



Japanese Waxwing and Bohemian Waxwing (Dave Farrow)

JAPAN – THE COMPLETE TOUR

**12 – 28 NOVEMBER 2017
with HONSHU EXTENSION to DECEMBER 4**

A BIRDQUEST CUSTOM TOUR FOR STEVE BIRD

LEADERS: DAVE FARROW, STEVE BIRD and GINA BEEBE NICHOL.

GROUP MEMBERS: TONY BAVERSTOCK, NICK COBB, SIMON FOGG, RON HOFF, DOLLYANN MYERS, WINNIE POON, ROY SMITH and JOHN RICHARDSON.

Our tour to Japan covered a huge range of territory, combining the best of the winter birding circuit with four of the smaller islands, each with their own endemic species. In the Ryukyu Islands we saw Ryukyu Serpent Eagles, Slaty-legged Crane, Amami Woodcock, Japanese Wood Pigeon, Japanese Scops Owl, Ryukyu Scops Owl, Northern Boobook, Grey Nightjar, Owston's Woodpecker, Okinawa Woodpecker, Lidth's Jay, Ishigaki Tit, Japanese Leaf Warbler, Amami and Okinawa Robins. In Kyushu we saw thousands of Hooded and White-naped Cranes, Baikal Teal, Green Pheasant, Black-faced Spoonbill, Long-billed Plover, Saunders's Gull, White-backed Woodpecker, Japanese Green Woodpecker, Daurian Jackdaw, Chinese Penduline Tit, Brown-headed Thrush and Yellow-throated Bunting. A trip out to Izu islands produced Laysan, Black-footed and Short-tailed Albatross, Owston's Tit, White's Thrush and Japanese Robin, while the winter

wonderland of Hokkaido provided us with Steller's Sea Eagles, Red-crowned Cranes, Harlequin Duck, Stejneger's Scoter, Red-faced Cormorant, Pigeon and Spectacled Guillemot, Blakiston's Fish Owl, Ural Owl, Bohemian and Japanese Waxwings. On our Honshu extension we saw Marsh Grassbird, Copper Pheasant, Solitary Snipe, Japanese Accentor, Long-tailed Rosefinch, and a whole host of great waterfowl.

We gathered at Tokyo's Haneda airport and began our adventure with a long flight to (almost) the end of the Ryukyu island chain to Ishigakijima, a flight that took us fairly close to Mount Fuji, visible on the starboard side. On arriving on the sub-tropical island in the mid-afternoon we picked up our vehicles, but heavy rain put paid to any birding today. We ventured out on a drizzly morning, finding Ryukyu Green Pigeon, but rather more surprising was a Grey Nightjar flying around in daytime, a flock of 35 Brambling, and a calling Yellow-browed Warbler. Despite the birds seeming rather quiet following the overnight rain, in areas of open fields and forest edge we saw Japanese Sparrowhawks, Chinese Bulbul, Green Sandpiper and Common Greenshank, and eventually we saw Ryukyu Serpent Eagle flying along the edge of the tall trees, then perching along a canal and giving us some great views. On nearby shorelines we saw Kentish, Greater and Lesser Sand Plovers, Whimbrel, Eurasian Curlew, Grey-tailed Tattlers, Dunlin and Ruddy Turnstones. A pair of Slaty-legged Crakes surprised us as they tried to cross a road, offering a brief view as they scooted for cover, however they could not be coaxed out of the thick undergrowth. On another beach we found Pacific Golden Plovers, Grey Plover and Common Greenshanks, before we returned to the interior of the island. Around livestock paddocks we found Brown Shrike and White-breasted Waterhen, and as the rain returned we slowly drove forest lanes where we found another very obliging Ryukyu Serpent Eagle perched over the narrow road. At dusk we heard both Northern Boobook and Ryukyu Scops Owls, but the rain seemed to deter them from making an appearance.



Ryukyu Serpent Eagle (Dave Farrow)

The next morning we returned to Banna Park where we found several of the ashy-plumaged Ishigaki Tits, Ryukyu Minivets and Asian Brown Flycatcher, then further inland we encountered a further two Ryukyu Serpent Eagles, some impressive butterflies, but few other birds were found in the quiet jungle.

Moving to Okinawa, we traveled the length of the island in darkness, and had a busy day exploring the forests of Yamburu. Soon after our arrival at the hotel we found a vocal and obliging Japanese Scops Owl in nearby trees, followed shortly afterwards by a confident and photogenic Northern Boobook. We tried for the hat trick, but the Ryukyu Scops Owls wouldn't play along. The Okinawa Robins were obliging, with many hopping at the roadsides, while Pryer's Woodpecker played hard to get until mid-afternoon when we finally had a good look. Okinawa Rails? Vocal in many places both day and night, but tried and tested strategies failed and we just couldn't get even a glimpse of one. A flock of Red Crossbills was a surprise and almost certainly an Okinawa rarity. Another Japanese Scops Owl was seen well on our second evening, and the pre dawn of the next day produced a Ryukyu Scops Owl, sitting on the side of the road. We travelled to Amami Oshima via Kagoshima, where our first stop in the Amami forests produced an Owston's Woodpecker and several Lidth's Jays. Our nightdrive produced many Amami Black Rabbits a couple of Ryukyu Scops Owls, but alas no Woodcocks. Further work was required! Birding the next morning gave us some looks at the shy Amami Robins, and flight views of some Japanese Wood pigeons. The weather decided to close in and we had an afternoon of rain, and exploring a far part of the island we eventually found Amami Woodcock at the roadside after dark, returning to our hotel in an atrocious rainstorm.



Northern Boobook (Dave Farrow)



Ryukyu Scops Owl (Dave Farrow)

Next stop was Kyushu, and the wooded hills of Mi-ike in the shadow of Mt Kirishima. We were met by a large flock of Russet Sparrows, and fields full of Black-backed Wagtails together with our first Japanese Skylarks, Buff-bellied Pipits and White-cheeked Starlings. Around the forested crater lake we found Yellow-throated Bunting, Red-flanked Bluetail, Daurian Redstart, a Yellow-browed Warbler, and two female White-backed Woodpeckers having a tiff. A look-out onto a fruiting tree produced our first Pale and Brown-headed Thrushes and a lovely male Japanese Green Woodpecker, we found a surprise late migrant male Narcissus Flycatcher and a distant Mountain Hawk Eagle soaring over the forested volcano. Moving from here we visited a reservoir where we saw hordes of rather shy Mandarin Ducks, Brown Dipper, and a Crested Kingfisher perched on a wire over the mountain river. We rolled into our minshuku at Arasaki in darkness, our home for the next three nights, with the sound of bugling Cranes all around.

