

JAPAN

20 MAY – 6/11 JUNE 2007

TOUR REPORT

LEADER: PETE MORRIS and CHIKARA OTANI

This was our fourth summer tour to Japan in recent years, a tour that focuses primarily on the breeding specialities and endemics of this remarkable country. It was also the first to visit the northern island of Hokkaido in the summer. With numerous hops (both by boat and plane) between islands (we spent our time birding on at least seven different islands!), we achieved our objectives admirably! The overall number of species recorded was, as expected, relatively small, as Japan has a fairly low number of resident and visiting breeding species. The quality among the 245 species (including some 'allospecies' splits) that we recorded was however extremely high! Highlights during the first part of the tour included such mouth-watering species as Malayan Night Heron, Okinawa Rail, Amami Woodcock, delightful Roseate Terns, Japanese Murrelet, Okinawa Woodpecker, Ryukyu Scops Owl, Ruddy Kingfisher, Fairy Pitta, Japanese Thrush, Okinawa, Amami (the two combined forming Ryukyu) and Japanese Robins, Lidth's Jay, and Japanese Yellow and Japanese Reed Buntings. On Hokkaido, we stood in awe as hundreds of thousands of Short-tailed Shearwaters fed just offshore, marvelled at the enormous Blakiston's Fish Owls and were delighted to see breeding species such as Hazel Grouse, Black Woodpecker, Siberian Rubythroat, Gray's Grasshopper Warbler and some fine Pine Grosbeaks. We were also delighted to find a female Brown Bear with her two charming cubs in the snow by the roadside! And to cap it off, we sampled exquisite and impeccably presented Japanese food and stayed in some wonderful and homely accommodations throughout the archipelago.

Our tour kicked-off in Narita, to the east of Tokyo. Following a mid-morning arrival, we went to our hotel and got organized before driving down to Tokyo Bay for a spot of wader watching around Kasai Park and Funabashi. Unfortunately the tides were not really on our side, but nevertheless we picked out a number of waders including our only Far Eastern Curlew of the trip, saw plenty of Black-headed and Slaty-backed Gulls and Greater Scaup, and scoped up and our first Azure-winged Magpie. We then headed to an area of marshes close to Narita, and enjoyed the lovely spring weather. The marshes were alive with birds. Oriental Reed Warblers chuntered from the reedbeds and before too long we found some attractively plumaged Japanese Reed Buntings and our other main target, the localized Japanese Swamp Warbler. The latter proved to be pretty common allowing many great scope views perched and many flight views as they continually displayed above the reeds. Here we

also found an Eastern Marsh Harrier and our first Green Pheasant, and we also had a little time to explore the nearby paddyfields where we found a variety of herons and waders including several Terek Sandpipers and an attractive Pacific Golden Plovers. Not a bad way to start!

The following morning, we visited another excellent area of marshland and reedbeds close to the hotel. Once again, Oriental Reed Warblers were everywhere, fine male Green Pheasants paraded along the field edges and the reedbeds held numerous Yellow Bitterns and at least three fantastic, Great Bitterns, one of which walked in the open in the paddyfields and even strolled across a road for us!! Some scanning of the lake revealed four Falcated Ducks (a surprise this far south at this time of year), Black-necked Grebe and both Whiskered and White-winged Terns, whilst back on dry land we enjoyed some attractively plumaged Meadow Buntings. It was then time to experience the incredibly efficient Japanese train system for the first time on this tour, and having arrived back at Narita Airport, we took a train to Tokyo and the Asama Express (a 240kmh bullet train!) to Karuizawa, easily arriving in time for lunch! That afternoon, having bagged the attractive endemic Japanese Green Woodpecker in the hotel car park, and a fine male Japanese Yellow Bunting nearby, we decided to visit an area of adjacent paddies. Here, we looked for, amongst others, Japanese Snipe, and were not disappointed as several birds showed well, both on the ground and giving their amazing aerial displays. Here we also found our first Japanese Buzzard, and Common Cuckoo and watched a male Northern Goshawk hunting. The reedy ditches held attractive Siberian Stonechats, a couple of singing Black-browed Reed-Warblers, Chestnut-eared Buntings and Zitting Cisticolas of the interesting *brunniceps* subspecies (surely not the same species as the birds in Europe?!). As dusk fell, the hoped-for Ural Owls remained silent, though we did see a couple of Grey Nightjars hawking insects.

Much of our time around Karuizawa was spent on the numerous forest trails that lead through the attractive deciduous and mixed forest. As with most northern temperate forests, digging the birds out was at times hard work. However, during our strolls, we came across a number of interesting species. Two of the first birds that we came across were two of the best as, from the same spot, we enjoyed great views of both Northern Hawk-Cuckoo and Japanese Thrush! Sweet songs led us to gorgeous Blue-and-white and Narcissus Flycatchers, grotesque Japanese Grosbeaks put in several appearances (especially on the feeders at the hotel!), and other goodies included Asian Brown Flycatchers and an elusive Eastern Crowned Warbler. Japanese Wagtails and Brown Dippers were found along the river, whilst Winter Wrens skulked around the smaller streams. Tit flocks held the smart Varied Tit and numerous Japanese Tits (split from Great Tit) whilst the mature woodland was home to tiny Japanese Pygmy Woodpeckers and Great Spotted Woodpeckers. Other more elusive denizens included Siberian Blue Robin and Asian Stubtail, both of which showed very well with a bit of effort. Ashy Minivets gave themselves away with their trilling calls and other species seen included our first Bull-headed Shrike and Black-faced Bunting. A further nightbirding attempt was unsuccessful though some took the opportunity to watch a delightful Japanese Giant Flying Squirrel emerge from its nest box roost site.

During our stay at Karuizawa, we also made a visit to a small lake that we often look at on the winter tour. The lake itself was pretty quiet apart from the breeding Black-crowned Night Herons, but the nearby river held several cryptic Long-billed Plovers, a Green Sandpiper, several Goosanders and two smashing drake Mandarin Ducks along with a more dowdy duck.

It was time to move on and we headed south for the spectacular Mount Fuji. The weather was forecast to deteriorate, so some careful strategic planning was required! Stops en route failed to yield a Crested Kingfisher, though we did find some attractive Chestnut-cheeked Starlings and some introduced Hwameis. We decided to head up the south side of Fuji, and arrived there in fine conditions. Spotted Nutcrackers and Northern Red-flanked Bluetails obliged, and, after a bit of effort,

we found a singing Japanese Accentor which posed nicely for us. Lower down we found our first Olive-backed Pipit and Dark-sided Flycatcher, and heard several Arctic Warblers before it was time to head back down to our digs. The following day, we knew what was coming, but tried all the same! We got to the forest just after the heavens opened, were gradually battered into submission, hung out the white flag and headed back down to Gotemba!! The weather showed no sign of improving, so we decided to hang on to the vans and head to Tokyo. Rain, rain and more rain followed, so we decided to visit a wetland on Tokyo Bay with a (dry) observation centre. Other than plenty of Grey-tailed Tattlers and a few close Black-winged Stilts, there was little to see, and we headed into Tokyo to take the ferry. Unfortunately, the two vehicles were separated in Tokyo, resulting in an exciting journey for Pete's van, but we all made it on to the overnight ferry bound for Hachijo-jima in the Izu Islands.

We awoke the next morning surrounded by Streaked Shearwaters. After brief stops on Miyake-jima and Mikura-jima we headed further south. Other than the thousands of Streaked Shearwaters, seawatching was poor, with just a handful of Short-tailed Shearwaters and a single Tristram's Storm-petrel.

By Japanese standards, Hachijo-jima is a relatively quiet and sleepy little island, and it is a delight to explore the lovely remnant patches of forest. Very soon we were watching Ijima's Leaf-Warblers, endemic Izu Island Thrushes and smart Japanese Wood pigeons. Orange-headed Japanese Robins sang from the undergrowth, and after a bit of effort we were all pleased to see this one well, and after a fairly long search we were delighted to find the very distinctive *owstoni* form of Varied Tit – another potential 'armchair tick', Izu Tit. As we drove around the island we encountered Chinese Bamboo Partridges and White's Thrushes on the road, Lesser Cuckoos and Pacific Swifts both put in several appearances and along the coast, both Black-tailed Gulls and Blue Rock Thrushes showed well, while a grassy area held a fine flock of Pacific Golden Plovers. It was here also that disaster struck, when what appeared to be a relatively innocuous fall, led to a rather nasty wound on John's arm. Brave as ever, he soldiered on once the local hospital had patched him up!

All too soon it was time to leave our wonderful hosts and re-board the ferry, this time bound for Tokyo. Once again, several of us peered at the sea for many hours, but this was not to be a classic voyage for birds. That said, we did see a few goodies including a single Black-footed Albatross, several Bulwer's Petrels, a single Flesh-footed Shearwater, a few difficult Tristram's Storm-petrels and some hard-to-see-well Japanese Murrelets. Otani managed to pick up a Madeiran Storm-petrel and a Bonin Petrel through his 'superbins' and other species amongst the thousands of Streaked Shearwaters included a Brown Booby, a handful of Sooty and Short-tailed Shearwaters, Pomarine and Long-tailed Skuas and several Red-necked Phalaropes.

We were soon heading south again, though this time southwest on a jet bound for Kagoshima from where we drove the short distance to Mi-ike, stopping at a lookout where highlights included our first Ryukyu Minivets. Having checked into our hotel, we began to explore the area in earnest. The stunning deciduous forest at Mi-ike holds a good selection of Japanese forest species including a number that we were keen to find. Without too much effort we found the robust-looking White-backed Woodpecker, the smart Ruddy Kingfisher, and gorgeous Japanese Paradise Flycatchers, but before too long, our visit to this area focused on the pursuit of two species that were incredibly difficult to find due to two very different reasons. The first, the Copper Pheasant is just difficult! Shy and uncommon, we put in many hours searching and came close when a drumming bird appeared nearby and showed briefly to Otani (but no-one else in his van could see it!). The second, the Fairy Pitta, was difficult as they did not seem to have arrived back from Southeast Asia! It was the latest return in living memory, and by our third day, our hopes were fading. A brief burst of call on our final morning became somewhat confused as a Japanese gentleman walked down the trail whistling the

pitta! However, we persevered, and literally at the last minute, as we were heading back for the last time, the holy grail began to call. Enough to make the hairs on the back of your neck stand on end and before long we were feasting our eyes on the rainbow-coloured Fairy Pitta – one of the birds we had all been hoping to find but had almost given up on! Relief and delight ran through the group, and after securing fantastic views, we dashed back to the vans and headed for Kagoshima Airport.

It was time to island hop again, this time to the small island of Amami-oshima where three Oriental Pratincoles greeted us on the airfield. Here, we had just a handful of very special birds to find and we set about it almost immediately on arrival as we set off on a night drive. This was a great success as we found a fantastic Amami Woodcock which posed at point-blank range almost for as long as we wanted. This is a rare and declining species, thanks to predation by introduced mongooses, and we were delighted to see it so well, and also enjoyed a couple of Ryukyu Scops Owls on the same drive. The following day we were on site at dawn to search for the elusive Amami Thrush. They were in good voice and showed well but briefly a couple of times. Here we also found the distinctive Ryukyu Flycatcher, Amami Robin (the distinctive endemic form of the Ryukyu Robin) and our first Amami Woodpecker (surely a good split from White-backed Woodpecker). We also visited the Amami Natural Forest where several of the species showed again, and we also eventually saw the delightful endemic Lidth's Jay. That evening, we decided to go on another night drive, and as well as seeing another Amami Woodcock, we found a roosting Ruddy Kingfisher, saw four Amami Black Rabbits and found the ultra-rare Ryukyu Rat (an impressive tree-dwelling species), as well as a number of interesting frogs.

After another visit to the Amami natural Forest, where we secured more good views of Lidth's Jay and scoped up some Whistling Green Pigeons, it was once again time to move on, this time to the positively tropical island of Ishigaki-jima. In order to get there we had to first return to Kagoshima and then pass over almost the entire Ryukyu chain, stopping just short of Taiwan at Ishigaki Island. We had just under two days to explore this excellent island, which is most famous in ornithological circles as being the most easily accessible site for Ryukyu Serpent Eagle. We did well this year, getting good views of several and saw many other interesting species in the process. These included several excellent Malayan Night Herons, some very obliging Ryukyu Scops Owls, a pair of Northern Hawk Owls and a couple of Emerald Doves. Other localized species included a displaying Japanese Sparrowhawk, numerous Whistling Green Pigeons, many Chinese Bulbuls and more Ryukyu Minivets, Ruddy Kingfishers, Ryukyu Flycatchers and Japanese Paradise-Flycatchers. We also spent time watching the very dark local form of Japanese (Great) Tit which is perhaps better split off as Ishigaki Tit. We also came across a number of other more widespread waterbirds including Purple Herons, Cinnamon and Yellow Bitterns, Eastern Reef Egret, White-breasted Waterhen and both Lesser and Greater Sandpipers and we also found a vagrant Chinese Pond Heron or two.

