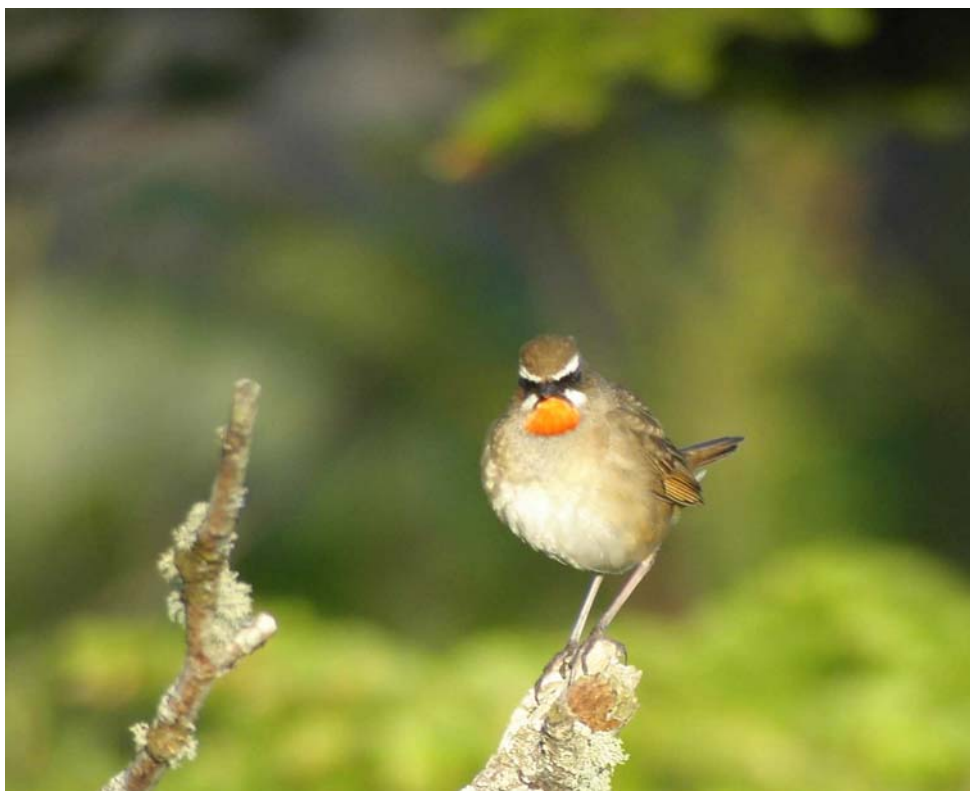


Japan

11-23 June 2005



Siberian Rubythroat

Björn Anderson

General

This was a trip together with my wife Yvonne. It was her first visit to Japan and for me the second, following a winter birding trip in 2002. This time it was going to be a combined sightseeing and birding trip. As Yvonne was going back to Tokyo in October, we decided to cut it out of this itinerary. Instead we started with a couple of days around Hakone and Mount Fuji before taking the train to Kyoto for a couple of nights. The second part of the trip saw us in eastern Hokkaido, where we had some wonderful days in a very scenic and relaxed part of Japan. I then continued the trip on my own by taking the ferry from Hokkaido to Oarai and then another ferry to Hachijojima in the Izu Island group.

My birding this time was rather selective, with a relatively short list of target birds and the rest being fairly opportunistic general birding. Key species that I recorded were Japanese Yellow Bunting, Japanese Accentor, Northern Hawk-Cuckoo, Chestnut-cheeked Starling, Middendorff's, Pleske's and Sakhalin* Grasshopper Warblers, Sakhalin Leaf-Warbler, Japanese Robin, Blakistons's Fish-Owl, Bonin and Bulwer's Petrels, Swinhoe's, Tristram's and Band-rumped Storm-Petrels as well as the Izu specialities Japanese Wood-Pigeon, Ijima's Warbler and Izu Island Thrush.

Itinerary

11/6

We flew from Beijing to Tokyo in the early morning and arrived at Narita airport around midday. Our destination for today was Hakone near Mt Fuji. We started off by going to the JR travel desk to initiate the JR rail pass and check train schedules. At the train platform we waited for our train to arrive and take us to Tokyo station. Here we did the stupid mistake to rely on the advice from a lady who claimed that our train was the one leaving a few minutes before schedule. I hesitated, but the lady insisted so aboard we went. It then took me only seconds to realize that it was a much slower train than planned. Lesson one: all trains always leave on time (within fractions of a second) in Japan! Nevertheless, we managed to do the connection to Shinkansen south from Tokyo. At Odawara we got off and took a much smaller local train that lead towards the mountain. At the foot of the mountain we changed again to an even smaller train that zigzagged (!) its way up to the small town of Gora in the Hakone area. On the train we met a friendly English-speaking man who helped us to find a minshuku and also invited us for dinner in one of the local restaurants. We found this friendliness very typical of Japan and it made our trip a thorough success.

12/6

We, or at least I, woke up early to the persistent calls from a Japanese Bush-Warbler just outside the window. After a quick brecky at the minshuku, we walked to Gora station and took the train three stations downhill and changed to a bus to Ashi-no-ko. From the bus we had our first stunning views of the perfectly shaped volcano Mt Fuji. We struggled with pushing our backpacks into the too small coin-lockers at the bus station, but were soon walking along the trail at the northwestern part of the lake. The key bird here is Japanese Yellow Bunting, but it took me a very long time until I eventually heard a ticking bunting by the lakeshore. Sure enough, soon a female flew out and past us and landed in the bushes a bit away where I was able to pish it in for close observation. This bunting seems to be getting more and more scarce and I saw myself lucky to get it with so little trouble.

With the bunting in the bag, we walked back to the bus station and took a 10.30 bus to Gotemba, where we changed to another one heading for Subashiro at the eastern slope of Mt Fuji. Finding a place for the night at first seemed tough, as all the minshukus were full. Eventually we were lucky with one and we quickly throw in our luggage before taking a taxi to Mt Fuji. As mid June is relatively early in the season, there were very few buses going up the mountain and none that suited us.