We began at dawn in the fields where hundreds of Hooded and a scattering of White-naped Cranes were roosting before they descended in their thousands onto tracks where grain had been laid out for them. We picked out four Sandhill Cranes during our stay, plus a few Common Cranes. Oriental Rooks were abundant, together with a few Daurian Jackdaws including a nice pied adult. On one morning we enjoyed the sight of the Cranes coming and going against an orange dawn sky, with a range of Pipits including a single

Richard's, several Red-throated, and many Buff-bellied. Chestnut-eared Buntings showed nicely as did Chinese Penduline Tits, and a cock Green Pheasant gave a good display as he sprinted across the rice paddies. A wet morning produced a Wryneck, our first Dusky Thrushes and a flock of White-shouldered Starlings. Side trips included visiting the Sendai Gawa, a rocky river where we saw Long-billed Plovers and Japanese Wagtails, another Crested Kingfisher and some Japanese Grosbeaks. On the west coast we visited two areas of tidal mudflats where we found many Black-faced Spoonbills, hordes of wildfowl that included a few Baikal Teal, many Common Greenshank, over a hundred Saunders's Gulls, a flock of Vega Gulls with a few *taimyrensis* Heuglin's and Black-tailed Gulls, Brown Boobies circling offshore, Japanese Cormorants sat on rocky outcrops, a perched Merlin and thousands of Bramblings.

Returning to Haneda, we rolled our luggage down to Takeshiba port and boarded the ferry to the Izu Islands. As we left the shelter of Tokyo Bay in the early hours, the ship began to thump and shudder as it ran head on into a strong blow from the south. The ship continued from Miyakejima and headed for Hachijojima at the terminus of its route. We covered in shelter from the sheets of spray breaking over the bow of the ship, finding a few seabirds shooting past over the foaming waves. We were happy to see several Laysan and Black-footed Albatrosses cruising past, a couple of Tristram's Storm Petrels, Streaked Shearwaters, and some dark-morph 'Pacific' Fulmars that had us fooled for a while as to their identity. On reaching Hachijojima, the ship turned across the wind, and we had the scary sight of seeing two crew members being picked up by the howling gale and thrown across the deck! Once the ship had safely turned we enjoyed a tail wind back to Miyakejima where we landed, and were whisked away to our hotel. We headed to remnant forest surrounding a crater lake, and found the Izu endemic Owston's Tit, and a Japanese Robin bathing in a puddle.

We scoured the forest the next morning, unable to locate any Izu Thrushes, but a showy White's Thrush was much enjoyed. The ship came back for us (contrary to expectations, as it was still very stormy) and once we were steaming northwards into the 'Oshima Triangle' we saw many Laysan and Black-footed Albatrosses, and a huge immature Short-tailed Albatross came drifting by. Hurrah!



Owston's Tit (Steve Bird)



White's Thrush (Steve Bird)

We spent the night in Tokyo and flew to Kushiro in the early morning, finding this part of Hokkaido to be snow-free. We headed across the open landscape, finding a pair of Japanese Cranes at the roadside, and we made our way to the very scenic Cape Kiritappu. Here we found Falcated and Long-tailed Duck in the harbour, and from the headland we saw Red-necked and Slavonian Grebes, Harlequin Ducks, and a group of delightful Sea Otters frolicking in the surf. We saw our first Steller's Sea Eagle here, plus some fake Tufted Puffins! Around Nemuro we saw a single Red-faced Cormorant sat alongside Pelagic and Japanese Cormorants, and off Cape Nosappu we saw hundreds of Pacific Divers passing offshore, Ancient Murrelets close to shore, Spectacled Guillemots, two forms of Pigeon Guillemot, and many Long-tailed and Harlequin

Ducks. Along the shallow coastline we saw small groups of Stejneger's Scoter among the more numerous Blacks, plus Whooper Swans and a horde of Red-breasted Merganser. We arrived at our simple guesthouse at Rausu soon after dark and with several inches of fresh snow still falling we began to unload the vans. Suddenly, just a few metres from us, a Blakiston's Fish Owl had come down the stream here and just sat there, looking magnificent, periodically having a dunk as it tried to grab a fish. Wow! You lucky people! We eventually got organised and indoors, and had a great meal provided by our hosts, periodically returning to the window to photograph the two Owls that seemed to have moved in for the evening.

