

Japan Birding & Nature | Species List

January 7 – 23, 2023 | with Naturalist Journeys



With guides Bryan Shirley, Takumi Koichi, and Peg Abbott, and clients Bud, Gingy, Cathy, Debbie, Katy, John, Kathy, Rob, Peter, Nancy, Shirli, and Mike

Compiled by Peg Abbott

(#) in Family Line – total number species seen in family

(#) in species line – number of days of the trip, out of 14 total

HO – heard only

LO – Leader only

SUMMARY: An incredible trip with guides Bryan Shirley and Takumi Koichi, hosted by Peg Abbott of Naturalist Journeys. We had good weather, a most companionable group and great birding. We just missed a major snowstorm at the end, cutting our final day short to take an earlier flight off Hokkaido. All agreed top birds included the Blakiston's Fish Owl seen in the evening and by some in the early morning dining on fish. Red-crowned and White-naped Cranes were noted, but who could forget the incredible day we had seeing five crane species including rare Siberian Crane! Or equally memorable, a stunning Ural Owl sitting in such a picturesque roost tree. The two eagles we encountered on Hokkaido featured at the top of the list, with the dramatic-patterned Steller's taking top billing. We saw 30 species of waterfowl including two rarities we know from home – American Wigeon and Canvasback. We had excellent looks at many of the resident songbirds. Seeing numerous Eurasian Curlew was memorable amid the 1000's of winter shorebirds using coastal mudflats. Woodpeckers were a favorite of photographers along with the Common Kingfisher. Bryan made sure we found the endemics and regional specialties. We put in extensive field time, going from southern Kyushu to northern Hokkaido, and we found mammals too, in fact some listed the Red Fox which were so confiding on Hokkaido as their top "bird".

BIRDS 141 species in 39 families, of which 2 were Leader only birds

eBird Trip Report Link: <https://ebird.org/tripreport/103165>

DUCKS, GEESE AND SWANS Anatidae (30)

Greater White-fronted Goose *Anser albifrons* – (2) We saw one lone individual in with Taiga and Tundra Bean-Goose in a pond we observed from a raised hide at Kohokagata. We found two at Tatara Park outside of Tokyo as we made our way back after exploring Honshu, an adult and an immature bird swimming amid a group of Tundra Swans.

Taiga Bean-Goose *Anser fabalis* – (1) We had great views of both bean-goose species possible in Japan, two closely-related species seen together in the lake at the Kamoike Waterfowl Sanctuary near Kaga City on the west side of Honshu Island. We could study head shape and bill length, longer in the Taiga species, as both species were in a group off to the side of the lake, swimming and feeding side by side. **Tundra Bean-Goose** *Anser serrirostris* – (1) Seen with Taiga Bean-Goose swimming among reeds along the shore close enough to get a scope on them to compare head shape and bill size.

Mute Swan (I) *Cygnus olor* – (1) One individual seen at Matsumoto Castle, introduced to this park.

Tundra Swan *Cygnus columbianus* – (1) We found about 20 individuals driving the farm fields not far from the Kamoike Waterfowl Sanctuary. We got the bus lined up with them for some very good views as they fed in unplowed fields. We later saw several dozen of this species mixed in with Whooper Swans at Tatara Park outside of Tokyo. They were bathing, preening, calling to each other – excellent behavioral viewing. The form here, Bewick's, has far more yellow than the North American subspecies, but still less than the Whooper.

Whooper Swan *Cygnus* – (5) We first saw this species at Tatara Park, as we stood with a small herd of Japanese pre-school children that were feeding ducks. Most of the ducks were Northern Pintail, over 100 of them, and occasionally something would scare them back to the water with the swans, then they'd waddle up for more feed. It was great to get scope views of the two swan species together for comparison. Once on Hokkaido, we saw a few in the large rivers we crossed driving north and flying overhead as we drove down the Notsuke Peninsula.

Common Shelduck *Tadorna* – (3) We first encountered this gleaming black and white duck at a great distance from the viewing platform at the Crane Center near Izumi. We then found them on ponds and canals in the surrounding wetlands, and in the Kumo River estuary. Common at the start of our trip, but not further up on Honshu.

Mandarin Duck *Aix galericulata* – (1) One of the highlights of the trip, we drove up into the mountains above Izumi to a quiet reservoir. Bryan was confident we would find Mandarin Duck but we had no concept of finding at first a dozen, then two dozen, then groups of 40-50 or more. At first, we had one male and at least ten females, then another male swam in and a chase ensued. Around the next cove we found multiple males, and from the bridge at the end we had at 40 or more males in view and lines of both genders resting along the shore. We watched them in flight and heard them vocalizing. They were wary, and kept their distance but we learned a lot about this stunning species and loved walking and watching them in their mountain realm. We estimate about 300 were present in total.

Baikal Teal *Sibirionetta formosa* – (1) We were fortunate to see quite a number of this species, at a distance, but clear enough in the scopes to get good views of the face pattern and vertical stripe on the side. About 1400 were wintering at the Kamoike Waterfowl Sanctuary this winter according to the ranger. We were able to see them at a couple of other ponds and lakes in the area as well.

Northern Shoveler *Spatula clypeata* – (2) Present in many of the wetlands we visited, though not numerous, we saw males and females interspersed with other species. Several times we observed them feeding in a group, circling tightly together while kicking their feet, churning up the food.