We spent the entire afternoon on the eastern slope of the mountain and walked up to 2300 m. The target Japanese Accentor was keeping a low profile and as we later found out, we were not high enough. Anyway we had a most wonderful trek in a stunning landscape. Back at the car park we decided to walk down the road to meet the prearranged taxi. We got all the way to KM 7.5 until we got a lift with another couple's taxi, as we had by then realized that ours was not showing up and there would be very few cars around. In the evening we had a good dinner at the minshuku and the hosting couple even summoned a local birdwatcher that came over. This proved most useful as he provided good info on the Accentor and even offered me to pay a visit to his home where he had Chestnut-eared Starlings breeding in his garden.

13/6

I left very early in the morning in order to make a final attempt on the accentor. This time I intended to climb to an altitude of about 2600 m, having been advised that this would be the altitude for them. I arrived the car park at the Hill Station at 4.20 and walked uphill for one hour to 2560 m when I suddenly saw a familiar shape perched in a bush-top right in front of me. Altogether I had at least three Accentors coming in very close, i.e. within meters. Happy with this success I was eager to descend to the more forested areas in search of the remaining target bird, Northern Hawk-Cuckoo. I skidded down through the volcano ashes and was soon back at the Hill Station, from where I walked down the access road. After only a few km walking I heard the distinct, although distant, call of the Cuckoo and soon had two of them circling me and perching in the treetops providing excellent views. I then continued walking all the way down to KM 5.5 where I met up with last night's local birdwatcher, which also happened to be a taxi driver. We drove straight to his home and within seconds my life bird number 6000 was under the belt in the form of Chestnut-cheeked Starling. As it was still relatively early in the morning and my wife would probably be fast asleep, we took a detour to a small patch of forest where we encountered Japanese Paradise-Flycatcher amongst other things.

Back in time for a late brecky at the minshuku. At 10.00 we got a lift with the minshuku owner to Gotemba, where we took the local train to Mishima. From here we took the 11.50 Shinkansen all the way south to Kyoto.

In spite of the distance it did not take us long before we reached Kyoto in the early afternoon. Quickly found a ryokan about 15 minutes walk from the railway station and then spent the rest of the afternoon and evening in the scenic Gion district.

14/6

This was a genuine sightseeing day in Kyoto, where we thoroughly enjoyed visiting many of the stunning temples and palaces like Nijojo Castle, Imperial Palace, Golden Pavillion, etc etc. Rounded off the day in a typical sushi bar, which really became a favorite food of mine. Splendid day altogether, even without any birding (a fact that still amazes me!).



Sushi-bar in Kyoto

15/6

Some brief sightseeing in Kyoto in the morning before we took the 11.36 Shinkansen towards Tokyo and onwards to Haneda airport for our flight to Hokkaido. The flight was slightly delayed, which came as a surprise as everything in Japan seems to be measured in seconds rather than any other unit. We arrived at Kushiro at 20.30 and swiftly obtained the pre-booked rental car. In the darkness we drove through Kushiro, which proved very easy thanks to the GPS monitor in the car. After a two hours drive east of Kushiro, we finally reached Furen. My memories from my winter trip in 2002 came back and it was

very pleasing to return. Instead of the extremely cold winter nights when we were listening to Blakiston's Fish-Owls at Hattaushi bridge, we now made a stop at the very same spot in the middle of the night in pleasant temperature with lots of Sakhalin Warblers singing.

Late at night we checked in at the minshuku at Furen Lodge with Matsuo-san and his wife. It felt really good to be back in their hospitable house and we had some tea with them before finally going to bed, accompanied by an over-ambitious Sakhalin Warbler just outside.

16/6

As I was eager to get out birding in the warm summer night, I got up at 4.00 and walked the trail through the Nature Reserve, just next-door to the minshuku. Lots of birds were active and singing and I had fantastic views of Middendorff's and Sakhalin Grasshopper Warblers as well as a Sakhalin Leaf-Warbler, Narcissus Flycatcher and Latham's Snipe. Before breakfast I also crossed the main road and walked through some fields to a patch of forest along the major inlet. By 8.00 I was back for a delicious breakfast and recharged the batteries before going out again. This time we walked along the boardwalks on Shunkunitai peninsula to the north of the minshuku through some magic woodland.

Again very rich in birds and even found at least one Japanese Paradise-Flycatcher, which is a very rare bird on Hokkaido. The weather was beautiful and around 11.00 we were back at the minshuku and took the car and drove east along the Nemuro peninsula. Many scenic stops along the southern shore of the peninsula and eventually we reached Nosappu Misaki, which feels like the end of the world. Last time I visited in the winter it was full of pack-ice and bubbling with alcids and other sea-birds. This time the number of birds were fewer, but still lots of Rhinoceros Auklets and a couple of Tufted Puffins as well as the usual composite of cormorants and gulls. We also saw a small pod of largish whales, which I still have not identified. Soon the sea fog rolled in and put an efficient end to the sea-watching.

After a lunch of crab-soup, we drove west along the north shore of the peninsula until cutting across to the lighthouse point south of Nemuro.

In the late afternoon we walked out to the lighthouse at Ochiishi peninsula and spent some time watching sea-birds. By 18.00 we were back at Lake Furen and a couple of quick stops in the forests before reaching the minshuku. The evening was spent at the minshuku with a truly excellent dinner and a view of the setting sun over the marshlands.



Delicious dinner at Lodge Furen

17/6

One of my target birds, the Japanese Robin, still remained off-list, so I went up very early at 3.00 and drove to the forest along the inlet and walked in through the forest.