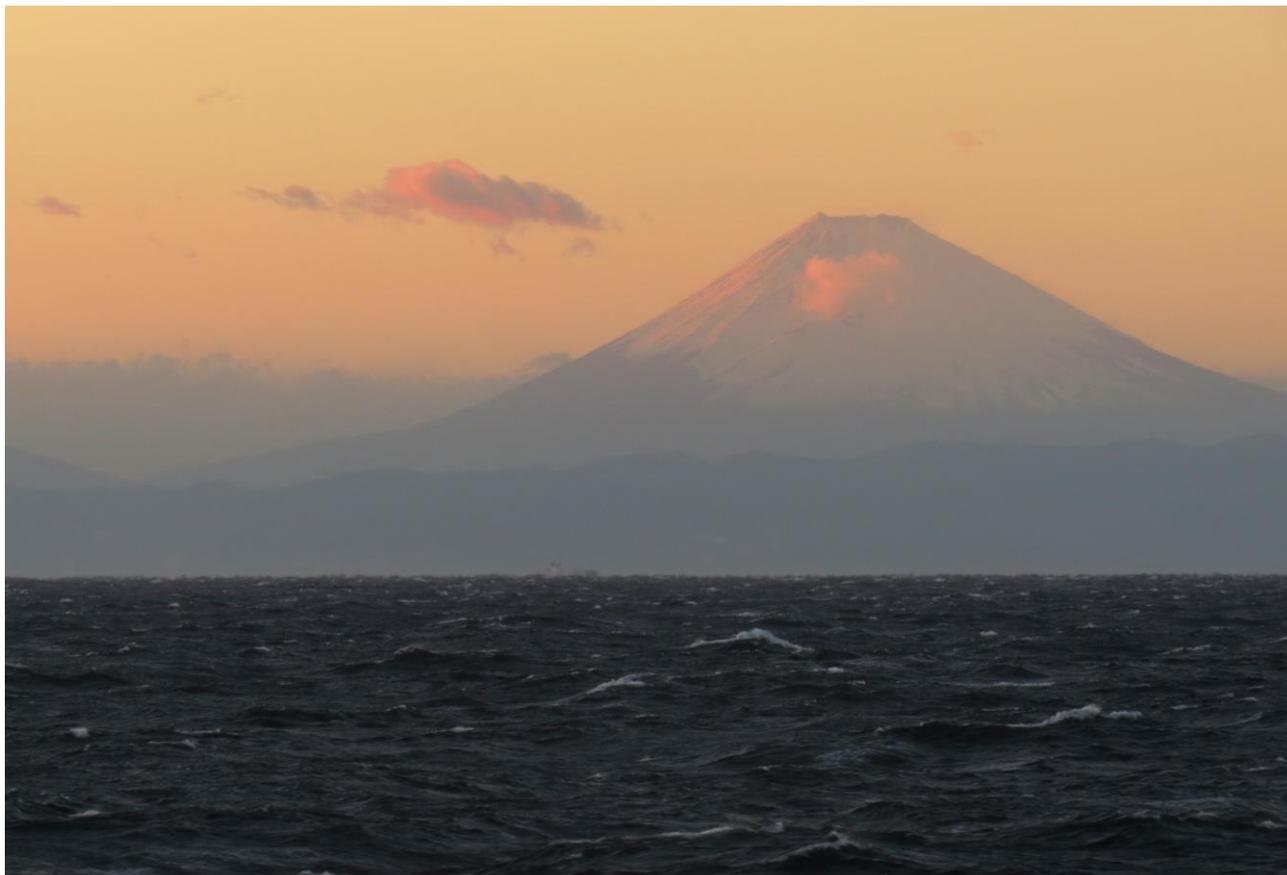
The next morning we had the company of Brown Dippers in the stream outside, amid a wonderland of fresh snow. We saw Brunnich's Guillemot, Glaucous and Glaucous-winged Gulls around the harbour, and along the coast by the mouth of a salmon river we enjoyed the spectacle of many White-tailed and Steller's Sea Eagle, sat around in the trees, and pecking at dying salmon in the river itself. We got close to Harlequin Ducks basking in the sunshine, plus Black-necked Grebe, and along the Notsuke peninsula we enjoyed close looks at more Steller's Sea Eagles, plus some obliging Sika Deer and Red Fox, and wonderful views of the snow-covered mountains of the Shiretoko peninsula. We spent another night with a view of the Fish Owl, then heading back southwards we encountered a flock of Waxwings in a town with streets of berry-laden trees, among 200 Bohemians we saw four Japanese Waxwings sitting in a birch tree showing off their red tail tips. Next stop was for the spectacle of Japanese Cranes, bugling and dancing on the snow while gathered for some free handouts, stunning in flight as they came dropping into the fields in front of us. To finish off we had a great view of a roosting Ural Owl sat in hole in a large tree. An evening flight then took us back to Haneda, ready for the next part of the adventure.



Ural Owl (Dave Farrow)

The next morning we travelled to Narita Airport, said goodbye to those leaving us, picked up new vehicles and continuing to the reedbeds of the Tonegawa. A bright sunny day, we had several views of the skulking Marsh Grassbird, plus Eastern Marsh Harriers, and Common Reed Buntings (but no Japanese). We then embarked on a long drive across Tokyo to reach Karuizawa, some of which was spent sitting in a stationary traffic jam in the heart of the great city, but once clear we had an uneventful journey and arrived ready for the next days of birding.

At Karuizawa we began with a male Copper Pheasant at the roadside that sprinted off across the copper-coloured forest floor. No snow meant things were harder to spot, but we found several of the ungainly Japanese Serow, a confiding Japanese Accentor feeding under our hotel's feeder, Japanese Green Woodpeckers, lovely Varied and Willow Tits, Dusky Thrushes, Red Crossbill, and *fumigatus* Eurasian Wrens. Around fields we saw Meadow and Rustic Buntings, plus a splendid Japanese Weasel. We tracked down a very furtive Solitary Snipe that crouched in a stream, before re-emerging to give us a good show of his bouncing gait. On small roads in the mountains we found some dapper Long-tailed Rosefinches, while on wetlands we enjoyed several smart drake Smew, Goosanders, Japanese Wagtails, and had some great looks at Dusky Thrushes feeding in a persimmon tree.



Mt. Fuji (Dave Farrow)

The next day it was time to go and see 'the relatives', visiting the valley where the Japanese Macaques or 'Snow Monkeys' gather. Despite there being only a light spattering of snow, it was still fun to see the animals relaxing in the hot tub, and we also benefited from a very reduced numbers of tourists in this often hectic location. Apart from some smart *japonicus* Eurasian Jays, there were few birds, and we rejoined the highway and made our way through an epic number of tunnels along the north coast and beyond to Kaga. As soon as we turned off the highway we met a delightful group of Grey-headed Lapwings at the roadside, then spent the last hours of the day at the Katano Kamo-ike observatory watching good numbers of Baikal Teal among the gathered waterfowl, plus Greater White-fronted and Taiga Bean Geese, and as time went on a few Tundra Bean Geese woke up among the sleeping flock.

Our last days' birding in Japan was good fun, beginning with Green Pheasant, some Bewick's Swans, and a morning flight of Greater White-fronted Geese heading out to the fields. At a roadside pond thick with duck we enjoyed dozens of Falcated Ducks, the males glistening in the sunshine as they made little head tossing displays. Two juvenile Northern Goshawks made several unsuccessful attempts at catching some breakfast, and a Hooded Crane was spotted in the fields. We managed to find the Greater White-fronted Goose flock

but alas could not find any smaller versions among them. In another area we watched graceful flocks of Bewick's Swans, and found a flock of nine White-naped Cranes, a little farewell to us at the end of our last full day. We made the short journey to Komatsu airport, flying to Haneda and spending our last night near Narita airport, very satisfied with our epic journey around this marvelous country.