Gadwall *Mareca strepera* – (3) We spied a two different pairs at a pond at a city park that we stopped at before reaching Kumamoto. In the moat at Matsumoto Castle we had great views at winter plumage males and females. There were small numbers at several wetlands, but never the dominant species.

Falcated Duck *Mareca falcata* – (3) We had good views out the bus window as we parked above the major canal in the crane area, and then found another on the pond at the city park near Kumamoto. We saw four females while at the Kamoike Waterfowl Center but only after some searching. Less common this year than many, perhaps the warm weather and lack of ice and snow?

Eurasian Wigeon *Mareca penelope* – (8) Common, widespread and numerous, we had repeated beautiful looks at this species and counted them by the dozen in ponds and wetlands. Males were still in bright plumage. Present at Kamoike, though not a dominant species. They were present at Tatara Park, in deeper water and along the lakeshore. At a city park outside of Tokyo, several were up on shore grazing and we got very close views. We had a few up on Hokkaido at sea.

American Wigeon *Mareca americana* – (1) A rare find in Japan, we had scope views of a male still showing his head color adjacent to a pair of Gadwall at the pond at the city park near Kumamoto. The pond was filled with ducks, we had hoped to spot the Baikal Teal reported here, but we as combed through hundreds of birds, coots, three species of grebes and numerous ducks, and this was our best find.

Eastern Spot-billed Duck *Anas zonorhyncha* – (7) Seen in canals, quiet rivers, wetlands on Kyushu on each of our days there. In the moat at Motsumoto Castle we had very close views in nice light for photography. We had very

close individuals at Kumoba Pond as we walked around it late in the day. They were present on the lakeshore at Tatara Park. Common and widespread, but most often interspersed with more numerous species.

Mallard *Anas platyrhynchos* – (8) Common at Kyushu. Huge numbers on Honshu at Kamoike Waterfowl Sanctuary and the adjacent lakes and ponds. Also common on Honshu, though scarce on Hokkaido, recorded on 13 of our eBird checklist spots.

Northern Pintail *Anas acuta* – (6) We first saw a few in the distant flooded field scoped from the observation deck at the crane center at Izumi, then we saw a raft of 100+ at the mouth of the Kumo River. We continued to see them at freshwater lakes and ponds on Honshu, at the Kamoike Waterfowl Center and neighboring lakes. Memorable was the huge flock coming up to Japanese pre-school children feeding them at Tatara Park, great photo opportunity for portraits!

Green-winged Teal *Anas crecca* – (8) Seen in wetlands as we explored the rice fields around Izumi's Crane Center, and very close views of a dozen or so roosting in aquatic vegetation at the shore of the lake at the city park near Kumamoto, then on Honshu at the Kamoike Waterfowl Sanctuary. Widespread though not abundant, often present as evidenced by records on 12 of our eBird checklists.

Canvasback *Aythya valisineria* – (1) Rare and totally unexpected on Hokkaido in an ocean harbor, we found three males and one female and one very excited Japanese birder wanting to make sure we had indeed seen them. We took a number of photographs; for Bryan in his many years birding here it was a second sighting.

Common Pochard *Aythya ferina* – (7) Common and widespread. At Mizumoto Park on Honshu just outside Tokyo they were the most numerous species. They were present in the deep-water harbors on Hokkaido.

Tufted Duck *Aythya fuligula* – (9) Seen our first walk in Tokyo when we walked down to the river, in small rafts in the Tama River near the colorful fishing boats and bridge spans crossing the river. Two males at Kamoike Waterfowl Sanctuary. A few were present at Tatara Park. Widespread. Seen off the harbors in Hokkaido in small number.

Greater Scaup *Aythya marila* – (6) A couple of individuals in the Tama River on our first morning walk in Tokyo. One male picked out among the 1000+ ducks at Kamoike Waterfowl Sanctuary. Seen with Black Scoter in rafts off the harbors in Hokkaido.

Harlequin Duck *Histrionicus histrionicus* – (4) Dozens of them, male and female, in all the harbors of Hokkaido, males still in very bright plumage.

Stejneger's Scoter *Melanitta stejnegeri* – (2) A great spot by Bryan, just one individual among 50+ Common Scoter, feeding by a fishing net set out from shore on Hokkaido, the Notsuke Peninsula. He then found us another from the Hanasaki Lighthouse viewpoint in calmer water for a really terrific, clear view.

Black Scoter *Melanitta americana* – (4) Rafts of them off the coast and in harbors of Hokkaido, mixed male and female groups. They were seen in high surf open ocean, and in the quieter harbors. Numerous, the most common sea duck encountered.

Long-tailed Duck *Clangula hyemalis* – (2) First seen in Shibetsu Harbor on Hokkaido, we then saw several while scanning open ocean from the roads. We had them from Nassapu Point off the most eastern tip of Japan.

Common Goldeneye *Bucephala clangula* – (2) A fun lifer for Jon and Cathy who hope to now see it in their home state as well. We saw many once we encountered them, in the open ocean and in quieter harbors on Hokkaido. A few were seen in open ocean as well.

