

Japan, April 20-29, 2019

VLADIMIR DINETS*, PAUL CARTER, TRIP COMPANION 2**

*WHO WROTE THE PRESENT REPORT

**WHO OPTED TO REMAIN ANONYMOUS DUE TO SCHEDULING CONFLICTS

The trip was conducted to celebrate TC2's birthday. Full moon was on April 19. The temperatures were 16-27°C during the day and 3-16°C at night.

April 20. We met at Sendai Airport at 20:15, picked up the car and drove to to a difficult-to-find hotel called Christmas Rose (38.163743N 140.396738E), getting excellent views of orange-morph **Japanese marten** along the way. There were lots of vole burrows on ski slopes around the hotel, but we found only one rather tame **greater Japanese mouse** during a short walk.

April 21. In the morning we drove to Nishizao Pasture (38.193481N 140.377135E). There was a **Japanese serow** licking salt from a concrete roadside wall along the way. The meadows had incredibly high vole density and a few molehills, but we didn't see any small mammals, just a **Japanese marten** and a **red fox** also looking for them. Another **red fox** was trying to get the owner's orange cat to play by rolling over, waving the feet in the air, bouncing, etc. The cat freaked out and went all defensive, hissing and screaming. Then we tried to get to the nearby crater lake, but the road was still closed. We saw another **Japanese serow** on that road, plus a copper pheasant.

We continued to Takahata and explored a few small caves in the area. Only one (Ichonosawa Cave, 38.048187N 140.231057E) had bats (two **greater horseshoe bats** and one **eastern bentwing**; the latter was banded and we reported the number to the authorities). Also found a very tame green pheasant nearby, and (at 38.051866N 140.217950E) a **Japanese serow** grazing among flowering sakura trees – an image as close to super-girly unicorn anime as you can get in real life.

In the evening we explored the road to Lide Hot Springs (37.955718N, 139.660844E). There were **Endo's pipistrelles** feeding over the river at 38.055914N 139.704020E, two **Japanese giant flying squirrels** and a few **lesser Japanese mice** in the same area, numerous **Japanese raccoon dogs** in the fields, a very tame **masked palm civet** near Lide Hot Springs, and one **Asian particolored bat** chasing winter moths around a street light despite the cold. On the way back we found two juvenile **Japanese hares** of the very rare golden morph. The first one ran into a patch of spring flowers and posed for a gorgeous photo shoot. The second one was on a stretch of a road with concrete walls on both sides, so we had to slowly chase it for a few hundred meters through two tunnels until we got to a place where it could escape into the forest. There was a bit of traffic, so we had to signal like crazy to upcoming trucks, maneuver all over the highway... but we saved the bunny.

April 22. We took the ferry from Niigata to Ryotsu on Sado Island. There was one large herd and many small groups of **Pacific white-sided dolphins** along the way, eagerly approaching the ferry and bowriding. Also a pair of **bottlenose dolphins**, and a breaching **humpback** very far away.

Once on Sado, we looked at a few crested ibises, went to Sado Resort Hotel Azuma (38.013107N 138.226795E), and VD saw a tail end of escaping **Sado mole** after flipping a piece of plywood near an abandoned house along the road. We tried driving and walking along two roads across the northern mountain range, but both were closed at higher elevations; all we found was a lot of **Japanese raccoon dogs** (mostly near the coast), some **greater** and **lesser Japanese mice** and one poorly seen **Japanese field vole** (all around 38.157667N 138.370059E), and one very shy **Japanese hare** (seen by VD near Osado Ishina Ancient Forest, 38.195512N 138.416817E).

April 23. We checked a bunch of caves in the southernmost part of the island, but found only one **greater horseshoe bat**, still hibernating despite warm weather. We took a ferry from Ogi to Naoetsu on the mainland, and didn't see anything interesting until we entered the harbor and suddenly witnessed a feeding aggregation of at least a couple hundred dolphins (mostly **common**, but also **bottlenose** and **Pacific white-sided**) on the outer side of the outer wavebreak, along the sharp border between seawater and murky river water.

After a quick stop to watch **Japanese macaques** at Jigokudani Monkey Park, we drove to Karuizawa. A night drive (by PC and VD) to Karuizawa Snow Park (36.423301N 138.627086E) and then through Wild Bird Forest (36.363757N 138.591144E) produced a few **red foxes** (some very tame), a group of **wild boars** including a large male, a few **greater** and **lesser Japanese mice**, a few **sika deer**, a **long-fingered myotis** feeding over the pool at Shiraito Falls (36.410405N 138.592514E). A night walk through the Wild Bird Forest was remarkably unproductive, with only one **Japanese giant flying squirrel** and a few more **deer** seen.

