The rest of our day was a travelling day and after an afternoon flight to Kagoshima on Kyushu, we then drove to the coastal town of Hyuga ready for the next part of our exciting tour.



Hyuga - Arasaki - 10th Feb

Today after our breakfast we drove the short distance to the fishing harbor where we boarded our boat for the short pelagic into the bay. We soon found plenty of Vega Gulls, plus a Slaty-backed Gull and some Black-tailed Gulls. On a small platform Grey Heron, Little Egret and lots of Great Cormorants of the *sinensis* race were seen and then as we got further out into the harbour, a Western Osprey was seen carrying a fish.

The boat slowly searched the waters just a short distance out of harbor and we all strained our eyes looking for any small black-and-white bird on the water. After half an hour we started to get very anxious until Sonja spotted our target bird, a pair of **Japanese Murrelets**. We manoeuvred closer and closer to these superb birds in their breeding plumage and watched as they chased fish and even called to each other, a fantastic spectacle of this mega bird!



After watching three birds very close

and getting photos we made our way back and found another two Murrelets almost in the harbor. Back



on shore we were treated to some hot tea and presents by the boat operator before setting off to a nearby headland. Once here we saw Daurian Redstart, a pair of Peregrine Falcons and a Dusky Thrush. A Japanese Bush Warbler called but was only briefly seen by two people. Moving on we collected our lunch and headed to a small pond where in the surrounding fields we spotted **Dusky Thrushes**, Grey Wagtail, and some Barn Swallows. Overlooking the pond we had to sift through hundreds of Mallard and Common Pochard to find Northern Shoveler, Tufted Ducks, a couple of Smew and Eurasian Teal, plus Great Crested and Little Grebes. A Ryuku Minivet was seen by a few as it perched high in a tree and groups of fly-over Japanese Grosbeaks ended up with one bird perched on a tree top for everyone to see well in the scopes. Warbling White-Eyes were also seen and as we left we added a Common Kestrel and Eastern Buzzard.

We then continued our journey towards Arasaki. A stop was made by the river bridge at Izu when Gina spotted a superb Crested Kingfisher sat on a wire. We all got out of the vans and also found a couple of Long-billed Plovers, Common Sandpipers, Japanese Wagtails, more Little Grebes and some Bull-headed Shrikes. It was time to continue the last section of our journey where we arrived in the dark at the famous Crane Centre our accommodation for the next 3 nights.

Arasaki - Gumizakicho- 11th Feb

This morning we woke before dawn to the sound of thousands of cranes surrounding our accommodation. We took a pre-breakfast drive just a short distance to the fields where countless thousands of Hooded Cranes were being joined by hundreds of **White-naped Cranes**.

As the sun came up more and more cranes arrived, it was a true spectacle. Black Kites also flew around as did big flocks of Northern Pintail. Nearby on a small pool we found two Black-faced Spoonbills



alongside about 5 Eurasian Spoonbills. There were Common Shelducks and a few Northern Lapwings and amongst the smaller birds we got good views of Eurasian Skylarks of the subspecies *japonica* which are often referred to as Japanese Skylarks. There were also Buff-bellied Pipits and the odd Red-throated Pipit, plus Dusky Thrushes were all over the place and then we managed to spot four Sandhill Cranes among the throngs of other cranes. On a distant sea wall two Northern Goshawks perched while around us were *orientalis* Carrion Crows, a potential split as Oriental Crow, and also comparisons with Large-billed Crows.

It was time to head back for breakfast after which we had a bit of time around the crane center to scope the many cranes and take photographs. A Common Crane was spotted in amongst the throngs of Hooded and White-naped Cranes and after an enjoyable time here we set off in the buses to explore the many fields. We found Black-faced and Meadow Buntings, Dusky Thrushes and a flock of over

100 Grey-capped Greenfinches. In the reed beds we found the first of about 10 Chinese Penduline Tits. We then moved on and after picking up our lunch we drove the coastal road where a stop produced both Japanese and Pelagic Cormorants on a rock and far out at sea several Brown Boobies.

Continuing on to an area of reeds and a forest trail we soon found many Common Reed Buntings, plus Warbling White-eyes, and few Pale Thrushes and Bull-headed Shrikes. The forest was rather quiet but we did manage to see a White-bellied Green Pigeon and some Ryuku Minivets. A Ruddy-breasted Crake was only seen by Sonja while Black-faced Buntings stayed hidden and finally on our way back a female Grey Bunting one of our target birds was spotted.