Fortunately it did not take me long before I heard the typical song of the robin. Actually the song is more like a *Luscinia* than an *Erythacus*. I soon had the bird tracked down and enjoyed super views of this little forest gem. Happy with the quick success, I drove to Nosappu Misaki for some sea-watching. The fog was persistent and I only managed some limited birding, so at 7.00 I left and drove back to Furen, with some stops along the road. After breakfast we packed up and left for Rauso at the Shiretoko peninsula. It was an easy drive with stunning views of the mountain ranges and the sea. In Rauso we checked in at the minshuku just beyond town in the early afternoon. Most of the afternoon was then spent driving up through Shiretoko National Park and across the mountain range. To say that the scenery was stunning does not really make it any justice. Brilliant sunshine, fresh leaves on the trees, remaining snowfields and clear views of all the Russian volcano-islands in the distance.



Panorama over Shiretoko NP with the Russian volcano islands in the horizon

By 17.00 we were back at the minshuku and had a delicious dinner with crayfish, crab and sashimi. At 19.30 it was time for the Blakiston performance and we put up the telescope in our room (!) over-looking the stream just 30 meters away. Just before dusk, the pair of Fish-Owls flew in high on the opposite mountainside and soon dropped down to the stream, where we could enjoy some magic minutes with this rarely seen owl.

18/6

This day we had a bit of a lie-in, i.e. 5.00 at this latitude and season. We left Rauso and drove south towards Kushiro, where we had breakfast and then arrived at the airport in due time for Yvonne's 10.00 flight to Tokyo/Beijing.

After seeing her off, I drove leisurely to Kushiro marshes and spent several hours birding in this mixed landscape. The weather was absolutely brilliant and I walked some boardwalks through marshes as well as birded some woodlands. Many birds typical of the Siberian taiga were seen, as well as some locals such as Sakhalin Leaf-Warblers.

By 14.00 I returned to Kushiro and dropped off the car at the Hertz/Toyota office close to the train station. The train for Tomakomai left punctually at 16.18 and after a quick change in Minami Shitose I arrived equally punctually at Tomakomai. From the train station it is a short taxi drive to the ferry terminal. The ferry left at 23.45 and by then I was already fast asleep dreaming of the pelagic birds tomorrow...

19/6

I got up at 3.00 and found that it was still dark. Nevertheless I took position on deck and by the crack of dawn I started seeing sea-birds flying along the ferry. After not too long I saw a huge wall of fog ahead and eventually we hit it and it was so thick I even had trouble seeing the surface from the deck. The fog then remained for most of the day with some clear areas along the way. This proved most frustrating to use a mild word: basically the entire day was f... up. During 13 out of the 16 hours of daylight it was foggy! Nevertheless I remained on deck and had some really good spells of birding. Both Laysan and Black-footed Albatrosses were often in view although the real one, the Short-tailed was probably already closing in on the Bering Sea. A single Bonin Petrel topped the list and several close South Polar Skuas were real nice sightings.

After a long day at sea, we finally reached Oarai at 19.00. On deck I met another Japanese birdwatcher, which kindly offered a lift to Tokyo and invited me to have dinner and stay at his parents' home for the night.

20/6

This was a relaxed day, as I had no firm plans until the Izu Island ferry departure late in the evening. I started with taking the train to central Tokyo and left the luggage at a coin-locker before I went shopping in the electronic shopping district. The rest of the day was spent doing nothing until I took the ferry from Takeshiba ferry terminal in the evening. The ferry left at 22.30 with me again fast asleep.

21/6

I was up at 3.30, but it was not light until 4.00. I had some good pelagic birding, although most of the birds in view were Streaked Shearwaters. Some good views of Bulwer's and also a few storm-petrels. At Miyakejima, I had a good view of the smoking volcano and the dead forests. Best of all was a singing Pleske's Warbler that I scoped from the back of the ferry while it was ashore on Miyakejima in the early morning. At 9.30 we arrived Hachijojima and by then it was raining seriously. I quickly found a minshuku and the owner was kind enough to come to the ferry terminal and pick me up. In spite of the torrential rain, I felt I had no option but getting out to the forest for the special birds. Fortunately it did not take me long to locate some Izu Island Thrushes, Ijima's Leaf-Warblers, Japanese Wood-Pigeons and Japanese Robins. By mid afternoon I was totally soaked and returned to the minshuku. As I was keen to find out if there was any good habbo for Pleske's Warbler on this island, I decided to rent a bike and circle the new volcano. The rain stopped and during one hour and 40 minutes I biked around the northwestern part of the island. Even though there was good habbo, I failed to locate any Warblers. By 17.00 I was back at the minshuku for a marvelous dinner with sushi and sashimi. As the rain had started again, there was no point in trying for owls in the evening.



Smoking volcano and dead forest at Miyakejima

22/6

The rain was still hammering in the morning, so I took the bike and made a lunatic trip up to the top of the new volcano. Not only was it steep uphill, it was raining heavily and at the top it was so windy I almost fell over in the worst gusts. Needless to say, I found no Pleske's Warblers and very few birds at all.

After circling the top of the volcano, I descended and had breakfast at the minshuku before packing up and leaving for the ferry.

By the time it was time for the ferry to depart at 10.00, the wind was up at gale force and I had serious doubts about the ferry leaving at all.

It did, and soon we were coming clear of land and the wind hit us even harder. As I was keen on more pelagic birds, I decided to stay on deck with my scope. I found a good spot on the leeward side of the ship and with one hand on the rail and one on the scope I actually managed to get many good views of Storm-Petrels in spite of the ship rolling dangerously in some of the largest waves I had ever seen. I had no real concern about the safety of the ship as I assumed that the skipper was experienced enough to judge the weather. Instead my concern was about my personal safety remaining on deck. However, most stories have a happy ending and when reaching the calmer waters near to Tokyo I had had some smashing views of Tristram's, Swinhoe's, Band-rumped and Bulwer's Petrels. The ferry docked around 19.00 and I went straight through Tokyo to Narita, which is close to the international airport.