Red-crowned Cranes (Steve Bird)



Steller's Sea Eagle (Dave Farrow)

SYSTEMATIC LIST OF SPECIES RECORDED DURING THE TOUR

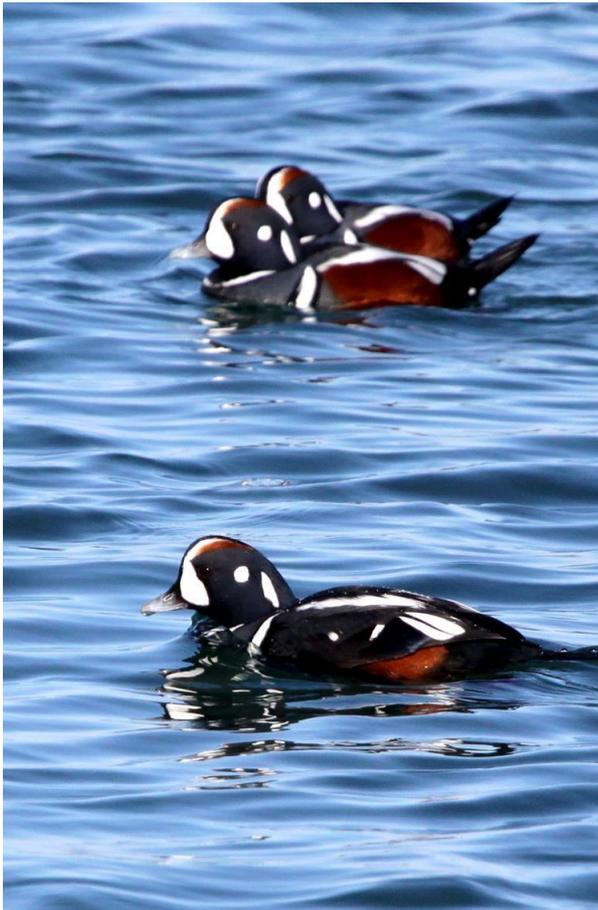
The species names and taxonomy used in the report mostly follows Gill, F & D Donsker (Eds). **IOC World Bird Names**. This list is updated several times annually and is available at <http://www.worldbirdnames.org>.

Species which were heard but not seen are indicated by the symbol (H).

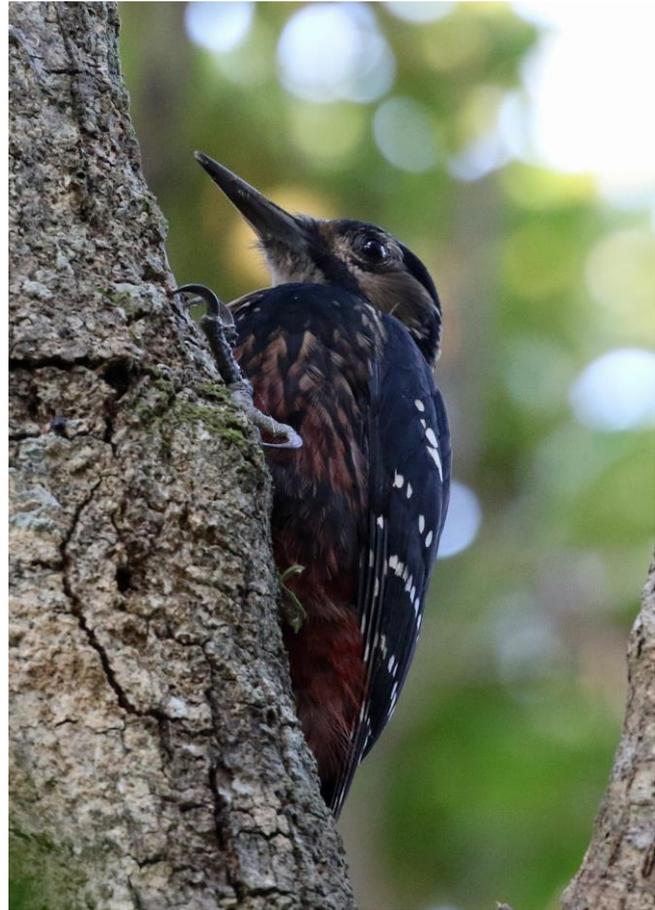
- Bewick's Swan (Tundra S)** *Cygnus [columbianus] bewickii* Around Kaga and Komatsu we found 400 or more.
- Whooper Swan** *Cygnus cygnus* Small flocks along the Hokkaido coasts, one with the above species at Komatsu.
- Brant Goose (Black Brant)** *Branta [bernicla] nigricans* A few seen around the Hokkaido coasts.
- Taiga Bean Goose** *Anser fabalis* Forty or so seen at Katano Kamo-ike, a few near Komatsu.
- Tundra Bean Goose** *Anser serrirostris* A few identified with the above at Katano Kamo-ike, once they were awake.
- Greater White-fronted Goose** *Anser albifrons* 300 or so seen in the fields near Kaga. Also on Katano Kamo-ike
- Mandarin Duck** *Aix galericulata* Only seen on one day on Kyushu, with good numbers near Izumi.
- Gadwall** *Anas strepera* A couple at Cape Kiritappu, a few on the extension.
- Falcated Duck** *Anas falcata* One at Cape Kiritappu, a very gorgeous flock of 50+ near Kaga.
- Eurasian Wigeon** *Anas penelope* Frequently encountered.
- Eurasian X American Wigeon** *Anas penelope/americana* A dodgy male at Arasaki.
- Mallard** *Anas platyrhynchos* Great to see good numbers of smart really wild birds, especially in the Kaga area.
- Eastern Spot-billed Duck** *Anas zonorhyncha* Frequently encountered, except in Hokkaido.
- Northern Shoveler** *Anas clypeata* Scattered sightings, most in Hokkaido and on the extension.
- Northern Pintail** *Anas acuta* Regular sightings throughout.
- Baikal Teal** *Anas formosa* A group of 8 at Uki, hundreds at Katano Kamo-ike and good looks at Akune.
- Eurasian Teal** *Anas crecca* Regular sightings along our route.
- Common Pochard** *Aythya ferina* Small flocks seen in several places.
- Tufted Duck** *Aythya fuligula* Seen on Kyushu and in a couple of other places.

Greater Scaup *Aythya marila* Nice to see good numbers around the Hokkaido coasts.

Harlequin Duck *Histrionicus histrionicus* One of the stars of Hokkaido, with many smart birds seen on the coasts.



Harlequin drakes (Dave Farrow)



Owston's Woodpecker (Steve Bird)

Stejneger's Scoter *Melanitta [deglandi] stejnegeri* A good look at some small flocks along the Hokkaido coasts.

Black Scoter *Melanitta americana* Frequent sightings on Hokkaido, present in small flocks all around the coasts.