April 24. It rained all day, so we didn't see much in Karuizawa or on the way to Bergcot (36.080728N 138.259715E). Bergcot is a cozy lodge that puts out food for animals every evening; we watched four **Japanese raccoon dogs**, a **Japanese marten** just outside the window. The property was crawling with **lesser Japanese mice**. A **Japanese badger** showed up every evening for 6 days prior to our arrival, but not on the night we were there. At a bridge a bit further up the road (36.082111N 138.264029E), VD spotted an **Ussuri tube-nosed bat** was flying around; judging by the streaks of guano they sometimes use the bridge as night roost, but we never saw that. Boulder fields further upstream looked like really great habitat for **Smith's red-backed voles**, but only one was seen (by VD). In the town, there were countless molehills of lesser Japanese moles on a golf course just west of 36.051197N 138.255061E. **Sika deer** are abundant in the area – drive carefully! Watch also for copper pheasants.

April 25. In the morning the weather finally improved, and **Japanese squirrels** attended the feeders. After a brief stop at Matsumoto Castle we drove to Norikura Plateau, a beautiful high-elevation area, seeing two large male **Japanese macaques** along the way. There we saw a few **red foxes**, an **Japanese weasel** (at Ichinose Marsh, 36.104220N 137.626499E), some **sika deer**, a **Japanese serow**, many **lesser Japanese mice**, at least two **greater Japanese mice**, and two **Japanese flying squirrels** (at the excellent Ushidome Pond Trail, 36.114735N 137.613406E, seen well only by VD). We possibly heard a **birdlike noctule**, but didn't see any bats. On the way to our hotel in Ino we realized that it was probably our last night drive and we still hadn't seen a **Japanese badger**, so when we were just 10 min from entering town, VD went to the back seat, entered a shamanic trance, and asked Ōyamatsumi (Japanese mountain god) to send a badger our way; the animal immediately appeared on the roadside and was seen well by PC and TC2.

April 26. At 4 am we went Takato Castle (35.833874N 138.062497E) to see **Oriental freetail**s. We did get them on a bat detector, but the only bat seen was a **Far Eastern myotis**. Then we drove to Kawachi-no-Fuketsu Cave (35.250921N 136.353735E) to see the largest known hibernaculum of **Hilgendorf's tube-nosed bat**; there were also a few **greater horseshoe bats**, plus a few **Japanese macaques** along the access road. We continued to Kyoto, where PC and TC2 watched **Japanese pipistrelles** (seen only by TC2) and a **birdlike noctule** forage above the river (we also got **Asian particolored bat** on bat detector), and two **coypus** in the water at 35.029281N 135.770897E. Then we proceeded to Shikoku Island.

April 27. We took a whalewatching trip from Tosa, but didn't see any mammals, then drove to Tokushima with a stop at Ryuga-do Cave, where we were told that the part with roosting bats was inaccessible to visitors. From Tokushima we took a ferry to Wakayama on Honshu; no mammals seen during the crossing.

April 28. PC left one day early; TC2 and VD continued. We sopped at Sandanbeki Cave (33.666065N 135.335665E), a known maternity colony of **eastern bentwings**, but the bats hadn't arrived yet. Then we went whalewatching from Kii Oshima with Kazuyoshi-maru (<http://www.zb.ztv.ne.jp/kazuyoshimaru/index.html>, 33.455781N 135.828428E) and saw **dwarf sperm whales** and **Eden's whales**, plus a large billfish (swordfish or marlin). Then we drove to Dorogawa via Dorokyo Gorge, hoping for some mammals along the way, but there was too much weekend traffic. Dorogawa Bat Cave and adjacent Praying Mantis Cave (34.268919N 135.890902E) still had a few hibernating **greater horseshoe bats**, some very active **least horseshoe bats**, and another bat IDed by our detector as Savii's pipistrelle; it was probably **Asian particolored bat**.

April 29. Early flights.

Species list

Mammals (Japanese endemics in **bold**)