We then drove back to our accommodation at the crane center, reviewed the checklist and enjoyed another amazing dinner prepared by the lovely ladies at the center.

Arasaki - 12th Feb

This morning we did our regular morning run around the crane fields but it was raining and much duller than yesterday so we didn't spend too long before returning for breakfast. The Hooded, White-naped and Common Cranes were spotted and then as we neared our accommodation we looked through hundreds of Eastern Rooks race *pastinator*, until we found a couple of **Daurian Jackdaws**, which included a few all dark juveniles and two superb adult black-and-white birds.



After breakfast we made another quick check of the fields before setting off to our first stop at Yatsushiro. From the sea wall we tucked into our lunch and also scoped the estuary which had a small island with roosting Black-faced Spoonbills, Grey Herons, and one Vega Gull of the subspecies *mongolicus* (Mongolian Gull). In the calm receding waters were Red-breasted Mergansers, Great Crested Grebe, many Eurasian Teal and Eurasian Wigeon, plus Eastern Spot-billed Ducks. Western Ospreys were not uncommon

and a few Black-tailed Gulls of varying ages were noted.

We then moved on and drove to another area of estuary at Uki where we looked over another sea wall. Here we were treated to fabulous views of many Saunders's Gulls, and amongst the numerous ducks we got to see a nice drake Baikal Teal, and many groups of fancy Falcated Ducks. There were also flocks of Grey Plovers flying by, and we found Dunlin, Common Greenshanks, and a Kentish Plover. We moved along the sea wall a bit and got even better views of the **Saunders's Gulls**, a Common Kingfisher was seen briefly by a couple of people and a lone Lesser Black-backed Gull *L. fuscus heuglini* (Hueglin's Gull), flew past. It was now getting dull and cloudy and the rain set in so we made our way slowly back to our accommodation just after dusk.



Arasaki - Satsuma - Tsurui 13th Feb



This morning went out early and searched the east fields of Arasaki. Our first stop however was just a hundred meters away when an adult Daurian Jackdaw was spotted perched on top of a telephone pole.

In the fields beside we saw a flock of Russet Sparrows, a Common Snipe and a Wood Sandpiper. Further on beside a small river we found a few Chinese Penduline Tits and eventually after a bit of a battle a Ruddy-breasted Crake came out into the open and showed itself, while in the same spot a Dusky Warbler was seen beside a Japanese Bush Warbler. We moved on to the crane feeding area and today all the cranes were spread out as far as you could see. We searched through the thousands of Hooded Cranes and hundreds of White-naped Cranes to find two Common Cranes and four Sandhill Cranes and then to everyone's delight Maureen spotted the lone **Demoiselle Crane** that had been reported here. We got fabulous

views of this elegant looking crane and at one point if you stood in the right spot you could actually see 5 species of crane in one binocular view. Amazing!

We headed back to the accommodation for breakfast, packed our bags and said goodbye to the lovely ladies of Arasaki Crane Centre. We then drove to the town of Satsuma and stopped beside the river bridge. Here we found a raft of Tufted Ducks, plus Eurasian Teal, Common Sandpipers and in a weedy field we flushed three Common Snipe.

Down on the river were both Japanese and Black-backed Wagtails, and then we spotted a smart looking **Crested Kingfisher** on a wire over the river. On the rocks were three Long-billed Plovers and then a Common Kingfisher was found.



After this great stop we made our way to Kagoshima airport and our onward connecting flights to Kushiro.

Tsurui - Rausu - 14th Feb

This morning we set out early and headed for a nearby river bridge in time for dawn. As the daylight broke we could see about 40 **Red-crowned Cranes** in the far end of the river. As the sun came up the,

views got better and we noted a couple of Whooper Swans with them and Common Mergansers flying over. Several cranes eventually took off and flew towards us landing fairly close in the river. Marsh Tits were also spotted.



We then returned for breakfast packed our bags and headed out. Our first stop was on a small snow covered track into a forest where a big dead tree held a **Ural Owl** looking out of its hole and sunning itself. We moved on stopping for a flock of Siskins and another Marsh Tit.

