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Japan in Winter Tour Report 13th - 26th January 2018

Guide: Jun Matsui

Participants:

Day 1 - 13th Jan.

Starting from Narita we made a quick visit to a small pond near the hotel. It was good to see a pair of **Falcated Duck** there. **Japanese Wagtail** was the first endemic of the trip. Then we drove to the reed beds along the Tone River. Diana got a decent view of **Japanese Marsh Warbler**. After stopping at a local hospital, we headed to Karuizawa. We had short time to walk around Kaikoen Park near the Hotel. We stayed at the *Komoro Grand Castle*, with a free drink and crab!

Day 2 - 14th Jan.

We started the day with a morning walk through Karuizawa Yachono-Mori (Bird Forest). At this time of year it is normally heavily covered with snow and ice but this year the trails were largely clear and walking was relatively easy. We picked up a **Great-spotted Woodpecker** and some other nice birds in the car park. As we walked through the forest, we flushed a flock of **Japanese Waxwings** from some mistletoe, but couldn't get a decent view. After this we went for a cup of coffee at the Shiotsubo Onsen Hotel where we had nice views of **Varied Tit**, **Eurasian Nuthatch**, and **Japanese Accentor**. As we walked back, we tried the same mistletoe to see if any waxwings had come back, and yes, they were there. We also had an excellent view of them near the car park later. After a short visit to an open field in the Hocchi area to pick up **Japanese Pheasant** and **Common Buzzard**. we then spent the rest of the day at Saku Reservoir. Several species of ducks, and **Long-billed Plover** were there but not unexpected. To see **Daurian Jackdaw** there was rather a surprise. That night we stayed again at the *Komoro Grand Castle*.



Japanese Waxwing

Day 3 -15th Jan.

This was a driving day. We set off early and got to the **Snow Monkey** Park before the car park filled up. It was a bit icy but a pleasant walk to Monkey Park. The monkeys were fabulous but there were not many birds about except a **Japanese Accentor**, which Gimme picked up. After nice hot chocolate at cafe, we kept driving.

We stopped at Kahoku-gata before the hotel. There was not much open water because of the ice. We stayed at the *Route Inn Komatsu Airport*.

Day 4 -16th Jan.

Because of the heavy snow, we couldn't go anywhere except Kamo-ike (Duck pond). But it was same for the birds, because all of the birds were at Kamo-ike and we had an unusually close view of them including **Baikal Teal, Taiga** and **White-fronted Geese**, and **Bewick's Swan**. We also had good selection of raptors. Some of them were just fly-bys, but we got **Northern Goshawk, Eurasian Sparrowhawk**, and **Japanese Sparrowhawk**.

Before going to Kamo-ike, we stopped at Shibayama-gata. We saw **Wryneck** and **Hen Harrier** there. We also stopped at Hashidate Harbour, where we saw **Black-tailed Gull** and **Japanese Cormorant**. We stayed

again at the *Route Inn Komatsu Airport*.



Japanese Macaques or Snow Monkeys keeping warm

Day 5 - 17th Jan.

We flew to Kagoshima and then we drove to Izumi. We saw some Cranes before got to the Hotel. We stayed at the *Hotel Wing* and went out for dinner, for a Japanese BBQ! It was great!

Day 6 - 18th Jan.

Today we went to the Crane Centre. We had spectacular views of 15,000 Cranes. **White-naped, Hooded, Common, and Sandhill Cranes** were there. We also saw **Black-faced** and **Eurasian Spoonbills** a large flock of **Rooks** and some **Daurian Jackdaws**. We visited the Kuma River mouth. Sadly there was no Saunders's Gull but there was a good selection of ducks and waders. We also saw **Chinese Penduline Tit** in the riverbed. We stayed at the *Hotel Wing* again. Went out for dinner at a Japanese Pub where we shared lots of small dishes, it was fun.

Day 7 - 19th Jan.

We went to Koga-Dam, aiming for **White-bellied Japanese Pigeon**.