It was then time to island hop again, this time to Okinawa, a little to the northeast. On arrival, we headed north up the island to the Yamburu region and to our base at Hentona. We had just about two days on the island and of course our priority was to find the localized endemics. Of greatest interest to most was the amazing Okinawa Rail and this can be a difficult species to find. However, luck was with us again this year, and in a couple of outings we found around 20 or so individuals, including a few fluffy black juveniles. Some of the stunning adults were seen down to just a few metres and it was no surprise that this species ended up as bird-of-the-trip! We also had some excellent views of the somewhat sneaky Okinawa Woodpecker, logging a dozen or more in our two days. Whilst out on the forest tracks we encountered numerous Varied Tits (of the local form), and the delightful Okinawa (Ryukyu) Robin proved to be common. Night time excursions revealed some large Ryukyu Flying-Foxes and more Ryukyu Scops Owls, but not the hoped-for Japanese Scops Owl. We also spent some time along the coast looking at terns and got some wonderful views of supremely

elegant Black-naped and Roseate Terns and also found Little, Whiskered, White-winged and Common Terns, the latter of the distinctive, dark-billed *longipennis* subspecies. In paddyfields, we managed some superb views of a Ruddy-breasted Crake, and flushed our only Barred Buttonquail of the tour.

Content with our clean-up of Ryukyu endemics, we headed back to Tokyo for an overnight stay. At this point we said goodbye to our contingent that were heading home, and having packed them up into their various taxis and trains, the rest of us once again headed for Haneda, this time to catch a flight to Asahikawa, Hokkaido's second largest city. It was my first time in Hokkaido in the summer, and wow, what a difference! The bleak snow and ice-covered landscape had been transformed into a verdant land with, surprise surprise, paddyfields everywhere! We first drove to an area near to Aizankei hot springs, where we began our exploration of Hokkaido's attractive forests. Stunning Grey-bellied Bullfinches greeted us and other goodies found here included our first Oriental Cuckoo (a species which was to prove pretty common on Hokkaido), a fine male Japanese Robin singing from a tree top, some musical though somewhat sneaky Sakhalin Leaf Warblers, a shy Grey Bunting, and our first smart Russet Sparrow. We then made our way to Lake Oketo, and here, we were soon admiring impressive White-throated Needletails above the hotel. Later that evening, we went out for a spot of nightbirding which proved pretty successful. Several Grey Nightjars and Eurasian Woodcocks were seen well at dusk, and after dark, some rhythmic tooting eventually led us to a cute Oriental Scops Owl.

We had a day and a morning to explore the wonderful forests around Lake Oketo which are easily accessed via a network of tracks. Both Grey-headed and Black Woodpeckers put on a wonderful display, and high-pitched whistles led us to two fabulous male Hazel Grouse. Gray's Grasshopper Warblers were back, though it took much time and effort before we had all seen one well, and other goodies included an Oriental Honey Buzzard, more Sakhalin Leaf Warblers and Grey Buntings and many other, by now, familiar forest species. We stopped at a very pleasant curry house for lunch on our full day, and while waiting for our food, we found some confiding Japanese Snipes, a pair of cryptic Eurasian Wrynecks attending a nest, and a big surprise in the form of an attractive male Daurian Redstart, a species that is not usually present in Hokkaido in the summer.

It was once again time to move, and we headed for the north coast of Hokkaido, stopping at various wetlands as we went. It was not long before we encountered our first White-tailed Eagle overhead, and these were to be regular for the rest of our stay on Hokkaido. We found several species of wildfowl, including more attractive Falcated Ducks, and at one marsh, found a Eurasian Hobby hawking over the reeds, several Black-browed Reed Warblers and an attractive pair of Green-headed Wagtails, a rare breeding species in Japan now. We then made our way along the coast where Temminck's and Pelagic Cormorants and large numbers of Slaty-backed Gulls were to be found, and at one area, we found good numbers of summer-plumaged Spectacled Guillemots and a few Harlequin Ducks.

It was then time to head for Rausu, our destination for the evening, and we began the long haul up and over the Shiretoko Pass. The weather was somewhat bleak, but we were soon jolted into action when a Brown Bear and her two cubs appeared by the roadside! What a fantastic sight! We watched in awe as these amazing creatures played in the snow just a few metres away before eventually disappearing back into the scrub! A male Siberian Rubythroat provided some avian diversion, but we had an appointment with another big brown predator to keep, so we headed down to our base at Rausu. It wasn't long after dark when the first of the fabulous Blakiston's Fish Owls appeared, and over the next couple of hours, we were treated to wonderful views of both of the pair coming down for their fish suppers! A brilliant experience and certainly a highlight of the trip.

After our late night, we started the following day a little sleepily, but made our way back up to the spectacular Shiretoko Pass, this time in perfect weather. Grey Buntings, Japanese Accentors, Hawfinches, Siberian Rubythroats and a Japanese Robin all obliged, but the real stars of the show were two vivid red male Pine Grosbeaks that gave fantastic views.

Heading down the coast, we picked out a Glaucous Gull in a flock of Slaty-backed Gulls, and then, one of those once in a lifetime events occurred! From the road we could see flocks of birds in the mist, and on investigation these turned out to be Short-tailed Shearwaters. We made our way to the beach to find sardines leaping on to the shingle and hungry packs of tens or perhaps even hundreds of thousands of Short-tailed Shearwaters gorging themselves on them. We had never seen anything like it – the noise and action was incredible, and we watched the spectacle for some time, scarcely able to believe it was really happening. At times it was surreal as vast throngs of birds rushed up and down the beach, occasionally disappearing in the mist! Locals rushed down to the beach with buckets, no doubt stocking the freezer with sardines, and as news spread, birders came from the other side of Hokkaido to witness and film the amazing sight! One Black-legged Kittiwake and a semi-albino Short-tailed Shearwater were picked out from the flocks, and eventually we tore ourselves away and continued south. Other stops brought us a more obliging Gray's Grasshopper Warbler, more fine Siberian Rubythroats and Long-tailed Rosefinch, whilst at sea highlights included Black and Stejneger's Scoters, a Long-tailed Duck and a breeding-plumaged Black-throated Diver. We decided to continue on to Kiritappu, on the south coast of Hokkaido, and here, an area of marshland yielded several obliging Middendorff's Grasshopper Warblers and a couple of Lanceolated Warblers, as well as more wrynecks and rubythroats, and we also found our first impressive Red-naped Cranes (a new experience for me seeing them against a green (rather than white!) background).

Our final day on wonderful Hokkaido saw us first exploring the coast of the Nemuro Peninsula, where large numbers of Rhinoceros Auklets and Pacific Divers were found at sea. Some Eastern Water Rails called at close range, but failed to oblige, whilst other species seen included more White-tailed Eagles and an Eastern Marsh Harrier. Back at Kiritappu, fog largely prevented us from looking out to sea, though we did find more obliging Lanceolated and Middendorff's Grasshopper Warblers and a male Eurasian Sparrowhawk, and we then made our way to Akan, north of Kushiro. Here we had more wonderful encounters with Red-crowned Cranes, and had a last look in the forest. Northern Hawk-Cuckoo, White-bellied Pigeon, Black Woodpecker and smart Blue-and-white Flycatchers all showed well, but it was time to leave, and we headed back to the airport, content with our incredible few days on Japan's northernmost island.

There's no doubt about it, as we headed back to Narita, we were able to reflect back on what had been a brilliant trip. We had seen a wonderful selection of the Japanese avifauna, sampled a superb array of Japanese cuisine and experienced a few aspects of the fascinating Japanese way of life. As usual we were looked after superbly by all of our wonderful and friendly hosts and I am looking forward to seeing those friendly faces again on my next visit!

SYSTEMATIC LIST

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

Species that were not personally recorded by the leaders are indicated by the symbol (NL).

Conservation threat categories and information are taken from *Threatened Birds of the World*, BirdLife International's magnificent book on the sad status of the rarest 10% of the world's avifauna, and updates on the BirdLife website: <http://www.birdlife.org/datazone/index.html>

GAVIIDAE

Red-throated Loon (Red-throated Diver) *Gavia stellata*: Only seen on the Hokkaido extension where we noted a total of eight or so off the coasts of the Nemuro Peninsula, one or two of which were in breeding plumage.

Black-throated Loon (Black-throated Diver) *Gavia arctica*: Only seen on the Hokkaido extension where a breeding-plumaged bird, complete with white flank patch, was scoped off the east coast.

Pacific Loon (P Diver) *Gavia pacifica*: Only seen on the Hokkaido extension, we noted at least 10 off the Nemuro Peninsula, some of which showed well in the scope, allowing us to note the critical identification features from the previous species. Most were in non-breeding plumage.

PODICIPEDIDAE

Little Grebe *Tachybaptus ruficollis*: A handful of sightings in the Narita area and near to Karuizawa, and a single on Hokkaido.

Great Crested Grebe *Podiceps cristatus*: A single on the large lake at Inba-numa, near Narita, on our second morning was a write-in for the tour.

Red-necked Grebe *Podiceps grisegena*: Only seen on the Hokkaido extension where a breeding-plumaged bird was scoped off the east coast.

Black-necked Grebe (Eared G) *Podiceps nigricollis*: A couple were seen at some range on the large lake at Inba-numa, near Narita, on our second morning.

DIOMEDEIDAE

Black-footed Albatross *Diomedea nigripes*: A single showed well from the ferry on the way back into Tokyo from Hachijo-jima. This species is currently classified as 'Endangered' by BirdLife International, with a world population estimated at 109,000 and decreasing. From 1978-1992, it experienced mortality from interactions with high seas drift-nets in the north Pacific. Bycatch estimates from driftnets put yearly bycatch (at least in 1990) at c.4,000 birds per year. Currently, it interacts with longline fisheries and mortality is thought to be at least 2,000 birds per year in US-based fisheries and a further 6,000 in Japanese/Taiwanese fleets! This is supported by a pilot study showing that post-breeding birds disperse over large distances to the oceanographic 'transition zone' where they are susceptible to bycatch in the US and foreign pelagic longline fleets. Other threats include loss of nests to waves, pollution, introduced predators, oiling, plastic ingestion and volcanic eruption on Torishima.

PROCELLARIIDAE

Bonin Petrel *Pterodroma hypoleuca*: Otani got on to one through his 'mega-bins' on the way between Hachijo-jima and Miyake-jima, but the rest of us were unable to get on to it unfortunately.

- Bulwer's Petrel *Bulweria bulwerii*: At least six were seen to the north of Hachijo-jima as we left the island, one or two of which showed reasonably well.
- Streaked Shearwater *Calonectris leucomelas*: The spectacle of many thousands of these on the journey to and from Hachijo-jima was an amazing spectacle.
- Flesh-footed Shearwater *Puffinus carneipes*: Just a single individual of this bulky shearwater was picked out on the crossing back from Hachijo-jima to Tokyo.
- Sooty Shearwater *Puffinus griseus*: Just a single picked out on the crossing back from Hachijo-jima to Tokyo (though a few others may have been overlooked). Very similar to the next species, and best identified by the much brighter and more contrasting white flashes on the underwing.
- Short-tailed Shearwater *Puffinus tenuirostris*: The commonest dark shearwater on the crossings between Hachijo-jima and Tokyo though scarce with a total of just 20 or so logged. On Hokkaido, we had one of the most memorable experiences of the tour with this species, and indeed it was bird-of-the-trip on Hokkaido thanks to top votes from Otani, Bob and Robin. As we drove south from Rausu in the mist, we noticed flocks of birds along the coast, which on investigation, proved to be hundreds of thousands of this species, gorging themselves on hapless shoals of sardines which were washing up on the beach! The noise and spectacle had to be seen to be believed, and Richard even found a semi-albino individual amongst them! Totally amazing!!

HYDROBATIDAE

- Madeiran Storm-petrel (Band-rumped S-p) *Oceanodroma castro*: Another one that Otani got on to through his 'mega-bins' on the way between Hachijo-jima and Miyake-jima, but the rest of us were unable to see.
- Tristram's Storm-petrel (Sooty S-p) *Oceanodroma tristrami*: A total of four of these large storm-petrels were seen on the crossings to and from Hachijo-jima, though none of the sightings were particularly close or satisfying. This species is classified as 'Near Threatened' by BirdLife International. The most serious threat to the species is the potential introduction of rats or other predators to any of its primary breeding sites: a large population which bred on Torishima Island until the early 1960s has apparently been exterminated by introduced cats and rats, and potentially large colonies could have been extirpated from the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands for the same reason

SULIDAE

- Brown Booby *Sula leucogaster*: A single on the way back from Hachijo-jima.

PHALACROCORACIDAE

- Great Cormorant (Cormorant) *Phalacrocorax carbo*: Common around Tokyo and on the lake at Karuizawa where the subspecies involved is *hanedae* (often considered synonymous with *sinensis*).
- Temminck's Cormorant (Japanese C) *Phalacrocorax capillatus*: Only seen on the Hokkaido extension where they were found to be quite common along the coasts. A much more pelagic species than Great Cormorant.
- Pelagic Cormorant *Phalacrocorax pelagicus*: Only seen on the Hokkaido extension where small numbers were seen along the coasts with up to 20 noted in a day.