Smew *Mergellus albellus* – (4) A female was a nice surprise to find, farther south than Bryan had witnessed before, at a pond we stopped at before reaching Izumi on Kyushu. Two were seen from the pond with the raised hide we visited after the Kamoike Waterfowl Sanctuary on Honshu. Four males and a female were present in the concrete-walled Raikotera Reservoir, we made a quick stop at on our way to Motsumoto Castle. Several males and females were present at Tatara Park.

Common Merganser *Mergus merganser* – (4) One lone male seen at the Kamoike Waterfowl Sanctuary. Once scoped in the harbor near where we picked up the boat trip near Rausu, in the ocean with other ducks. They continued to be present in the saltwater harbors and even coastal ocean areas on Hokkaido, where they mixed with Red-breasted Merganser.

Red-breasted Merganser *Mergus serrator* – (2) As we made our way down the coast at Hokkaido, we found this species mixed in with Common Mergansers, in some Hokkaido harbors a dozen or more. We also saw groups in flight low over the surf from various coastal viewpoints.

GREBES Podicipedidae (4)

Little Grebe *Tachybaptus ruficollis* – (5) Several individuals in the lake at the city park near Kumamoto. Seen at the city park we walked before checking into our hotel at Kumamoto. Two seen along the reedy shore in one of the lakes we visited near Kamoike Waterfowl Sanctuary. One individual was in the moat at Motsumoto Castle. One individual was present at Tataru Park

Red-necked Grebe *Podiceps grisegena* – (2) A few were seen off the coast as we drove north in Hokkaido.

Great Crested Grebe *Podiceps cristatus* – (4) First seen in the Tama River in Tokyo, one near the boats and then another very far out by a huge raft of ducks. We found them again at the city park near Kumamoto where we had super views of one quite close to shore, and several at a distance. Seen at the ocean view park we stopped at to scan for cormorants and gulls when arriving to Honshu. Twenty or more were present at Tataru Park near Tokyo.

Eared Grebe *Podiceps nigricollis* – (2) One individual seen in the lake at the city park near Kumamoto. We had a few more from Amagozen Point as we overlooked the Sea of Japan.

PIGEONS AND DOVES Columbidae (2)

Rock Pigeon (*Columba livia*) – (14) Common, cities and roadways, farms, all islands including Hokkaido. Seen every day of the tour.

Oriental Turtle-Dove *Streptopelia orientalis* – (7) Common around wetlands, farms, the crane feeding area on Kyushu. Widespread, seen on most days of the journey.

RAILS, CRAKES, AND ALLIES Rallidae (2)

Eurasian Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus* – (1) A few individuals seen at the city park near Kumamoto.

Eurasian Coot *Fulica atra* – (8) First seen at the Tama River in good number, then at wetlands on Kyushu, including the city park near Kumamoto. A few individuals were present at the Kamoike Waterfowl Sanctuary. A few were scattered into our view of waterfowl at Tataru Park.

CRANES Gruidae (6)

Siberian Crane *Leucogeranus leucogeranus* – (1) A treasured moment of our trip, we'd heard from the wildlife guardian at the Crane Center that one had regularly been coming in quite late to the roost pond seen from the observation tower, but leaving quite early. Our group was up to the challenge and we were there next day at first light. It took no time at all to see this stately giant standing above the myriad Hooded Cranes, gleaming white plumage – as it flew out to feed, we saw its black wing tips. Almost gripping to see a species listed by IUCN as critically endangered. Less than 4000 exist in the world, and loss of habitat is increasing as a threat.

Sandhill Crane *Antigone canadensis* – (1) There were three on the survey done the day before we visited the Crane Center and with luck, we found them. Two obligingly were feeding on dike between two water areas, easy to observe.

White-naped Crane *Antigone vipio* – (2) This species quickly stole our hearts with its regal elegance and beauty. While outnumbered by Hooded Cranes at the Crane Center near Izumi, this species stole the show. We saw many, estimated at 1500, and these were grouped into families, with a pair and one young the most common

grouping but two young present at times. We got quite close to some along the area's road margins, and saw them in flight and feeding. We watched pairs toss their heads up uttering unison calls and watched restless youngsters instigate leaping and dancing. For many of us, these wintering cranes form the core reason we came to Japan in winter. And seeing this species at Izumi proved up, worth the whole trip!

Common Crane *Grus grus* – (1) Koichi and Bryan were keen to find this species and they did, one individual at a great distance, scoped and observed by most of the group on our first day at the Crane Center.

Hooded Crane *Grus monacha* – (2) The most numerous species in the Crane Center's surrounding fields, an estimated 8000 were present during our time there, we probably saw at least half of these as we watched. Good numbers of juveniles were there mixed in with the abundant adults. We watched their interactions, and watched them strut across feeding areas, often with their bustle up as they approached each other. Great behaviors to view.

Red-crowned Crane *Grus japonensis* – (2) Absolutely memorable moments, very relaxed viewing at two sites on Hokkaido, where we could watch behavior, see birds in flight and feeding, hear pairs do their unison calling, and just admire the stature and grace of these huge cranes. One of the highlights of the trip and predictable to find them!

PLOVERS AND LAPWINGS Charadriidae (5)

Black-bellied Plover *Pluvialis squatarola* – (1) Abundant at the mudflats at Yatsushiro we walked along the dike to view birds at a distance, mid-tide.