Moving on we drove to the crane center where farmers put out food for the **Red-crowned Cranes** and where you get to see many cranes flying in and jumping up in their traditional dance. We spent a while here just

enjoying seeing these majestic birds. We then headed towards the coast collecting our lunch along the way. At the coast we were surprised that the fog had come in greatly hampering our viewing. We drove out along the Notsuke Peninsular and stopped when a Steller's Sea Eagle was spotted on a telephone pole. It soon flew off and was lost in the fog.



We continued on and when a break in the fog allowed us to view the sea a quick search soon found Spectacled Guillemots, some Ancient Murrelets, Black Scoter and both Glaucous and Slaty-backed Gulls. We then got great looks at many Sika Deer and a Red Fox.



Further on and a flock of **Asian Rosy Finches** flew past so we backed up got out and had fabulous looks at about 50 of these sought after birds. Moving on we stopped by the visitor's center and scanned the sea again seeing a couple of Larcha Seals. More scoters including several flyby Stejneger's Scoters, and lots of Glaucous Gulls were noted. We returned slowly as the sun set over the snow fields and our last stop of the day found 3 Snow Buntings feeding along the beach.



We then drove to Rausu and our accommodation beside a little snow covered stream. As we were getting our bags into our rooms a **Blakiston's Fish Owl** landed in a tree and then flew down to the stream where it eventually caught a fish and then flew off. It or its mate then flew in 15 minutes later, fished and flew off, what a great way to arrive and see this awesome owl. The previous days, the owl never came in until 3.30 am and

we had already seen it twice by 5.30pm.



Rausu - 15th Feb

This morning we woke early and Paul had already seen the Blakiston's Fish Owl arrive just before dawn. Out on the stream were a pair of Brown Dippers, and we watched both Steller's and White-tailed Eagles fly up the valley. We had no idea of the spectacle of eagles that was to come! After breakfast we headed down to the harbor and while waiting to board our boat we watched a few Kamchatka Gulls,



Glaucous and Slaty-backed Gulls. We boarded our boat and set off just 10 minutes sailing to get to the **pack ice** which had only arrived overnight! Fantastic!

A short journey on calm seas allowed us to spot a few Spectacled Guillemots, Harlequin Ducks and two Thick-billed Murres before arriving at the pack ice.

What happened over the next hour and a half was simply mind-blowing.

More than 300 eagles with

around 180 **Steller's Sea Eagles** and 120 **White tailed Eagles** were all around us sat on the ice and flying to and fro. Our boatmen set us just inside the ice and threw out a few fish which tempted many of the eagles to fly in to perform for all of the cameras. This spectacle was really hard to describe other

than overwhelmingly fantastic!



With hundreds of photos of eagles doing everything imaginable we diverted some of our attention to the gulls and in particular a nice adult Thayer's Gull. We also saw Glaucous and Glaucous-winged plus many Slaty-backed of varying ages. Reluctantly we returned to harbor seeing a few more Spectacled Guillemots and distant Ancient Murrelets. Back on shore we grabbed a hot coffee and drove north along the coastal road. Our first stop found a Red-necked Grebe and some Harlequin Ducks plus three relatively close Ancient Murrelets. Further along we found numerous Harlequin Ducks, Black Scoters, over 200 Kamchatka Gulls.

We then headed south and eventually checked a few harbors where we got close views of many Black Scoters, Harlequins, Common Mergansers, Scaup, and some amazingly close Long-tailed Ducks and Red-breasted Mergansers. We then returned towards our hotel stopping again along the coast for a couple of distant Stejneger's Scoters. Back at our hotel we sat down for dinner and of course as we are so lucky the Blakiston's Fish Owl came in and fished and then flew off. It came back again in about half an hour and sat in a tree for 20 minutes before flying up the valley.

Rausu - Cape Kiritappu - Tokyo 16th Feb

A leisurely breakfast this morning, had some people report seeing the Owl before dawn, and of course both eagle species flying up the valley. The **Brown Dipper** was again on the stream and Japanese Pygmy Woodpeckers and Marsh Tits were seen.



We packed our bags and said goodbye to this idyllic spot. As we were leaving town we spotted some close Whooper Swans on the river, so a quick stop here allowed us to get some lovely photos.

We then continued on making a short stop on the Notsuke Peninsular which was rather quiet for birds but this gave way to fantastic scenery of snow-capped mountains and the Russian Island of Kunashir. There were also lots of ice fishermen with their little tents set up on one of the frozen lakes. We continued on and made a roadside stop for closer views of several small

flocks of Stejneger's Scoters, and then at a comfort stop we spotted some Grey-bellied Bullfinches, Marsh Tits, Eurasian Nuthatch and a Goldcrest.