We had several nice views of them. We then drove around the dam and had good views of a pair of **Crested Kingfishers** and some **Mandarin Ducks**. At the Crane Park, we got decent views of **Falcated Ducks**. It felt a bit strange to see a **Brown Booby** flying over the cold seawater; we also got the **Pelagic Cormorant** at Akune and then checked Sendai River. We spent the rest of the day at the Crane Centre. We again stayed at the *Hotel Wing*, today eating inside the hotel, which was OK.

Day 8 - 20th Jan.

We said farewell to the Cranes. Then drove to Miike, Kirishima NP. We got a close view of **Ryukyu Minivet** and good views of **Yellow-throated Bunting, Japanese Grosbeak, Japanese Green Woodpecker** and some other birds. We visited the Kajiki area after the lunch where we saw **Long-tailed Shrike**, which is a vagrant for Japan. A male **Hen Harrier, Black-faced Spoonbill, Black-crowned Night Heron** and **Western Osprey** were also there. We stayed at a *Kagoshima Airport Hotel*.

Day 9 - 21st Jan.

Today we flew to Kushiro. After picking up our vehicle we drove to Tsurui to see **Red-crowned Cranes** before checking into the hotel. It was surprisingly calm weather. We stayed at the *Kushiro Prince Hotel* where they do a nice steak.

Day 10 - 22nd Jan

This was a long day. We started before sunrise. It was -17C at Otowa Bridge but we got magical views of roosting **Red-crowned Cranes** through the mist. We then spent some time at the feeding area, there weren't many cranes there but those that were showed us bit of dancing. We were surprised to see a lone **Common Crane** there. It was the first recorded there in 30 years. We had lunch and took a short walk at Teshikaga before going on to Rausu. Rausu harbour had a nice collection of gulls, and ducks. We also saw **Steller's Sea Eagle** there. At the famous birding accommodation *Washi-no-yado* a male **Blakiston's Fish Owl** came to the pond several times. ...Well most of us just saw it twice but Gimme stayed up very late. We stayed *Washi-no-yado* where they served great food.

Day 11 - 23rd Jan

At Rausu, we visited the harbour and got nice views of gulls. We then went to the Notsuke Peninsula. There were not many sea birds, because of the strong wind and snow. We did manage to see **White-winged Scoter**. And we're lucky enough to see **Snow Buntings** there without walking through the snow covered field. Then we headed to Yoroushi. Another **Blakiston's Fish Owl** showed up later this night. We stayed at *Daiichi Yoroushi onsen*, with incredible meals!

Day 12 - 24th Jan

We took a short walk through the snow after breakfast to look for **Solitary Snipe** before driving off towards Nemuro. Luckily we bumped into the Eagle Feeding by local fisherman at Swan 44. It was great timing. After lunch, we visited Cape Nosappu. It was very mild weather for that place, but yes it was still freezing cold. We picked up **Spectacled Guillemot, Ancient Murrelet, Red-faced Cormorant, and Black-throated Diver**. We stayed at *Minshuku Furen* where we had a good meal and a warm friendly warm atmosphere. It is a lovely place to stay.

Day 13 - 25th Jan

We visited Meiji Park in the morning, then took the Ochi-ishi boat Cruise that afternoon, seeing Black-throated Diver, White-winged Scoter Pigeon, Spectacled and Brunnich's Guillemot (Thick-billed Murre) and Ancient Murrelet. It was freezing, but still milder than usual. We stayed again at the *Kushiro Prince Hotel* where the steak wasn't as nice as on our previous visit.

Day 14 - 26th Jan

We flew back to Haneda, and then took the bus to Narita before saying goodbye and starting the onward journeys.