23/6

An eventless day when I only left Narita to the airport and took the late morning flight to Beijing.

Weather

We decided to go in June, as I wanted to connect with the warblers on Hokkaido. The disadvantage being that we could have been rained out on Honshu as normally it is in the midst of the short rainy season. As it turned out, I believe we were very lucky with the weather in general. On Honshu it was either sunny or overcast and we even had several good looks at Mount Fuji itself. On Hokkaido it was brilliant sunshine every day with the only serious obstacle being the sea fog at Nosappu Misaki. Fog was an even more serious problem on the ferry trip from Hokkaido: out of 16 hours of daylight it was thick fog during 13 hours! Whether this is normal or not, I cannot say, but it was truly frustrating. The bad weather caught up with me during the Izu Island part and I was completely rained out during my entire stay on Hachijojima. Fortunately it probably did not affect the birding too much as the endemics are very common and easily seen. Going back with the ferry to Tokyo, I experienced some extremely rough weather with strong winds.

Logistics

We booked the domestic flights through our travel agent in Beijing and paid about USD 100 one-way between Tokyo and Kushiro.

For the train journeys we can strongly recommend buying a JR rail pass. It has to be bought outside Japan and can then be initiated on a day you select later. The pass is valid for 7 (JPY 28,300) or 14 days (or longer?) and though expensive, will most likely save you lots of money compared to purchasing separate tickets. Information is available in English on the web.

Regarding the ferries I booked these in advance, which is most likely not necessary at all. As they do not speak English, it is advised to ask a Japanese-speaking person to support. Different standards of accommodation are available and this could easily be sorted out when arriving at the ferry terminals. For planning purpose these are the schedules:

Tomakomai-Oarai (ph 029-2674133)

18.45-13.30 next day

23.59-19.00 next day

None in service on Sundays

Oarai-Tomakomai

18.30-13.15 next day

23.59-19.45 next day

None in service on Sundays

Tokyo Takeshiba – Izu Island (ph 03-54729999)

22.30, arriving Miyakejima about 05.00 next morning and arriving Mikurajima

06.10 and Hachijojima 09.30

Takeshiba is reached via subway or JR rail just a few stations south of Tokyo Stn.

Mostly we stayed at minshukus, which is a brilliant way to experience Japan culture. Prices are around JPY 4000-8000 per person including dinner (recommended) and breakfast. Normally it is relatively easy to find a minshuku by asking around. In Hokkaido there are two minshukus that are highly recommended from a birding perspective. One is with Takeyoshi Matsuo at the Nature Inn (213-7, Tobai, Nemuro, Hokkaido, 086-0074 Japan, Phone&Fax : +81-1532-5-3919, E-mail : matsuo-t@plum.plala.or.jp) at Lake Furen and the other one is Washi-no-yado in Rauso for Blakiston's Fish-Owls. The latter is better to book with the kind support of Matsuo-san.

As many people may leave Narita airport in the morning, the following hotel might prove convenient in Narita town. Just outside from the JR station there is a small street immediately down to the left and the hotel is less than 50 meters down on the left hand side. 5500 JPY for a single room. Note that the trains from Narita to the airport may not be so frequent in the early morning, so better check in advance.

Site descriptions

These are only brief descriptions of the sites and other reports on the web contain more detailed information, notably the one by Dave Sargeant from June 2004.

Hakone

Hakone is easily reached from Tokyo by Shinkansen and some local trains. It might be one of the better sites for the rather rare Japanese Yellow Bunting. We saw one along the northwestern shore of the lake Ashi-no-ko. The trailhead is found immediately to the west of the stream that flows into the northern end of the lake. Follow the trail along the lake shore. We found one Bunting just at the water edge where there is a trail fork with one trail leading up the slope and this is about 1.2 km from the trailhead.



Northern end of Ashi-no-ko with the trail (orange) to Japanese Yellow Bunting

Mount Fuji

Who has not seen a photo of Mount Fuji, one of the most picturesque volcanoes in the world? The mountain can be reached from the south, east and north. We chose the east access road, which starts from Subashiro. The town has many places to stay, although we found many of them fully booked even though it was not yet the peak season.

The access road leads through different kinds of forest all the way to the hill station at the end of the road. From here it is possible to walk all the way to the top, although it is not allowed to actually climb the top in the early part of the summer. I eventually found the key bird Japanese Accentor by climbing up to the tree line at 2500 m.

Lake Furen

Lake Furen is famous for its wintering Sea-Eagles, but a summer visit is also a highlight of any Japan trip. The nights are filled with the songs of several interesting warblers and breeding Red-crowned Cranes, Latham's Snipes and Sakhalin Leaf-Warblers are easily seen.

The place to stay is Lodge Furen and from there it is easy to find the boardwalk at Shunkunitai peninsula or the trail in the forest at the Nature Reserve. There is also another interesting woodland to the south of the road where Japanese Robin occurs. It is

found by taking the narrow road a couple of hundred meters west of the large bridge a 1-2 km east of Lake Furen. This narrow road goes south from the main road past fields and a few houses. Where the road angles 90 degrees to the left, it is possible to continue straight on a small dirt track after crossing a chain. This dirt track soon leads to a larger forest to the right and this is where I found the Robin.

Lake Furen is also the gateway to Nemuro Peninsula with several well-know sites like Nosappu Misaki, Ochiichi Misaki, etc. These are described more in detail in my winter report. Although there are more seabirds in the winter, they are well worth a visit also in the summer.

Rauso

Rauso is a fishing port in the northeastern part of Hokkaido. In the past it was famous for its wintering Sea-Eagles, but nowadays the star attraction is the feeding station for Blakiston's Fish-Owls. The road from Lake Furen to Rauso is very good and passes through typical woodland and along the Pacific seashore. The place to stay is the minshuku at Washi-no-yado (ph: 01538 7 2877). The owner does not really speak any English, but are very friendly and serves some absolutely delicious seafood in traditional Japanese style. Besides the Fish-Owls, we also heard Sakhalin Leaf-Warblers in the early morning. Washi-no-yado is found by taking the coastal road through Rauso. After probably less than one km comes an obvious cave (with "glowing" moss) on the left side. I think the minshuku is the first road/valley to the left after this cave. The minshuku is only about 200 m from the main road, situated by the stream.