Our next stop beside a nature center found a couple of nice Eurasian Jays of the race *brandtii*. We continued on and headed towards Cape Kiritappu and as we drove the quiet back lanes we stopped for a pair of Red-crowned Cranes in a farm yard, and then a Grey-headed Woodpecker that landed on a telephone pole. A small tree held 7 Grey-bellied Bullfinches and we noted Black Kites, White-tailed Eagles and even a few Steller's Sea Eagles flying over.

We eventually arrived at the cape and walked towards the lighthouse. Scanning the sea with scopes in the bitter wind we found Spectacled Guillemots including one or two in full breeding plumage, Ancient Murrelet amongst the Harlequin Ducks and Black Scoters. Then we spotted Red-necked Grebe and some Red-throated Loons. Further out on the point we could see a Steller's Sea Eagle perched on top of a rock and below in the water were three Sea Otters playing in the surf.

Scanning the sea again we found Pigeon Guillemots, one Snowy Guillemot and two very tiny and difficult to see Least Auklets. We returned to the vehicles and set off towards the airport but not before a final stop when a flock of 120 Common Redpolls were seen feeding beside the road. We made it to the airport in perfect time for our flights which nearly got cancelled due to a forecast of snow. After a slight delay we caught our flight and headed back to Tokyo where our wonderful tour concluded.

BIRDLIST FOR JAPAN 2020

A = Number of species recorded on tour B = Number of days out of 12 recorded C = Highest daily count

H = Heard Only N/C = No Count C=Common

This list follows the IOC WORLD BIRD LIST v (10.1) and as such names may be different than some of the field guides and other taxonomy's – see additional notes appendix *

Subspecies if known are added in *Red*

A	SPECIES	SCIENTIFIC NAME	B	C
1	Whooper Swan	<i>Cygnus cygnus</i>	2	60
2	Brant Goose	<i>Branta bernicla nigricans</i>	1	2
3	Mandarin Duck	<i>Aix galericulata</i>	3	5
4	Long-tailed Duck	<i>Clangula hyemalis</i>	2	5+
5	Stejneger's Scoter	<i>Melanitta stejnegeri</i>	3	20+
6	Black Scoter	<i>Melanitta americana</i>	3	100+
7	Common Goldeneye	<i>Bucephala clangula clangula</i>	4	10
8	Smew	<i>Mergellus albellus</i>	4	18
9	Common Merganser	<i>Mergus merganser orientalis</i>	5	50
10	Red-breasted Merganser	<i>Mergus serrator</i>	4	30
11	Harlequin Duck	<i>Histrionicus histrionicus</i>	2	80
12	Common Shelduck	<i>Tadorna tadorna</i>	2	9
13	Common Pochard	<i>Aythya ferina</i>	4	150
14	Tufted Duck	<i>Aythya fuligula</i>	6	12
15	Greater Scaup	<i>Aythya marila nearctica</i>	2	8
16	Northern Shoveler	<i>Spatula clypeata</i>	2	12
17	Baikal Teal	<i>Sibirionetta formosa</i>	1	1
18	Eurasian Teal	<i>Anas crecca</i>	6	80
19	Falcated Duck	<i>Mareca falcata</i>	1	250
20	Gadwall	<i>Mareca strepera</i>	1	1
21	Eurasian Wigeon	<i>Mareca penelope</i>	7	20
22	Eastern Spot-billed Duck	<i>Anas zonorhyncha</i>	5	1000
23	Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos platyrhynchos</i>	8	200
24	Northern Pintail	<i>Anas acuta</i>	8	800
25	Copper Pheasant	<i>Syrnaticus soemmerringii</i>	1	Tracks
26	Green Pheasant	<i>Phasianus versicolor tohkaidi</i>	1	H
27	Red-throated Loon	<i>Gavia stellata</i>	1	3
28	Little Grebe	<i>Tachybaptus ruficollis poggei</i>	5	9
29	Red-necked Grebe	<i>Podiceps grisegena holbollii</i>	2	2
30	Great Crested Grebe	<i>Podiceps cristatus cristatus</i>	4	4
31	Black-necked Grebe	<i>Podiceps nigricollis nigricollis</i>	1	1
32	Black-faced Spoonbill	<i>Platalea minor</i>	3	10
33	Eurasian Spoonbill	<i>Platalea leucorodia leucorodia</i>	2	8
34	Grey Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea jouyi</i>	5	10
35	Great Egret *	<i>Ardea alba alba / modesta</i>	4	25
36	Little Egret	<i>Egretta garzetta garzetta</i>	3	20
37	Pacific Reef Heron	<i>Egretta sacra sacra</i>	1	1
38	Pelagic Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax pelagicus pelagicus</i>	4	200
39	Great Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo hanedae</i>	6	100
40	Japanese Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax capillatus</i>	1	11
41	Western Osprey	<i>Pandion haliaetus haliaetus</i>	4	20