Trip List



Baikal Teal in the snow at Kamo-ike

Anatidae

- | | | |
|---|--|------------------------------------|
| 1 | White-fronted Goose | <i>Anser albifrons</i> |
| | Good close views at Kamo-ike, where they usually do not stay that time of the day. | |
| 2 | Taiga Bean Goose | <i>Anser fabalis middendorffi</i> |
| | Good close views at Kamo-ike, where they usually not stay that time of the day. | |
| 3 | Brent Goose | <i>Branta bernicla</i> |
| | 4 at Notsuke Peninsula. | |
| 4 | Bewick's Swan | <i>Cygnus columbianus bewickii</i> |
| | Good numbers at Kamo-ike. Also one of the American race <i>columbianus</i> , Whistling Swan. | |
| | Whooper Swan | <i>Cygnus cygnus</i> |
| | Common in Hokkaido. | |
| 6 | Common Shelduck | <i>Tadorna tadorna</i> |
| | Common in Kyushu. | |
| 7 | Mandarin Duck | <i>Aix galericulata</i> |

Over 50 at Koga-Dam.

- 8 Gadwall *Anas strepera*
Along the road and Kamo-ike.
- 9 Falcated Duck *Anas falcata*
2 in the small pond near the hotel in Narita. Also at Izumi and Ochi-ishi.
- 10 Eurasian Wigeon *Anas penelope*
Common in most water areas.
- 11 Mallard *Anas platyrhynchos*
Very common. Huge flock at Kahoku-gata.
- 12 Eastern Spot-billed Duck *Anas zonorhyncha*
Very common.
- 13 Northern Shoveler *Anas clypeata*
Good views at Shibayama-gata, and other places.
- 14 Northern Pintail *Anas acuta*
Common. Enormous numbers at Izumi.
- 15 Baikal Teal *Anas formosa*
Incredibly close view sat Kamo-ike. Normally they stay on the far side of the pond.

- 16 Eurasian Teal *Anas crecca*
Very common. Huge flock at Kahoku-gata.
- 17 Green-winged Teal *Anas carolinensis*
At Shibayama-gata, the North American Green-winged Teal, now split by the IOC as a species in its own right.
- 18 Common Pochard *Aythya ferina*
Reasonably common.
- 19 Tufted Duck *Aythya fuligula*
Reasonably common. Big raft at Kuma River.
- 20 Greater Scaup *Aythya marila*
Reasonably common in Hokkaido.
- 21 Harlequin Duck *Histrionicus histrionicus*
Common in Hokkaido. Good view at Rausu Harbour.
- 22 White-winged Scoter *Melanitta deglandi*
Good views on the Ochi-ishi Cruise.
- 23 Black Scoter *Melanitta americana*
Common in Hokkaido.
- 24 Long-tailed Duck *Clangula hyemalis*
Good view at Ochi-ishi.

- 25 Common Goldeneye *Bucephala clangula*
Common in Hokkaido.
- 26 Smew *Mergellus albellus*
Good views at Saku Reservoir and Kamo-ike.
- 27 Common Merganser *Mergus merganser*
Good views at Saku Reservoir.
- 28 Red-breasted Merganser *Mergus serrator*
Good views at Ochi-ishi. Also at Kuma River.

Phasianidae

- 29 Japanese Pheasant *Phasianus versicolor*
Saw several times on this trip. Best seen at Kahoku-gata.

Gaviidae

- 30 Black-throated Diver *Gavia arctica*
Distant views from Cape Nosappu. Good views on the Ochi-ishi cruise.

Podicipedidae

- 31 Little Grebe *Tachybaptus ruficollis*
Seen at Narita, and Shibayama-gata.
- 32 Red-necked Grebe *Podiceps grisegena*
Distant views from Cape Nosappu. Also seen on the Ochi-ishi cruise.
- 33 Great Crested Grebe *Podiceps cristatus*
At Shibayama-gata.
- 34 Black-necked Grebe *Podiceps nigricollis*
At Shibayama-gata.

Threskiornithidae

- 35 Black-faced Spoonbill *Platalea minor*
Best views at Kuma River. Also at Izumi, and Kajiki.
- 36 Eurasian Spoonbill *Platalea leucorodia*
Some seen at Izumi.