Northern Lapwing *Vanellus vanellus* – (1) First seen from the observation platform at the Crane Center near Izumi, we later had several fly over as we worked a canal running parallel to one of the roads through the rice fields. We had a few close to the road margin when working the road system in that area the following day.

Kentish Plover *Charadrius alexandrinus* – (1) We sorted this species from Little Ringed Plover, also present at the Yatsushiro mudflats. They were in groups, about thirty in total.

Long-billed Plover *Charadrius placidus* – (1) Peg spotted two plovers in gravel habitat on a quick stop along a river, as Bryan explained they used to be along the river there but not in recent years. He ran for the scope and we had wonderful views of a probable pair. We watched them preening and were able to walk closer to them to get very good scope views. This is a range-restricted species so there were high fives all around.

Little Ringed Plover *Charadrius dubius* – (2) A few individuals were scoped on the mudflats at Yatsushiro. We found them again outside of Tokyo we stopped to observe the reported Oriental Stork in. Two were loafing on the mudflat adjacent to the lake at Tatara Park near Tokyo.

SANDPIPERS AND ALLIES Scolopacidae (8)

Eurasian Curlew *Numenius arquata* – (1) We had excellent views on the mudflats at Yatsushiro.

Red-necked Stint *Calidris ruficollis* – (1) Persistent Peg kept at it until we sifted and sorted through hundreds of Dunlin to get a good scope comparison of size for these Red-necked Stints, a good study.

Dunlin *Calidris alpina* – (1) Over 1000 present on the mudflats at Yatsushiro, feeding voraciously. By number one of the most numerous species of the trip.

Rock Sandpiper *Calidris ptilocnemis* – (1) A group of ten was seen using the rocky shoreline at the Hanasaki Lighthouse. Waves would push them up and they'd fly to another perch, eventually making it close enough for a good scope identification.

Solitary Snipe *Gallinago solitaria* – (1-LO) Koichi spotted one and excitedly led us to the part of the stream we might see it, but snow pack was very high due to plowing the adjacent parking lot, so we could not see around the bend, where it flew as we approached. Sigh, just missed it, our invitation back! **Common Snipe**

Gallinago gallinago – (4) While working the canal and rice-field road system near the Izumi Crane Center, Peg had just asked Bryan “Do you see snipes here?” when Katy said “there is one right here”. We saw two or three in this area subsequently, would that all bird karma be so strong!

Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos* – (1) Widespread and common.

Common Redshank *Tringa tetanus* – (1) One lone individual sleeping on the mudflats at Yatsushiro.

AUKS, MURRES, AND PUFFINS Alcidae (4)

Common Murre *Uria aalge* – (2) Seen at a distance, a steady stream of individuals, 20+ in total, quite a ways out to sea, flying in long lines over the surf, occasionally landing.

Pigeon Guillemot *Cephus columba* – (1) A couple of very white-plumaged individuals were bobbing in the surf between gulls, a distant scope view but unmistakable. At Nassapu, the furthest east point in Japan.

Spectacled Guillemot *Cephus carbo* – (1) Great to get scope views, with patience, though at a distance we could sort the various alcid species among the more numerous Red-breasted Mergansers, Pelagic Cormorants and Harlequin Ducks.

Ancient Murrelet *Synthliboramphus antiquus* – (1) Two individuals seen of the point at Nassapu, the tip of the Nemeru Peninsula.

GULLS AND TERNS Laridae (8)

Saunders's Gull *Saundersilarus saundersi* – (2) We saw a half dozen scattered widely, all on the water, interspersed with rafts of wintering ducks at the mouth of the Kuma River. Scope views, we had seen a few Black-headed at close range earlier so it was a good study of small, agile gulls. Plentiful along the mudflats at Higashi Yoka, locally common though range restricted.

Black-headed Gull *Chroicocephalus ridibundus* – (6) Seen along the Tama River and then again at the mouth of the Kuma River, three individuals there. We found them again when returning to the Tokyo area at the park we stopped at to search for thrushes in the late afternoon. Numerous in the harbor at Hokkaido where we took the boat. Plentiful off of Hanasaki Lighthouse and Nassapu Point on Hokkaido. **Black-tailed Gull** *Larus crassirostris* – (1) Numerous at the ocean viewpoint we chose to scan for gulls and cormorants on the west coast of Honshu.

Common Gull *Larus canus* – (4) The Asian part of the split from Mew Gull, keen-eyed Bryan found one among probably 100 Black-headed Gulls, fortunately up on rocks of the seawall so we could scope it. Once on Hokkaido we had them fairly regularly in harbors. More numerous this year than most, we saw quite a few off the Nemeru Peninsula at various stops.

Herring Gull *Larus argentatus* – (5) We saw the Vega Gull, soon a split from Herring, at the Tama River. One individual seen in the harbor at Hokkaido.

Slaty-backed Gull *Larus schistisagus* – (5) A couple of individuals were resting on beach rock pilings and concrete moorings, in scope range to check leg color and see well at the ocean viewpoint we stopped at on the west side of Honshu. Very numerous along the coast and in harbors and the peninsulas we ventured out on while on Hokkaido.

Glaucous-winged Gull *Larus glaucescens* – (3) A few individuals were present with the more numerous Slaty-backed Gulls at the harbors on Hokkaido. Seen with Slaty-backed and Glaucous for nice comparison in the scope.