42	Eurasian Sparrowhawk	<i>Accipiter nisus nisosimilis</i>	1	1
43	Northern Goshawk	<i>Accipiter gentilis fujiyamae</i>	2	4
44	Black Kite (Black-eared Kite)	<i>Milvus migrans lineatus</i>	11	35
45	White-tailed Eagle	<i>Haliaeetus albicilla albicilla</i>	3	200
46	Steller's Sea Eagle	<i>Haliaeetus pelagicus</i>	3	150
47	Eastern Buzzard	<i>Buteo japonicus japonicus</i>	6	2
48	Ruddy-breasted Crake	<i>Zapornia fusca erythrothorax</i>	2	1
49	Common Moorhen	<i>Gallinula chloropus chloropus</i>	3	2
50	Eurasian Coot	<i>Fulica atra atra</i>	7	6
51	White-naped Crane	<i>Antigone vipio</i>	3	200+
52	Red-crowned Crane	<i>Grus japonensis</i>	2	150
53	Common Crane	<i>Grus grus</i>	3	2
54	Hooded Crane	<i>Grus monacha</i>	3	8000+
55	Demoiselle Crane	<i>Grus virgo</i>	1	1
56	Sandhill Crane	<i>Antigone canadensis canadensis</i>	2	5
57	Grey Plover	<i>Pluvialis squatarola squatarola</i>	1	60
58	Long-billed Plover	<i>Charadrius placidus</i>	2	3
59	Kentish Plover	<i>Charadrius alexandrinus nihonensis</i>	1	3
60	Northern Lapwing	<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>	3	30
61	Dunlin	<i>Calidris alpina (sachalina or kistchinski)</i>	2	60
62	Common Snipe	<i>Gallinago gallinago gallinago</i>	3	3
63	Common Sandpiper	<i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>	6	3
64	Green Sandpiper	<i>Tringa ochropus</i>	2	2
65	Wood Sandpiper	<i>Tringa glareola</i>	1	1
66	Common Greenshank	<i>Tringa nebularia</i>	1	15
67	Black-headed Gull	<i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>	4	300
68	Saunders's Gull	<i>Saundersilarus saundersi</i>	1	230
69	Black-tailed Gull	<i>Larus crassirostris</i>	3	10
70	Mew Gull (Kamchatka) *	<i>Larus canus kamtschatschensis</i>	2	250
71	Vega Gull *	<i>Larus vegae vegae</i>	6	45
	Vega Gull (Mongolian Gull) *	<i>Larus vegae mongolicus</i>	1	1
72	Lesser Black-backed Gull *	<i>Larus fuscus heuglini / tamyrensis</i>	1	1
73	Slaty-backed Gull	<i>Larus schistisagus</i>	6	100+
74	Glaucous-winged Gull	<i>Larus glaucescens</i>	2	20+
75	Glaucous Gull *	<i>Larus hyperboreus</i>	4	40+
76	Iceland Gull *	<i>Larus glaucooides thayeri</i>	1	1
77	Thick-billed Murre	<i>Uria lomvia arra</i>	2	2
78	Pigeon Guillemot	<i>Cepphus columba columba</i>	1	2
79	Spectacled Guillemot	<i>Cepphus carbo</i>	3	20
80	Ancient Murrelet	<i>Synthliboramphus antiquus</i>	3	5
81	Japanese Murrelet	<i>Synthliboramphus wumizusume</i>	1	5
82	Least Auklet	<i>Aethia pusilla</i>	1	2
83	Rock Dove	<i>Columba livia</i>	8	N/C
84	Japanese Pigeon	<i>Columba janthina</i>	1	2
85	White-bellied Green Pigeon	<i>Treron seiboldii seiboldii</i>	1	1
86	Oriental Turtle Dove	<i>Streptopelia orientalis orientalis</i>	7	100
87	Ural Owl	<i>Strix uralensis japonica</i>	1	1
88	Blakiston's Eagle Owl	<i>Bubo blakistoni</i>	3	1