Ardeidae

- 37 Black-crowned Night Heron *Nycticorax nycticorax*
Saw good numbers at Kuma River mouth, and Kajiki.
- 38 Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea*

- Reasonably common throughout the tour.
- 39 Eastern Great Egret *Ardea modesta*
Common.
- 40 Great Egret *Ardea alba*
Common.
- 41 Little Egret *Egretta garzetta*
Common.

Phalacrocoracidae

- 42 Pelagic Cormorant *Phalacrocorax pelagicus*
Seen at Akune. Common in Hokkaido.
- 43 Red-faced Cormorant *Phalacrocorax urile*
A few fly overs at Cape Nosappu.
- 44 Great Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo*
Common. Huge flock flying at Izumi.
- 45 Japanese Cormorant *Phalacrocorax capillatus*
At Hashidate Harbour and Akune.

Pandionidae

- 46 Western Osprey *Pandion haliaetus*
Common. Close view at Kajiki perched atop a pine tree.

Accipitridae

- 47 Black (Black-eared) Kite *Milvus migrans lineatus*
Common. Everyday bird.
- 48 White-tailed Eagle *Haliaeetus albicilla*
Common in Hokkaido.
- 49 Steller's Sea Eagle *Haliaeetus pelagicus*
Common in Hokkaido. Great view at Swan site 44.
- 50 Eastern Marsh Harrier *Circus spilonotus*
Uncommon, but seen at several locations.
- 51 Hen Harrier *Circus cyaneus*
Seen at several locations on this trip. Normally Uncommon.
Beautiful male at Kajiki.
- 52 Eurasian Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus*
One flew over at Kamo-ike.
- 53 Northern Goshawk *Accipiter gentilis*
One flew over at Kamo-ike giving a decent view.
- 54 Japanese Goshawk *Accipiter gularis*
One flew over at Kamo-ike, brief view.

- 55 Eastern Buzzard *Buteo japonicus*
Reasonably common.

Rallidae

- 56 Eurasian Coot *Fulica atra*
Common in most wetlands, even on the sea.

Gruidae

- 57 Sandhill Crane *Grus canadensis*
Decent views at Izumi.
- 58 White-naped Crane *Grus vipio*
Almost half the world population wintering in Izumi.
- 59 Common Crane *Grus grus*
1 at Izumi. Also at Tsurui, first in 30years.
- 60 Hooded Crane *Grus monacha*
80% or so of population wintering in Izumi.
- 61 Common x Hooded Crane
There were a few hybrids at Arasaki.
- 62 Red-crowned Crane *Grus japonensis*
Beautiful bird, worth waking up early for. At Tsurui and Furen.

Charadriidae

- 63 Northern Lapwing *Vanellus vanellus*
Good view at Tone River reeded.
- 64 Grey-headed Lapwing *Vanellus cinereus*
Good views at Shibayama-gata.
- 65 Grey Plover *Pluvialis squatarola*
Large numbers at Kuma River mouth.
- 66 Pacific Golden Plover *Pluvialis fulva*
Good views at the Tone River reed beds.
- 67 Long-billed Plover *Charadrius placidus*
Reasonably common on this trip.
- 68 Kentish Plover *Charadrius alexandrinus*
Large numbers at the Kuma River mouth.

Scolopacidae

- 69 Common Snipe *Gallinago gallinago*

- Common in Kyushu.
- 70 Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos*
Uncommon, saw several times at Kyushu.
- 71 Greenshank *Tringa nebularia*
Surprisingly common, not many but saw several locations.
- 72 Green Sandpiper *Tringa ochropus*
Reasonably common.
- 73 Dunlin *Calidris alpina*
Good numbers at Kuma River mouth.

Laridae

- 74 Black-headed Gull *Chroicocephalus ridibundus*
Not many. Seen sometimes.
- 75 Black-tailed Gull *Larus crassirostris*
Good views at Hashidate.
- 76 Mew Gull *Larus canus*
A few in Hokkaido.
- 77 Glaucous-winged Gull *Larus glaucescens*
Common in Hokkaido.
- 78 Glaucous Gull *Larus hyperboreus*
Common in Hokkaido.
- 79 Vega Gull *Larus vegae*
Common in Kyushu.
- 80 Slaty-backed Gull *Larus schistisagus*
Very common in Hokkaido.