Glaucous Gull *Larus hyperboreus* – (3) Several individuals seen well among the more numerous Slaty-backed Gulls seen in the harbors and while out on the boat in Hokkaido, we saw them in flight and on the water. We continued to see individuals here and there along the coast on Hokkaido.

LOONS Gaviidae (2)

Red-throated Loon *Gavia stellata* – (1) At least two individuals scoped off of Nassapu Point, the tip of the Nemuru Peninsula on Hokkaido.

Arctic Loon *Gavia arctica* – (1) One individual seen along the coast of Hokkaido as we stopped for a break driving north.

STORKS Ciconiidae (1)

Oriental Stork *Ciconia boyciana* – (1) We found a lone individual still using a city park with a lake and some reed areas as we drove back to Tokyo. We were able to observe it feeding, in flight, and resting at the water's edge. It was color banded above the knees. Rare in the world, about 100 individuals winter in Japan each year, often spread out as lone individuals.

CORMORANTS Phalacrocoracidae (3)

Pelagic Cormorant *Urile pelagicus* – (4) A couple of dozen were huddled together on a cement structure off the coast on the west side of Honshu, also present at this site were Japanese Cormorants, so we could compare bill size and overall shape. Fairly common but mainly lone birds seen in the water feeding off the coast of Hokkaido.

Great Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo* – (7) Common, widespread. Kyushu and Honshu. Several were resting on the concrete sides of Raikotera Reservoir on the way to Motsumoto Castle. Numerous at Tatara Park near Tokyo.

Japanese Cormorant *Phalacrocorax capillatus* – (2) We had good scope views of this species from an ocean viewpoint stop on the west coast of Honshu. One individual was perched in with numerous Pelagic Cormorants on a wave-swept, icy rock at the monument for the Kuril Islands overlook. Bryan said these were not typically on Hokkaido in winter, though the range map shows it, it's not been his experience so a good find.

HERONS AND EGRETS Ardeidae (3)

Gray Heron *Ardea cinerea* – (7) This Great Blue Heron equivalent was seen often, in predictable wetland habitats. They were present on freshwater and at the coast, with 20+ seen on the mudflats at Yatsushiro. Widespread at most wetland sites visited as evidenced by being recorded on 11 eBird checklists.

Great Egret *Ardea alba* – (7) Seen regularly in small numbers in wetland habitats. Kyushu, Honshu, common and widespread.

Little Egret *Egretta garzetta* – (5) First seen at the Crane Center in Izumi, scope views. Seen here and there in wetland and farm field areas. Several were on the shallow lake margins at Tatara Park near Tokyo.

IBISES AND SPOONBILLS Threskiornithidae (2)

Eurasian Spoonbill *Platalea leucorodia* – (2) Seen at a distance but good scope views in the flooded field pond we checked each time at the observation platform. We saw an individual perched on a canal concrete wall as we walked a reed area looking for buntings, and then several again at the city park lake near Kumamoto.

Black-faced Spoonbill *Platalea minor* – (2) Side by side with Eurasian Spoonbill, we had a good scope study from the Crane Center observation platform while on Kyushu.

OSPREY Pandionidae (1)

Osprey *Pandion haliaetus* – (4) Seen in the wetlands surrounding the Crane Center, one individual, then several at the mouth of the Kumamoto River. At the city park near Kumamoto, Bud got a fine shot of one carrying a fish.

HAWKS, KITES, AND EAGLES Accipitridae (7)

Eastern Marsh-Harrier *Circus spilonotus* – (1) One was flying and harassing teal at the Kamoike Waterfowl Sanctuary. It had a brief interaction with an Eastern Buzzard also working the area.

Eurasian Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus* – (1) One buzzed the shoreline of the river we walked to our first morning in Tokyo, the Tama River.

Northern Goshawk *Accipiter gentilis* – (1) Bryan scoped one at the Crane Center near Izumu, distant but a clear view, and explained that in Japan they are not wary and even occur on Tokyo!

Black Kite *Milvus migrans*– (10) Common, widespread. High numbers were seen at the Swan 44 Rest Area where eagles had gathered for fish being cast off from local fisherman, they harassed each other and both species of eagles.

White-tailed Eagle *Haliaeetus albicilla* – (5) Great views on Hokkaido, very close views while on the boat where they tossed out fish, amazing to watch this bird turn on an instance and descend to catch it. We saw them perched in trees and over the ocean. Big numbers at the Swan 44 Rest Area on the ice and flying back and forth from shore to areas ice fisherman dropped their cast-off parts.

Steller's Sea-Eagle *Haliaeetus pelagicus* – (4) One of the most impressive birds of prey on the planet, this huge eagle commands attention with its bold black and white pattern. We saw adults and immatures, watched them fly and feed and found them perched, often multiple individuals in a tree. Numbers were way down this year, little ice so far, but we saw more each day we were on Hokkaido so they are making their way down for the winter. Dozens seen at the Swan 44 Rest Area – quite impressive!

Eastern Buzzard *Buteo japonicus* – (5) A few individuals seen around rice fields and agricultural areas of Kyushu. One was active at the Kamoike Waterfowl Sanctuary. One was seen in flight and then perched at a beautiful park, the Motsumoto Alps Park. We stopped at a bridge to see our first Red-crowned Cranes on Hokkaido and one was posing in lovely winter-bare trees.