ARDEIDAE

- Yellow Bittern (Chinese Little B) *Ixobrychus sinensis*: At least a dozen showed very well in the marshes at Inba-numa, near to Narita, on our second morning out, and we saw another male in some paddyfields on Ishigaki-jima.

- Cinnamon Bittern (Chestnut B) *Ixobrychus cinnamomeus*: A brief single for Pete on Amami was followed by some good views in the paddies on both Ishigaki-jima and Okinawa.
- Malayan Night Heron *Gorsachius melanolophus*: A big favourite with all of us as we enjoyed some fabulous views of adults and immatures on Ishigaki-jima. Second favourite for Nick and fourth overall.
- Black-crowned Night Heron (Night Heron) *Nycticorax nycticorax*: Scattered sightings throughout the tour, the largest concentration of 100+ was on the small lake near to Karuizawa.
- Eastern Cattle Egret *Bubulcus coromandus*: Scattered sightings throughout. *Coromandus*, is very richly coloured in breeding plumage, as well as being long-necked and long-legged, and has been split off as a separate species (Eastern Cattle Egret) by some authors, including Rasmussen and Anderton in their excellent recent '*Birds of South Asia: The Ripley Guide*'.
- Chinese Pond Heron *Ardeola bacchus*: Single vagrants were seen well on all three of our days on Ishigaki-jima in the south of the country.
- Pacific Reef Egret (Eastern R Heron) *Egretta sacra*: A few around the rocky coasts of the Ryukyus where many of those seen were the unmistakable dark phase. Several stocky white birds were seen on Ishigaki-jima but alas we could not find any Chinese Egrets among them.
- Little Egret *Egretta garzetta*: Small numbers in many areas.
- Intermediate Egret (Yellow-billed E) *Egretta intermedia*: Educational to see the breeding plumaged birds of the nominate race which show dark bills when breeding, unlike their African and Australian relatives! Fairly common and widespread.
- Great Egret (Great White Egret) *Egretta alba*: Scattered sightings throughout though probably most common in the south of the country. The largest daily total was c20 at Yatsu, Tokyo, on the rainy day that we drove from Gotemba to Tokyo.
- Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea*: Another widespread and fairly common heron species.
- Purple Heron *Ardea purpurea*: A total of four noted on Ishigaki-jima, including some which gave good views.
- Great Bittern (Eurasian B) *Botaurus stellaris*: Great views of three at Inba-numa, near to Narita, including one walking in the open in the paddyfields, even walking across a road!! A great place to see this usually elusive species.

THRESKIORNITHIDAE

- Black-faced Spoonbill *Platalea minor*: It was a great surprise to see an immature of this rare species in the pouring rain just by Okinawa Airport. This species is classified as 'Endangered' by BirdLife International with the world population estimated to be 1,480 and decreasing. Habitat destruction is probably the biggest threat. The main wintering grounds are threatened by industrial development, particularly a key site in Taiwan and also in China, and reclamation, especially in South Korea, Japan and China. Economic development in China has converted many coastal wetlands into aquaculture ponds and industrial estates. Pollution is a major threat to birds wintering in Hong Kong. An outbreak of botulism at one of the major wintering sites killed 73 birds from December 2002 to February 2003. Increasing levels of disturbance and also hunting are threats in China and Vietnam. In addition, fishermen in China collect waterbird eggs at a nesting site.

ANATIDAE

- Mandarin Duck *Aix galericulata*: A couple of drakes and a duck of this ornate species showed very well on a river near to Karuizawa. We went on to see others on Okinawa and again on Hokkaido where a couple were seen at Lake Oketo.
- Eurasian Wigeon *Anas penelope*: A couple of lingering birds at the marshes near to Narita and on the river at Karuizawa, and small numbers (up to 20 per day) seen well on Hokkaido.

- Gadwall *Anas strepera*: Only seen on the Hokkaido extension where we found small numbers in several wetlands.
- Eurasian Teal *Anas crecca*: A drake on the large lake at Inba-numa, near Narita, on our second morning was the only one of the trip.
- Falcated Duck *Anas falcata*: Four, including a drake, on the large lake at Inba-numa, near Narita, on our second morning, were somewhat of a surprise, and we went on to see another ten or so well on Hokkaido.
- Mallard *Anas platyrhynchos*: Just a handful of sightings of feral individuals on the main part of the tour and then small numbers at several sites on Hokkaido.
- Chinese Spot-billed Duck *Anas zonorhyncha*: Regular sightings, right down to Ishigaki-jima where it was common.
- Northern Pintail *Anas acuta*: Only seen on the Hokkaido extension where a total of eight were noted in a couple of wetlands.
- Northern Shoveler *Anas clypeata*: Only seen on the Hokkaido extension where again, a total of eight were noted in a couple of wetlands.
- Common Pochard *Aythya ferina*: Only seen on the Hokkaido extension where a single was seen near to Abashiri.
- Tufted Duck *Aythya fuligula*: Three were noted at Kasai Park in Tokyo on the first day, and we went on to see plenty more on Hokkaido.
- Greater Scaup *Aythya marila*: Good numbers in Tokyo Bay on our first day (at least 100), were followed by a female at Yatsu, Tokyo, and we went on to see good numbers (up to 200 per day) on Hokkaido.
- Harlequin Duck *Histrionicus histrionicus*: Only seen on the Hokkaido extension, where we logged small numbers (up to ten in a day) along the coasts.
- Long-tailed Duck (Oldsquaw) *Clangula hyemalis*: Only seen on the Hokkaido extension, where a single drake was scoped off the east coast.
- Black Scoter *Melanitta americana*: Only seen on the Hokkaido extension, where good numbers remained off the east coast, where we estimated up to 1,000, many of which were distant.
- Stejneger's Scoter *Melanitta stejnegeri*: Only seen on the Hokkaido extension where at least four were seen well off the east coast.
- Red-breasted Merganser *Mergus serrator* (NL): Only seen on the Hokkaido extension where a couple were noted by some along the coast.
- Goosander (Common Merganser) *Mergus merganser*: Five were seen on the same river as the Mandarin Ducks close to Karuizawa, and another dozen or so were seen on Hokkaido.

ACCIPITRIDAE

- Crested Honey Buzzard (Oriental H B) *Pernis ptilorhynchus*: Only seen on the Hokkaido extension where we saw a female very well, right overhead, in the forest near to Lake Oketo.
- Black-eared Kite *Milvus lineatus*: Fairly scarce in the summer in Japan with just small numbers on most days. It was much commoner on Hokkaido where we noted up to 200 per day. This large, pale and well-marked form, is often lumped in Black Kite *M. migrans*.
- White-tailed Eagle *Haliaeetus albicilla*: Only seen on the Hokkaido extension where it was seen in small numbers on the north and east coasts. We enjoyed some great views of birds overhead and noted up to eight in a day.
- Ryukyu Serpent Eagle *Spilornis perplexus*: A total of at least seven were seen on Ishigaki-jima, a couple of which showed exceedingly well! The small endemic form concerned is often lumped in Crested Serpent Eagle *S. cheela* but the new(ish) raptors guide splits it amongst others.

- Eastern Marsh Harrier *Circus spilonotus*: A single was seen over the marshes near to Narita and a couple of others noted on Hokkaido.
- Northern Goshawk *Accipiter gentilis*: A single was seen by some near to Narita and later the same day we watched a fine male hunting over some dry paddyfields near to Karuizawa.
- Japanese Sparrowhawk *Accipiter gularis*: A good look at a displaying bird (picked up on call – it appeared to be a female) on Ishigaki-jima (where the endemic form *iwasakii* is found) and another heard there the following day.
- Eurasian Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus*: Only seen on the Hokkaido extension where a male showed well near to Kiritappu.
- Grey-faced Buzzard *Butastur indicus*: Just a couple of sightings in the Narita area and a single while we were looking for Copper Pheasants near to Mi-ike.
- Japanese Buzzard *Buteo [buteo] japonicus*: Our first individuals were seen around Karuizawa and we went on to see a total of five there, and noted a few more on Hokkaido. This form is more usually lumped in Common Buzzard *B. buteo*, but some recent references (including Rasmussen and Anderton in their excellent recent '*Birds of South Asia: The Ripley Guide*') have reappraised the species limits in this interesting complex. Many of the birds are very pale compared to Common Buzzards (in the strict sense), and can superficially resemble Rough-legged Buzzard *B. lagopus*. One problem is the variability in all forms! I have treated it as an allospecies, giving it its own English name (which is already in widespread colloquial use) and it is identified in its scientific name by a trinomial with the superspecies name preceding it in square brackets.

PANDIONIDAE

- Osprey *Pandion haliaetus*: First seen near to Narita on the first afternoon, we managed to see a total of eight individuals scattered through the tour, three of which were on Hokkaido.

FALCONIDAE

- Common Kestrel (Kestrel) *Falco tinnunculus*: A single on the afternoon that we visited Toden Lake was the only one of the tour.
- Eurasian Hobby *Falco subbuteo*: Only seen on the Hokkaido extension, we had good views of a single hawking over the coastal marshes near to Tofutsu Lake.

PHASIANIDAE

- Hazel Grouse *Bonasa bonasia*: Only seen on the Hokkaido extension, we enjoyed some fantastic views of a couple of males of this dapper grouse in the forests near to Lake Oketo. Voted second favourite on Hokkaido.
- Chinese Bamboo Partridge *Bambusicola thoracica*: Heard a few times, the only one seen was a single on the road as we drove through the forest on Hachijo-jima. All the birds in Japan descend from introduced stock.
- Copper Pheasant *Syrnaticus soemmerringii*: After much effort, we eventually managed to track down a drumming bird near to Mi-ike, which was seen briefly from Otani's bus as it ran across the forest floor. It was disappointing not to see this very shy species better. It is listed as 'Near Threatened' by BirdLife International. It has declined greatly, largely due to widespread hunting (hence the shyness!) but introduced predators may also pose a threat.
- Common Pheasant *Phasianus colchicus* (H): Heard on Ishigaki-jima where this species is introduced.
- Green Pheasant *Phasianus versicolor*: This Japanese endemic was seen exceptionally well at the roadside near to Narita and others were seen in the Karuizawa area and in the Mi-ike area whilst looking for rarer pheasants! The males are very different to Common (or Ring-necked) Pheasant, and even the females differ in their shorter tail and distinctive

patterning which is quite different from most races of Common Pheasant (see for example the plate in Handbook of Birds of the World).

TURNICIDAE

Barred Buttonquail *Turnix suscitator*: We flushed a single from long grass on Okinawa.

RALLIDAE

Okinawa Rail *Gallirallus okinawae*: Tension is always high when looking for this one, however we need not have worried as our explorations in Yamburu (northern Okinawa) led us to numerous encounters with this fantastic creature (nearly 20 seen including some black chicks). The views were great, and for the second year in succession, it was our bird-of-the-trip, pipping the pitta by one point! Classified as 'Endangered' by BirdLife International, the world population is believed to be between 1,200 and 1,680 and declining. Logging, dam construction and associated road-building, agricultural development and golf course construction are causing forest loss and fragmentation. Feral dogs and cats and the introduced Javan Mongoose *Herpestes javanicus* are possible predators. Recent research indicates that its range on the island has contracted to the north (resulting in a 25% decrease in extent of occurrence). The research strongly implies that introduced mongoose are the cause of this contraction.

Eastern Water Rail *Rallus indicus* (H): Only recorded on the Hokkaido extension where, despite some valiant attempts, we were unable to lure these secretive rails from their dense cover.

Ruddy-breasted Crake *Porzana fusca*: We found a remarkably co-operative individual on Okinawa which, with a little enticement, repeatedly crossed an open area in front of us. One or two others were seen more briefly.

White-breasted Waterhen *Amaurornis phoenicurus*: Quite common on Ishigaki-jima and a couple seen on Okinawa.

Common Moorhen (C Gallinule) *Gallinula chloropus*: Small numbers at various wetlands.

Eurasian Coot (Common C) *Fulica atra*: A couple seen in the marshes close to Narita on the first day and a couple of others on Toden Lake near to Karuizawa.

GRUIDAE

Red-crowned Crane (Japanese C) *Grus japonensis*: We enjoyed some very good views of small numbers (16 noted in total) in Eastern Hokkaido. It was nice to see them in a summer environment, rather than standing on snow! This is the world's second rarest crane, with a total population of only 2,400 birds, 800 of which are resident in Hokkaido. It is classified as 'Endangered' by BirdLife International because it has a very small, declining population as a result of loss and degradation of wetlands through conversion to agriculture and industrial development.

RECURVIROSTRIDAE

Black-winged Stilt *Himantopus himantopus*: Small numbers seen at three sites in the Tokyo/Narita area, as well as on Ishigaki-jima and Okinawa, and we even saw a single up on Hokkaido.