Long-tailed Duck *Clangula hyemalis* A good number off Cape Nosappu, also from the Notsuke Hanto.

Common Goldeneye *Bucephala clangula* Not uncommon on Hokkaido, multiple sightings. **Smew**

Mergellus albellus Several of both sexes seen near Karuizawa and in the Kaga area. **Goosander**

(Common Merganser) *Mergus merganser* Three at Kiritappu, more seen on the extension. **Red-**

breasted Merganser *Mergus serrator* An impressive horde of several hundred in Notsuke Bay.

Copper Pheasant *Syrnaticus soemmerringii* A fine male was startled from the roadside and ran uphill, at Karuizawa.

Common Pheasant (introduced) *Phasianus colchicus* A few on Ishigakijima.

Green Pheasant *Phasianus versicolor* Cracking views of a male at Arasaki, another seen calling at Kaga.

Indian Peafowl (introduced) *Pavo cristatus* Several seen on Ishigakijima.

Red-throated Diver (R-t Loon) *Gavia stellata* Hundreds seen off Notsuke Hanto, also off Nosappu Misaki

Black-throated Diver (B-t Loon) *Gavia arctica* Under recorded for sure, several off the Hokkaido coasts.

Pacific Diver (P Loon) *Gavia pacifica* Hundreds flying past Nosappu Misaki.

White-billed Diver (Yellow-billed Loon) *Gavia adamsii* One flew past Nosappu Misaki. (Ouch)

Laysan Albatross *Phoebastria immutabilis* A steady flow of these from the Izu ferry, 10+ on each day.

Black-footed Albatross *Phoebastria nigripes* Quite a few from the Izu ferry, a dozen on the second

day. **Short-tailed Albatross** *Phoebastria albatrus* Hurrah! An immature showed well on the Izu ferry.

Tristram's Storm Petrel *Oceanodroma tristrami* A couple of blips in a stormy sea.

Northern Fulmar *Fulmarus glacialis* Haha! Failed to figure out what they were for a while, dark grey with pale underhand.

Streaked Shearwater *Calonectris leucomelas* Plenty seen from the Izu ferry.

Little Grebe *Tachybaptus ruficollis* Quite a few seen on Kyushu, also on the extension.

Red-necked Grebe *Podiceps grisegena* Not uncommon around the Hokkaido coasts.

Great Crested Grebe *Podiceps cristatus* Frequent sightings along our route..

Slavonian Grebe (Horned G) *Podiceps auritus* A few on the sea around Hokkaido, a single at Katano Kamo-ike.

Black-necked Grebe *Podiceps nigricollis* Quite a few around the Hokkaido coasts, with some close views.

Black-faced Spoonbill *Platalea minor* Seven around Arasaki, 26+ in a day between Arasaki, Yatsushiro and Uki.



Black-faced Spoonbill (Dave Farrow)



Black-necked Grebe(Dave Farrow)

Black-crowned Night Heron *Nycticorax nycticorax* A few sightings in Kyushu.

Chinese Pond Heron *Ardeola bacchus* A single seen on Ishigakijima.

Eastern Cattle Egret *Bubulcus coromandus* Quite a few on Ishigakijima, a single at Satsuma.

Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea* Common along our route.

Purple Heron *Ardea purpurea* A single at the roadside on Ishigakijima.

Eastern Great Egret *Ardea [alba] modesta* The most numerous and widespread white Egret in Japan.

Intermediate Egret *Ardea intermedia* A few seen on Ishigakijima.

Little Egret *Egretta garzetta* Many at Arasaki, a few elsewhere on Ishigakijima and Okinawa.

Pacific Reef Heron *Egretta sacra* Singles on Ishigakijima and Okinawa, another near Arasaki.

Brown Booby *Sula leucogaster* Seven seen over the mouth of the bay at Yatsushiro.

Pelagic Cormorant *Phalacrocorax pelagicus*

Red-faced Cormorant *Phalacrocorax urile* A single bird sat with the other Cormorants at Nosappu Misaki.

Great Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo* Frequent on freshwater habitats.

Japanese Cormorant *Phalacrocorax capillatus* Some good examples seen in maritime habitats, usually atop a rock.

Western Osprey *Pandion haliaetus* Frequent sightings, except in Hokkaido, numerous on the Kyushu coasts.

Ryukyu Serpent Eagle *Spilornis [cheela] perplexus* Great views of four birds on Ishigakijima.

Mountain Hawk-Eagle *Nisaetus nipalensis* A single soaring over the slopes of Mt Kirishima at Mi-ike.

Japanese Sparrowhawk *Accipiter gularis* Three plus on Ishigakijima - resident *iwasakii* race, a single on Amami.

Eurasian Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus* Regular sightings along our route.

Northern Goshawk *Accipiter gentilis* Three on Kyushu, more on the extension, with two unsuccessfully chasing ducks.

Eastern Marsh Harrier *Circus spilonotus* Three seen at Omigawa on the extension.

Hen Harrier *Circus cyaneus* One at Arasaki, another near there deftly avoiding collision with our minibus!

Black Kite (Black-eared K) *Milvus [migrans] lineatus* Common around the coasts of the main islands.

White-tailed Eagle *Haliaeetus albicilla* Great views of many on Hokkaido.

Steller's Sea Eagle *Haliaeetus pelagicus* A highlight of the tour, some wonderful encounters. See note.

Grey-faced Buzzard *Butastur indicus* Not uncommon on the southern islands, vocal and visible at Ada.

Eastern Buzzard (Japanese B) *Buteo japonicus* Regular sightings on the main islands.

Slaty-legged Crake *Rallina eurizonoides* A brief view of two that scuttled off the road on Ishigakijima.

Okinawa Rail *Gallirallus okinawae* (H) Many heard, not a glimpse of any though. **White-**

breasted Waterhen *Amaurornis phoenicurus* Commonly seen on Ishigakijima. **Ruddy-**

breasted Crake *Porzana fusca* A brief view of one of several calling birds at Arasaki.

Common Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus* Noted on Ishigakijima and at Arasaki.

Eurasian Coot *Fulica atra* Frequent sightings on the main islands, also on Miyakejima.

Sandhill Crane *Grus canadensis* At least four seen at Arasaki, with some nice close views.