OWLS Strigidae (3)

Blakiston's Fish-Owl *Ketupa blakistoni* – (2) Another highlight of the trip; this incredible species is acclimated to feed in a fish pond at Hotel Yoroushi Onsen on Hokkaido. We were fortunate that it came in at an expected time (it is not seen every night) and almost all of the group got to see it well. A few intrepid travelers got up early to watch and wait, and were rewarded when about 6 AM the male came in and caught two fish, ate them both before flying off. The wingspan is impressive! We were able to get photographs (no flash) and video. So memorable.

Ural Owl *Strix uralensis* – (1) Bryan and Koichi knew of a roost on Hokkaido, one of several, and with luck on a sun-bright day we made a short walk through snow to reach a lookout across a small ravine. The owl is used to being admired from this point, and was obviously enjoying the sun. Another stellar moment of the trip thanks to our competent guides.

Short-eared Owl *Asio flammeus* – (1) Two individuals seen in soft sunset light as we returned from a full day birding on the Nemeru Peninsula. We watched them coursing over the beach grasses.

KINGFISHERS Alcedinidae (1)

Common Kingfisher *Alcedo atthis* – (3) Kathy found our first one which caused much exclaiming in the bus, as we had stopped to view ducks in a major canal while at the Crane Center area. We found another along the river at the several city nature parks we birded at. Peg described them as avian jewelry, quick moving and stunning to see. Nancy had a keen eye for them, she found one quite close on the wall of the moat at the Motsumoto Castle.

WOODPECKERS Picidae (3)

Japanese Pygmy Woodpecker *Yungipicus kizuki* – (6) Our first encounter was in the city park by Kumamoto, in a flock of Long-tailed Tit and most striking was their relative size – not much difference! This individual was intent

on feeding and barely budged much to the delight of our photographers. Another was found in the mixed flock we encountered in tall conifers that framed the ocean view we checked for cormorants and gulls on the west side of Honshu. We saw them on our woods walks from Karuizawa, one was quite close at the feeding flock we found in the Forest Park. One came into the feeder area on Hokkaido at Hotel Yoroushi.

Great Spotted Woodpecker *Dendrocopos major* – (4) Seen briefly at Motsumoto Alps Park, calling on the far side of the ravine. There was an active pair by the resort we stayed at while at Karuizawa. We found them on all our outings from here, with time in the deciduous forests this emerged as the most common woodpecker species. Good views at the feeder at Hotel Yoroushi, Hokkaido.

Japanese Woodpecker *Picus awokera* – (2) Great views in the garden of the Buddhist Temple we visited in Nagano. Peter got a good photo of it and we went back to find it, good views and calling. Good views of this species in the small park we visited at day's end while at Karuizawa, in the same tree as a Great Spotted for a good size comparison.

FALCONS AND CARACARAS Falconidae (2)

Eurasian Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus* – (2) Several individuals seen around the Crane Center and adjacent fields. Bud and Koichi later watched one from the bus, as it was hovering over some open areas near Nassapu Point.

Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus* – (1) A quick fly by at the Crane Center, seen by those atop the observation platform as our group spread out.

SHRIKES Laniidae (1)

Bull-headed Shrike *Lanius Bucephalus* – (5) A handsome bird, we first saw them at a farmhouse settlement in the agricultural area surrounding the Crane Center at Izumi. We then found them on most outings while on Kyushu. Their habit of feeding and returning to the same perch helped us get great views. Scattered sightings on several outings, on flew along the edge of the reed line at Tatara Park. Widespread and while not numerous, often present.

CROWS AND JAYS Corvidae (6)

Eurasian Jay *Garrulus glandarius* – (3) First heard at the mountain reservoir area we visited to check for Mandarin Ducks. A small flock of 4 or 5 was above us at the Snow Monkey hot springs site. The Hokkaido subspecies is very striking and we had 15-20 at the feeders at close range at Hotel Yoroushi.

Oriental Magpie *Pica serica* – (1) Seen near Saga, in one of the only areas of Japan they occur, in open fields before the mudflats stop on the west side of Honshu. It is the prefecture of Saga's official bird.

Daurian Jackdaw *Corvus dauuricus* – (2) Great views of this species, one or two among the many Rooks outside of the Crane Center near Izumi.

Rook *Corvus frugilegus* – (3) Abundant near Izumi, in town and out at the Crane Center.

Carrion Crow *Corvus corone* – (10) Widespread, best told by voice or when perched to check the bill size and head shape. Widespread, seen on most days, including at Hokkaido. Vocal.

Large-billed Crow *Corvus macrorhynchos*– (12) Very common on Kyushu, Honshu and Hokkaido. Seen and heard daily.

TITS AND CHICKADEES Paridae (5)

Coal Tit *Periparus ater* – (3) One individual was seen in the mixed flock in tall conifers at the ocean edge, a stop we made on the west side of Honshu.

Varied Tit *Sittiparus varius* – (5) First seen at the mountain reservoir we visited in Kyushu. We heard a flock but it took some time for all to get good views. We had a better view when at the ocean view overlook in a mixed flock on the west side of Honshu. Seen in the mixed flock at the Matsumoto Castle and then again in a flock at the Matsumoto Alps Park. Great views while walking the trails at Karuizawa Bird Forest

Marsh Tit *Poecile palustris*– (3) Seen at Hotel Yorosushi at the feeders and on our walk along the creek. Seen at the Citizen's Forest Bird Hide in good number.