89	Long-eared / Short-eared Owl sp *	<i>Asio otus / Asio flammeus sp</i>	1	1
90	Common Kingfisher	<i>Alcedo atthis bengalensis</i>	1	1
91	Crested Kingfisher *	<i>Megaceryle lugubris pallida/ lugubris</i>	3	1
92	Japanese Pygmy Woodpecker *	<i>Dendrocopos kizuki *</i>	5	6
93	Great Spotted Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos major japonicus</i>	3	3
94	White-backed Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos leucotos namiyei</i>	1	1
95	Japanese Green Woodpecker	<i>Picus awokera awokera</i>	1	3
96	Grey-headed Woodpecker	<i>Picus canus jessoensis</i>	1	1
97	Common Kestrel	<i>Falco tinnunculus interstinctus</i>	3	2
98	Peregrine Falcon	<i>Falco peregrinus japonensis</i>	1	2
99	Ryukyu Minivet	<i>Pericrocotus tegimae</i>	2	6
100	Bull-headed Shrike	<i>Lanius bucephalus bucephalus</i>	5	3
101	Eurasian Jay *	<i>Garrulus glandarius japonicus / brandtii</i>	6	3
102	Daurian Jackdaw	<i>Corvus dauuricus</i>	2	5
103	Rook *	<i>Corvus frugilegus pastinator</i>	3	500
104	Northern Raven	<i>Corvus corax kamtschaticus</i>	1	2
105	Carrion Crow *	<i>Corvus corone orientalis</i>	9	100+
106	Large-billed Crow	<i>Corvus macrorhynchos japonensis</i>	11	C
107	Japanese Waxwing *	<i>Bombycilla japonica</i>	2	10+
108	Coal Tit	<i>Periparus ater insularis</i>	3	10
109	Varied Tit	<i>Sittiparus varius varius</i>	4	10
110	Marsh Tit	<i>Poecile palustris hensoni</i>	3	6
111	Willow Tit	<i>Poecile montanus restrictus</i>	3	4
112	Japanese Tit	<i>Parus minor minor</i>	2	20
113	Chinese Penduline Tit	<i>Remiz consobrinus</i>	2	10
114	Long-tailed Tit *	<i>Aegithalos caudatus *</i>	4	6
115	Dusky Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus fuscatus fuscatus</i>	1	1
116	Eurasian Skylark *	<i>Alauda arvensis japonica</i>	3	20+
117	Brown-eared Bulbul *	<i>Hypsipetes amaurotis *</i>	10	C
118	Barn Swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica gutturalis</i>	2	30
119	Sand Martin	<i>Riparia riparia ijimae</i>	1	2
120	Asian House Martin	<i>Delichon dasypus dasypus</i>	1	4
121	Japanese Bush Warbler	<i>Horornis diphone cantans</i>	3	2
122	Warbling White-eye *	<i>Zosterops japonicus japonicus</i>	4	20
123	Goldcrest	<i>Regulus regulus japonensis</i>	2	1
124	Eurasian Wren	<i>Troglodytes troglodytes fumigatus</i>	2	2
125	Eurasian Nuthatch *	<i>Sitta europaea clara / hondoensis</i>	4	4
126	Common Starling	<i>Sturnus vulgaris poltaratskyi</i>	3	5+
127	White-cheeked Starling	<i>Spodiopsar cineraceus</i>	5	10
128	Pale Thrush	<i>Turdus pallidus</i>	5	6
129	Dusky Thrush	<i>Turdus eunomus</i>	9	50+
130	Red-flanked Bluetail	<i>Tarsiger cyanurus</i>	2	4
131	Daurian Redstart	<i>Phoenicurus auroreus auroreus</i>	5	6
132	Brown Dipper	<i>Cinclus pallasii pallasii</i>	3	3
133	Russet Sparrow	<i>Passer cinnamomeus rutilans</i>	2	50+
134	Eurasian Tree Sparrow	<i>Passer montanus saturatus</i>	9	100+
135	Grey Wagtail	<i>Motacilla cinerea cinerea</i>	4	2
136	Japanese Wagtail	<i>Motacilla grandis</i>	6	5