GLAREOLIDAE

Oriental Pratincole *Glareola maldivarum*: Some fairly distant birds were seen around the airfield on Amami.

CHARADRIIDAE

- Little Ringed Plover *Charadrius dubius*: Our first was at Kasai Park in Tokyo and we saw another around Inba-numa and heard another near to Karuizawa.
- Long-billed Plover (Long-billed Ringed Plover) *Charadrius placidus*: Great views of five, including two juveniles, along a river near to Karuizawa. This cryptically patterned species blends in so well with the riverbed that it always takes some time to spot them.
- Kentish Plover (Snowy Plover) *Charadrius alexandrinus*: Small numbers were seen well on the mudflats on Ishigaki-jima.
- Lesser Sand Plover (Mongolian P) *Charadrius mongolus*: Six distant birds were noted on our first day at Kasai Park, and we had much better views of at least ten on Ishigaki-jima. The birds we saw were the nominate subspecies. The smaller *atrifrons* group may in the future be split off retaining the same English name (Lesser S P) in which case the *mongolus* group would be renamed Mongolian Sand Plover.
- Greater Sand Plover *Charadrius leschenaultii*: We managed to locate a single on the mudflats on Ishigaki-jima, which we were able to compare with the previous species.
- Pacific Golden Plover *Pluvialis fulva*: A single was found in wet paddyfields near to Narita during our first day, and we went on to see a few more on Hachijo-jima and on Ishigaki-jima.
- Grey Plover (Black-bellied P) *Pluvialis squatarola*: A single bird was a surprise find on Ishigaki-jima.

SCOLOPACIDAE

- Sanderling *Calidris alba*: At least 30 at Funabashi, in Tokyo Bay, on our first day, a write-in for this tour!
- Red-necked Stint (Rufous-n S) *Calidris ruficollis*: Reasonable views of a few on the mudflats at Funabashi, with others showing at Yatsu and on Ishigaki-jima.
- Sharp-tailed Sandpiper *Calidris acuminata*: A single in some wet paddies near to Narita on the first day was much appreciated and was followed up with good views of a couple on Ishigaki-jima.
- Dunlin *Calidris alpina*: At least 500 in Tokyo Bay on our first day and at least six on our return visit to the area when we visited Yatsu in the rain!
- Common Snipe *Gallinago gallinago*: A total of five were seen in the wetlands close to Narita, and another presumed migrant was found on Hachijo-jima.
- Latham's Snipe (Japanese S) *Gallinago hardwickii*: We enjoyed some great looks and aural performances in the paddies near to Karuizawa, and the species was relatively common and widespread on Hokkaido.
- Eurasian Woodcock *Scolopax rusticola*: Only seen on the Hokkaido extension, we enjoyed some excellent encounters with roding birds in the Lake Oketo area. There are not many tours that record two species of *Scolopax*!
- Amami Woodcock *Scolopax mira*: Another must see species on this tour which requires some effort after dark, and our efforts were duly rewarded with spectacular close-up views of two different individuals. The deep bill, long legs and pink orbital skin, characters which help separate this species from the former, were all visible. Listed as 'Vulnerable' by BirdLife International, the world population is estimated at between 2,500 and 9,999. Key threats seem to be habitat loss and, perhaps more worryingly, predation from introduced predators, most notably Javan Mongoose *Herpestes javanicus* which was introduced for snake control!
- Bar-tailed Godwit *Limosa lapponica*: Small numbers were seen at a few sites in the Tokyo Bay/Narita area.
- Eurasian Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus*: One of the more common migrant waders, we estimated 85 on our first day in the Tokyo Bay/Narita area and saw smaller numbers elsewhere. The form concerned, *variegatus*, shows a darker rump than the nominate form but is not

uniform brown as on the recently split (by some) North American Hudsonian Whimbrels *N. hudsonicus*.

Far Eastern Curlew *Numenius madagascariensis*: A single bird was seen relatively distantly on the mudflats at Kasai Park.

Common Redshank *Tringa totanus*: Only seen on the Hokkaido extension where we saw a couple at Kiritappu and heard others. This species is a very scarce breeding species in Eastern Hokkaido.

Marsh Sandpiper *Tringa stagnatilis*: A single on Ishigaki-jima represented our only sighting.

Green Sandpiper *Tringa ochropus*: A single on the river near to Toden Lake was a surprise write-in.

Wood Sandpiper *Tringa glareola*: At least six were seen in the wet paddyfields close to Narita on our first day.

Terek Sandpiper *Xenus cinereus*: A couple were seen at Kasai Park by some, we went on to get some closer views of three in some flooded paddies near to Narita later that day and saw a couple of others on Ishigaki-jima.

Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos*: Scattered sightings of a total of nine individuals, including four on Hokkaido.

Grey-tailed Tattler *Heteroscelus brevipes*: First seen (up to 60) on our first day in the Tokyo Bay/Narita area, with numerous subsequent sightings. Several were sporting their barred underparts, indicative of breeding plumage.

Ruddy Turnstone *Arenaria interpres*: Largest numbers were found in the paddyfields close to Narita, where we recorded at least 30, not really a habitat one would usually associate with this primarily coastal species. Small numbers were also seen at a variety of other locations.

Red-necked Phalarope *Phalaropus lobatus*: A few were seen en route to Hachijo-jima and then at least 30 were seen on the sea as we headed back to Tokyo from Hachijo-jima, some of which were a fair way into Tokyo Bay in the evening.

STERCORARIIDAE

Pomarine Jaeger (P Skua) *Stercorarius pomarinus*: Sadly, most of the skuas we saw were fairly distant and unobliging! That said, we managed to identify an adult of this species as we were heading back to Tokyo from Hachijo-jima.

Parasitic Jaeger (Arctic Skua) *Stercorarius parasiticus*: One was identified by Otani (and those super bins!) as we were heading for Hachijo-jima.

Long-tailed Jaeger (L-t Skua) *Stercorarius longicaudus*: A couple of adults were seen on the way to Hachijo-jima, and a couple more on the way back.

LARIDAE

Black-headed Gull *Larus ridibundus*: At least 100 were seen in Tokyo Bay on our first day and a total of just four were noted on Hokkaido.

Black-tailed Gull *Larus crassirostris*: Seen on the way to and from Hachijo-jima as well as on the island, and then good numbers on Hokkaido. A smart and fairly range-restricted gull.

Glaucous Gull *Larus hyperboreus*: Only seen on the Hokkaido extension. Just a single first summer bird in a large flock of Slaty-backs just south of Rausu. Many of the immature Slaty-backed Gulls are very bleached at this time of year, though the distinctive dark-tipped pink bill of this species is a reliable character.

Slaty-backed Gull *Larus schistisagus*: A few scraggy immatures were seen in Tokyo Bay on our first day. On Hokkaido, where it is a common coastal breeder, the species was abundant.

Black-legged Kittiwake *Rissa tridactyla*: A single immature bird was seen amongst the thousands of Short-tailed Shearwaters off the Hokkaido coast south of Rausu.

STERNIDAE

Greater Crested Tern (Swift T) *Sterna bergii*: Just one single seen off Ishigaki-jima.

Black-naped Tern *Sterna sumatrana*: Some excellent looks at this species on Ishigaki-jima and in particular on Okinawa. The delicate pink hue to the underparts was often apparent.

Roseate Tern *Sterna dougallii*: Some fabulous looks at this delightful tern on Okinawa this year, with beautiful pink-hued adults watched courtship feeding and flying by at close range. We saw around 250 on our last day on the island, including some with green flags (which Max discovered were flagged on Okinawa!). Note that at this time of year, the bills are all black, the red base developing through the summer. This supremely elegant species seems to be declining over much of its range and was John's bird of the trip.

Common Tern *Sterna hirundo*: Seen at several localities through the tour, those seen belonging to the black-billed, east Asian form, *longipennis*. Another arm-chair tick one day?

Little Tern *Sterna albifrons*: Hundreds seen in Tokyo Bay, a few seen in the Narita area on the first couple of days and others seen at various locations in the Ryukyus.

Whiskered Tern *Chlidonias hybridus*: The first was a single at Inba-numa, near Narita, with three further singles in the Ryukyus, including one in the excellent tern harbour on Okinawa.

White-winged Tern (W-w Black T) *Chlidonias leucopterus*: At least four distantly at Inba-numa, near Narita, with another from the excellent tern harbour on Okinawa

ALCIDAE

Spectacled Guillemot *Cephus carbo*: Only seen on the Hokkaido extension where we enjoyed excellent views of up to 20 off Utoro, at the base of the Shiretoko Peninsula, and we later saw a couple of others off the east coast.

Japanese Murrelet *Synthliboramphus wumizusume*: Three were seen as we sailed back from Hachijo-jima to Tokyo, though the views could have been better! As scientific names go, it's hard to beat this one. Classified as 'Vulnerable' by BirdLife International, the world population is estimated to be between 2,500 and 9,999 and is declining. Threats to the species include sport-fishing close to breeding colonies, predation by crows (attracted to the spoils of the sports fishermen) and mortality in drift nets. Introduced rats, changes in sea temperature and oil spills may all also be having a detrimental effect!

Rhinoceros Auklet *Cerorhinca monocerata*: Only seen on the Hokkaido extension where, after a single off the east coast, we enjoyed up to 200 offshore from Lake Furen, some of which showed pretty well.

COLUMBIDAE

Rock Dove *Columba livia*: All introduced here.

Japanese Wood Pigeon *Columba janthina*: At least ten were seen on Hachijo-jima where we were able to get some great views of this big and dark pigeon both in flight and perched. Some of us also saw another single on Amami. Classified as 'Near Threatened' by BirdLife International, it is thought to be declining in some of its range due to forestry activities.

Oriental Turtle Dove (Rufous T D) *Streptopelia orientalis*: Common and widespread and seen most days. All seen on Honshu and Kyushu were presumably the nominate subspecies, whilst those on the Ryukyus should have been the endemic *stimpsoni* subspecies.

Emerald Dove *Chalcophaps indica*: A couple seen very well on Ishigaki-jima, with several more heard calling.

White-bellied Pigeon (Japanese Green P) *Treron sieboldii*: We struggled initially for this one before eventually getting good views in the Mi-ike area. We also found small numbers on Hokkaido. Amazing lilac and blue colours around their eyes and great calls!

Whistling Green Pigeon (Red-capped G P) *Treron formosae*: Reasonably common and conspicuous at times on the Ryukyu Islands. Note that this form, as we noted at the time, does not

show a red cap. Classified as 'Near Threatened' by BirdLife International, presumably due to habitat loss, though it does seem to be fairly tolerant, occurring in pretty disturbed areas.

CUCULIDAE

Northern Hawk-Cuckoo *Cuculus hyperythrus*: What appeared to be a very vocal immature male eventually showed well to all at Karuizawa (we do not normally record this species here), and on Hokkaido we heard another and saw one on our last afternoon there. This form was previously lumped in Hodgson's Hawk-Cuckoo *C. fugax*

Common Cuckoo (Eurasian C) *Cuculus canorus*: Surprisingly scarce this year, with just one seen at Karuizawa and a few others heard.

Oriental Cuckoo *Cuculus optatus*: We heard this species a couple of times at Mi-ike, but it refused to show itself. On Hokkaido, they were rather more common with many heard and several seen at various locations. This form (which breeds across northern Eurasia) is often lumped in Himalayan Cuckoo *C. saturatus*, with the name Oriental Cuckoo being used for the enlarged species. Note that this form was formerly known as *horsfieldi* (with the English name Horsfield's Cuckoo being used for the form) but this name was shown to be antedated by *optatus*.

Lesser Cuckoo (Little C) *Cuculus poliocephalus*: Our best sightings were on Hachijo-jima where they were relatively common. We heard several others elsewhere.

STRIGIDAE

Oriental Scops-Owl *Otus sunia*: Only seen on the Hokkaido extension where we got some good spotlight views of a sneaky individual in the forest near to Lake Oketo.

Ryukyu Scops Owl (Elegant S O) *Otus elegans*: Great views of this cute little owl, first spotlighted on Amami and then seen on Ishigaki-jima well (including in broad daylight!) and on Okinawa. Classified as 'Near Threatened' by BirdLife International. It is common wherever suitable habitat remains on the Nansei Shoto, and is presumed to have quite a large population there. It has a population estimated at c.1,000 birds on Lanyu Island, and it has been described as fairly common on the Batanes and Babuyan islands. However, its range must have been much reduced and fragmented in the Philippines by deforestation, although its population it thought to be stable on Lanyu Island and its prospects for survival there are good so long as suitable habitat is protected. It is presumably also relatively secure in the Ryukyu Islands.

Blakiston's Fish Owl *Ketupa blakistoni*: Brilliant views of a pair of these huge owls at Rausu. This awesome encounter was Richard's bird of the trip. Unfortunately, the total population of this splendid beast is now estimated at between 250 and 999 individuals (around 120 of which are in Hokkaido), and the species is classified as 'Endangered' by BirdLife International. Logging of riverine forest, conversion of forest to farmland, development along riverbanks and the construction of dams are the major threats. Over-harvesting of fish, especially salmon, has reduced food availability in Russia and Japan. Disturbance is a problem across its range and river pollution and hunting are potential threats. On Hokkaido, birds are killed through collision with powerlines and traffic and drowning in nets on fish-farms. The bird is named after Captain Thomas Blakiston, a British businessman and consul in Hokkaido from 1861 to 1884.

