

Ryukyu Islands
March 2017

Iriomote, Ishigaki & Okinawa

Ryukyu Serpent Eagle, Iriomote Island



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Introduction

This report sets out a week visiting Iriomote, Ishigaki and Okinawa Islands, Japan, with Shaun Coyle.

Pre-trip Logistics

The various trip reports posted on Cloudbirders (www.cloudbirders.com) for the region were accessed prior to the trip. The recent report from [Mans Grundsten *et al*, 2016](#) provided some very useful GPS points for sites on Okinawa, some of which are reproduced below from our visit. We also obtained some great information from recent trips to Okinawa by Sue Bryan & Gunnar Engblom, Paul French and also Ross Gallardy, who was based there for a while. Another very useful recent trip report on Birdforum from [Adam Bowley](#) from March 2016 includes more information for Okinawa. [Tom Marko \(2012\)](#) A Birder's Guide to Okinawa, and the extensive information in the [Japan Nature Guides](#) website, are also good sources of information, worth consulting prior to a trip.

We couldn't find much information (in English at least) for Ishigaki and Iriomote Island, but a trip report from [Gerry Hinchon, May 2015](#) provides some information for Ishigaki.

[Ebird](#) is becoming a great resource for updated bird sightings, and if time permits, would be worth checking prior to a visit. Care needs to be taken that locations provided there may not always be accurate.

Thanks to Keiko Mori for help with hire car logistics on Okinawa.

Bird calls were obtained from the excellent Xeno Canto (www.xeno-canto.org).

Thanks are extended to all above who have provided information and/or resources.

Originally we looked at the potential of including **Amami Island**. There are regular flights from Naha, Okinawa. Unfortunately they were too expensive for our date range (c£250), and it appears that Amami is currently cheaper to get to from Kagoshima in southern Kyushu, Japan. On this basis we left this option for another trip. Flights also go from Naha to **Minami-Daito** Island where the *interpositus* form of Ryukyu Scops Owl is present (see Sloan, B. LITTLE-KNOWN ASIAN BIRD The Ryukyu Scops Owls *Otus elegans interpositus* of the Daitô islands, Japan BirdingAsia No.22 2014).

Field Guide & Nomenclature

The standard guide for the region: Birds of East Asia: Eastern China, Taiwan, Korea, Japan, Eastern Russia by Mark Brazil covers the whole of Taiwan.

This report has attempted to follow the taxonomy & nomenclature provided in the field guide.

Weather

The weather during our trip was mostly ok. Temperatures were warm, up to +20c in the sunshine. Rain occurred regularly as patches of drizzle in North Okinawa. There was also rain on Iriomote.

Locations

Overview Map

The map below shows the general locations visited

GPS locations

GPS files for birding sites and logistics are provided as a [.KMZ file here](#) for each Island. The locations of these files can also be seen on this [Google Maps](#) page.

We used the free android App. [Navigator](#) available on a tablet/smart phone as a Sat Nav and GPS. The base map for Japan is downloadable so can be used off line. The GPS refs (from the KMZ files linked above) can be uploaded on the mapping via a second App. [KML/KMZ Waypoint Reader](#) (this can then be used as a Sat Nav to locate sites and waypoints). By using this system to navigate to pre-programmed GPS points based on birding sites, instead of the car hire companies Sat Nav, we were able to get navigation to every birding site without getting lost or losing time.

Costs

The currency in Japan is the Japanese Yen (**JPY**), with the exchange rate being roughly £1 = Y138.

Flights

We visited the Ryukyu Islands from Taipei (having spent two weeks in Taiwan). The flights were with low cost carriers [Peach Air](#) (£82.92 Taipei, Taiwan – Naha, Okinawa), [Vanilla Air](#) (£75.00 Naha – Taipei) and [Japanese Airlines \(JAL\)](#) (£116.00 return Naha to Ishigaki). The flights were booked directly on their respective websites.

Hire Car

An International Driving Licence is required to hire a vehicle in Japan. We hired a car for 24 hours on Iriomote from **Yamaneko Rent-a-car** near the ferry terminal at Ohara. They only had one car left and an adjacent hire company was fully booked. It was however coming up to a Japanese bank holiday period. Cost was JPY5000 for 24hrs, plus JPY1000 for insurance.

In Ishigaki I hired a scooter from a hire place near to the bus station for 24hrs (available 9am to 9am) for JPY2000 + JPY1000 insurance.

In Okinawa we hired a medium sized car from **Nippon Car Rentals**. This was expensive as we were late booking, and it was the only company that would let us pick up a car late evening (with some help) when we arrived in Naha. The cost was JPY26,244 for three days.

Visa

As a UK citizen we were visa exempt.



Map 1: Ryukyu Islands

Itinerary

Date	AM	PM	EVE
15-Mar			Flight MM928 1710 Taipei to Naha, Okinawa arrive 2020
16-Mar	Flight JTA601 Okinawa to Ishigaki arrive 0815	Ferry to Iriomote. Birding Cross Island Road, Nakagara Area	Drive to western most point. Spotlighting north road.
17-Mar	Ferry Iriomote to Ishigaki	Ferry to Ishigaki. Local farmland south of Banna	Hotel Cocoshan, Ishigaki City
18-Mar	Southern entrance of Banna Park	Banna Park, Nagura Wetlands, Sokobara Reservoir	Flight RAC708 1940 Ishigaki to Okinawa arrive 2045
19-Mar	Ada Pig Farm Roads. Ada village, mangroves & beach	Forest east of Benoki & north of Terukubi Track	Forest east of Benoki & north of Terukubi Track
20-Mar	Benoki Reservoir Forest area	Yanbaru Education area, Ogimi Dam, Kin Wetlands	Kin Wetlands
21-Mar	Kin Wetlands, Naha sites	Southern Okinawa	Flight JW189 21:15 Okinawa to Taipei arrive 2155

Costs

		Ryukyu	JPY	GBP
15/03/2017	Flight	Peach Air TPE to OKA (with 1x20kg hold luggage added)		£82.92
15/03/2017	Accommodation	Just stayed around airport (it closed at midnight though!)		
16/03/2017	Flight	JAL OKA to Ishigaki return price		£116.00
16/03/2017	Transport	Bus Airport to City	540.00	£3.86
16/03/2017	Ferry	Ishigaki to Iriomote open return	2,400.00	£17.14
16/03/2017	Transport	Car hire Y5000 + insurance Y1000 for 24 hrs	3,000.00	£21.43
17/03/2017	Fuel	Y 1,727	863.50	£6.17
17/03/2017	Accommodation	Hotel Cocoshan, Ishigaki City = Y 6000 twin	3,000.00	£21.43
18/03/2017	Transport	Scooter hire for 24hrs (9am-9am) Y2000 + Y1000 insurance	3,000.00	£21.43
18/03/2017	Transport	Bus to Airport	500.00	£3.57
18/03/2017	Transport	Car hire Okinawa Nippon Cars 3 days = Y26,244	13,122.00	£93.73
18/03/2017	Transport	Toll Road Charge	1002.00	£7.26
21/03/2017	Transport	Toll Road Charge	720.00	5.22
21/03/2017	Fuel	Y5575	2,787.50	£10.71
21/03/2017	Flight	Vanilla Air OKA to TPE		£75.00
			Total	£491.21

Selected Diary

The sections below describe trip highlights.