Alcidae

- 81 Thick-billed Murre *Uria lomvia*
Saw one on the Ochi-ishi Cruise.
- 82 Common Murre *Uria aalge*
Distant views from Cape Nosappu.
- 83 Pigeon Guillemot *Cephus columba*
Brief but good views on the Ochi-ishi Cruise.
- 84 Spectacled Guillemot *Cephus carbo*
Good view son the Ochi-ishi Cruise.
- 85 Ancient Murrelet *Synthliboramphus antiquus*
Good views on the Ochi-ishi Cruise.

Columbidae

- 86 Rock Dove *Columba livia*
Common.
- 87 Oriental Turtle Dove *Streptopelia orientalis*
Not many, but seen at various locations.
- 88 White-bellied Green Pigeon *Treron sieboldii*
Good view sat Koga-Dam.

Strigidae

- 89 Blakiston's Fish Owl *Bubo blakistoni*
Good view sat Washi-no-yado, and also at Daiichi.
- 90 Ural Owl *Strix uralensis*
Good views of one happily sunbathing at a day roost.

Alcedinidae

- 91 Common Kingfisher *Alcedo atthis*
Good views at the Kuma River mouth.
- 92 Crested Kingfisher *Megaceryle lugubris*
Good view sat Koga-Dam.

Picidae

- 93 Japanese Pygmy Woodpecker *Dendrocopos kizuki*
Reasonably common.
- 94 White-backed Woodpecker *Dendrocopos leucotos*
Good view at Koga-Dam.
- 95 Great Spotted Woodpecker *Dendrocopos major*
Some good view at Karuizawa.
- 96 Japanese Green Woodpecker *Picus awokera*
Good view at the car park, Karuizawa.
- 97 Wryneck *Jynx torquilla*
Surprised to see one at Shibayama-gata.

Falconidae

- 98 Common Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus*
Seen on several occasions, mostly along the road.
- 99 Merlin *Falco columbarius*
A fly over at one site.
- 100 Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus*
Fly over at Kamo-ike. Also on the Ochi-ishi Cruise.

Campephagidae

- 101 Ryukyu Minivet *Pericrocotus tegimae*
Good views at Miike.

Laniidae

- 102 Bull-headed Shrike *Lanius bucephalus*
Common. Everyday bird except in Hokkaido.
103 Long-tailed Shrike *Lanius schach*
Vagrant to Japan, with one at Kajiki near Kagoshima.

Corvidae

- 104 Eurasian Jay *Garrulus glandarius japonicus*
Good views at Karuizawa. And at Daiichi.
105 Daurian Jackdaw *Coloeus dauuricus*
Rather surprised to see one at Saku. Also seen at Izumi.
106 Eastern Rook *Corvus pastinator*
Huge flocks at Saku, and Izumi.

107 Carrion Crow *Corvus corone orientalis*
Common.

108 Large-billed Crow *Corvus macrorhynchos japonensis*
Seen in smaller numbers than Carrion Crow, but still
common.

Bombycillidae

- 109 Japanese Waxwing *Bombycilla japonica*
Incredible views at Bird Forest, Karuizawa, a very good find.

Paridae

- 110 Marsh Tit *Parus palustris*
Reasonably common in Hokkaido. Good views at Furen.
111 Willow Tit *Parus montanus*
Good views at Bird Forest, Karuizawa.
112 Varied Tit *Parus varius*
Best views at Shiotsubo Hotel.
113 Coal Tit *Parus ater*
Good views at Bird Forest, Karuizawa.
114 Japanese Tit *Parus minor*

Common.

Remizidae

- 115 Chinese Penduline Tit *Remiz consobrinus*
Good view sat Kuma River.

Alaudidae

- 116 Eurasian Skylark *Alauda arvensis japonica*
Common in Kyushu.