Washi-no-yado, the last building in the row

Rauso is also the gateway to Shiretoko National Park with splendid scenery and some good birding with Mountain Hawk-Eagle seen by us.

Hokkaido ferry

It is a matter of choice in which direction to take this ferry. Going south means daylight further south. A telescope can be used both on this ferry and the Izu Island ferry. It is advised to attach some sort of padding on the tripod legs in order minimize vibrations. This is a very birdy ferry with seabirds of good diversity almost constantly in view, unless you are, like me, caught in sea fog.

Birds

Pacific Diver, *Gavia pacifica*

One from the Tomakomai to Oarai ferry.

Diver sp, *Gavia* sp

One in basic plumage flew past Ochiishi.

Red-necked Grebe, *Podiceps grisegena holboellii*

One on a nest at Kushiro Marshes.

Laysan Albatross, *Phoebastria immutabilis*

25+ from the Tomakomai to Oarai ferry.

Black-footed Albatross, *Phoebastria nigripes*

20+ from the Tomakomai to Oarai ferry.

Fulmar, *Fulmarus glacialis rogersii*

50+ off Rauso and 100+ from the Tomakomai to Oarai ferry.

Bonin Petrel, *Pterodroma hypoleuca*

One from the Tomakomai to Oarai ferry off Sendai.

Bulwer's Petrel, *Bulweria bulwerii*

Two from the Tokyo to Hachijojima ferry and two from the Hachijojima to Tokyo ferry.

Streaked Shearwater, *Calonectris leucomelas*

Uncountable numbers, but certainly thousands from the Tomakomai to Oarai ferry with birds starting to appear in small numbers around halfway. Many thousands from the Tokyo to Hachijojima ferry. Tens of thousands from the Hachijojima to Tokyo ferry.

Flesh-footed Shearwater, *Puffinus carneipes*

At least five birds identified from the Tomakomai to Oarai ferry, but it may have been more numerous.

Short-tailed Shearwater, *Puffinus tenuirostris*

Many hundreds off Nosappu Misaki on both visits, 200+ off Ochiishi and thousands off Rauso. It cannot be excluded that many were Sooties. From the Tomakomai to Oarai ferry there were probably many tens of thousands. As I have difficulties in separating this species from Sooty, I cannot exclude that many were actually Sooties instead. Underwing pattern seemingly varies a lot. Many were moulting birds and many with no moult at all. One was also seen from the Hachijojima to Tokyo ferry.

Band-rumped Storm-Petrel, *Oceanodroma castro*

One from the Tomakomai to Oarai ferry off northern Honshu. One, probably two, from the Hachijojima to Tokyo ferry.

Swinhoe's Storm-Petrel, *Oceanodroma monorhis*

One from the Tokyo to Hachijojima ferry. Two from the Hachijojima to Tokyo ferry. Blackish plumage, Leach's-like flight, different from Tristram's.

Tristram's Storm-Petrel, *Oceanodroma tristrami*

One from the Tokyo to Hachijojima ferry and one from the Hachijojima to Tokyo ferry. Sooty-brown plumage. Pale wingbar. Large with deliberate flight, flapping wing beats with many long glides.

Storm-Petrel sp, *Oceanodroma* sp

Two from the Tomakomai to Oarai ferry. Four from the Tokyo to Hachijojima ferry. Five from the Hachijojima to Tokyo ferry.

Great Cormorant, *Phalacrocorax carbo hanedae*

One in Tokyo and about 50 at a river south of Tokyo.

Japanese Cormorant, *Phalacrocorax teminckii*

Common along the coasts of Nemuro Peninsula.

Pelagic Cormorant, *Phalacrocorax pelagicus pelagicus*

Fairly common along the coasts of Nemuro Peninsula.

Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea jouyi*

One in Tokyo, ten in Kyoto, four north of Shibetsu, Hokkaido and 10-20 at Kushiro Marshes.

Great Egret, *Ardea alba modestus*

One in Kyoto and one at Mikurajima.

Intermediate Egret, *Egretta intermedia intermedia*

One at Mikurajima.

Little Egret, *Egretta garzetta garzetta*

Five in Kyoto.

Black-crowned Night-Heron, *Nycticorax nycticorax nycticorax*

About five in Kyoto.

Eurasian Wigeon, *Anas penelope*

Several small flocks on Nemuro Peninsula.

American Wigeon, *Anas americana*

One male just east of Furen, Hokkaido, although a hybrid cannot be entirely excluded.



American Wigeon

Falcated Duck, *Anas falcata*

One pair just east of Furen, Hokkaido.



Falcated Ducks

Mallard, *Anas platyrhynchos platyrhynchos*

Small numbers on Hokkaido.

Spot-billed Duck, *Anas poecilorhyncha zonorhyncha*

A few in Kyoto and a few on Nemuro Peninsula.

Northern Pintail, *Anas acuta*

One near Fureen, Hokkaido.

Tufted Duck, *Aythya fuligula*

Three near Nemuro, five north of Shibetsu and five at Shiretoko NP.

Greater Scaup, *Aythya marila nearctica*

Fairly common on Hokkaido.

Harlequin Duck, *Histrionicus histrionicus*

Small numbers at Nosappu Misaki and one along the southern shore of Nemuro Peninsula.



Harlequin Duck

American Scoter, *Melanitta americana*

Nine off the northern coast of Nemuro Peninsula.

Common Merganser, *Mergus merganser merganser*

About ten females and 30 pulli south of Rauso.

Black Kite, *Milvus migrans lineatus*

One in Tokyo, five in Kyoto and common on Hokkaido.