(1) Iriomote Island

Introduction

Iriomote is part of the southern Yaeyema Island group. This is the key island for the southern Ryukyu endemics. Unlike the other main island, Ishigaki, it is still mostly forested, with mangroves along the coast, and natural sub-tropical evergreen forest in the hills. It has the endemic (Iriomote) Varied Tit, and shares with Ishigaki the Southern Great (Ishigaki or Japanese) Tit and Ryukyu Serpent Eagle. Ryukyu Flycatcher, Ryukyu Minivet, and Ryukyu (Whistling) Green Pigeon are also present.

In addition it has its own endemic wildcat – Iriomote Wildcat *Prionailurus (bengalensis) iriomotensis* (treated by some as a species and by others as a well-defined form of Leopard Cat). With a population of around 100 individuals, it one of the rarest cats in the world and listed as critically endangered by the IUCN.

Logistics

We spent 24 hours on Iriomote. Getting to the island is straightforward from Ishigaki. Daily ferries go from **Ishigaki City** port, with [a number](#) of crossings a day. The crossings take less than an hour, with two options **Ohara** (SE Iriomote) and **Uehara** (NW Iriomote). We took the Ohara ferry (JPY2400 return) and on arrival went to the car hire firms in town to hire a car for 24hrs (JPY6000). We rough camped overnight in a car park where we finished spotlighting for the cat.

With little information on the island, we just drove around and explored a number of sites:

- **Nakagara River Conservation Area and Cross Island Track** – A drivable track to a substation/compound area with interpretation sign, then a walkable track up to a watchtower over the river and beyond. Forest trails go off the main track. The track goes all the way to the west side of the island apparently (a full day walk);
- **Old Shirahama Road**– Old road to Shirahama is now overgrown and runs along forest. We visited late evening for Owls. Whilst there we noted that it was popular with the hotel companies bringing guests for the Firefly displays;
- **Omija Park** – we didn't really explore this area, but it may be good for a number of endemics/regional specialities. Ryukyu (Whistling) Green Pigeons were on the roadside wires at dawn around here;
- **Uehara-yama Telecom & Farmland** – South of Uehara village is an area of farmland and a short track up into the nearby hills to a telecom station. (Iriomote) Varied Tit is said to be occasionally seen in the forest edge here (according to a local resident we talked to);
- **Iriomote Wildlife Conservation Centre** – May be good for information. We only visited briefly at the very end of our trip;
- **Northern Coast Road** – We spotlit along this road an evening and pre-dawn for the Iriomote Wildcat, and also Owls.

There are undoubtedly other sites and good locations, and exploring any forest tracks and trails into the hills are likely to be productive.

Highlights:

(Iriomote) Varied Tit– Excellent views on the Cross Island Track through Nakagara River Conservation Area. This form is now considered a species following the four way split in [McKay et al, 2014](#). This split is followed by IOC & BI/IBW and called ‘Iriomote Tit’.

Southern Great (‘Ishigaki’) Tit – The form in the Yaeyama Islands *nigiloris* is common on Iriomote. It’s considered to be a form of Cinereous or Southern Great Tit (*cinereous* group) in the field guide (Brazil, 2009). Other authorities place it within Japanese group (*minor*) of Great Tit or ‘Japanese Tit’. It is however one of the more distinct forms of the Great Tit complex.

Ryukyu (Crested) Serpent Eagle – This proved to be a common and easily observed species on Iriomote, with many birds seen perching in farmed areas and along the coastal road telegraph poles (just like a Caracara from the Americas). The behaviour in this respect seemed more pronounced than a Crested Serpent Eagle, and made it a more enjoyable species to see than expected. It was also noted in forest habitats (the cross island road, Old Shirihama Village road, Telecom road etc). The majority of the world population of the form *perplexus* must be present on Iriomote. It is considered a full species in the field guide (Brazil, 2009).

Ryukyu (Narcissus) Flycatcher – A bird was singing in damp forest on the Cross Island Track. This bird was in a female type plumage, but could have been a non-adult male. The endemic form in the Ryukyu Islands *owstoni* is considered a separate species to Narcissus Flycatcher following recent research (See [Dong et al, 2015](#)).

Ryukyu Minivet– Seen well by the watchtower on the Cross Island Track. Also seen around the Telecom tower at Uehara.

Ryukyu (Whistling) Green Pigeon – We heard this species along the Cross Island Track and saw them at dawn along the northern coast road around Omija Park area. Iriomote is probably a good location for this species. In the field guide (Brazil, 2009) the forms of Whistling Green Pigeon on the Ryukyu Island are split from that in Taiwan. **(Grey-capped/Common) Emerald Dove** – Heard Only in forest around the farmland south of Uehara.

White’s (Scaly) Thrush – We flushed a single bird from the roadside edge at the very start of the Cross Island Track, Ohara. The form *iriomotensis* is said to be resident in the forests of Iriomote and has only recently been described (see Nishiumi & Morioka 2009: A new subspecies of *Zoothera dauma* (Aves, Turdidae) from Iriomotejima, southern Ryukyus, with comments on *Z. d. toratugumi*. *Bull Natl Mus Nat Sci A* 35: 113–124). Its song is currently unknown. There is however also potential for it to be joined in winter by migrant White’s/Scaly Thrushes. **Pale Thrush** was also a very common winter migrant during our visit, being regularly flushed from road side and trails.

Owls – Ryukyu (Elegant) Scops Owl and Northern (Ryukyu) Boobook were common along the northern coast road, and a probably common and widespread throughout Iriomote. We soon saw both species at dusk by the Old Road to Shirahama; and then during spotlighting for the Wildcat we heard

a number of both species along the coast, with incidental spotlighting of the Scops Owl on a few occasions. No potential calls from **Collared (Japanese) Scops Owl** were noted, and no speculative playback used.

[Ruddy Kingfisher] – One possible calling bird heard in forest from the Telecom access road. The bird only called twice distantly and didn't respond to tape. This species was the most surprising omission from the trip as we failed to see it elsewhere as well. It is said to be common in the Ryukyu Islands.