1. **Sado mole** *Mogera tokudae* 1 Sado I.
2. **Japanese macaque** *Macaca fuscata fuscata* 8-10 Jigokudani Monkey Park, 2 Matsumoto, 6 Kawachi-no-Fuketsu
3. Greater horseshoe bat *Rhinolophus ferrumequinum nippon*, 2 Takahata Caves, 1 Sado I, 4 Kawachi-no-Fuketsu, 6 Dorogawa Bat Cave
4. **Japanese horseshoe bat** *R. cornutus cornutus* 3-5 Dorogawa Bat Cave
5. Asian particolored bat *Vespertilio sinensis superans*, 1 Lide Hot Springs road
6. Birdlike noctule *Nyctalus aviator* 1 Kyoto
7. **Endo's pipistrelle** *Pipistrellus endoi*, 1 Lide Hot Springs road
8. Japanese pipistrelle *Pipistrellus abramus*, 1 Kyoto
9. Eastern long-fingered myotis *Myotis macrodactylus* 1 Karuizawa
10. Far Eastern myotis *M. bombinus* 1 Takato
11. Eastern bentwing *Miniopterus fuliginosus* 1 Takahata Caves
12. Hilgendorf's tube-nosed bat *Murina hilgendorfi* 50+ Kawachi-no-Fuketsu
13. Ussuri tube-nosed bat *Murina ussuriensis* 1 Bergcot
14. Red fox *Vulpes vulpes japonica* 2 Nishizao Pasture, 5 Karuizawa. 4 Norikura Plateau
15. **Japanese raccoon dog** *Nyctereutes viverrinus viverrinus*, 10-12 Lide Hot Springs road, 10-14 Sado I., 4 Bergcot
16. Masked palm civet *Paguma larvata* 1 Lide Hot Springs road, 1 Norikura Plateau
17. **Japanese marten** *Martes melampus melampus*, 2 Nishizao Pasture, 1 Bergcot
18. **Japanese weasel** *Mustela itatsi* 1 Norikura Plateau
19. **Japanese badger** *Meles anakuna* 1 Ino
20. Wild boar *Sus scrofa leucomystax* 6-7 Karuizawa
21. Sika deer *Cervus nippon centralis* 6 Karuizawa, 15 Bergcot
22. **Japanese serow** *Capricornis crispus* 2 Zao area, 1 Takahata Caves, 1 Norikura Plateau
23. Eden's whale *Balaenoptera edeni* 3 Shirahama
24. Dwarf sperm whale *Kogia sima* 2 Shirahama
25. Common dolphin *Delphinus cf. delphis* 100+ Naoetsu
26. Common bottlenose dolphin *D. truncatus* 2 Sado I. ferry, 10-20 Naoetsu

27. Pacific white-sided dolphin *Lagenorhynchus obliquidens* 100+ Sado I. ferry, 5-10 Naoetsu
28. **Japanese giant flying squirrel** *Petaurista leucogenys nikkonis* 2 Lide Hot Springs road, 1 Karuizawa
29. **Japanese flying squirrel** *Pteromys momonga* 2 Norikura Plateau
30. **Japanese squirrel** *Sciurus lis* 3 Bergcot
31. **Greater Japanese mouse** *Apodemus speciosus* 2-3 Lide Hot Springs road, 1 Sado I., 1-5 Karuizawa, 2 Norikura Plateau
32. **Lesser Japanese mouse** *A. argenteus* 2-3 Lide Hot Springs road, 2-3 Sado I., 1-5 Karuizawa, 9-11 Norikura Plateau
33. **Japanese field vole** *Alexandromys montebelli brevicorpus*, 1 Sado I.
34. **Smith's vole** *Myodes smithii smithii* 1 Bergcot
35. Coypu *Myocastor coypus* 2 Kyoto
36. **Japanese hare** *Lepus brachyurus angostidens* 2 Lido Hot Springs road, L. b. lyoni 1 Sado I.

Birds (detailed information provided upon request)

1. Copper pheasant *Syrnaticus soemmerringii scintillans*, *S. s. subrufus*
2. Green pheasant *Phasianus versicolor robustipes*, *P. v. tohkaidi*
3. Chinese bamboo partridge *Bambusicola thoracica*
4. Eurasian wigeon *Anas penelope*
5. Mallard *A. platyrhynchos platyrhynchos*
6. Eastern spot-billed duck *A. zonorhyncha*
7. Common teal *A. crecca crecca*
8. Common porchard *Aythya ferila*
9. Tufted duck *A. fuligula*
10. Greater scaup *A. marila nearctica*
11. Streaked shearwater *Calonectris leucomelas*
12. Swinhoe's storm-petrel *Oceanodroma monorhis*
13. Crested ibis *Nipponia nippon*
14. Grey heron *Ardea cinerea jouyi*
15. Great egret *A. alba alba*
16. Intermediate egret *A. intermedia*
17. Little egret *Egretta garzetta garzetta*
18. Temminck's cormorant *Phalacrocorax capillatus*
19. Greater cormorant *P. carbo hanedae*
20. Pelagic cormorant *P. pelagicus pelagicus*
21. Osprey *Pandion haliaetus haliaetus*
22. Black-eared kite *Milvus lineatus*
23. Grey-faced buzzard *Butastur indicus*
24. Eurasian buzzard *Buteo buteo japonicus*
25. Eurasian coot *Fulica atra atra*
26. Eurasian oystercatcher *Haematopus ostralegus oscaris*
27. Little ringed plover *Charadrius dubius curonicus*
28. Common redshank *Tringa nebularia*
29. Common sandpiper *T. hypoleuca*
30. Red-necked phalarope *Phalaropus lobatus*
31. Black-headed gull *Larus ridibundus*
32. Black-tailed gull *L. crassirostris*
33. Vega gull *L. vegae*
34. Slaty-backed gull *L. schistisagus*
35. Spectacled guillemot *Cepphus carbo*
36. Ancient murrelet *Synthliboramphus antiquus antiquus*
37. Japanese murrelet *S. wumizusume*
38. Oriental turtle dove *Streptopelia orientalis orientalis*
39. Rock pigeon *Columba livia*
40. Pacific swift *Apus pacificus pacificus*
41. Great spotted woodpecker *Dendrocopos major japonicus*