White-tailed Sea-Eagle, *Haliaeetus albicilla*

Three near Furen, one near Nosappu Misaki, one south of Rauso and about five at Lake Takkobu, Kushiro.

Eurasian Buzzard, *Buteo buteo japonicus*

One at Shiretoko NP.

Mountain Hawk-Eagle, *Spizaetus nipalensis orientalis*

One soaring at 200 m at Shiretoko NP was a nice surprise find.

Chinese Bamboo-Partridge, *Bambusicola thoracica ssp*

One pair heard at Ashi-no-ko, two pairs heard at Mount Fuji and three pairs heard on Hachijojima.

Green Pheasant, *Phasianus versicolor tanensis*

One male seen by Yvonne at Hakone. 6-8 seen on Hachijojima.

Red-crowned Crane, *Grus japonicus*

Half a dozen pairs on Kushiro Marshes, mostly around Lake Furen.



Red-crowned Cranes

Water Rail, *Rallus aquaticus indicus*

One at the Nature Center at Lake Furen.

Eurasian Oystercatcher, *Haematopus ostralegus osculans*

Nine at Lake Furen.

Long-billed Plover, *Charadrius placidus*

Three in the river at 200 m at Shiretoko NP.

[Eurasian Woodcock, *Scolopax rusticola*

One probable flushed in the forest near Lake Furen.]

Latham's Snipe, *Gallinago hardwickii*

Fairly common in wetlands and meadows at Nemuro Peninsula and nine seen in the morning when driving from Rauso to Kushiro.



Latham's Snipe

Eurasian Curlew, *Numenius arquata orientalis*

Four at Lake Furen.

Red-necked Phalarope, *Phalaropus lobatus*

One female east of Nemuro.

Red Phalarope, *Phalaropus fulicarius*

Three and two from the Tomakomai to Oarai ferry. Both winter and summer plumaged birds.

South Polar Skua, *Stercorarius maccormicki*

A total of nine from the Tomakomai to Oarai ferry, all seen on the southern part. Some birds were not moulting, whereas some were moulting secondaries or primaries.

Black-tailed Gull, *Larus crassirostris*

Common on Hokkaido, from the Tomakomai to Oarai ferry and on Hachijojima.



Black-tailed Gulls

Glaucous-winged Gull, *Larus glaucescens*

About five on Nemuro Peninsula.



Glaucous-winged Gull

Glaucous Gull, *Larus hyperboreus pallidissimus*

One second-year bird on the southern shore of Nemuro Peninsula.

Slaty-backed Gull, *Larus schistisagus*

Very common on Hokkaido. Many seen from the Tomakomai to Oarai ferry.



Slaty-backed Gull

Black-legged Kittiwake, *Rissa tridactyla pollicaris*

Common on Nemuro Peninsula.

Tern sp, *Hirundo* sp

One from the Tomakomai to Oarai ferry may have been a Common Tern.

Common Guillemot, *Uria aalge inornata*

Two from the Tomakomai to Oarai ferry.

Spectacled Guillemot, *Cephus carbo*

One seen off Nosappu Misaki on both visits.

Ancient Murrelet, *Synthliboramphus antiquus antiquus*

About 20 from the Tomakomai to Oarai ferry.

Rhinoceros Auklet, *Cerorhinca monocerata*

Many hundreds off Nosappu Misaki and Ochiishi. About 15 from the Tomakomai to Oarai ferry.

Tufted Puffin, *Fratercula cirrhata*

Two singles flying past Nosappu Misaki. This is a rare bird off this cape in the summer.

Japanese Wood-Pigeon, *Columba janthina janthina*

Many sightings on Hachijojima, mostly in flight but also some close-up perched birds. Seen around the town and on the slopes of the old volcano.

Oriental Turtle-Dove, *Streptopelia orientalis orientalis*

A few at Mount Fuji, several in Kyoto, a few on Hokkaido and common on Hachijojima.

White-bellied Pigeon, *Treron sieboldii sieboldii*

Two pairs near Lake Furen and one pair between Shibetsu and Kushiro.

Northern Hawk-Cuckoo, *Cuculus hyperythrus*

Two heard at 1800 m at Mount Fuji. One of them seen very well as it was very tape-responsive. Strikingly different call from the formerly combined Hodgson's Hawk-Cuckoo.

Common Cuckoo, *Cuculus canorus canorus*

Three heard at Mount Fuji, several on Kushiro Marshes and one at Kushiro Marshes

Oriental Cuckoo, *Cuculus horsfieldi*

One heard at Mount Fuji, one near Lake Furen, one north of Shibetsu and one at Shiretoko NP. Two syllable call, sometimes several hoots in a row when starting up.

Lesser Cuckoo, *Cuculus poliocephalus*

About five at Mount Fuji and common on Hachijojima.

Blakiston's Fish-Owl, *Ketupa blakistoni blakistoni*

One pair at minshuku Washi-no-yado, Rauso. The pair flew down from the valley at dusk (19.30) and perched for five minutes rather high on the slope opposite the minshuku. After a few duetting calls, the first one dived down the slope to a small sapling by the stream, from where it watched the dead fish put out for it. After five minutes it jumped down to the rocks in the stream and grabbed a fish and remained for a minute before flying upstream. The second bird did more or less exactly the same procedure. We then waited for a repeat performance for another half hour, but nothing happened. A great performance of a truly magnificent bird and a much better observation than my previous ones in the winter. Or to put it another way, it could hardly get much better!



Blakiston's Fish-Owl

Grey Nightjar, *Caprimulgus indicus jotaka*

One heard predawn at low elevation at Mount Fuji.

White-throated Needletail, *Hirundapus caudacutus caudacutus*

15-20 put in a great flight show at Lake Takkobu, Kushiro.