Large-billed ('Japanese') Crow – A common resident. The form here is more compact and with some different calls. It is not as closely related to the other Japanese forms, and has been proposed as having potential to be distinct enough to be a separate species, eg '**Yaeyama Jungle Crow**' ([see HBW Alive \(Madge, 2017\)](#)).

Brown-eared Bulbul – A noisy, conspicuous and common resident.

Bush Warblers – A number of Bush Warblers were heard calling and occasionally seen in roadside scrub and forest edge. No singing birds were noted during our visit. These were either Japanese or Korean (Manchurian) Bush Warblers.

Other notable birds included – **Eastern Spot-billed Duck, Grey Heron, Great White Egret, Little Egret, Pacific Reef Heron, Cattle Egret, Black-crowned Night Heron, (Eastern) Osprey, Grey-faced Buzzard, White-breasted Waterhen, Pacific Golden Plover, Kentish Plover, Little Ringed Plover, Oriental Turtle Dove, (Eurasian) Hoopoe, Brown Shrike, Barn Swallow, Pacific Swallow, Zitting Cisticola, Japanese White-eye, Blue Rock Thrush, Brown-headed Thrush** (one individual), **Dusky Thrush** (three individuals in farmland south of Uehara), **Red-billed Starling** (a small group in farmland by Ohara), **Eastern Yellow Wagtail, White Wagtail (*ssp. leucopsis*), Grey Wagtail.**

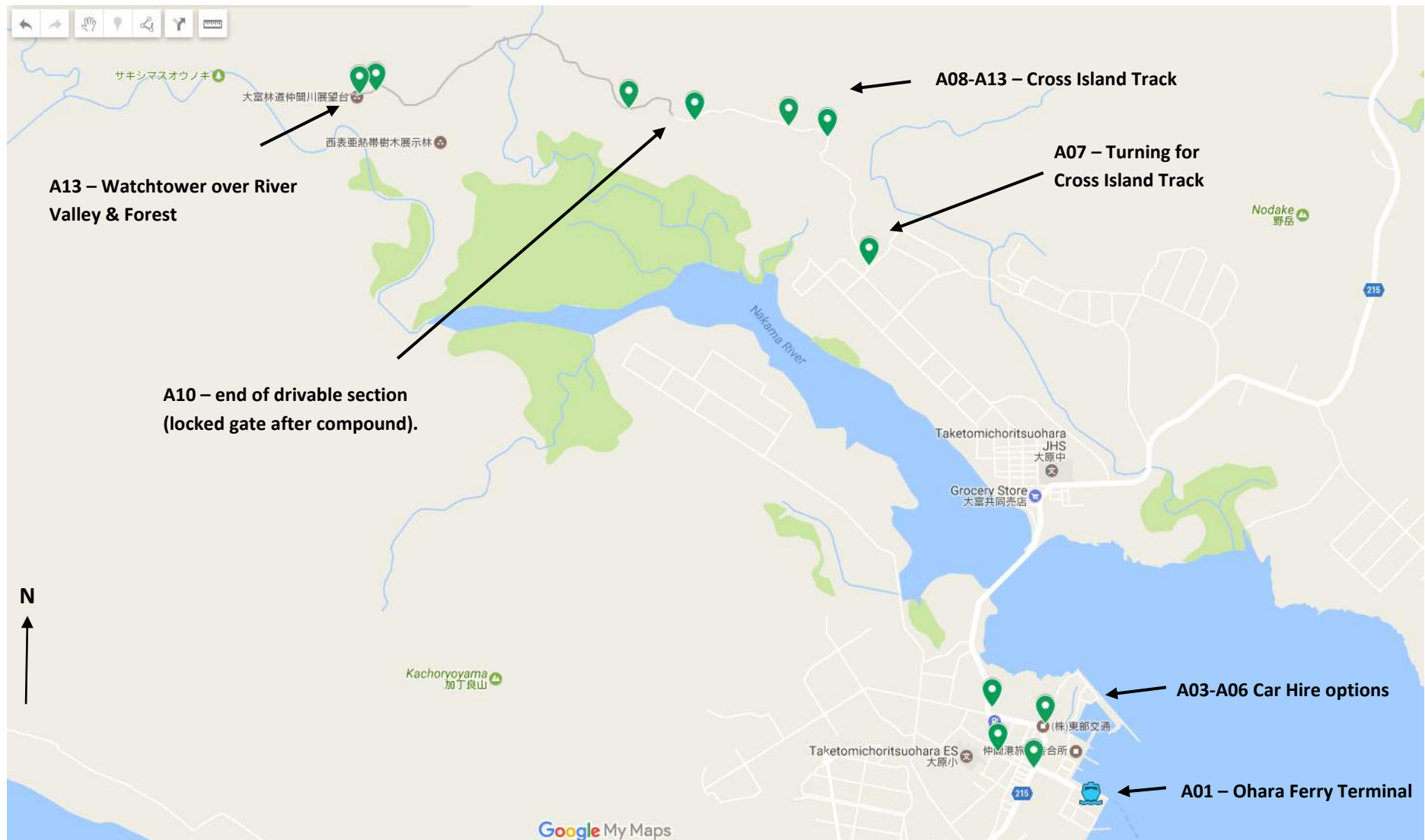
Other Wildlife – The highlight of the visit to Iriomote Island for me was seeing **Iriomote Wildcat**. We had two relatively brief but very close (<5m) sightings from the same area of coastal vegetation on the north coast road (sadly too quick for photos). The first sighting was on the edge of a rough grassland pull in behind the beach, spotlit from the car. The second sighting a few minutes later in the same rough grassland area behind the beach, but on foot. Both times the cat (or possibly two individuals) moved away quickly into thick vegetation when spotlit. This was pre-dawn at about 04:00am. We spent about 2.5hrs spotlighting during the evening (c20:30-23:00) and then pre-dawn from 03:40 until dawn. The weather was clear during the evening session, with rain arriving overnight to light drizzle on and off during the dawn session. The route we drove spotlighting is shown as a blue line on the map below (and linked [Google Maps](#) page).