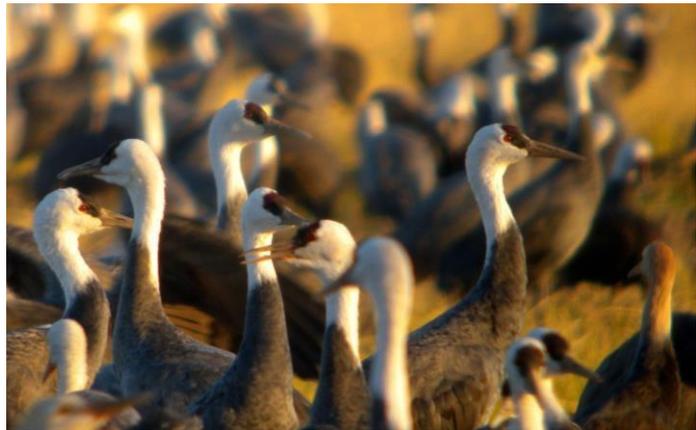
White-naped Crane *Grus vipio* A thrill as always at Arasaki, plus nine at Komatsu. The most elegant of the family?

Red-crowned Crane (Japanese C) *Grus japonensis* An enchanting show at Tsurui, 100+ counted in the area.

Common Crane *Grus grus* A handful of birds among the throng at Arasaki.



Sandhill Crane (Dave Farrow)



Hooded Cranes (Dave Farrow)

Hooded Crane *Grus monacha* The most numerous Crane at Arasaki, up to 10,000 supposedly. A single near Kaga.

Black-winged Stilt *Himantopus himantopus* Five seen on Ishigakijima.

Northern Lapwing *Vanellus vanellus* A good number at Arasaki, also on the extension.

Grey-headed Lapwing *Vanellus cinereus* Some lovely examples seen well around Kaga.

Pacific Golden Plover *Pluvialis fulva* At least 50 on Ohama beach on Ishigakijima.

Grey Plover *Pluvialis squatarola* Numerous at Yatsushiro and Uki.

Long-billed Plover *Charadrius placidus* Some good examples seen on the Sendai Gawa at Satsuma.

Little Ringed Plover *Charadrius dubius* At least three seen near Uki.

Kentish Plover *Charadrius alexandrinus* Seen in good numbers at Ohama beach, Ishigakijima and at Yatsushiro.

Lesser Sand Plover (Mongolian S P) *Charadrius [mongolus] mongolus*

Greater Sand Plover *Charadrius leschenaultii* Two or more seen on Ishigakijima.

Amami Woodcock *Scolopax mira* One or more seen at Yuwandake on very wet and stormy night!

Solitary Snipe *Gallinago solitaria* A nice thrill to see well a very shy example at Karuizawa.



Solitary Snipe (Dave Farrow)

Common Snipe *Gallinago gallinago* A few seen along our route.

Whimbrel *Numenius [phaeopus] variegatus* A single on Ishigakijima.

Eurasian Curlew *Numenius arquata* A single on Ishigakijima, a few more at Yatsushiro.

Common Greenshank *Tringa nebularia* In good number on Ishigakijima and on the Kyushu coast.

Green Sandpiper *Tringa ochropus* Seen in Kyushu and on Ishigakijima.

Grey-tailed Tattler *Tringa brevipes* Some 10 birds noted on Ishigakijima.

Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos* Seen in Kyushu and on Ishigakijima.

Ruddy Turnstone *Arenaria interpres* A couple on Ishigakijima, a few more at Yatsushiro.

Temminck's Stint *Calidris temminckii* Seen on wet paddyfields near Uki.

Dunlin *Calidris alpina* A good number on the Kyushu coast, also a flock seen on Ishigakijima.

Grey Phalarope (Red P) *Phalaropus fulicarius* At least three seen on stormy seas from the Izu ferry.

Black-legged Kittiwake *Rissa tridactyla* In reasonable number around the Hokkaido coasts.

Black-headed Gull *Chroicocephalus ridibundus* Fairly numerous around Hokkaido.

Saunders's Gull *Chroicocephalus saundersi* Great encounters at Uki, a few distantly at Yatsushiro, one at Arasaki.

Black-tailed Gull *Larus crassirostris* Good looks on Kyushu and Hokkaido, also near Komatsu.

Kamchatka Gull (Mew G) *Larus [canus] kamtschatschensis* Quite a few seen around the harbours on Hokkaido.



Glaucous-winged Gull (Dave Farrow)



Glaucous Gull (Dave Farrow)

Glaucous-winged Gull *Larus glaucescens* Some good examples seen around the Hokkaido coasts.

Glaucous Gull *Larus hyperboreus* Good numbers of these handsome birds on Hokkaido.

Vega Gull *Larus [vegae] vegae* Quite a few seen in Kyushu along at coastal sites.

Slaty-backed Gull *Larus schistisagus* The commonest gull in Hokkaido where we saw many hundreds.

Heuglin's Gull *Larus [fuscus] heuglini* At least eight of the yellow-legged *taiyrensis* form at Yatsushiro.

Pomarine Skua *Stercorarius pomarinus* At least one from the Izu ferry.

Whiskered Tern *Chlidonias hybrida* A handful seen on Ishigakijima.

Brunnich's Guillemot (Thick-billed Murre) *Uria lomvia* A single seen off the harbour at Rausu.

Common Guillemot (C Murre) *Uria aalge* One from Nosappu Misaki.

Pigeon Guillemot *Cepphus (columba) columba* A couple of regular Pigeon Guillemot from Nosappu Misaki

Pigeon Guillemot *Cepphus (columba) snowi* At least two of the Kurils form at Nosappu.

Spectacled Guillemot *Cepphus carbo* Quite a few from Nosappu Misaki, some off Notsuke Hanto also.

Ancient Murrelet *Synthliboramphus antiquus* Some nice close views around Cape Nosappu.

Rhinoceros Auklet *Cerorhinca monocerata* Some 20+ seen from Cape Nosappu, all flying by.

Rock Dove *Columba livia* Available.

Japanese Wood Pigeon (Black W P) *Columba janthina* A single flyby on Okinawa, several in flight on Amami.

Oriental Turtle Dove *Streptopelia orientalis* Seen almost daily, but not on Hokkaido.

Ryukyu Green Pigeon (Whistling G P) *Treron [formosae] permagnus* Several on Ishigakijima, also on Amami.

Japanese Scops Owl *Otus semitorques* Great views of two at Ada, more heard there. Race *pryeri*, with red eyes.

Ryukyu Scops Owl (Elegant S O) *Otus elegans* A jaywalking bird on Okinawa, two more in the Amami forests.