White-throated Needletail

Fork-tailed Swift, *Apus pacificus pacificus*

Two at 2600 m elevation at Mount Fuji, two at Shiretoko NP and five at Lake Takkobu, Kushiro. About 20 on Hachijojima.

Eurasian Wryneck, *Jynx torquilla japonica*

One at Shunkunitai peninsula at Lake Furen.

Pygmy Woodpecker, *Dendrocopos kizuki seebohmii*

One pair at Ashi-no-ko.

Black Woodpecker, *Dryocopus martius martius*

One heard at Shiretoko NP.

Skylark, *Alauda arvensis japonicus*

Two heard at Mount Fuji, common on Nemuro Peninsula and a few at Kushiro Marshes. The form *japonicus* was formerly treated as a separate species.



Skylark

Bank Swallow, *Riparia riparia ijimae*

Locally common on Hokkaido.

Barn Swallow, *Hirundo rustica gutturalis*

Fairly common south of Tokyo, Kyoto and a few on Hokkaido.

Asian House Martin, *Delichon dasypus dasypus*

Common at Gora, Hakone. Small numbers at Rauso and Shiretoko NP.

White Wagtail, *Motacilla alba lugens*

A few at Hakone and common on Hokkaido.

Japanese Wagtail, *Motacilla grandis*

One at the Golden Pavillion in Kyoto.

Grey Wagtail, *Motacilla cinerea robusta*

Two at Mount Fuji and several at Shiretoko NP.

Olive-backed Pipit, *Anthus hodgsoni yunnanensis*

Common at Mount Fuji a few at Shiretoko NP.

Brown-eared Bulbul, *Ixos amaurotis amaurotis* & *matchiae*

Common on Honshu and one north of Kushiro (*amaurotis*). Common on Hachijojima (*matchiae*).

Goldcrest, *Regulus regulus japonensis*

Several heard at Mount Fuji. Song similar to European forms and unlike those from parts of central China.

Brown Dipper, *Cinclus pallasii pallasii*

One at 200 m at Shiretoko NP.

Winter Wren, *Troglodytes troglodytes fumigatus*

5-8 at Mount Fuji, a few on Nemuro Peninsula and at Shiretoko NP.

Japanese Accentor, *Prunella rubida rubida*

Four at 2560 m at Mount Fuji. Seen perched on top of very low (1-2 m) stunted bushes (willow and some sort of coniferous). This was at the tree line well above the 6th station, but not yet at the 7th station. The first bird was found sitting atop a bush and later when playing a short burst of the tape it started to sing and then also attracted a second pair nearby. Eventually had fantastic views of this bird that is actually quite nice-looking when seen close up. Thin golden streaks on the cheek were one of the differences to *P modularis*.

Blue Rock-Thrush, *Monticola solitarius philippensis*

Fairly common on Hachijojima.

Japanese Thrush, *Turdus cardis*

One male seen singing at Ashi-no-ko. One heard at Subashiro.

Brown-headed Thrush, *Turdus chrysolaus chrysolaus*

One seen well when singing from a treetop in the late afternoon at Mount Fuji.

Probably a couple more heard in the same area. One at the Nature Center at Lake Furen and one south of Rauso.

Izu Island Thrush, *Turdus celaenops*

15-20 seen on Hachijojima. Recorded on both volcanoes and in the town gardens.

Asian Stubtail, *Urosphena squameiceps*

About five at Ashi-no-ko.

Japanese Bush-Warbler, *Cettia diphone cantans*

Common south of Tokyo, around Kyushu, on Hokkaido and on Hachijojima, mostly heard.



Japanese Bush-Warbler

Lanceolated Warbler, *Locustella lanceolata*

One seen very well at Shunkunitai peninsula at Lake Furen.



Lanceolated Warbler

Middendorff's Warbler, *Locustella ochotensis ochotensis*

Fairly common on Nemuro Peninsula: several at Lake Furen, Ochiishi and along the north coast of Nemuro Peninsula and a few at Kushiro Marshes.



Middendorff's Warbler

Pleske's (Styan's) Warbler, *Locustella pleskei*

One near the port at Miyakejima in the morning. Heard singing and scoped from the ship.

Sakhalin Warbler, *Locustella amnicola*

Fairly common on Nemuro Peninsula and a few at Kushiro Marshes. The form *amnicola* is separated by e.g. Drovetski et. al. (Journal of Avian Biology 35:105-110, 2004) from Gray's Grasshopper Warbler based on differences in mitochondrial DNA. Disclaimer: I tried one simple playback of the form *fasciolata* recorded in central Siberia at a known territory at Kushiro Marshes and it produced an immediate response. Is this because they are not specifically distinct at all or is it because the taxon on Hokkaido is *fasciolata* instead of *amnicola* ??



Sakhalin Warbler

Black-browed Reed-Warbler, *Acrocephalus bistrigiceps*

Fairly common around Lake Furen and at Kushiro Marshes.

Arctic Warbler, *Phylloscopus borealis xanthodryas*

Common at Mount Fuji from 1400-2600 m. The song and call are clearly different from the mainland forms. The song being much shorter and has two alternating notes. The call is rather harsh tit-like and the Dipper-like “zret” of the mainland forms was never heard. The bill looked shorter and thinner and the underparts are more yellowish. A recording of the song from Kamtschatka is further different with an alternating three-note song. More research in sorting out this complex is certainly needed.

Sakhalin Leaf-Warbler, *Phylloscopus borealoides*

One in the forest at the Nature Center at Lake Furen, one at Shunkunitai at Lake Furen, one at a road side stop north of Shibetsu, one at the minshuku in Rauso and a total of six at various places at Kushiro Marshes. Mostly found in deciduous forest and singing in the canopy.



Sakhalin Leaf-Warbler

Eastern Crowned Warbler, *Phylloscopus coronatus*

Three in the forest at the Nature Center at Lake Furen, one at a road side stop north of Shibetsu and many in Shiretoko NP. Very common in deciduous forest at Kushiro Marshes.