42. Common kestrel *Falco tinnunculus interstinctus*
43. Bull-headed shrike *Lanius bucephalus bucephalus*
44. Eurasian jay *Garrulus glandarius japonicus*, *G. g. tokugavae*
45. Carrion crow *Corvus corone orientalis*
46. Jungle crow *Corvus macrorhynchos japonensis*
47. Willow tit *Poecile montanus restrictus*
48. Varied tit *Parus varius varius*
49. Coal tit *P. ater insularis*
50. Lesser tit *P. minor minor*
51. Brown-eared bulbul *Hypsipetes amaurotis amaurotis*
52. Barn swallow *Hirundo rustica gutturalis*
53. Long-tailed tit *Aegithalos caudatus trivirgatus*
54. Japanese bush warbler *Horornis diphone cantans*
55. Chinese hwamei *Garrulax canorus*
56. Japanese white-eye *Zosterops japonicus japonicus*
57. Eurasian wren *Troglodytes troglodytes fumigatus*
58. Eurasian nuthatch *Sitta europaea amurensis*
59. White-cheeked starling *Sturnia cineraceus*
60. Chestnut-cheeked starling *S. philippensis*
61. White's thrush *Zoothera aurea toratugumi*
62. Pale thrush *Turdus pallidus*
63. Brown-headed thrush *T. chrysolaus chrysolaus*
64. Dusky thrush *T. eunomus*
65. Japanese thrush *T. cardis*
66. Blue rock thrush *Monticola solitaria philippensis*
67. Narcissus flycatcher *Ficedula narcissina*
68. Blue-and-white flycatcher *Cyanoptila cyanomelana cyanomelana*
69. Daurian redstart *Phoenicurus aureus*
70. Brown dipper *Cinclus pallasi pallasi*
71. Skylark *Alauda arvensis japonica*
72. Russet sparrow *Passer rutilans rutilans*
73. Eurasian tree sparrow *P. montanus saturatus*
74. Eastern yellow wagtail *Moracilla tschutschensis taiwana*
75. Grey wagtail *M. cinerea cinerea*
76. White wagtail *M. alba lugens*
77. Japanese wagtail *M. grandis*
78. Brambling *Fringilla montifringilla*
79. Hawfinch *Coccothraustes coccothraustes*
80. Japanese grosbeak *C. personata*
81. Oriental greenfinch *Chloris sinica minor*
82. Eurasian siskin *Carduelis spinus*
83. Meadow bunting *Emberiza cioides cioides*
84. Chestnut-eared bunting *E. fucata fucata*
85. Masked bunting *E. personata*

Reptiles and amphibians

1. Chinese softshell turtle *Pelodiscus sinensis*
2. Japanese pond turtle *Mauremys japonica*
3. Japanese grass lizard *Takydromus tachydromoides*
4. Japanese clawed salamander *Onychodactylus japonicus*
5. Firebelly newt *Cynops pyrrhogaster*
6. Japanese toad *Bufo japonicus formosus*
7. Japanese treefrog *Hyla japonica*
8. Japanese frog *Rana japonica*
9. Tagoi frog *R. tagoi tagoi*
10. Forest green tree frog *Rhacophorus arboreus*

A few photos



Red foxes (*Vulpes vulpes japonica*); the one on the left is trying to play with a housecat.



Japanese martens (*Martes melampus melampus*) in a field and at a feeder.



Japanese raccoon dogs (*Nyctereutes viverrinus viverrinus*) in a field and at a feeder.



Masked palm civet (*Paguma larvata*)



Japanese macaques (*Macaca fuscata fuscata*)



Greater (*Rhinolophus ferrumequinum nippon*) and Japanese (*R. cornutus cornutus*) horseshoe bats



Oriental bentwing (*Miniopterus fuliginosus*) and Hilgendorf's tube-nosed bats (*Murina hilgendorfi*)



Japanese serows (*Capricornis crispus*)



Eden's whale (*Balaenoptera edeni*) and Pacific white-sided dolphins (*Lagenorhynchus obliquidens*)



Juvenile and adult Japanese hares (*Lepus brachyurus angostidens*)



Japanese squirrel (*Sciurus lis*)



Japanese giant flying squirrel (*Petaurista leucogenys nikkonis*)



Greater (*Apodemus speciosus*) and lesser (*A. argenteus*) Japanese mice