Blakiston's Fish Owl *Bubo blakistoni* Outrageous views on our first night at Rausu. Bird of the trip? See note.

Ural Owl *Strix uralensis* A very nice look at a roosting bird near Kushiro. The race is *japonica*.

Northern Boobook *Ninox japonica* Singles seen on Ishigakijima and Okinawa, the latter posing by our hotel.



Blakiston's Fish Owl (Steve Bird)

Grey Nightjar *Caprimulgus jotaka* A surprise to see a migrant bird flying around in daytime on Ishigakijima.

Common Kingfisher *Alcedo atthis* A few noted in Kyushu, also on the extension.

Crested Kingfisher *Megaceryle lugubris* Three or more seen on Kyushu rivers.

Eurasian Wryneck *Jynx torquilla* A single seen on a wet Arasaki morning.

Japanese Pygmy Woodpecker *Dendrocopos kizuki* Regular sightings of this endemic along our route.

Great Spotted Woodpecker *Dendrocopos major* A male on Hokkaido, a couple at Karuizawa. Race *japonicus*.

White-backed Woodpecker *Dendrocopos leucotos* A great look at two at Mi-ike, race *namiyei*.

Owston's Woodpecker *Dendrocopos [leucotos] owstoni* Great looks at a female of this dusky Amami endemic.

Okinawa Woodpecker (Pryer's W) *Dendrocopos noguchii* It took time but eventually we found one, nice looks.

Japanese Green Woodpecker *Picus awokera* A male showed well at Mi-ike, several birds seen at Karuizawa.

Common Kestrel (Eurasian K) *Falco tinnunculus* Several seen on Kyushu and elsewhere.

Merlin *Falco columbarius* One seen at Yatsushiro, a male near Kaga.

Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus* Regular sightings, two on Okinawa, singles on Kyushu, Hokkaido and Miyakejima.

Ryukyu Minivet *Pericrocotus tegimae* A small number seen on Ishigaki, Okinawa and Amami islands, also at Mi-ike.

Bull-headed Shrike *Lanius bucephalus* Not uncommon in Kyushu and Honshu.

Brown Shrike *Lanius cristatus* A small number of migrants noted on Ishigakijima.

Eurasian Jay *Garrulus glandarius* Good looks at quite a few on the extension, race *japonicus*.

Lidth's Jay (Ryukyu J) *Garrulus lidthi* Some good examples seen well on both days on Amami.

Daurian Jackdaw *Coloeus dauuricus* 12+ juveniles at Arasaki plus a single pied adult, also a single juvenile near Kaga.

Oriental Rook *Corvus [frugilegus] pastinator* Hundreds around Arasaki, also flock found near Kaga on the extension.

Oriental Crow *Corvus [corone] orientalis* Common in places on all the main islands.

Large-billed Crow *Corvus macrorhynchos* Daily, often commonly. On Ishigakijima the small race is *osai*. See note.

Bohemian Waxwing *Bombycilla garrulus* 200+ at Nakashibetsu on Hokkaido were thrilling.

Japanese Waxwing *Bombycilla japonica* Four seen well at Nakashibetsu with a large flock of the above species.

Coal Tit *Periparus ater* Plenty around Karuizawa.

Varied Tit (Japanese V T) *Sittiparus varius* Seen often on Okinawa and Amami, also at Karuizawa

Owston's Tit (Izu T) *Sittiparus owstoni* Nice looks at these exotic fellows on Miyakejima.

Marsh Tit *Poecile palustris* Several seen in the Hokkaido woods.

Willow Tit *Poecile montanus* A few seen in the Karuizawa area.

Japanese Tit (Eastern Great T) *Parus minor* Seen on Amami, at Mi-ike, Miyakejima and on the extension.

Ishigaki Tit *Parus [minor] nigriloris* At least five seen on our last morning on Ishigakijima.

Chinese Penduline Tit *Remiz consobrinus* A delightful group of eight or so at Arasaki.

Japanese Skylark *Alauda [arvensis] japonica* Seen in good number around Arasaki, clearly a different taxon to Eurasian.

Light-vented Bulbul (Chinese B) *Pycnonotus sinensis* A handful seen on Ishigakijima.

Brown-eared Bulbul *Hypsipetes amaurotis* Seen throughout, some different subspecies involved. See note.

Sand Martin *Riparia riparia* A single at Satsuma.

Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica* Some small flocks noted in Kyushu.

Pacific Swallow *Hirundo tahitica* Present around the southern islands only.

Japanese Bush Warbler *Horornis diphone* Seen most often on Kyushu, also on Okinawa, Amami and Miyakejima.

Long-tailed Tit *Aegithalos caudatus* Small flocks at Mi-ike and around Karuizawa.

Yellow-browed Warbler *Phylloscopus inornatus* Heard on Ishigakijima, seen at Mi-ike.

Japanese Leaf Warbler *Phylloscopus xanthodryas* A smart example at Ada of this species, although it didn't call...



Japanese Leaf Warbler (Steve Bird)

Marsh Grassbird (Japanese Swamp Warbler, J Marsh W) *Locustella pryeri* Good looks at Omigawa.

Zitting Cisticola *Cisticola juncidis* A couple seen on Kyushu, several at Omigawa.

Chinese Hwamei (introduced) *Garrulax canorus* A small number seen at Karuizawa.

Japanese White-eye *Zosterops japonicus* Seen commonly in the southern islands, also on Miyakejima.

Goldcrest *Regulus regulus* One at Karuizawa.

Eurasian Wren *Troglodytes troglodytes* Good looks at the dark *fumigatus* race at Karuizawa, also on Hokkaido.

Eurasian Nuthatch *Sitta europaea* Three races; *roseilia* at Mi-ike, *asiatica* in Hokkaido, and *hondoensis* at Karuizawa..

White-cheeked Starling *Spodiopsar cineraceus* Common on Kyushu, also in good number on the extension.

Common Starling *Sturnus vulgaris* A score of these present at Arasaki.

White's Thrush *Zoothera aurea* A fine example standing in the road on Miyakejima.