Ijima's Leaf-Warbler, *Phylloscopus ijimae*

Common on Hachijojima, mostly on the old volcano.

Narcissus Flycatcher, *Ficedula narcissina narcissina*

Two in the forest at the Nature Center at Lake Furen and one at 200 m at Shiretoko NP.



Narcissus Flycatcher

Blue-and-white Flycatcher, *Cyanoptila cyanomelana cyanomelana*

One male at Ashi-no-ko, Hakone and one heard at Subashiro.

Japanese Robin, *Erythacus akahige akahige* & *tanensis*

One heard and seen well at dawn in the forest near Lake Furen and another heard singing in the same area (akahige). About ten heard and briefly seen on the old volcano on Hachijojima (tanensis). The song and behavior is much more like a *Luscinia* than an *Erythacus*.

Siberian Rubythroat, *Luscinia calliope*

About ten seen and heard on Nemuro Peninsula. Often showing well when singing.



Siberian Rubythroat

Siberian Blue Robin, *Luscinia cyane bochaiensis*

Common at Mount Fuji.

Red-flanked Bluetail, *Tarsiger cyanurus cyanurus*

Common at Mount Fuji and one near Lake Furen.

Common Stonechat, *Saxicola torquatus stejnegeri*

Common on Hokkaido.



Common Stonechat

Japanese Paradise-Flycatcher, *Terpsiphone atricaudata atrocaudata*

One female near the nest at Subashiro. One female in the forest at Shunkunitai at Lake Furen and probably also a male there as one was heard singing. Apparently only a few previous records from Hokkaido.

Hwamei, *Garrulax canorus ssp*

Fairly common at Ashi-no-ko, Hakone. Introduced.

Red-billed Leiothrix, *Leiothrix lutea* ssp
 One at Ashi-no-ko, Hakone. Introduced.

Long-tailed Tit, *Aegithalos caudatus trivirgatus*
 About five in Kyoto.

Marsh Tit, *Poecile palustris hensoni*
 About ten around Lake Furen.

Willow Tit, *Poecile montana restrictus*
 Five at Mount Fuji.

Coal Tit, *Periparus ater insularis*
 Common at Mount Fuji and on Hokkaido.

Great Tit, *Parus major minor*
 A few at Hakone, Mount Fuji, Kyoto and Hokkaido.

Varied Tit, *Sittiparus varius varius*
 One at Subashiro.

Eurasian Nuthatch, *Sitta europaea asiatica*
 About five in the forest at the Nature Center at Lake Furen and one at Kushiro Marshes.

Japanese White-eye, *Zosterops japonicus japonicus* & *stejnegeri*
 One at Subashiro, several in Kyoto (*japonicus*) and fairly common on Hachijojima (*stejnegeri*).

Bull-headed Shrike, *Lanius bucephalus bucephalus*
 Two in the town gardens on Hachijojima.

Brown Shrike, *Lanius cristatus superciliosus*
 One south of Lake Furen.

Eurasian Jay, *Garrulus glandarius japonicus*
 Three at Mount Fuji.

Hooded Crow, *Corvus cornix orientalis*
 One at Gora, Hakone, common in Kyoto and very common on Hokkaido.

Large-billed Crow, *Corvus macrorhynchos japonensis*
 A few at Hakone, common in Kyoto, very common on Hokkaido and fairly common on Hachijojima.



Hooded and Large-billed Crows

Chestnut-cheeked Starling, *Sturnus philippensis*

A pair at a nesting box at Subashiro, Mount Fuji. About ten around the forest at the Nature Center at Lake Furen and one north of Shibetsu.



Chestnut-cheeked Starling

White-cheeked Starling, *Sturnus cineraceus*

Common south of Tokyo and in Kyoto and a few at Lake Furen.

Russet Sparrow, *Passer rutilans rutilans*

One at the forest at the Nature Center at Lake Furen and one just south of Lake Furen.

Eurasian Tree Sparrow, *Passer montanus saturatus*

Common both on Honshu, Hokkaido and Hachijojima.

Oriental Greenfinch, *Carduelis sinica minor* & *kwarahiba*

Ten in Kyoto (*minor*) and common on Hokkaido (*kwarahiba*).

Grey-bellied Bullfinch, *Pyrrhula [pyrrhula] griseiventris*

A pair seen nicely at 2560 m at Mount Fuji.

Japanese Grosbeak, *Eophona personata personata*

Three at 1500 m at Mount Fuji.

Long-tailed Rosefinch, *Uragus sibiricus sanguinolentus*

Five at the forest near Lake Furen, one on the north coast of Nemuro Peninsula, one near Rauso and about ten at Kushiro Marshes.



Long-tailed Rosefinch

Meadow Bunting, *Emberiza cioides ciopsis*

About five at Ashi-no-ko, three at Mount Fuji and fairly common in scrubby areas on Hachijojima.

Yellow Bunting, *Emberiza sulphurata*

One female at Ashi-no-ko. We walked 1.2 km from the dam without seeing or hearing any Yellow Bunting. We then tried a trail uphill to the road with the same result, but after coming back down to the beach, I heard a bunting calling and soon a female Yellow Bunting flew out over the water and landed in the bushes close to the beach. There I found it again and could watch it for a short while before it flew off again.

Black-faced Bunting, *Emberiza spodocephala personata*

Common on Nemuro Peninsula, at Shiretoko NP and at Kushiro Marshes.



Black-faced Bunting

Reed Bunting, *Emberiza schoeniclus pyrrhulina*

About ten on Nemuro Peninsula and a few at Kushiro Marshes.

Mammals

Whale sp

Five at Nosappu Misaki.

Dall's Porpoise

Several flocks seen from the Tomakomai to Oarai ferry.

Sika Deer,

Common on Mt Fuji and Hokkaido.

Seal sp

A few at Nosappu Misaki.

Sea-Lion

Common from the Tomakomai to Oarai ferry.