Northern Boobook *Ninox japonica*: Great spotlight views of a few on Ishigaki-jima and also heard on both Amami and Okinawa. This form was previously lumped in Brown Boobook *N. scutulata* with the name Brown Hawk-Owl being used for the enlarged species.

CAPRIMULGIDAE

Grey Nightjar (Jungle N) *Caprimulgus indicus*: We did well for this species this year, firstly seeing a couple at dusk near to Karuizawa, and then obtaining some great views of at least three more in the forest near to Lake Oketo on Hokkaido.

APODIDAE

White-throated Needletail *Hirundapus caudacutus*: Only seen on the Hokkaido extension. We enjoyed some great views of these spectacular swifts, in particular around Lake Oketo.

Fork-tailed Swift (Pacific S, White-rumped S) *Apus pacificus*: This long-winged and rather rakish swift was only really seen well on Hachijo-jima and again on Hokkaido.

House Swift (House S) *Apus nipalensis*: A couple were seen poorly in the distance on Ishigaki-jima, and then, right on cue, we had some much better views in northern Okinawa.

ALCEDINIDAE

Ruddy Kingfisher *Halcyon coromanda*: First seen at Mi-ike where we got some good scope views of the rather uniform chestnut subspecies *major* and we went on to see many more in the Ryukyu Islands, including fantastic views of several on Ishigaki-jima, where we could admire the waxy red bills and lilac-hued upperparts of the subspecies *bangsi*. Rated highly in Roy and Judi's top sixes.

Common Kingfisher *Alcedo atthis*: Our first two were on the river close to Toden Lake, and we saw others near to Mi-ike and on Okinawa.

PICIDAE

Eurasian Wryneck *Jynx torquilla*: Only seen on the Hokkaido extension. A pair close to Lake Oketo were attending a nest, and put on a great performance, and we saw a couple more at Kiritappu. Always great to see.

Grey-headed Woodpecker *Picus canus*: Only seen on the Hokkaido extension where we had several good looks at this species in the forest around Lake Oketo. Clearly closely related to the next species!

Japanese Green Woodpecker *Picus awokera*: Some great looks at this very smart endemic though more often heard than seen in the gorgeous forests of Karuizawa, Mount Fuji and Mi-ike. Our first were in the hotel car park at Karuizawa! The scientific name *awokera* is a mis-transcribed form of the Japanese name ao (green) - gera (woodpecker).

Okinawa Woodpecker (Pryer's W) *Sapheopipo noguchii*: These extremely rare woodpeckers showed very well on Okinawa with at least eight on our first day in Yamburu and six on the next! High on Alain's favourites, and 10th overall. Classified as 'Critically Endangered' by BirdLife International, its population is believed to number somewhere between just 146 and 584! Threats to its continued existence are generally due to deforestation and habitat deterioration. It is also believed to be at risk from natural disasters (such as typhoons) because it occupies such a small range.

Black Woodpecker *Dryocopus martius*: Only seen on the Hokkaido extension, where several of these huge and impressive woodpeckers showed extremely well, including a male at a nest hole in the forest near to Lake Oketo.

Great Spotted Woodpecker *Dendrocopos major*: Small numbers seen at forested sites on Honshu and again on Hokkaido.

White-backed Woodpecker *Dendrocopos leucotos*: Some great looks at this attractive woodpecker at Mi-ike where they respond very positively to the recording of Okinawa Woodpecker's drumming! Another was seen by some near to Lake Oketo.

Amami Woodpecker (Owston's W) *Dendrocopos [leucotos] owstoni*: Some great looks at this highly distinctive large and dark endemic on Amami, especially at the Amami Natural Forest. This form must surely be ripe for splitting, and I am sure that before too long it will be. Therefore I have treated here as a distinct 'allospecies'.

Japanese Pygmy Woodpecker *Dendrocopos kizuki*: This attractive species was commonly encountered in small numbers in forest more or less throughout, with our first ones being seen at Karuizawa.

PITTIDAE

Fairy Pitta *Pitta nympha*: How this one caused us to sweat, and sweat and... It seems that they arrived later than ever this year, and left their arrival until the morning of our departure! That said, our (almost literally) last minute encounter with this brilliant creature was superb, and after some initial teasing, we were then treated to some great views of the bird hopping about just a few metres from us! As a result, it was voted as our second favourite bird of the trip. Classified as 'Vulnerable' by BirdLife International. Deforestation on the breeding grounds in Japan, Taiwan (where trapping was also a problem), China and South Korea is the main threat though it may be a fair assumption that habitat disturbance on the wintering grounds may also be a problem. The world population is estimated to be between 2,500 and 9,999 and is declining.

ALAUDIDAE

Japanese Skylark *Alauda japonica*: Fairly common on Honshu where it was seen at a number of more open sites and could often be heard singing. 'Skylarks' were also seen on Hokkaido, though the species/subspecies seen there is difficult to ascertain, though we may well have only see *japonica* there too. This form is often lumped in Eurasian Skylark *A. arvensis*, and its characters are somewhat intermediate between that species and Oriental Skylark *A. gulgula*. For those of you interested in this lark, have a look at <http://www.birdskorea.org/njl.asp> "...*japonica*, a form appearing to be somewhat intermediate between Northern and Oriental Skylark, so that it has been described variously as *A. arvensis japonica*, *A. gulgula japonica* or *Alauda japonica*. While it appears closer to Northern in general appearance, like Oriental it keeps its tail largely closed during song-flights..."

HIRUNDINIDAE

Sand Martin (Bank Swallow) *Riparia riparia*: A single migrant was seen near to Narita. On Hokkaido, where this species breeds, we found them to be common.

Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica*: A common and widespread summer visitor except in the Ryukyus where it is largely replaced by the next species.

Pacific Swallow *Hirundo tahitica*: Common on the Ryukyus.

Red-rumped Swallow *Hirundo daurica*: We had some great views of one sitting on some wires at Ada, northern Okinawa.

Asian House Martin *Delichon dasypus*: Fairly common on Honshu where we saw reasonable numbers around Karuizawa and between there and Mount Fuji. Fairly plentiful on Hokkaido.

MOTACILLIDAE

Olive-backed Pipit *Anthus hodgsoni*: A common breeding bird on Mount Fuji though the bad weather there nearly thwarted us, with just one individual seen! Several more were seen well on Hokkaido.

- Black-backed Wagtail *Motacilla lugens*: Fairly common on Honshu, and especially so on Hokkaido, where many were seen. This form is often lumped in White Wagtail *M. alba*
- Japanese Wagtail *Motacilla grandis*: Good views of several of these attractive birds on Honshu where we first found them around Karuizawa. It is an endemic breeding species to Japan.
- Green-headed Wagtail *Motacilla [flava] taivana*: Only seen on the Hokkaido extension. After a little effort, we secured good views of a pair of these attractive birds at Tofutsu Lake, on the north coast of Hokkaido. It is an extremely rare breeding species in Japan.
- Grey Wagtail *Motacilla cinerea*: Pretty common and widespread in suitable habitats on Honshu, Kyushu and Hokkaido.

CAMPEPHAGIDAE

- Ashy Minivet *Pericrocotus divaricatus*: Another of those breeding visitors that seems to be declining. We saw a few at Karuizawa and heard a few more there.
- Ryukyu Minivet *Pericrocotus tegimae*: First seen at Mi-ike and then common on Ishigaki-jima and throughout the Ryukyus. This distinctive resident species was previously lumped in Ashy Minivet *P. divaricatus* and vocally the two are certainly very similar.

PYCNONOTIDAE

- Chinese Bulbul (Light-vented B) *Pycnonotus sinensis*: Common on Ishigaki-jima and in some of the more open areas on Okinawa. The birds on Ishigaki are believed to be indigenous and of the endemic subspecies *orii*, whilst those on Okinawa are presumed to have been introduced from Taiwan.
- Brown-eared Bulbul *Hypsipetes amaurotis*: Regularly observed throughout. A highly variable species, there is significant variation between the subspecies we encountered!

CINCLIDAE

- Brown Dipper *Cinclus pallasii*: Seen well on a couple of occasions along the rivers at Karuizawa and seen again around Mi-ike and on Hokkaido.

TROGLODYTIDAE

- Winter Wren (Wren) *Troglodytes troglodytes*: Heard and seen fairly regularly on Honshu, Hachijo-jima and Kyushu, and several more heard on Hokkaido! The rather dark form concerned is *fumigatus* whilst those heard on Hachijo-jima are the *mosukei* subspecies. The song is similar to, though distinctly different from, West European birds. Winter Wren is a species that is sure to get a 'taxonomic review' at some stage!

PRUNELLIDAE

- Japanese Accentor *Prunella rubida*: After a bit off effort on Mount Fuji, we managed to get some great views of a single of these rufescent Dunnocks! We then went on to get some good views of several more around the Shiretoko Pass on Hokkaido.

TURDIDAE

- Japanese Robin *Erithacus akahige*: We were pleased to find that this species was common (if at times elusive!) on Hachijo-jima, where we all got some great looks at the *tanensis* subspecies. On Hokkaido, we went on to get some great views of the slightly brighter nominate subspecies, a couple of which sat right out singing for us.
- Amami Robin *Erithacus [komadori] komadori*: We enjoyed some great views of this form (with black splotches on the flanks) at Sumiyo Dam and in the Amami Natural Forest. The differences in plumage (of both sexes) and voice between this form and the form on Okinawa are significant, and for this reason (predicting the future split), I have treated the two here as

'allospecies'. The combined species is classified as 'Near Threatened' by BirdLife International, Threats include predation by introduced mongooses (Okinawa) and weasels (Nakanoshima) and habitat loss resulting from commercial logging.

Okinawa Robin *Erithacus [komadori] namiyei*: Common on Okinawa where they could often be seen hopping along forest roads. See other comments under Amami Robin above.

Siberian Rubythroat *Luscinia calliope*: Only seen on the Hokkaido extension. This jewel of a bird was first found in the dwarf vegetation at the top of the Shiretoko Pass, and we then went on to see several fabulous singing males in Eastern Hokkaido. My favourite bird on Hokkaido!

Siberian Blue Robin *Luscinia cyane*: Much easier to hear than see though we did manage to see a couple of fine males pretty well at Karuizawa.

Northern Red-flanked Bluetail *Tarsiger cyanurus*: Pretty common on Mount Fuji where we got some great views of up to eight birds including several handsome males. Also several more noted on Hokkaido. Usually known simply as Red-flanked Bluetail, Rasmussen and Anderton in their excellent recent '*Birds of South Asia: The Ripley Guide*' split off Himalayan Red-flanked Bluetail *T. rufilatus* as a separate species and I have renamed the residual nominate form seen on this tour accordingly.

Daurian Redstart *Phoenicurus aureus*: Only seen on the Hokkaido extension. A single male at our lunch stop close to Lake Oketo was an unusual sight, as this species is not a regular breeder on Hokkaido.

Siberian Stonechat *Saxicola maura*: Seen in grasslands near to Karuizawa where we saw some fine males, and then very common on Hokkaido. Stonechats are another group where the species limits remain contentious. The form here is *stejnegeri* which is included in Siberian Stonechat *S. maura* if it is split off.

Blue Rock-Thrush *Monticola solitarius*: First seen on Hachijo-jima and several more seen in the Ryukyus and even a few along the Hokkaido coast. The subspecies concerned is the highly distinctive red-bellied *philippensis* (though it is only a winter visitor to the Philippines), surely another candidate for a split? In Japan, it is a coastal species, and does not breed in the mountains.

White's Thrush *Zoothera aurea*: After some brief and largely unsatisfying sightings on Hachijo-jima (where the birds kept leaping off the road!) we managed some great scope views of a bird on the nest at Mi-ike. We also heard a couple singing on Hokkaido. White's Thrush *Z. aurea* (the northern breeder that winters in Southeast Asia) and Scaly Thrush *Z. dauma* are now generally treated as two species on the basis of very different songs. The two are very hard to separate in the field though in Japan, only White's Thrush occurs.

Amami Thrush *Zoothera major*: We heard them well and had a few brief but good views (for some) of this shy species on Amami. Another from the Scaly Thrush complex. Handbook of Birds of the World (Volume 10) lumps this and White's Thrush in Scaly Thrush though I personally believe this is incorrect due to the very different songs. Formerly classified as 'Critically Endangered' by BirdLife International (they now lump this species!) the world population was estimated at less than 58! Key threats seem to be habitat loss and, perhaps more worryingly, predation from introduced predators, most notably Javan Mongoose *H. javanicus* which was introduced for snake control!