Pycnonotidae

- 117 Brown-eared Bulbul *Microscelis amaurotis*
Common. Everywhere.

Hirundidae

- 118 Asian House Martin *Delichon dasypus*
Seen near Izumi.
119 Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica*
Reasonably common in Kyushu.

Cettidae

- 120 Japanese Bush Warbler *Cettia diphone*
Heard in several locations but difficult to see. Had views at
Kuma River mouth.

Aegithalidae

- 121 Long-tailed Tit *Aegithalos caudatus*
Common.

Cisticolidae

- 122 Japanese Marsh Warbler *Locustella pryeri*
Came very close, even too close. Incredibly cryptic. Some of
us got brief views, very hard to see in winter.

Zosteropidae

- 123 Japanese White-eye *Zosterops japonicus*
Wasn't very common. We usually see more on this tour.

Troglodytidae

- 124 Winter Wren *Troglodytes troglodytes*
Difficult in winter, we managed to see one at Daiichi.

Sittidae

- 125 Eurasian Nuthatch *Sitta europaea amurensis*
Good views on the feeder at Shiotsubo Hotel.
Eurasian Nuthatch *Sitta europaea asiatica*
Common in Hokkaido.

Sturnidae

- 126 White-cheeked Starling *Sturnus cineraceus*
Very common except in Hokkaido.

Turdidae

- 127 Pale Thrush *Turdus pallidus*
Good views at Shibayama-gata.
128 Dusky Thrush *Turdus eunomus*
Common in many places.

Muscicapidae

- 129 Red-flanked Bluetail *Tarsiger cyanurus*
Good view at Bird Forest, Karuizawa.
130 Daurian Redstart *Phoenicurus auroreus*
Common in Kyushu.
131 Blue Rock Thrush *Monticola solitarius*
Reasonably common, best view at Hashidate Harbour.

Cinclidae

- 132 Brown Dipper *Cinclus pallasii*
Good views at Bird Forest, and Koga-Dam. Also at Daiichi.

Passeridae

- 133 Russet Sparrow *Passer rutilans*
Large flock at the Kuma River mouth.
134 Eurasian Tree Sparrow *Passer montanus*
Very common.

Prunellidae

- 135 Japanese Accentor *Prunella rubida*
Good views at the feeder oat Shiotsubo Hotel. Also at Snow
Monkey Park.

Motacillidae

- 136 Grey Wagtail *Motacilla cinerea*
Common in river.
- 137 White Wagtail *Motacilla alba lugens*
Very common.
- 138 Japanese Wagtail *Motacilla grandis*
Reasonably common.
- 139 Olive-backed Pipit *Anthus hodgsoni*
Small flock at Miike.
- 140 Red-throated Pipit *Anthus cervinus*
Brief views at Izumi.
- 141 Buff-bellied Pipit *Anthus rubescens japonicus*
Common. Good views at Tone River and Izumi.

Fringillidae

- 142 Brambling *Fringilla montifringilla*
Common in Karuizawa and Kyushu.
- 143 Oriental Greenfinch *Carduelis sinica*
Common.
- 144 Hawfinch *Coccothraustes coccothraustes*
Not many sightings on this trip.
- 145 Japanese Grosbeak *Eophona personata*
Good views at Karuizawa.
- 146 Meadow Bunting *Emberiza cioides*
Common in Karuizawa but not anywhere else.
- 147 Rustic Bunting *Emberiza rustica*
Glad to see some at Karuizawa, and good views at Kamoike.
- 148 Yellow-throated Bunting *Emberiza elegans*
Good view at Miike.
- 149 Black-faced Bunting *Emberiza spodocephala*
Not many sightings on this trip.
- 150 Common Reed Bunting *Emberiza schoeniclus*

Very few this trip.

Calcariidae

151 Snow Bunting

Plectrophenax nivalis

Didn't need to walk several kms, which is often the case, good to see them along the side of the road at Notsuke instead.

Jun Matsui and Sue Gregory Feb 2018