The Wildcat is supposed to prefer the lowlands, with classic habitat said to be mangrove and lowland riverine forest. The open farmed landscape and woodland edges also looked reasonable locations to see this cat, as presumably it has adapted to some extent to man-made habitats where there must be foraging opportunities. We stayed on the coast road, but the minor lanes and forest edge around Uehara may be worth checking as well. The coastal scrub behind the beach also looks like good habitat, and this is eventually where we had our sightings (see photos of habitat at end of report). In

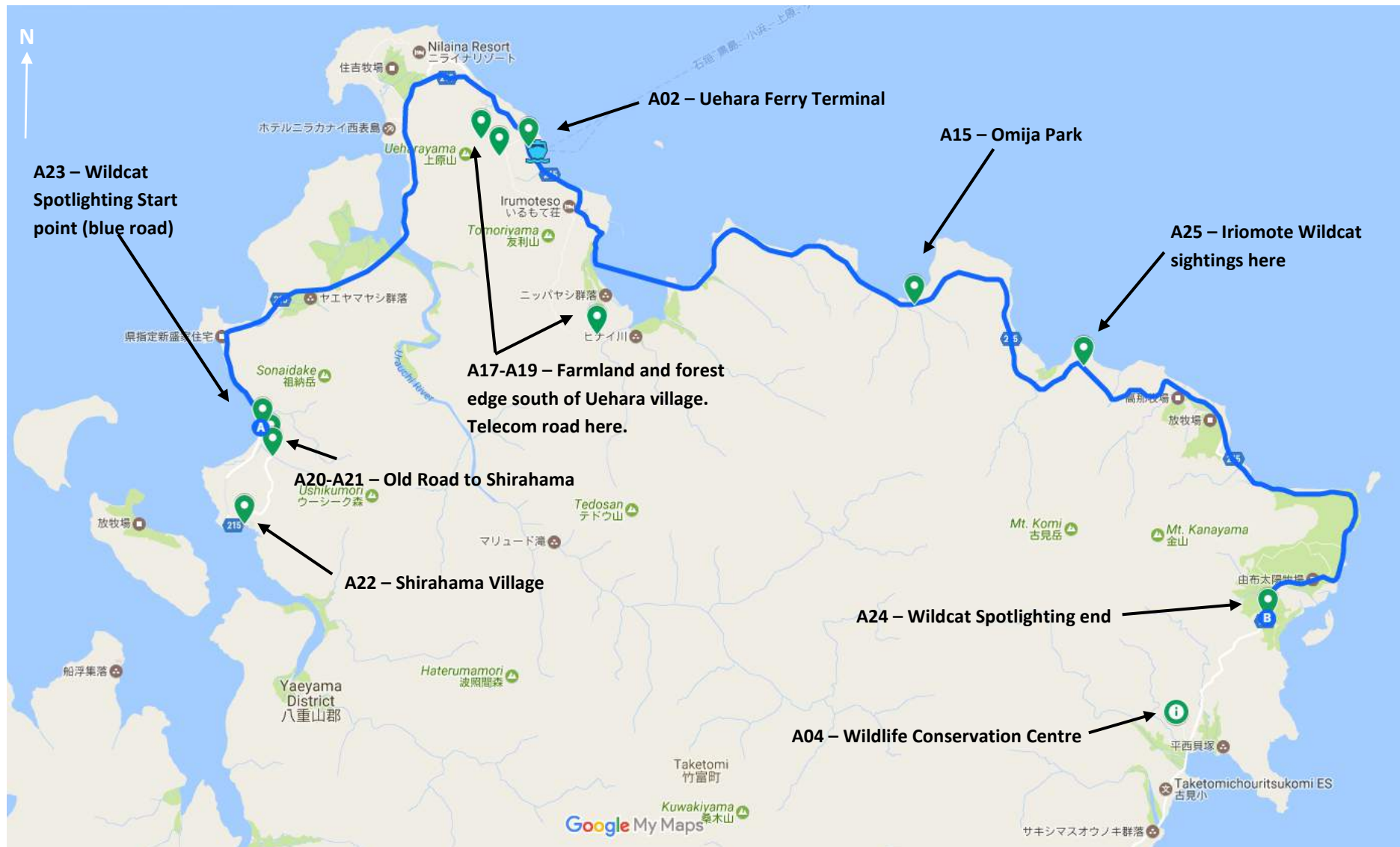
relation to traffic, the coast road was fairly quiet at night and very quiet pre-dawn, during our visit, and goes through varied lowland habitats, so represents a good location to try for sightings.

Iriomote Wildlife Conservation Centre has a good deal of information on the Wildcat. Some information from our visit is reproduced [here](#).

Ryukyu Flying Fox *Pteropus dasymallus* was noted in forest on the Old Road to Shirahama



Map 2: Ohara and Southern Iriomote



Map 3: Northern Iriomote & Coast Road

(2) Ishigaki

Introduction

Compared to Iriomote, Ishigaki Island has undergone much more habitat clearance for farming, and has a higher human population, being the centre of the Yaeyema Islands in Southern Ryukyu. Birding locations include Banna Park, which is close to Ishigaki City, and the hills to the north of the island (accessible eg from a northern route passing Sokobara Reservoir). It has a similar avifauna to Iriomote, although the Iriomote Varied Tit is not present on Ishigaki.

Logistics

We arrived at Ishigaki from Naha, Okinawa, with daily flights from a couple of operators. From the airport we took one of the two operational bus routes to the **Ishigaki City** (JPY540). On return to Ishigaki from Iriomote we stayed at the **Hotel Cocoshan** (JPY3000 per person twin), which was one of only a few hotels with vacancies last minute (it being a holiday weekend in Japan). Cheaper dorm options are available in the city, and a tourist information desk in the ferry terminal should be able to help. On the full day I hired a scooter and toured around the island.

The birding sites visited included:

- **Banna Park** – The southern entrance to this hillside forest is walkable from Ishigaki City, but transport is a better option. Access to the northern entrance will provide quickest access into decent forest tracks where key species can be found. The reservoir held some wetland species. A road runs from the southern entrance over the hills and to the north. A watch tower along the road provides good views over Ishigaki, and potential for scoping Ryukyu Serpent Eagles;
- **Farmland/Rice Paddies north of Ishigaki City** – Walking from the city to Banna Park are areas of farmland, scrub and irrigated rice paddies. These contained open country birds and some waders;
- **Sokobara Reservoir**– The forests around the reservoir are good for endemics, and the dam area is potentially good for scoping Ryukyu Serpent Eagle;
- **Nagaura-Amparu Wetlands** – A small tidal estuary on the west coast. The intertidal is not close, but can be scoped from the coast road by the bridge, and the inland road on a couple of locations. A park at the northern end may provide trails through the mangroves, but was not visited with the time available.

Highlights:

Ryukyu Serpent Eagle – Much scarcer than on Iriomote. Only two sightings driving around the island, one of a bird with a snake in its talons on the inland road east of the Nagaura-Amparu Wetlands, and a second in farmland around Sokobara Reservoir.

Ryukyu (Narcissus) Flycatcher – A couple of birds in wet forest north of Sokobara Reservoir.

Ryukyu Minivet – Seen at Banna Park and Sokobara Reservoir.

Southern Great ('Ishigaki') Tit – Common in forest edge habitat.