Siberian Thrush *Zoothera sibirica* (H): Only recorded on the Hokkaido extension. Sadly, despite much effort, we only briefly heard this species singing in the distance at dawn near to our hotel at Lake Oketo.

Japanese Thrush (Grey T) *Turdus cardis*: Good views of several of these small and striking thrushes in the gorgeous broadleaved forests at Karuizawa. A fine bird that sneaked into Richard and Cliff's top sixes.

- Brown-headed Thrush (Brown T) *Turdus chrysolaus*: Fairly common and relatively easy to see in the mountain forest and roadsides around Mount Fuji, and a few others seen on Hokkaido.
- Izu Thrush (Izu Islands T) *Turdus celaenops*: Quite common and relatively easy to see on Hachijojima where we saw more than a dozen. Classified as 'Vulnerable' by BirdLife International, the world population is estimated to be between 2,500 and 9,999 and is declining. The main threat to this species, which has a very small range, appears to be nest predation by introduced weasels and Large-billed Crows which have increased dramatically due to human activity (e.g. dumping of raw garbage).

SYLVIIDAE

- Asian Stubtail Warbler (Stub-tailed Bush W) *Urosphena squameiceps*: This tailless mite showed brilliantly in the scope at Karuizawa, and although we heard several others, we never caught another glimpse! A cracking little bird, it generally stays well hidden.
- Japanese Bush Warbler *Cettia diphone*: Known as the 'Japanese nightingale' due to its loud and fluty song. We saw them at several locations but heard far more than we saw.
- Zitting Cisticola (Fan-tailed Warbler) *Cisticola juncidis*: Common in wet and open areas throughout. At several locations (initially near to Narita), we had excellent opportunities to study the plumage, song and display of the local form, *brunniceps*, and came to the conclusion that we found it hard to believe they were the same species as we see in Western Europe!
- Middendorff's Grasshopper Warbler *Locustella ochotensis*: Only seen on the Hokkaido extension. We enjoyed great views of several individuals of this relatively showy species in the Kiritappu area.
- Lanceolated Warbler *Locustella lanceolata*: Only seen on the Hokkaido extension. After a few false starts with unobliging individuals, we enjoyed some good scope studies of a few individuals in the Kiritappu area.
- Gray's Grasshopper Warbler *Locustella fasciolata*: Only seen on the Hokkaido extension. The master skulker! It took plenty of effort and attempts before we had all had good views of this ultra-skulker on Hokkaido! The last of the summer migrants to arrive there.
- Japanese Swamp Warbler (J Marsh W, Marsh Grassbird) *Locustella pryeri*: Fairly common in the marshes near to Narita on our first afternoon where we saw up to ten singing individuals and got great scope views of this reedbed specialist. It's amazing how they always seem to perch whilst doing the splits! I'm certainly not convinced that this species a *Locustella*. Classified as 'Vulnerable' by BirdLife International, the world population is estimated to be between 2,500 and 9,999 and is declining. Loss and degradation of its reedbed habitats on both the breeding and wintering areas are the key causes for concern.
- Black-browed Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus bistrigiceps*: A very late migrant to Japan, we found a couple of singing individuals in the grasslands at Karuizawa which showed very nicely, and we went on to see several more on Hokkaido.
- Oriental Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus orientalis*: Very common in the marshes in the Narita area on the first couple of days and seen or heard at a few other locations. The loud croaky song is extremely similar to the song of Great Reed Warbler.
- Eastern Crowned Warbler (E C Leaf-W) *Phylloscopus coronatus*: Seen and heard in the forest at Karuizawa but otherwise absent until we got to Hokkaido where it was pretty common.
- Sakhalin Leaf Warbler *Phylloscopus borealoides*: Only seen on the Hokkaido extension where the song of this jolly little 'phyllosc' was a common sound. Remarkably elusive, it took some effort to see them well. This form was formerly lumped in the very similar Pale-legged Leaf Warbler *P. tenellipes* though it differs from that species in its song.
- Ijima's Leaf-Warbler *Phylloscopus ijimae*: Very common on Hachijojima where we saw them at nearly every stop in the forest. They were very vocal at this time and extremely responsive to squeaking. It is remarkable that there are very few winter records anywhere in the world for this species except for some old records from the Philippines and some

recent claims from the Ryukyus, and birds have been caught on passage in southern Kyushu. I guess they must be overlooked, possibly spending most of their time in the canopy. Classified as 'Vulnerable' by BirdLife International, the world population is estimated to be between 2,500 and 9,999 and is declining. Deforestation in its breeding areas, and quite possibly its wintering areas too, seem to be the main reasons for its decline.

Arctic Warbler *Phylloscopus borealis*: Small numbers heard in the higher elevation forests on Mount Fuji, where most of us failed to see them thanks to the inclement weather. The song in Japan, where the subspecies is *xanthodryas*, is significantly different from that in much of its range.

REGULIDAE

Goldcrest *Regulus regulus*: Heard on Mount Fuji and a few seen on Hokkaido.

MUSCICAPIDAE

Blue-and-white Flycatcher *Cyanoptila cyanomelana*: Some lovely views of dazzling males of this attractive and very accomplished songster at Karuizawa, and seen again on our last afternoon on Hokkaido.

Dark-sided Flycatcher (Sooty F, Siberian F) *Muscicapa sibirica*: A single showed well on Mount Fuji, and we went on to see a few more at Aizankei Hot Springs on Hokkaido.

Asian Brown Flycatcher (Brown F) *Muscicapa dauurica*: A couple showed well in the forest around Karuizawa and we saw another four in the forest around Lake Oketo on Hokkaido.

Narcissus Flycatcher *Ficedula narcissina*: Another cracking flycatcher that was a real performer and much admired. Seen very well on our first morning at Karuizawa with others showing well there, at Mi-ike and later on Hokkaido.

Ryukyu Flycatcher *Ficedula [narcissina] owstoni*: This interesting form was seen very well at several spots in the Ryukyus, with our best views being on Amami and Ishigaki-jima. This rather drab form is more or less resident, vocally distinct and surely a good one to have in the bank. It is so distinctive that I have treated it as an 'allospecies' giving it its own English name, and it is identified in its scientific name by a trinomial with the superspecies name preceding it in square brackets.

MONARCHIDAE

Japanese Paradise-Flycatcher (Black P F) *Terpsiphone atrocaudata*: First seen at Mi-ike, we went on to see several more in the Ryukyus. The beautiful maroon coloration and elongated tail feathers make this a particularly attractive species. Classified as 'Near Threatened' by BirdLife International. A recent survey detected a steep decline in part of the Japanese breeding population, which has presumably occurred because of forest loss and degradation in its winter range.

TIMALIDAE

Hwamei *Garrulax canorus*: A couple of these introduced laughingthrushes were found skulking in some undergrowth while we were unsuccessfully looking for Crested Kingfishers en route to Mount Fuji.

AEGITHALIDAE

Long-tailed Tit *Aegithalos caudatus*: Fairly common at Karuizawa and at Mi-ike, though only heard on Hokkaido.

PARIDAE

- Marsh Tit *Parus palustris*: Only seen on the Hokkaido extension, where we found just two on the way up to the Shiretoko Pass.
- Willow Tit *Parus montanus*: Fairly common around Karuizawa and again on Hokkaido. Vocally distinct from birds of Western Europe.
- Varied Tit *Parus varius*: This stunner was regularly encountered at forested sites virtually throughout the tour, having first been seen at Karuizawa (but see below).
- Izu Tit (Owston's Tit) *Parus [varius] owstoni*: We were delighted to eventually find three individuals of this large and chestnut-cheeked form on Hachijo-jima. Yet another distinctive future split which I have treated as an 'allospecies'.
- Coal Tit *Parus ater*: Little tufty crests here.
- Japanese Tit *Parus minor*: The subtly attractive, pallid birds in Japan belong to the subspecies *minor*, which are often lumped in Great Tit *P. major*.
- Ishigaki Tit *Parus [minor] nigriloris*: We saw a number of these amazing dark birds on Ishigaki. It is vocally and morphologically distinct and is another obvious future split that I have treated as an allospecies.

SITTIDAE

- Eurasian Nuthatch *Sitta europaea*: On Honshu, we saw *amurensis*, on Kyushu, the subspecies at Mi-ike was *roseilia*, and on Hokkaido the pallid-looking subspecies is *asiatica*.

ZOSTEROPIDAE

- Japanese White-eye *Zosterops japonicus*: A common and widespread breeding species. Much of the population moves further south for the winter. There is great variation between the islands, and more than one species may be involved.

LANIIDAE

- Bull-headed Shrike *Lanius bucephalus*: This attractive shrike was observed fairly regularly.

CORVIDAE

- Eurasian Jay *Garrulus glandarius*: Those seen in the forest at Karuizawa on Honshu were the distinctive pale-eyed *japonicus* whilst at Mi-ike, in southern Kyushu, the subspecies is probably the very similar *hiugaensis*. On Hokkaido, we saw the dark-eyed and brown-headed subspecies *brandti*.
- Lidth's Jay (Ryukyu J) *Garrulus lidthi*: We eventually got stunning views of this cracking Amami endemic, especially around the Amami Natural Forest. Classified as 'Vulnerable' by BirdLife International, it's population is thought to number less than 5,800 and it is declining due to increased nest predation by introduced mongooses and Large-billed Crows which have increased due to human activity (e.g. dumping of raw garbage).
- Azure-winged Magpie *Cyanopica cyanus*: This attractive species was seen on our first day in Tokyo Bay and then seen again at Karuizawa.
- Spotted Nutcracker *Nucifraga caryocatactes*: A trip up to the higher reaches of Mount Fuji led to brilliant views of these excellent birds.
- Oriental Crow *Corvus orientalis*: This species was common throughout Honshu, Kyushu and Hokkaido. It is more usually lumped in Carrion Crow *C. corone*. However, now that Hooded Crow *C. cornix* and Carrion Crow are treated as separate species, it is really logical to split off the equally different (genetically at least) and isolated Oriental (or Eastern) Crow as I have done here.

Large-billed Crow (Jungle Crow) *Corvus macrorhynchos*: Common all over. The rather tiny *osai* subspecies on Ishigaki-jima is a rather interesting one!

STURNIDAE

Chestnut-cheeked Starling (Red-cheeked S) *Sturnus philippensis*: This rather smart and localized starling was first seen around the paddyfields near Karuizawa and several others seen around Karuizawa, on the journey to Mount Fuji and on Hokkaido.

White-cheeked Starling (Grey Starling) *Sturnus cineraceus*: A common and widespread breeding species on Honshu, Kyushu and Hokkaido.

PASSERIDAE

Russet Sparrow *Passer rutilans*: Only seen on the Hokkaido extension where we enjoyed some great views of this well-marked breeding species.

Eurasian Tree Sparrow *Passer montanus*: Probably the most widespread and common species of the tour. Usually found in the vicinity of humans.

ESTRILDIDAE

Scaly-breasted Munia *Lonchura punctulata*: This introduced species was found to be common in some of the paddyfields on Okinawa.

FRINGILLIDAE

Grey-capped Greenfinch (Oriental Greenfinch) *Carduelis sinica*: Fairly common and widespread on Honshu, Kyushu and Hokkaido.

Eurasian Siskin *Carduelis spinus* (H): Only recorded on the Hokkaido extension where it was heard in the forest near to Rausu.

Pine Grosbeak *Pinicola enucleator*: Only seen on the Hokkaido extension where it was a pleasant surprise to find a couple of fine males up on the Shiretoko Pass. Much appreciated by Robin and Otani.

Long-tailed Rosefinch *Uragus sibiricus*: Only seen on the Hokkaido extension where at least three were found in Eastern Hokkaido, with both a female, and later a male, showing well.

Grey-bellied Bullfinch *Pyrrhula griseiventris*: Only seen on the Hokkaido extension. We were pleased to get great looks at several of these attractive birds on Hokkaido. This form is often lumped in Eurasian Bullfinch *P. pyrrhula*.

Japanese Grosbeak *Eophona personata*: Some very good looks at Karuizawa with a few others elsewhere. A highly impressive species.

Hawfinch *Coccothraustes coccothraustes*: Only seen on the Hokkaido extension where we saw a handful, including individuals regularly flying over the Shiretoko Pass.

EMBERIZIDAE

Grey Bunting *Emberiza variabilis*: Only seen on the Hokkaido extension. This sneaky species was a little difficult to pin down at first, but with a little perseverance, we all enjoyed great looks at both males and females.

Black-faced Bunting *Emberiza spodocephala*: Our best views were of a singing male scoped up at Karuizawa and we saw a couple of others there on other occasions. It was also very common on Hokkaido. The subspecies involved, *personata*, shows yellow underparts and is quite different from the nominate form on the mainland. Watch this space!

Japanese Yellow Bunting (Yellow B) *Emberiza sulphurata*: This scarce endemic breeder was seen very well on several occasions at Karuizawa. Classified as 'Vulnerable' by BirdLife International, the world population is estimated to be between 2,500 and 9,999 and is

declining. Threats are thought to include habitat loss, trapping for the bird trade and high levels of pesticide use.