Pale Thrush *Turdus pallidus* Some good examples at Mi-ike feeding with the following species.
Brown-headed Thrush *Turdus chrysolaus* At least six at Mi-ike were unexpected, presumably they continue southwards.
Dusky Thrush *Turdus eunomus* A few found on Kyushu and Hokkaido, good numbers on the extension.
Asian Brown Flycatcher *Muscicapa dauurica* Two seen at Banna Park on Ishigakijima.
Amami Robin *Larvivora [komadori] komadori* Rather shy, just a couple seen on Amami Oshima.
Okinawa Robin *Larvivora [komadori] namiyei* More showy than the above, with many seen along the forest roads.
Japanese Robin *Larvivora akahige* A single seen bathing in a puddle on Miyakejima.
Red-flanked Bluetail *Tarsiger cyanurus* A male at Mi-ike, a couple of female-plumaged birds near Komatsu.
Narcissus Flycatcher *Ficedula narcissina* A stunning male seen at Mi-ike was an unexpected late-stayer.
Daurian Redstart *Phoenicurus aureus* Scattered sightings, most numerous on Kyushu.
Blue Rock Thrush *Monticola solitarius* Regular sightings through the southern islands to Kyushu and Miyakejima.



Brown-headed Thrush (Steve Bird)



Pale Thrush (Dave Farrow)

Brown Dipper *Cinclus pallasii* A single on Kyushu, great views at Washi no Yado on Hokkaido, also at Karuizawa.
Russet Sparrow *Passer rutilans* Flocks of hundreds seen at various places on Kyushu.
Eurasian Tree Sparrow *Passer montanus* Seen throughout.
Japanese Accentor *Prunella rubida* A demure fellow, enjoyed at close range at Karuizawa.
Grey Wagtail *Motacilla cinerea* Common on the Ryukyu islands and up to Kyushu.
Black-backed Wagtail (White W) *Motacilla [alba] lugens* Good numbers on Kyushu, also found on Honshu commonly.
Japanese Wagtail *Motacilla grandis* Good examples seen at Satsuma, more common on the extension.
Richard's Pipit *Anthus richardi* A single fly-over at Arasaki, two more flew by at Uki.
Olive-backed Pipit *Anthus hodgsoni* A couple on Ishigakijima, a couple at Mi-ike.
Red-throated Pipit *Anthus cervinus* Not uncommon at Arasaki, all airborne though.
Buff-bellied Pipit *Anthus rubescens* In good number on Kyushu, a single on Miyakejima.
Brambling *Fringilla montifringilla* Thousands in Kyushu, also on Ishigakijima and at Karuizawa.
Japanese Grosbeak *Eophona personata* Good looks at Satsuma, also at Karuizawa.
Grey-bellied Bullfinch (Eurasian B) *Pyrrhula [pyrrhula] griseiventris* A couple of elusive birds on Miyakejima.
Long-tailed Rosefinch *Carpodacus sibiricus* Nice looks at a small flock including one male, near Karuizawa.
Grey-capped Greenfinch (Oriental G) *Chloris sinica* abundant at Arasaki, also in good number on the extension.
Red Crossbill *Loxia curvirostra* Eleven at Ada on Okinawa were notable, also 24 seen at Karuizawa.
Eurasian Siskin *Spinus spinus* A flock at Karuizawa.
Meadow Bunting *Emberiza cioides* Fairly common on Kyushu and Honshu.
Chestnut-eared Bunting *Emberiza fucata* At least eight or more in the fields at Arasaki.
Rustic Bunting *Emberiza rustica* Only found on the extension where they were fairly numerous.
Yellow-throated Bunting (Elegant B) *Emberiza elegans* Some nice examples seen at Mi-ike, also at Karuizawa.
Black-faced Bunting *Emberiza spodocephala* A small number of shy birds seen on Kyushu.
Common Reed Bunting *Emberiza schoeniclus* A few at Arasaki, more at Omigawa.



Sika Deer with Shiretoko peninsula.

MAMMALS

Amami Rabbit *Pentalagus furnessi* Eight or more seen on our first nightdrive on Amami Oshima. See note.

Eurasian Red Squirrel (Red S) *Sciurus vulgaris* A couple seen on Hokkaido.

Ryukyu Flying Fox Some handsome examples seen on the Ryukyu Islands.

Red Fox *Vulpes vulpes* Some fine examples seen on Hokkaido.

Harbour Seal (Common Seal) *Phoca vitulina* A couple seen at Cape Kiritappu.

Sea Otter *Enhydra lutris* At least four seen very well, frolicking off Cape Kiritappu

Japanese Weasel *Mustela itatsi* A single on Miyakejima, another near Karuizawa.



Japanese Weasel (Steve Bird)

Japanese Macaque *Macaca fuscata* A single near Karuizawa, then 50+ around, and in, the hot pools at Jigokudani.

Sika Deer *Cervus nippon* A small number on Kyushu and at Karuizawa, seen commonly on Hokkaido.

Japanese Serow *Capricornis crispus* Five confiding animals in a single day at Karuizawa.



Japanese Serow (Dave Farrow)

NOTES TO THE SYSTEMATIC LIST

Steller's Sea Eagle *Haliaeetus pelagicus* A highlight of the tour, with some wonderful encounters. A feature of visiting Hokkaido at this time of year is seeing the Eagles concentrated around the salmon rivers, feasting on the rather large fish as they expire in the shallows at the end of their lives. The species in question is Chum Salmon (a.k.a. Dog or Keta Salmon) *Oncorhynchus keta*. They are the last Pacific salmon species to spawn (November to January) and die about two weeks after their return to freshwater.

Blakiston's Fish Owl *Bubo blakistoni* It would have been comedic had it not been so damn thrilling. To have an Owl come down to the stream while we were still unpacking the vans in front of the minshuku was just outrageous. We had sublime views of them sitting in the fresh snow, and they are definitely easier to see at this time of year compared to February. It was also nice to spend two nights with such an iconic bird.

Large-billed Crow *Corvus japonensis* On Ishigakijima the Crows are of the very distinctive *osai* race, being smaller, slimmer billed and with a different call. They also seem to dominate the island! We also saw the race *connectens* on Okinawa and Amami.

Brown-eared Bulbul *Hypsipetes amaurotis* Various races seen, such as *stejnegeri* on Ishigaki, *pryeri* on Okinawa, *ogawae* on Amami and *matchiae* on Miyakejima.

Amami (Amami Black) Rabbit *Pentalagus furnessi* Endemic to Amami Oshima and neighboring island of Tokunoshima. A relict of a lineage of Asian rabbits that have died-out elsewhere, it is nocturnal, forest dwelling, and with shorter ears and legs than other rabbits.

Thanks to all participants for a wonderful tour.