Owls – **Ryukyu (Elegant) Scops Owl** and **Northern (Ryukyu) Boobook** were seen in forest at dawn from the southern entrance at Banna Park. This was the only area visited for night birding and both species are probably common in reasonable wooded habitat.

Mandarin Duck – A pair seen on the edge of forest at Banna Park, were a small series of rice paddies cut into the park boundary. Also present were a pair of **Eastern Spot-billed Duck**.

Common Pheasant – A number of birds seen in farmland south and east of Banna Park. The birds may be the result of introductions.

Emerald Dove – Heard Only at Banna Park

Brown-eared Bulbul – A noisy, conspicuous and common resident.

Bush Warblers – A number of Bush Warblers were heard calling and occasionally seen in roadside scrub and forest edge. No singing birds were noted during our visit. These were either Japanese or Korean (Manchurian) Bush Warblers.

Other notable birds included – **Eastern Spot-billed Duck, Eurasian Wigeon, Northern Shoveler, Eurasian Teal, Grey Heron, Purple Heron, Great Cormorant, Great White Egret, Little Egret, Pacific Reef Heron, Cattle Egret, (Eastern) Osprey, Grey-faced Buzzard, Chinese Sparrowhawk, Peregrine Falcon, White-breasted Waterhen, Common Coot, Kentish Plover, Little Ringed Plover, Black-winged Stilt, Spotted Redshank, Greenshank, Wood Sandpiper, Whimbrel, Red-necked Stint, Long-toed Stint, Snipe sp. (Common & Pin-tailed), Oriental Turtle Dove, Brown Shrike, Barn Swallow, Pacific Swallow, Chinese Bulbul, Zitting Cisticola, Japanese White-eye, Siberian Rubythroat** (a cracking male seen well in farmland south of Banna Park), **Blue Rock Thrush, Daurian Redstart, Brown-headed Thrush, Red-billed Starling** (a couple of sightings in farmland south of Banna Park), **Chestnut-cheeked Starling** (farmland north of Ishigaki City/Cemetery area), **Eastern Yellow Wagtail, White Wagtail (ssp. leucopsis), Grey Wagtail.**



Map 4: Map of Ishigaki Island

(3a) Okinawa

Introduction

The largest island and central within the Ryukyu chain. It has a large natural forest area (Yanbaru Forest National Park) surviving at the northern end of the island, with a number of island endemics and regional endemics focused on this forest area. The capital, Naha is at the southern end of the island and is a hub for the Ryukyu chain.

Logistics

We hired a car for three days (JPY26,244), and explored the northern part of the island for a couple of days, heading south for the final day, looking at wetland sites. Using the motorway to head north from Naha involves paying a toll (JPY1002). In Okinawa we used the car and rough camped around the Benoki Dam car park (has toilets with power sockets and ability to charge equipment) and the campsite/visitor centre at Kin Wetlands, which has pay-as-you-use showers

The birding sites visited were:

- **Ada Area** - The village of Ada on the north east coast has natural forest down to areas of mangrove, and a section of beach with scrub and rough grassland. North of the village and on the edge of Yanbaru Forest, agriculture cuts into the forest around the Ada Pig Farm complex. This area can be good for some of the endemics, particularly Okinawa Rail. The small roads around Yanbaru Forest from here are also worth exploring;
- **Northern Forest Roads** – We explored a number of minor roads through Yanbaru Forest, particularly the network west and north of Ada Pig Farm area, roads east and north of Benoki Reservoir and north along the Terukubi Rindo Track (road). This area was good at night for the scarce Collared (Japanese) Scops Owl;
- **Benoki Dam & Reservoir** - The forest around the dam and northern car park, and around the reservoir generally were birded and were a good location for Black (Japanese) Woodpigeon and for Pryer's Woodpecker as well as other species.
- **Hiji Waterfalls** – We only stopped briefly around the entrance to the waterfalls. This area is said to have all the endemics. We heard Ryukyu (Whistling) Green Pigeon here.
- **Yanbaru Educational Centre Area** – Situated in the Yanbaru Forest. A raised boardwalk ('Yonner Course') is present just south of the education centre, by taking a track to the west off the main road. A clearing on the main road north of the centre is given as a good place to see Ryukyu Robin at dawn (see Mans Grunsden's report, 2016). This clearing looks ok for Woodcock as well at night, but we didn't see this species anywhere;
- **Cape Hedo** – Open countryside and coastline at the norther tip of Okinawa.
- **Ogimi-Taiho Dam** – A small wetland reserve below the reservoir (to the south) held an equally small selection of waterfowl.
- **Kin Wetlands** – This is not really a semi-natural wetland but a series of rice paddies, aquaculture and agriculture. It was very busy with farm workers and waterfowl numbers were very low. The site was fairly disappointing during our visit given other favourable write-ups. It does however have info centre, accommodation/campsite and showers;
- **Naha and Southern Areas** – A series of intertidal mudflat areas can be viewed from coastal roads around Naha. Two well-known wetland sites are the very small Triangle Pond and the

Manko Waterbird and Wetland Centre (not open on Mondays). These sites don't take too long to bird as they are tiny. We also visited the south coast, but nothing much was seen here.

Highlights:

Okinawa Rail – Commonly heard in Yanbaru Forest. A bird was taped in for great views on the Ada Beach Road. The beach and back road here look like they may have some potential as an early morning or evening stakeout for this species. Birds were heard at one of the traditional stakeouts at the back of the Ada mangroves in the forest, and in most other forested locations in the Yanbaru Forest. Another area we tried, which can be a good area for sightings, are the minor roads around Ada Pig Farm, which can provide views of birds by the roadside, at dawn particularly.

Pryer's (Okinawa) Woodpecker – Seen in two locations; a pair were seen at the edge of the mangroves at Ada, and a number of drumming birds heard in forest north and east of the Benoki Reservoir, including good views of a pair (with female noted drumming) on the road heading north from the reservoir by some iron gates.

Ryukyu (Okinawa) Robin – A relatively common and widespread resident of Yanbaru Forest. Was singing regularly at dawn during our visit and seen at a couple of locations around the Ada area, including the beach road and further north around an old concrete road by the Pig Farm.

Black (Japanese) Woodpigeon – Good scope views by the Benoki Dam northern car park, in the surrounding forest, with a number singing at dawn in this area. Also heard from the 'Yonner Course' boardwalk near Yanbaru Education Centre.

Owls – The highlight was **Collared (Japanese) Scops Owl** of the form *pryeri*, which is buff coloured with orange eyes. This owl was heard in a few locations on the road network of northern Yanbaru Forest, but finally one was taped in for great views but sadly no photos on a minor road at the northern end of Yanbaru Forest. This is now usually considered distinct from Collared Scops Owl (eg IOC, BI/IBW). **Ryukyu (Elegant) Scops Owl** and **Northern (Ryukyu) Boobook** were common in all forested areas. We briefly noted the latter hawking/gleaning around a tree canopy in Yanbaru forest from the car headlights, like a nightjar. The Boobook was also easy to see at Kin Wetlands, with a couple of territories around the campground and harbour.