Meadow Bunting (Siberian Meadow Bunting) *Emberiza cioides*: The most commonly encountered, but nevertheless attractive, bunting.

Chestnut-eared Bunting (Grey-headed Bunting) *Emberiza fucata*: Great views in the paddies near to Karuizawa where they were common and approachable and also seen on Hokkaido.

Common Reed Bunting *Emberiza schoeniclus*: Only seen on the Hokkaido extension where they were fairly common at various wetland localities. The subspecies involved is *pyrrhulina*.

Japanese Reed Bunting (Ochre-rumped B) *Emberiza yessoensis*: Fairly common in the marshes near Narita where we saw some excellent breeding plumaged males atop reed stems on our first afternoon. Classified as 'Near Threatened' by BirdLife International, It is considered to be uncommon or rare in all parts of its range. It is presumably declining because of the loss and degradation of wetland habitat within its breeding range.

MAMMALS

Amami Rabbit (Amami Black R, Ryukyu R) *Pentalagus furnessi*: Our spotlighting efforts on Amami were rewarded with at least four individuals of this rare species.

Japanese Hare *Lepus brachyurus*: A single at Karuizawa while we were looking for pheasants was a surprise.

Japanese Squirrel *Sciurus lis*: Just a couple seen at Karuizawa.

Japanese Giant Flying Squirrel *Petaurista leucogenys* (NL): Although we all saw this one via the camera link on the TV screen, most opted to look unsuccessfully for owls rather than enjoying this cutie emerging!

Brown Rat *Rattus norvegicus*: A rat seen on Okinawa was identified as this species.

Ryukyu Rat (R Long-haired R) *Diplothrix legata*: This one sent Otani into raptures at Sumiyo Dam, as it was a new mammal for him!

Red Fox *Vulpes vulpes*: Only seen on the Hokkaido extension where a couple of tame foxes frequented our hotel at Lake Oketo, looking for handouts!

Brown Bear *Ursos arctos*: Only seen on the Hokkaido extension. One of the highlights of our brilliant visit to Hokkaido was watching a mother with two cubs in the snow by the roadside on the Shiretoko Pass.

Japanese Weasel *Mustela itatsi*: Seen by some while we were looking for kingfishers on the way to Mount Fuji, we then saw another on Hachijo-jima where they have been introduced.

Siberian Weasel (introduced) *Mustela sibirica*: A single of this introduced species was seen on Kyushu.

Eurasian Badger *Meles meles*: One, which was spotted by Richard while we were looking for pheasants near to Mi-ike, ended up running under a locked door into a fuel supply shed! What a stupid old badger!

Ryukyu Flying Fox *Pteropus dasymallus*: A few seen including close-up daytime views on Ishigaki-jima, and some seen feeding close by at night on Okinawa.

Harbour Seal (Common Seal) *Phoca vitulina*: Only seen on the Hokkaido extension. A single off the Hokkaido coast was thought to be this species.

Eurasian Wild Boar *Sus scrofa*: Singles were seen briefly on both Amami and Okinawa.

Sika Deer *Cervus nippon*: A few seen on Mount Fuji, several seen in the forest in the vicinity of Mi-ike and then common on Hokkaido.

REPTILES AND AMPHIBIANS

Thanks to Otani's help, we managed to record a significant number of 'herps' during our tour. Below

is a reasonably complete list along with the places we saw them.

RHACOPHORIDAE

Ryukyu Kajika Frog *Buergeria japonica*: Several during our spotlighting on Amami.
Schlegel's Green Tree Frog *Rhacophorus schlegelii* (H): Heard only at Karuizawa!

RANIDAE

Amami Tip-nosed Frog *Rana amamiensis*: Several during our spotlighting on Amami.
American Bullfrog *Rana catesbeiana*: The loud calls of this introduced species could be heard in the marshes near to Narita, where one was seen by some.
Indian Rice Frog *Rana limnocharis*: We saw four of these on Okinawa.
Ryukyu Tip-nosed Frog (OkinawaT-n F) *Rana narina*: A couple of this larger frog were seen on Okinawa.
Ezo Brown Frog *Rana pirica*: Only seen on the Hokkaido extension, we saw one on our first day on Hokkaido.

HYLIDAE

Japanese Tree Frog *Hyla japonica*: A single seen at Karuizawa.

BUFONIDAE

Western-Japanese Common Toad *Bufo japonicus japonicus*: Three seen at Mi-ike.
Marine Toad *Bufo marinus*: The toad that we saw on Ishigaki-jima.

SALAMANDRIDAE

Sword-tailed Newt (Ryukyu Fire-bellied N) *Cynops ensicauda*: Great looks on both Amami and Okinawa.

BTAGURIDAE

Yellow-margined Box Turtle *Cuora flavomarginata evelynae*: Great views on several occasions on Ishigaki-jima.

EMYDIDAE

Red-eared Slider (R-e Terrapin) *Trachemys scripta elegans*: This introduced species was seen on a couple of occasions in dams on Okinawa.

AGAMIDAE

Okinawan (Sakishima) Tree Lizard *Japalura polygonata ishigakiensis*: A couple of these tree-dwelling lizards were seen on Ishigaki-jima.

SCINCIDAE

Ryukyu Short-legged Skink *Ateuchosaurus pellopleurus*: A single was seen on Amami.

COLUBRIDAE

Burrowing Ratsnake *Elaphe conspicillata*: A single seen at Mi-ike on Kyushu.
[Ryukyu Green Snake *Cyclophiops semicarinatus*: A dead individual was found on the road on Amami.]
Pryer's Keelback Snake *Amphiesma pryeri*: A single seen swimming in a pond on Amami.
Tiger Keelback *Rhabdophis tigrinus*: A single seen, only by Pete, at Mi-ike.

VIPERIDAE

[Himehabu *Trimeresurus okinavensis*: A dead example of this highly-poisonous snake was found on the road on Amami.]

APPENDIX 1

BONIN ISLANDS EXTENSION

11 - 19 JUNE 2007

TOUR REPORT

LEADER: PETE MORRIS

The duration of our extra stay in Japan was determined by the ferry timings to the Bonin Islands. As the ferry only operates once every eight days, and since the timetable is only published each spring, we were quite lucky to only have to wait a couple of days for the ferry.

On the first of these days, we explored various tracts of woodland in the Narita and Tokyo area, in the hope of finding the rare and elusive Japanese Night Heron. With Otani's help, we tried various places where the species had been seen in the past, but found no evidence of them. A close perched Northern Goshawk and a Japanese Paradise-Flycatcher were two of the few rewards for our efforts!

That evening, we decided to take an overnight ferry to Miyake-jima where we spent a very productive morning. Despite the recent devastation to the forest (much of the island's forests have been killed off by noxious gases from the over-active volcano) we enjoyed an excellent morning, seeing good numbers of all of the Izu specialities as well as plenty of our main target bird, the localized Styan's (or Pleske's) Grasshopper Warbler, which was not only common, but conspicuous too! The journey back to Tokyo was good too as amongst the thousands of seabirds we were able to pick out several Bulwer's Petrels and a couple of Tristram's Storm-Petrels (one of which gave excellent looks) and enjoyed pretty good views of four Japanese Murrelets as well as a Sperm Whale.

The following day we were back on the ocean as our adventure began in earnest. Having acquainted ourselves with the rather crowded sleeping conditions, we headed for the deck as we left Tokyo Bay, and stared at the sea for the rest of the day! For the time put in, there were few rewards, though we did see a couple more Tristram's Storm-Petrels, enjoyed a fairly large pod of Short-finned Pilot Whales, saw another Sperm Whale, and had tantalizing views of what were most likely our first Matsudaira's Storm-Petrels. We went to sleep that night with high hopes for the morning.

Not surprisingly, we were back on deck at dawn, and the seven hour vigil that followed proved productive. A couple of Black-footed Albatrosses, hundreds of Bulwer's and Bonin Petrels, a Bannerman's Shearwater (for Richard), hundreds of Wedge-tailed Shearwaters, plenty of Matsudaira's Storm-Petrels (complete with white wing flashes), a Tristram's Storm-petrel and a Sooty Tern were

quite a nice haul, and as we approached Chichi-jima, our first destination in the Bonins, we were delighted to find a White-necked Petrel, a large and scarce *Pterodroma* which drifted right past us. We were on dry land for an hour before taking an onward ferry to Haha-jima. Seabirding was once again good, with plenty more Bonin Petrels and Matsudaira's Storm-Petrels and we added both Madeiran Storm-Petrel and Brown Noddy. We soon found our accommodation on the sleepy island of Haha-jima, and set out to explore the island. It did not take us long to find our first Bonin Honeyeater, a species that was to prove common during our stay. Over the course of the next two or three days we had many brilliant views of these aberrant white-eyes. Otherwise, birding was fairly slow. Endemic forms of Japanese Bush-Warbler (a potential split?), Japanese Buzzard (strange-looking), Brown-eared Bulbul and Grey-capped Greenfinch were bagged and we also found plenty of Blue Rock Thrushes and White's Thrushes. Odd things such as Slaty-backed Gull, Pacific Golden Plover, Ruddy Turnstone, Common Tern and various herons and egrets put in appearances, and we spent some time amusing ourselves watching turtles, reef sharks and rays. However, it must be said that we were ready for the journey back and another day of staring at the sea. This was once again productive, even in the brisk winds, with many more views of the same species and good numbers of Madeiran Storm-Petrels as a bonus!

Although we only recorded 72 species during our additional week or so, these included several excellent and seldom seen seabirds (a group we were very keen on) and the seldom seen Bonin Honeyeater, an attractive endemic that few have made the journey to see. An excellent end to a fine month in Japan!

SYSTEMATIC LIST

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

Species that were not personally recorded by the leaders are indicated by the symbol (NL).

Conservation threat categories and information are taken from *Threatened Birds of the World*, BirdLife International's magnificent book on the sad status of the rarest 10% of the world's avifauna, and updates on the BirdLife website: <http://www.birdlife.org/datazone/index.html>

Note that comments are only made for species not seen on the main tour and for some of the other more interesting sightings.

PODICIPEDIDAE

Little Grebe *Tachybaptus ruficollis*

DIOMEDEIDAE

Black-footed Albatross *Diomedea nigripes*: A couple were seen at sea as we sailed towards Chichi-jima in the Bonins, and a couple more were seen on the way back to Tokyo.

PROCELLARIIDAE

Bonin Petrel *Pterodroma hypoleuca*: Good numbers were seen at sea in the vicinity of the Bonin Islands, with up to 100 or more noted in a day, some of which showed extremely well. A real highlight of the boat journeys.

White-necked Petrel *Pterodroma cervicalis*: A single showed very well as we were approaching Chichi-jima in the Bonin Islands. This species is currently classified as 'Vulnerable' by BirdLife International, with a world population estimated at 100,000 and increasing. Most problems were caused by introduced mammals. The population on Raoul was probably destroyed by Feral Cats and Brown Rats *Rattus norvegicus*. Pacific Rat *R. exulans* is present on Macauley, but does not apparently attack eggs or chicks. Feral goats were present on both Raoul and Macauley and trampled burrows. Rabbits were formerly present on Phillip, and extensive grazing and burrowing caused large-scale erosion. It remains vulnerable to the introduction of further mammalian predators, and also to fire and disturbance by visitors. Conservation measures underway include the removal of goats from Raoul and Macauley in 1984 and 1970, respectively. The eradication of rabbits from Phillip in 1985 may have resulted in the species colonising the island in the following years. A study area on Macauley was established in 1988. The Kermadec Islands are nature reserves with access by permit only.

Bulwer's Petrel *Bulweria bulwerii*: Very common during our various pelagic adventures with many hundreds noted, some of which were extremely close to the boat.

Streaked Shearwater *Calonectris leucomelas*: Thousands in seas around the Izu Islands and Tokyo, but absent further south.

Flesh-footed Shearwater *Puffinus carneipes*: We noted just a single as we sailed towards Chichi-jima.

Wedge-tailed Shearwater *Puffinus pacificus*: This species replaced Streaked Shearwater in the more southern sea areas, though was not so numerous with a maximum daily count of 300. All birds seen were light phase.

Sooty Shearwater *Puffinus griseus*: Just a couple.

Short-tailed Shearwater *Puffinus tenuirostris*: Just small numbers.

Bannerman's Shearwater *Puffinus bannermani*: Richard got on to the first two, and just when I thought we would see no more, a third appeared by the boat, well to the north of the Bonin Islands. This rare and localized species is often lumped in Audubon's Shearwater *P. lherminieri*, but several recent publications have split it, and indeed the whole Little/Audubon's Shearwater complex has been completely revised in recent literature.

HYDROBATIDAE

Madeiran Storm-petrel (Band-rumped S-p) *Oceanodroma castro*: A single as we left Chichi-jima for Haha-jima, and then good numbers (15+) as we passed the Izu Islands on our way back north.

Matsudaira's Storm-petrel *Oceanodroma matsudairae*: Pretty common in the more southern sea areas with many great views close to the boat.