137	White Wagtail *	<i>Motacilla alba lugens / leucopsis</i>	7	400+
138	Red-throated Pipit	<i>Anthus cervinus</i>	1	1
139	Buff-bellied Pipit *	<i>Anthus rubescens japonicus</i>	3	6
140	Brambling	<i>Fringilla montifringilla</i>	1	1
141	Hawfinch	<i>Coccothraustes coccothraustes japonicus</i>	2	5
142	Japanese Grosbeak	<i>Eophona personata personata</i>	2	15
143	Eurasian Bullfinch *	<i>Pyrrhula pyrrhula griseiventris</i>	2	12
144	Asian Rosy Finch	<i>Leucosticte arctoa brunneonucha</i>	1	50
145	Grey-capped Greenfinch *	<i>Chloris sinica kawarahiba / minor</i>	9	150
146	Common Redpoll	<i>Acanthis flammea flammea</i>	1	120
147	Eurasian Siskin	<i>Spinus spinus</i>	1	20
148	Snow Bunting	<i>Plectrophenax nivalis vlasowae</i>	1	3
149	Chestnut-eared Bunting	<i>Emberiza fucata fucata</i>	2	4
150	Meadow Bunting	<i>Emberiza cioides ciopsis</i>	6	12
151	Common Reed Bunting	<i>Emberiza schoeniclus pyrrhulina</i>	3	30
152	Black-faced Bunting *	<i>Emberiza spodocephala personata</i>	3	8
153	Rustic Bunting	<i>Emberiza rusticus</i>	1	25
154	Grey Bunting	<i>Emberiza variabilis variabilis</i>	1	1



Hooded Cranes with two Sandhill Cranes back right



Hooded Crane – one of 12,000 seen



Red-crowned Cranes

Other sightings

A	SPECIES	SCIENTIFIC NAME	B	C
1	Japanese Squirrel	<i>Sciurus lis</i>	2	2
2	Red Fox	<i>Vulpes vulpes</i>	4	2
3	Spotted (Largha) Seal	<i>Phoca largha</i>	3	4
4	Sea Otter	<i>Enhydra lutris</i>	1	3
5	Siberian Weasel	<i>Mustela sibirica</i>	1	1
6	American Mink	<i>Neovison vison</i>	1	1
7	Japanese Macaque	<i>Macaca fuscata</i>	1	100
8	Sika Deer	<i>Cervus nippon</i>	4	100
9	Japanese Serow	<i>Capricornis crispus</i>	2	2
10	Indian Red Admiral (Painted Lady)	<i>Vanessa indica</i>	1	1

Appendix *

The above list and info below follow IOC WORLD BIRD LIST v (10.1)

Great Egret (*Ardea alba*) A potential split will possibly see the two subspecies (*Ardea alba alba*) and (*Ardea alba modesta*) we saw, either called Great Egret or Eastern Great Egret, while (*Ardea alba egretta*) could become American Egret so this should be noted for the future as they may be different species. Two (*Ardea alba modesta*) were noted by small size with (*Ardea alba alba*) at the crane fields Arasaki.

Japanese Murrelet (*Synthliboramphus wumizusume*) This globally threatened and endangered bird lives off the coasts and islands off E & S Japan. This was a big target for this tour and we had great views, of birds swimming, fishing just below the surface and even calling. The Kadogawa harbor near Hyuga in February represents the best place in the world to try and see this species. They breed on the offshore island of Biroshima where it is estimated there is a population of 800 birds. The local name for this bird is translated as Crowned Sea Sparrow.

Mew Gull (*Larus canus*) The subspecies we saw around Rausu was (*kamtschatschensis*) which is often referred to as Kamchatka Gull.

Vega Gull (*Larus vegae*) Rather complicated the Vega Gull was formerly considered a subspecies of American Herring Gull (*Larus smithsonianus*) or included with both the American Herring Gull and European Herring Gull in (*Larus argentatus*). The IOC and other authorities now consider it a full species Vega Gull (*Larus vegae*) which includes the subspecies (*Larus vegae mongolicus*) which was formerly a subspecies of the Caspian gull (*Larus cachinnans*). So we saw quite a few (*Larus vegae*) and one (*Larus vegae mongolicus*) which was the bird out on a small island at Yatsushiro, from the first sea wall that we stopped. This subspecies of Vega Gull is often called Mongolian Gull.