Ryukyu (Whistling) Green Pigeon – Heard only at the entrance to Hiji Waterfalls.

(Japanese) Varied Tit – A fairly common resident in Yanbaru Forest.

Ryukyu Minivet – A fairly common resident in Yanbaru Forest.

Black-faced Spoonbill – A group of eight birds on the intertidal in Naha City.

Other main targets: **Japanese Bush Warbler** – Common in scrub and woodland edge. Birds here were singing, **Eastern (Japanese) Great Tit** – Common, **Japanese Pygmy Woodpecker** – seen at a few locations around Yanbaru Forest (Ada area, Benoki Reservoir and Yanbaru Education Centre area); **Large-billed (Japanese) Crow** – Common.; **Brown-eared Bulbul** – Common.

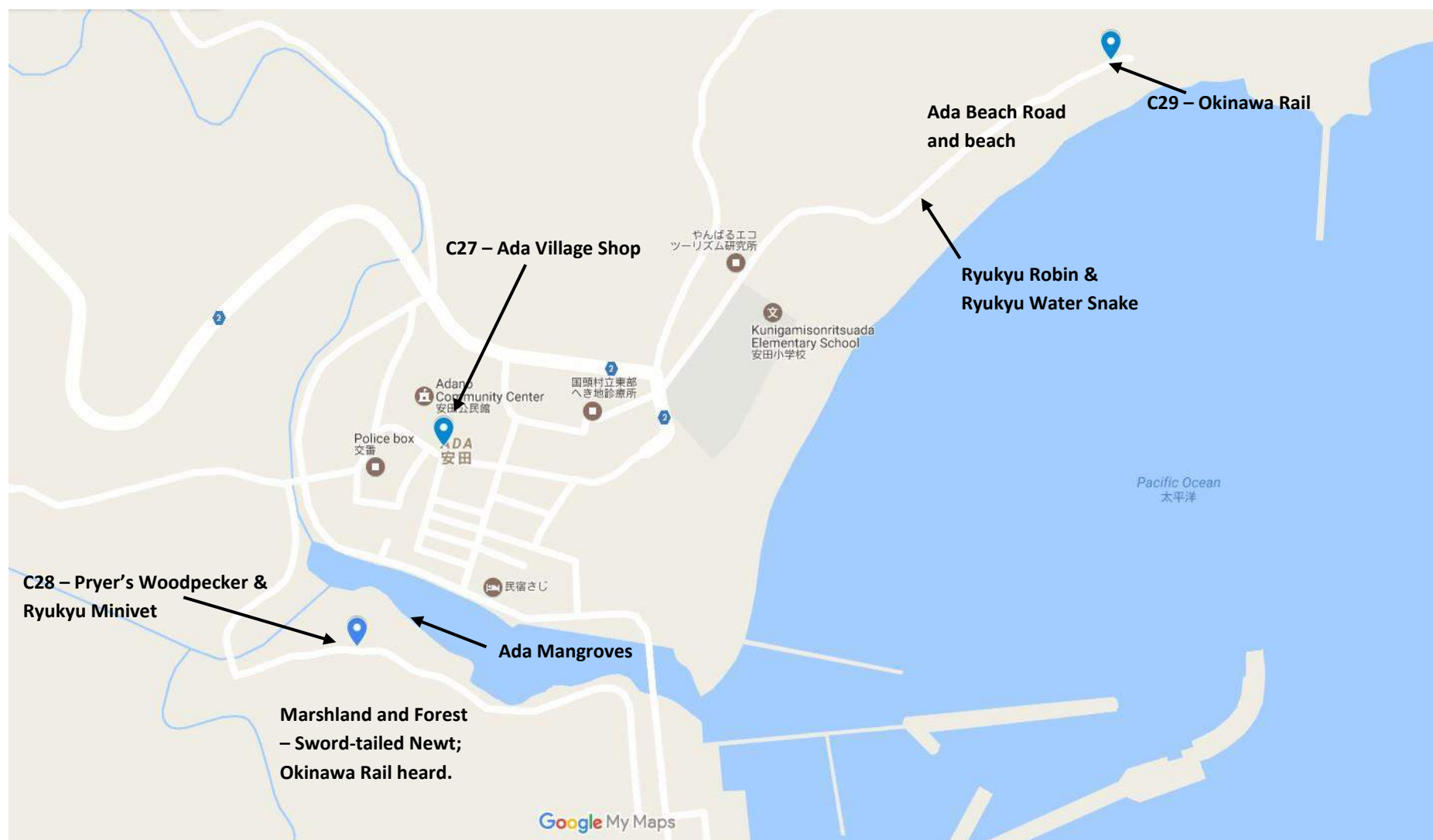
Other notable birds included – Gadwall, Eurasian Wigeon, Northern Shoveler, Eurasian Teal, Tufted Duck, Little Grebe, Great Cormorant, Grey Heron, Great White Egret, Little Egret, Pacific Reef Heron, Cattle Egret, (Eastern) Osprey, Grey-faced Buzzard, Peregrine Falcon, Common Moorhen, White-breasted Waterhen, Pacific Golden Plover, Kentish Plover, Little Ringed Plover, Black-winged Stilt, Common Sandpiper, Greenshank, Wood Sandpiper, Long-toed Stint, Common Redshank, Common Snipe, Oriental Turtle Dove, Common Kingfisher, Common Magpie, Brown Shrike, Barn Swallow, Pacific Swallow, Chinese Bulbul, Zitting Cisticola, Japanese White-eye, Siberian Rubythroat (another cracking male seen well in farmland on the north west coast), Blue Rock Thrush, Daurian Redstart, Pale Thrush (common), Brown-headed Thrush, Common Myna, Eastern Yellow Wagtail, White Wagtail (*ssp. lugens*), Grey Wagtail, Black-faced Bunting, Brambling, Tree Sparrow.

Other species – Sword-tailed Newt *Cynops ensicauda* was fairly conspicuous around Yanbaru Forest with our visit coinciding with its seasonal movements from terrestrial habitats to breeding waterbodies. Ryukyu Water Snake *Ampiesma pryori pryori* was seen around Ada Beach area. Okinawa Tree Lizard *Japarula polygonata* was seen near Terukubi Rindo Track southern entrance, and Ryukyu Tip-nosed Frog *Odorrana narina* was noted at night along the northern forest roads of Yanbaru Forest. Ryukyu Wild Pig *Sus scrofa riukiuanus* was seen in grassland around Ada Pig Farm road network.