Willow Tit *Poecile montanus* – (1) We saw a good number at the feeding station we happened upon as we walked the trails at Karuizawa, the most chickadee like of all the tits we observed.

Japanese Tit *Parus minor* – (9) The most common of the tits we encountered. A few individuals in with the more numerous Long-tailed Tits seen at the city park in Kumamoto. Seen in almost all flocks we encountered, and in the trees around our hotel Karuizawa. Widespread, in our woods walks and at city parks throughout, including at Hokkaido. Seen at the Citizen's Forest Bird Hide, a great place for photography.

LARKS Alaudidae (1)

Eurasian Skylark *Alauda arvensis* – (1) Seen regularly in the rice fields surrounding the Crane Center area at Kyushu.

BULBULS Pycnonotidae (1)

Brown-eared Bulbul *Hypsipetes amaurotis* – (12) The first bird for several of us on our Japan lists, this noisy, personable species is common and widespread – not shy!

BUSH WARBLERS Scotocercidae (1)

Japanese Bush Warbler *Horornis diphone* – (1) Seen by Rob and Bryan Izumi, down along the reed-lined channel we walked to see buntings and tits. Also heard in the marsh grasses at a birding stop / rest stop earlier the same day.

LONG-TAILED TITS Aegithalidae (1)

Long-tailed Tit *Aegithalos caudatus* – (3) Great close views of a most confiding flock that moved around, almost following us as we birded a city park near Kumamoto. We encountered them in several parks we visited, always vocal and social.

WHITE-EYES Zosteropidae (1)

Warbling White-eye *Zosterops japonicus* – (2) Colorful and confiding, widespread and common. Seen in flocks. We had several at very close range in the city park at Kumamoto.

NUTHATCHES Sittidae (1)

Eurasian Nuthatch *Sitta europaea* – (4) Just one individual, but seen well in the feeding flock we observed for some time while at Karuizawa Forest Park. Seen at the feeder at Hotel Yoroushi, Hokkaido. We got our best views in front of the Citizen's Forest Bird Hide, quite active and close.

TREECREEPERS Certhiidae (1)

Eurasian Treecreeper *Certhia familiaris* – (2) We heard and Peg saw one in a mixed flock at the Snow Monkey Park. All the group later got to enjoy one first heard, then seen going tree to tree exhibiting classic Brown Creeper behavior at Karuizawa Forest Park.

WRENS Troglodytidae (1)

Eurasian Wren *Troglodytes* – (2) Good views at one individual in Karuizawa Forest Park, perched up and singing on a moss-covered stump as we walked the trails. One was seen working the creek below us as we had breakfast at Hotel Yorosushi, Hokkaido.

DIPPERS Cinclidae (1)

Brown Dipper *Cinclus pallasii* – (2) First spotted by Deb, we had fabulous views of this species that ranges from the Himalayas to China, Korea and over to Japan just below us on a bridge at Karuizawa Forest Park. It was actively feeding, and sang often from rock perches with water pouring all around. It seemed impervious to the

cold! Later on Hokkaido, at Hotel Yorosushi we had a pair that was quite active in the creek below the lodge. Rob described a pair sitting with him while soaking in the onsen pool at the river edge as a trip highlight.

STARLINGS AND MYNAS Sturnidae (2)

European Starling *Sturnus vulgaris* – (1-LO) Peg saw one on the phone wire in the Crane Center area but with so much going on we just ticked it and moved on. Turns out this is the only reliable area for them!

White-cheeked Starling *Spodiopsar cineraceus*– (9) Common, social, vocal, found everywhere. Our first sightings on the walk along the river in Tokyo the most memorable.

THRUSHES Turdidae (3)

Brown-headed Thrush *Turdus chrysolaus* – (1) Peg and Katy were fortunate to see one in a large mixed flock of Pale and Dusky Thrushes, it popped up atop a large conifer like the top of a Christmas tree ornament, unmistakable. We tried to get the rest of the group over but it flew and then blended in to just too many thrushes to find it again at this park outside of Tokyo.

Pale Thrush *Turdus pallidus* – (4) Seen in the parking lot area of the Crane Center. Seen again in good number at a park outside of Tokyo.

Dusky Thrush *Turdus eunomus* – (6) First seen at the parking lot of the Crane Center then seen at most stops while on Kyushu. One was near the lake we viewed so many ducks in on the west side of Honshu. We saw one in tall Japanese Yellow Pines in Karuizawa Forest Park. Big numbers, dozens if not hundreds at a park outside of Tokyo.

OLD WORLD FLYCATCHERS AND CHATS Muscicapidae (2)

Daurian Redstart *Phoenicurus aureus* – (7) Such a beauty! Peter got an awesome photo of one in a flowering tree our first sighting in a village in Kyushu. They then were spotted at many stops, always appreciated for their beauty. One was seen quite close on the grounds of Matsumoto Castle. Seen often in parks that we stopped at throughout.

Blue Rock-Thrush *Monticola solitarius* – (2) Crazy beautiful views while on our first morning walk in Tokyo, then Nancy called out two as we passed through a town with a canal running parallel to the main road.