Lesser Black-backed Gull (*Larus fuscus*) A bird seen from the sea wall at Uki was the subspecies (*heuglini*) which is sometimes considered a full species Heuglin's Gull. Those that consider Heuglin's Gull a full species would then note our bird as a subspecies of this (*tamyrensis*) – confused or what!!

Glaucous Gull (*Larus hyperboreus*) Two subspecies of Glaucous Gull are seen in Hokkaido, where we saw ours. The larger ones are (*pallidissimus*), and the smaller ones are (*barrovianus*) we could have seen both?

Iceland Gull (*Larus glaucooides*) We had excellent views of an adult of the subspecies (*thayeri*) from our boat trip to the pack-ice off Rausu. This subspecies often referred to as Thayer's Gull.

Crested Kingfisher (*Megaceryle lugubris*) Two subspecies were seen with singles of (*lugubris*) at the Isa River Bridge and Satsuma, and a single (*pallida*) from Washino-Yado guesthouse, Rausu.

Long-eared / Short-eared Owl (*Asio otus* / *Asio flammeus*) We saw an owl fly across in front of our vehicles at dusk as we approached Arasaki but the light was not really good to identify it to species. We thought from the detail we could see it was more like Long-eared!

Japanese Pygmy Woodpecker (*Dendrocopos kizuki*) There were three subspecies seen during our tour. (*kizuki*) on Kyushu, (*shikokuensis*) on Honshu, and (*seebohmi*) on Hokkaido.

Eurasian Jay (*Garrulus glandarius*) Two subspecies were seen which included (*japonicus*) in Honshu and (*brandtii*) in Hokkaido.

Rook (*Corvus frugilegus*) The subspecies we saw all around Arasaki was (*pastinator*) often referred to as Oriental Rook.

Carrion Crow (*Corvus corone*) The subspecies we saw (*orientalis*) are genetically distinct and probably merit full species status as Oriental Crow.

Japanese Waxwing (*Bombycilla japonica*) This year there seemed to be very few waxwings around and as Japanese Waxwing is one of the most sought after species we were thrilled to find them on several days in Karuizawa.

Long-tailed Tit (*Aegithalos caudatus*) Not entirely sure as range restriction is vague but it seems like we saw two subspecies (*trivirgatus*) in central Japan and (*kiusiuensis*) in southern Japan.

Eurasian Skylark (*Alauda arvensis*) We saw the subspecies (*japonicus*) which is sometimes referred to as Japanese Skylark.

Brown-eared Bulbul (*Hypsipetes amaurotis*) We saw two subspecies (*amaurotis*) over much of Japan with (*matchiae*) seen in Kyushu.

Warbling White-eye (*Zosterops japonicus*) This species has changed its English name from Japanese White-eye to Warbling White-eye. We saw subspecies (*japonicus*).

Eurasian Nuthatch (*Sitta europaea*) We saw two subspecies of this white bellied form. (*hondoensis*) around Karuizawa in Honshu, and (*clara*) in Hokkaido.

White Wagtail (*Motacilla alba*) We probably had 2 subspecies according to range with (*lugens*) north and central Japan and (*leucopsis*) in southwest Japan so probably those we saw around Arasaki and Hyuga. These birds are often referred to collectively as Black-backed Wagtail. A roost of over 400 were seen one evening near Arasaki

Buff-bellied Pipit (*Anthus rubescens*) Note that this is the same bird as in North America that used to be called American Pipit. We saw the Asian subspecies (*japonicus*).

Grey-capped Greenfinch (*Chloris sinica*) Two subspecies were noted with (*kawarahiba*) seen around Rausu, ne Hokkaido, while (*minor*) was seen throughout the rest of Japan and ranges from s Hokkaido right down to Kyushu. Sometimes referred to as Oriental Greenfinch.

Black-faced Bunting (*Emberiza spodocephala*) We saw the yellow-bellied subspecies (*personata*) which is often referred to as Masked Bunting and may at a later date assume this name.

Eurasian Bullfinch (*Pyrrhula pyrrhula*) Several of these smart looking birds were seen of the subspecies (*griseiventris*) which is often referred to as Grey-bellied Bullfinch.

Special thanks to Dave Farrow, Steve Bird and Keith Langdon for helping to make this tour a great success!

More photos & videos at https://www.sunrisebirding.com/20Japan_web/

NEXT TRIP: February 5 - 16, 2021 <https://www.sunrisebirding.com/21Japan/>



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