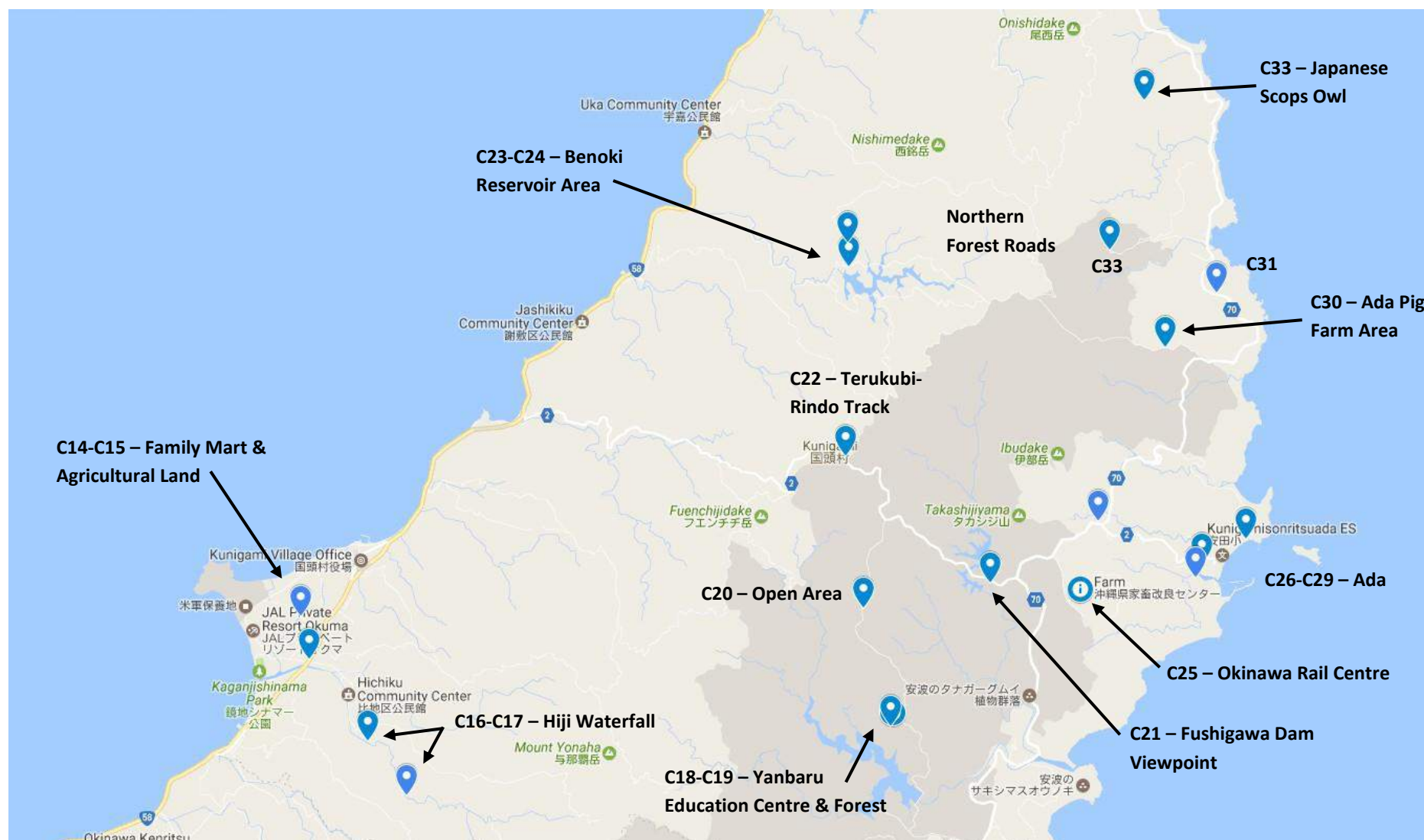
Final Thoughts

Thanks to Shaun for a great trip; and for reading a draft of this report and providing corrections, comments and amendments to increase its usefulness.

[GarethKnass](#)
Berkshire, UK



Map 5: Ada Village Area



Map 6: Yanbaru National Park & Forest area



Map 7: Naha Birding Locations

GPS Waypoint Reference Tables

A01 - Ohara Ferry	http://www.ishigaki-japan.com/transport/ferries
A02 - Uehara Ferry	
A03 - Yamaneko Rent-a-car	http://www.kanpira.com/english/traffic_for_sightseeing.htm
A04 - Care Hire Place	
A05 - Car Hire Place	
A06 - Car Hire Place	
A07 - Turn Off for Nakagara River Conservation Area	A cross island track goes through forest within the conservation area
A08 - Start of Forested Sections	
A09 - Iriomote Tit	First sighting here
A10 - End of Road	Parking may be possible here around compound.
A11 - Track	More Iriomote Tit sightings, plus Ryukyu Flycatcher
A12 - Side Trail	
A13 - Watchtower Viewpoint	Good forest view for Whistling Green Pigeon, Eagles, and Ryukyu Minivet.
A14 Visitor Centre 西表野生生物保護センター	Iriomote Wildlife Conservation Centre
A15 - Omija Park	A small park with mangroves and natural forest along the coast.
A16 - Uehara Village Shop スーパー川満	
A17 - Track to Telecom Tower	
A18 - Small Ponds	
A19 - End of Road	Forest edge present
A20 - Old Road Section	This minor road was good for Ryukyu Scops Owl, Boobook and Ryukyu Flying Fox.
A21 - Old Road	
A22 - Shirahama Village	end of the road for vehicles
A23 - Wildcat Spotlighting Start	
A24 - Cat Spotlighting End Point	
A25 - Iriomote Wild Cat Sightings	pre-dawn spotlit in the rough grassland turn in behind beach.
B01 - Painushima Ishigaki Airport	
B02 - Azuma Bus Ishigaki Bus Terminal	
B03 - Ferry to Iriomote Island	http://www.ishigaki-japan.com/transport/ferries
B04 - Motorcycle/Scooter Hire	
B05 - Banna Park Southern Entrance	Through road
B06 - Observation Tower	From high point on Banna Park hill
B07 - Banna Park - Through Road	
B08 - Banna Park	Northern Entrance, visitor centre
B09 - Observation Tower	For reservoir.
B10 - Banna Park	Woodland trails for endemics
B11 - Rice Paddies by Forest	Mandarin seen here
B12 - Nagura-Amparu wetlands	inter-tidal mudflats and distant mangroves from the bridge.
B13 - Park 石垣やいま村	Mangroves may be accessible from this park. Entrance fee
B14 - Ryukyu Serpent Eagle	Bird seen here at back of Wetlands
B15 - Sokobara Dam	Views over forest can be good for Serpent Eagle
B16 - Central Region Road 87	Forest present along here for endemics
B17 - Sokobara Reservoir Forests	Ryukyu Flycatcher, Ryukyu Minivet,
B18 - Sokobara Reservoir Track	Small track providing views of forest edge and reservoir.