OLD WORLD SPARROWS Passeridae (2)

Russet Sparrow *Passer cinnamomeus* – (1) Very local, a group seen near a farmhouse in the wetlands surrounding the Crane Center.

Eurasian Tree Sparrow *Passer montanus* – (10) Common, widespread, seen at times in big numbers, 50+.

WAGTAILS AND PIPITS Motacillidae (4)

Gray Wagtail *Motacilla cinerea* – (2) A lovely and varied species, we first encountered it in wetlands around the Crane Center in Kyushu.

Japanese Wagtail *Motacilla grandis* – (4) Bryan spotted an individual that cooperated fully as it bathed in the river, we stopped to check for Long-billed Plover. Two Black-backed forms of the White Wagtail were also present, so a good study between them. One perched up on the moat for us at the waterfowl sanctuary. They were feeding in grasses at Kumoba Pond in Karuizawa, and at Tatara Park.

White Wagtail *Motacilla alba* – (7) Common and vocal, first seen in Tokyo, often confiding. Widespread, we had them on many outings, including on the grounds of Matsumoto Castle.

American Pipit *Anthus rubescens* – (3) Seen early on in the trip near Izumi in agricultural fields, then scoped on the mudflats adjacent to the lake at Tatara Park. Another there flew over, calling.

FINCHES AND EUPHONIAS Fringillidae (6)

Brambling *Fringilla montifringilla* – (3) Great views first of an individual, then a flock of over 50 in the Motsumoto Alps Park.

Hawfinch *Coccothraustes* – (2) A very obliging individual perched high in a conifer, long enough we could put a scope on it and get good views. Peter got a nice shot of a lone individual at the Hotel Yorosushi on Hokkaido.

Japanese Grosbeak *Eophona personata* – (1- HO) Heard only, its lovely call echoed through tall graceful deciduous trees at Karuizawa Forest Park, but we could not get a sighting on it.

Long-tailed Rosefinch *Carpodacus sibiricus* – (2) We had good views at two individuals in shrubbery right around the parking lot (after climbing the hill to appropriate shrub habitat and not finding them) so we were all pleased to get good looks. We found them again in tall grasses interspersed with thick shrubbery at Karuizawa Forest Park.

Asian Rosy-Finch *Leucosticte arctoa* – (1) We were thrilled to find this one, Bryan first spotted three flying in a very strong wind that we could not relocate. Peter saw them again as we drove back down the Notsuke Peninsula and we stopped to scan, finding a dozen or so.

Oriental Greenfinch *Chloris sinica* – (9) Common, widespread, first seen landing along the river margin at the Tama River, Tokyo. Big flocks seen Kyushu. Seen commonly on Honshu at most of our stops. Recorded on 12 of our eBird checklists.

OLD WORLD BUNTINGS *Emberizidae* (4)

Chestnut-eared Bunting *Emberiza fucata* – (1) Kyushu, walk along a reed-filled canal not far from the Crane Center. Seen again at our picnic spot at the mouth of the Kuma River.

Meadow Bunting *Emberiza cioides* – (5) Kyushu, walk along a reed-filled canal where we spied Raccoon Dog sign, then also seen in the reedy channel we explored not far from the Crane Center. Most were singing, so easy to spot. One individual was seen at the Matsumoto Alps Park.

Reed Bunting *Emberiza schoeniclus* – (1) Seen near the Crane Center, reed-filled channels in the rice fields.

Masked Bunting *Emberiza personata* – (4) Two individuals seen and photographed on the concrete edge of a canal as we walked along the mouth of the Kumo River. Another was seen on the railings that lined the park we visited on the west coast of Honshu, an ocean view overlook. We had good looks at two, quite yellow in plumage, at the park outside of Tokyo that had all the thrushes.

MAMMALS (5)

Japanese Raccoon Dog *Nyctereutes viverrinus* – (1) No sighting, but we did see a big scat pile while walking along a ditch with reeds, used repeatedly and enough we passed by this place at dawn hoping for a view.

Red Fox *Vulpes* – (3) Two individuals were seen, separately, from the van as we drove north on Hokkaido. A beautiful individual was seen working the seawall area on the Notsuke Peninsula. On the Nemuru Peninsula, a pair was near the road and crossed behind the bus, only to come up alongside us before moving off.

Steller's Sea Lion *Eumetopias jubatus* – (1) A group of a dozen or so were feeding in a tight group off the coast in Hokkaido, not far from Rausu.

Spotted Seal *Phoca largha* – (1) One round-headed individual seen in the harbor at Nassapu. Nancy found this one on the ocean side, then we all had looks at a second individual close to shore as we left the area, in quiet water.

Japanese Macaque *Macaca fuscata* – (1) Incredible views at the Snow Monkey Park, we saw a lot of great behavior between individuals, including bathing in the hot pool.

Sika Deer *Cervus nippon* – (4) Quite a few seen on Hokkaido, including some large bucks still with antlers. Great views at a dozen or more on the Notsuke Peninsula, including males with antlers. Also seen in travel and then on

the Nemeru Peninsula.

Mountain Hare Lepus timidus – (1) No sighting, but tracks in the snow were plentiful, especially going down to the Ural Owl roost

Reptiles & Amphibians (1)

Japanese Common Toad *Bufo japonicus* – (1) One cold slow-moving individual seen on the way up to the Snow Monkey park as we birded along a roadside.