Tristram's Storm-petrel (Sooty S-p) *Oceanodroma tristrami*: A handful seen on various boat journeys, including one or two which gave excellent views. The extremely strong and crisp carpal bar seems to be pretty distinctive.

SULIDAE

Brown Booby *Sula leucogaster*: Common around the Bonin Islands where they breed in numbers.

PHALACROCORACIDAE

Great Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo*

ARDEIDAE

Black-crowned Night Heron *Nycticorax nycticorax*: An immature seen on Haha-jima in the Bonins.

Eastern Cattle Egret *Bubulcus coromandus*: Small numbers seen on Haha-jima in the Bonins.

Little Egret *Egretta garzetta*: A single seen on Haha-jima in the Bonins.

Intermediate Egret (Yellow-billed E) *Egretta intermedia*: A few seen on Haha-jima in the Bonins.

Great Egret *Ardea alba*: A few seen on Haha-jima in the Bonins.

Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea*

ANATIDAE

Chinese Spot-billed Duck *Anas zonorhyncha*

ACCIPITRIDAE

Black-eared Kite *Milvus lineatus*

Northern Goshawk *Accipiter gentilis*: A single seen perched at close range near to Narita.

Grey-faced Buzzard *Butastur indicus*: A single seen near to Narita.

Japanese Buzzard *Buteo [buteo] japonicus*: Several of the small, pale, and highly distinctive endemic subspecies *toyoshimai* were seen well on Haha-jima in the Bonin Islands.

PHASIANIDAE

Chinese Bamboo Partridge (introduced) *Bambusicola thoracica*

RALLIDAE

Common Moorhen (C Gallinule) *Gallinula chloropus*

CHARADRIIDAE

Pacific Golden Plover *Pluvialis fulva*: : Five on the beach on Haha-jima in the Bonins one morning.

SCOLOPACIDAE

Ruddy Turnstone *Arenaria interpres*: Four on the beach on Haha-jima in the Bonins on one day.

STERCORARIIDAE

Long-tailed Jaeger (L-t Skua) *Stercorarius longicaudus*: Just one adult noted as we left Tokyo on the way to the Bonins.

LARIDAE

Black-tailed Gull *Larus crassirostris*

Slaty-backed Gull *Larus schistisagus*: A single abraded sub-adult with a damaged wing was on the beach daily on Haha-jima in the Bonins.

STERNIDAE

Common Tern *Sterna hirundo*: One in the harbour on Haha-jima on a couple of dates.

Sooty Tern *Sterna fuscata*: One seen reasonably well at sea near the Bonin Islands, and three others too far away to be certain.

Little Tern *Sterna albifrons*

Brown Noddy *Anous stolidus*: Fairly common around the coasts of the Bonin Islands, especially from the ferry between Chichi-jima and Haha-jima.

ALCIDAE

Japanese Murrelet *Synthliboramphus wumizusume*: Some pretty good looks at four between Miyake-jima and Tokyo.

COLUMBIDAE

Rock Dove (introduced) *Columba livia*

Japanese Wood Pigeon ◊ *Columba janthina*: Several seen on Miyake-jima, though sadly the endemic form in the Bonins could not be found.

Oriental Turtle Dove (Rufous T D) *Streptopelia orientalis*

CUCULIDAE

Lesser Cuckoo (Little C) *Cuculus poliocephalus*

APODIDAE

Fork-tailed Swift (Pacific S, White-rumped S) *Apus pacificus*

PICIDAE

Japanese Pygmy Woodpecker ◊ (Pygmy W) *Dendrocopos kizuki*

ALAUDIDAE

Japanese Skylark *Alauda japonica*

HIRUNDINIDAE

Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica*

MOTACILLIDAE

Black-backed Wagtail *Motacilla lugens*

Japanese Wagtail *Motacilla grandis*

PYCNONOTIDAE

Brown-eared Bulbul *Hypsipetes amaurotis*: The endemic form in the Bonin Islands, *squamiceps*, was common on Haha-jima.

TROGLODYTIDAE

Winter Wren *Troglodytes troglodytes*

TURDIDAE

Japanese Robin *Erithacus akahige*: Several seen well on Miyake-jima.

Blue Rock-Thrush *Monticola solitarius*: Very common on Haha-jima in the Bonins.

White's Thrush *Zoothera aurea*: Several seen on Haha-jima in the Bonin Islands, though many were only seen briefly.

Izu Thrush (Izu Islands T) *Turdus celaenops*: Common and relatively tame on Miyake-jima.

SYLVIIDAE

Japanese Bush Warbler *Cettia diphone*: Seen on Miyake-jima and then common on Haha-jima in the Bonin Islands where it is represented by the nominate form. This form is quite different from the mainland forms, both in voice and appearance, and more than one species may be involved.

Styan's Grasshopper Warbler (Pleske's G W) *Locustella pleskei*: Very common on Miyake-jima where we enjoyed excellent views of many. Classified as 'Vulnerable' by BirdLife International, the world population is estimated to be between 2,500 and 9,999 and is declining. Habitat loss on the breeding and wintering grounds appear to be a threat to this species.

Ijima's Leaf-Warbler *Phylloscopus ijimae*: Common on Miyake-jima.

MONARCHIDAE

Japanese Paradise-Flycatcher (Black P F) *Terpsiphone atrocaudata*

PARIDAE

Izu Tit (Owston's Tit) *Parus [varius] owstoni*: Great views of several confiding individuals on Miyake-jima.

Japanese Tit *Parus minor*

ZOSTEROPIDAE

Japanese White-eye *Zosterops japonicus*: Common in the Bonins. According to the literature, the birds here were introduced from the Izu Islands (form *stejnegeri*).

MELIPHAGIDAE

Bonin Honeyeater *Apalopteron familiare*: Common – we enjoyed many brilliant views of confiding individuals on Haha-jima in the Bonins. Note that recent genetic work suggests that this species is a white-eye rather than a honeyeater. Classified as 'Vulnerable' by BirdLife International, the world population is estimated to be between 2,500 and 9,999 and is declining. Virtually all the original subtropical forest has already been cleared from the Ogasawara Islands, and it is now extinct on several of these islands, presumably as a result of the wholesale loss of its habitat. Economic development on Haha-jima Island, including developments for tourism, and a consequent reduction in forest cover is an important threat. Plans to construct a new airport on Ani-jima or the main island of Chichi-jima would cause habitat loss, if it remains extant there, and increase the chance of invasion by exotic species. Predation by domestic and feral cats may pose a minor threat.

LANIIDAE

Bull-headed Shrike *Lanius bucephalus*

CORVIDAE

Eurasian Jay *Garrulus glandarius* (H):

Azure-winged Magpie (Asian A-w M) *Cyanopica cyanus*

Oriental Crow *Corvus orientalis*

Large-billed Crow (Jungle C) *Corvus macrorhynchos*

STURNIDAE

White-cheeked Starling (Grey S) *Sturnus cineraceus*

PASSERIDAE

Eurasian Tree Sparrow *Passer montanus*

FRINGILLIDAE

Grey-capped Greenfinch (Oriental G) *Carduelis sinica*: Just two seen on Haha-jima in the Bonins where the endemic subspecies is *kittlitzii*.

EMBERIZIDAE

Meadow Bunting (Siberian M B) *Emberiza cioides*

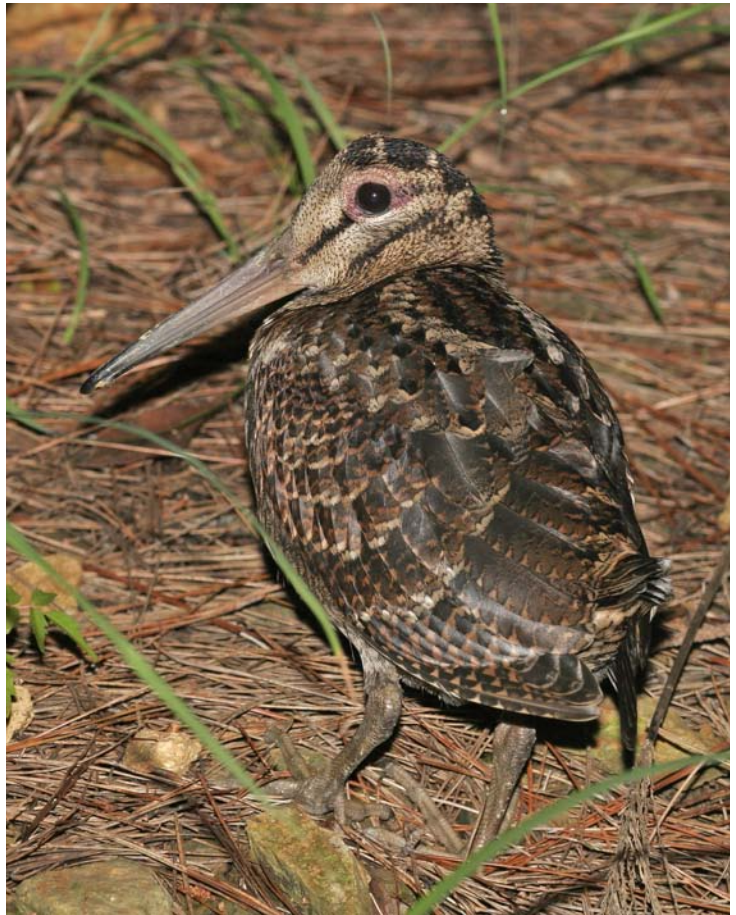
MAMMALS

Great Sperm Whale *Physeter catodon*: Singles were seen on the way back from Miyake-jima to Tokyo, and as we approached the Bonin Islands.

Short-finned Pilot Whale *Globicephala macrorhynchus*: A pod of at least 30 were seen as we left Tokyo en route to the Bonins.

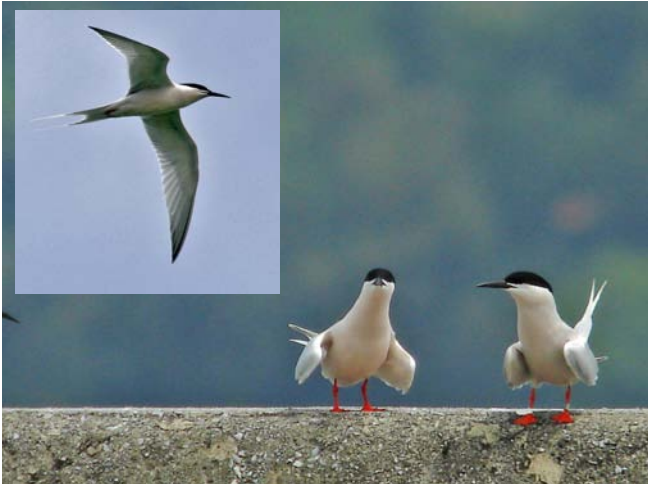
APPENDIX 2

RESULTS FROM THE BIRD OF THE TRIP VOTE FROM THE MAIN TOUR



- 1st OKINAWA RAIL
- 2nd Fairy Pitta
- 3rd Amami Woodcock
- 4th Malayan Night Heron

All photos in this section of the Tour Report were taken by Pete Morris on the tour except for the Badger which was taken by Alain Perthuis



- 5th Ryukyu Robin (Amami left, Okinawa right)
- 6th Roseate Tern
- 7th Japanese Thrush
- 8th Ruddy Kingfisher
- 9th Japanese Yellow Bunting
- 10th Okinawa Woodpecker

And the best of the rest from the main tour...



Left to right, from top to bottom, the surprise Black-faced Spoonbill on Okinawa, the Badger on Kyushu, Ryukyu Rat on Amami, 'Izu' Tit on Miyake-jima, 'Ishigaki Tit on Ishigaki, Ryukyu Scops Owl on Okinawa, Ryukyu Serpent-Eagle, sunset in Tokyo Bay and 'Amami' Woodpecker.



RESULTS FROM THE BIRD OF THE TRIP VOTE FROM HOKKAIDO





1st SHORT-TAILED SHEARWATER

Hopefully this compilation of photos, including the semi-albino bird, shows why this was one of the most amazing ornithological events any of us had ever witnessed!

2nd Hazel Grouse

3rd Blakiston's Fish Owl

4th Pine Grosbeak (no photo)

5th Gray's Grasshopper Warbler (no photo - no surprise there!!)

6th Siberian Rubythroat

...and the mammal of the trip, one of the three fantastic Brown Bears seen on the Shiretoko Pass!



And the best of the rest from Hokkaido and the Bonin Extension...



Top row: Daurian Redstart was unexpected on Hokkaido, whilst Black Woodpecker (male) and Japanese Crane were expected. Left, Middendorff's Grasshopper Warblers were common around Kiritappu and on the extension, we found Syan's Grasshopper Warbler (lower left) on Miyake-jima. In the Bonin Islands, Bonin Hon-eyeater (or White-eye), was the obvious highlight though seabirding was excellent (left to right): Bonin Petrel, Matsudaira's Storm-petrel, Bulwer's Petrel and Wedge-tailed Shearwater (light morph).