C01 - Naha Airport	
C02 - Manko Waterbird and Wetland Center	Closed on Mondays
C03 - Triangle Pond 与根の三角池（探鳥地）	Grundsten 2016
C04 - Viewpoint	Information from Grundsten 2016
C05 - Mudflats viewing point	Information from Grundsten 2016. Black-faced Spoonbill seen here
C06 - Mudflats viewpoint	Information from Grundsten 2016
C07 - Cape Kivan	A southerly point.
C08 - Formal Memorial Park 平和記念公園	Brambling seen here
C09 - Harbour	Waders
C10 - Nature Mirai Centre	Pay as you go showers, toilets, campsite (charge). Adjacent to Kin Rice Paddies northern area
C11 - Kin Rice Paddies	Southern section
C12 - Ogimi--Taiho Dam	Wetlands below the dam can be accessed from this minor road
C13 - Viewing Screen	
C14 - Familymart Okuma Beach Mae Shop	
C15 - Farmland	Barred Buttonquail possible. Siberian Rubythroat
C16 - Hiji Falls Visitor Centre	Whistling Green Pigeon. Other reports have recorded most endemics from Hiji.
C17 - Hiji Waterfall	
C18 - Yanbaru Educational Forest	Visitor Centre and accommodation
C19 - Yanbaru Educational Forest Centre Boardwalk	Yonner Course
C20 - Open Area	Can be good for Ryukyu Robin early Morning - (see Grundsten 2016). Looks good for Woodcock at night.
C21 - Fushigawa Dam 北部ダム統合管理事務所 安波ダム管理支所 普久川ダム	Observation Platform here (see eg Grundsten 2016)
C22 - Terukubi Rindo Track	Various reports see the main endemics down here. We heard Japanese Scops at night.
C23 - Benoki Dam	Japanese (Black) Woodpigeon seen here. Pryer's Woodpecker heard drumming distantly.
C24 - Iron Gates	Pryer's Woodpecker drumming
C25 - Okinawa Rail Research Centre 安田くいなふれあい公園	...and crazy golf course!
C26 - Ada Garden Hotel アダ・ガーデンホテル 沖縄	
C27 - Ada Village Shop 安田協同店	Good coffee
C28 - Ada Village Mangroves	Pryer's Woodpecker seen on edge of mangroves.
C29- Ada Beach Road	Okinawa Rail seen at end of the road. Beach Area and road looks good for seeing rails. Okinawa Robin also seen along here.
C30 - Ada Pig Farm	Minor Roads around here can be good for Okinawa Rail
C31 - Old Road	Okinawa Robin seen here. Okinawa Rail possible.
C32 - Start of Forest Track (head north)	Narrow forest road - Good for owls. Japanese Scops territories heard and seen along this road heading north.
C33 - Forest Track	Japanese Scops Owl seen here
C34 - Cape Hedo	

A Selection of Trip Photos



Iriomote Varied Tit – Cross Island Track, Iriomote. Note fine lines around eyes are thought to be spider webbing.



Iriomote Varied Tit – Cross Island Track, Iriomote. Responded very well to pishing.



Ryukyu Serpent Eagle – Farmland around Ohara



Ryukyu Serpent Eagle – Northern Coast Road



Southern Great ('Ishigaki' or Japanese) Tit – Ohara Village, Iriomote



Large-billed (Yaeyema Jungle) Crow – Farmland near Ohara Village, Iriomote



Ryukyu Green Pigeon – Northern Coast Road, Iriomote



Ryukyu (Elegant) Scops Owl – Common on Iriomote.



Northern (Ryukyu) Boobook – The resident form of Northern Boobook on Iriomote Island.



Northern (Ryukyu) Boobook – Too close to fit the whole bird in.



Oriental Turtle Dove – The form on the Ryukyu Islands *stimpsoni* is common throughout



Ryukyu Flying Fox – Old Road, Iriomote



Iriomote Wildcat Display in the Wildlife Conservation Centre. Looks unlike the Leopard Cats of tropical Asia, with thick grey fur and short bushy tail.



Iriomote Wildcat Display in the Wildlife Conservation Centre



View from Watchtower looking over the Nakagara River Conservation Area, Iriomote



Northern Coast Road, Iriomote; with Iriomote Wildcat Warning Sign



Northern Coast Road, Iriomote - right down to the sea



Rough Grassland turn in by Northern Coast Road. This is where we had Wildcat sightings - along the edge and within the rough grassland behind the beach.



River with lowland forest and Mangrove – classic Wildcat habitat along the northern coast road of Iriomote



Southern Great ('Ishigaki' or Japanese) Tit – Banna Park, Ishigaki. The absence of green in the mantle etc. makes this form quite striking.



Brown-eared Bulbul – Common and very vocal – Banna Park, Ishigaki



Ryukyu Flycatcher – Forest around Sokobara Reservoir, Ishigaki



Ryukyu Flycatcher – Forest around Sokobara Reservoir, Ishigaki



Ryukyu Minivet – Forest around Sokobara Reservoir, Ishigaki



Mandarin Duck – Male of a pair at SW corner of Banna Park in rice paddies



Banna Park, Ishigaki - Suspension Bridge, Reservoir and Forest NE corner of park



Okinawa Rail – Ada Beach Road



Ryukyu (Okinawa) Robin – Old Concrete Road near Ada Pig Farm, Okinawa



Ryukyu (Okinawa) Robin – Ada Coast Road, Okinawa



Pryer's Woodpecker – Male of a pair at the edge of Ada Mangroves



Pryer's Woodpecker – Female drumming above Benoki Reservoir, Okinawa



(Japanese) Varied Tit – Part of the four way split of Varied Tit. The forms on Okinawa and north are part of Japanese Varied Tit.



Japanese Bush Warbler – Uncharacteristically sitting in the open, Benoki Reservoir area, Okinawa



Northern (Ryukyu) Boobook – Kin Wetlands, Okinawa



Ryukyu (Elegant) Scops Owl – Benoki Reservoir by the Dam Car Park, Okinawa



Black (Japanese) Woodpigeon – A distant bird from the Benoki Dam Car Park



Sword-tailed Newt – Ada Mangroves, Okinawa



Small Indian Mongoose – An unfortunate introduction onto Okinawa, Kin Wetlands, Okinawa



Black-faced Spoonbill – A small group on Intertidal mudflats in Naha City