Japan

Dancing Cranes & Winter Birding

Southern Islands Extension



Steller's Sea Eagle by Greg de Klerk

The island chain making up the country of Japan is undoubtedly a must-visit destination for the keen birder, and this exploration takes in the very best of what Japan has to offer. Stretching for over 3,000 kilometres (1,860 miles), 'The Land of the Rising Sun' is host to a variety of habitats. On the beautiful, northerly island of Hokkaido, with its fields of snow, frozen lakes and rugged seacoasts, we hope to marvel at the impressive Blakiston's Fish Owl, magnificent Steller's Sea Eagles and elegant Red-crowned (Japanese) Cranes. In addition, the coasts here are home to numerous species of sea ducks, loons and auks, and we will also keep an eye out for wintering passerines, including the beautiful Asian Rosy Finch.

The forests inland from Tokyo harbour the spectacular, endemic Copper and Green Pheasants, Japanese Accentor, Japanese Grosbeak and Japanese Green Woodpecker, while the hot springs at Nagano are famous for their 'Snow Monkeys'. The extensive rivers and lakes on the Sea of Japan side of Honshu teem with waterfowl that include the immaculate Smew, Falcated Duck, Baikal Teal, Tundra and Taiga Bean Geese and the rare Long-billed Plover. The island of Kyushu plays host to one of the greatest avian spectacles on Earth, with thousands of Hooded and White-naped Cranes spending the winter here along with other specialties like Brown-cheeked Rail, Chinese Penduline Tit, Saunders's Gull and the superb Mandarin Duck. On the eastern side of the island, we will attempt to locate the near-endemic Grey Bunting and the endangered Japanese Murrelet among many other exciting and memorable species. We invite you to join us on our unforgettable exploration of this Asian winter wonderland!

On our extension to the Ryukyu Islands, we will visit the small island of Amami, home to the striking Lidth's Jay, Amami Thrush and the scarce Amami Woodcock. Thereafter, we venture to the island of Okinawa, where a host of exciting endemics can be found – endangered Okinawa Woodpecker, recently discovered Okinawa Rail, stunning Ryukyu Robin and localised Ryukyu Minivet are just some of the island's tantalizing species that we hope to see during our explorations here.

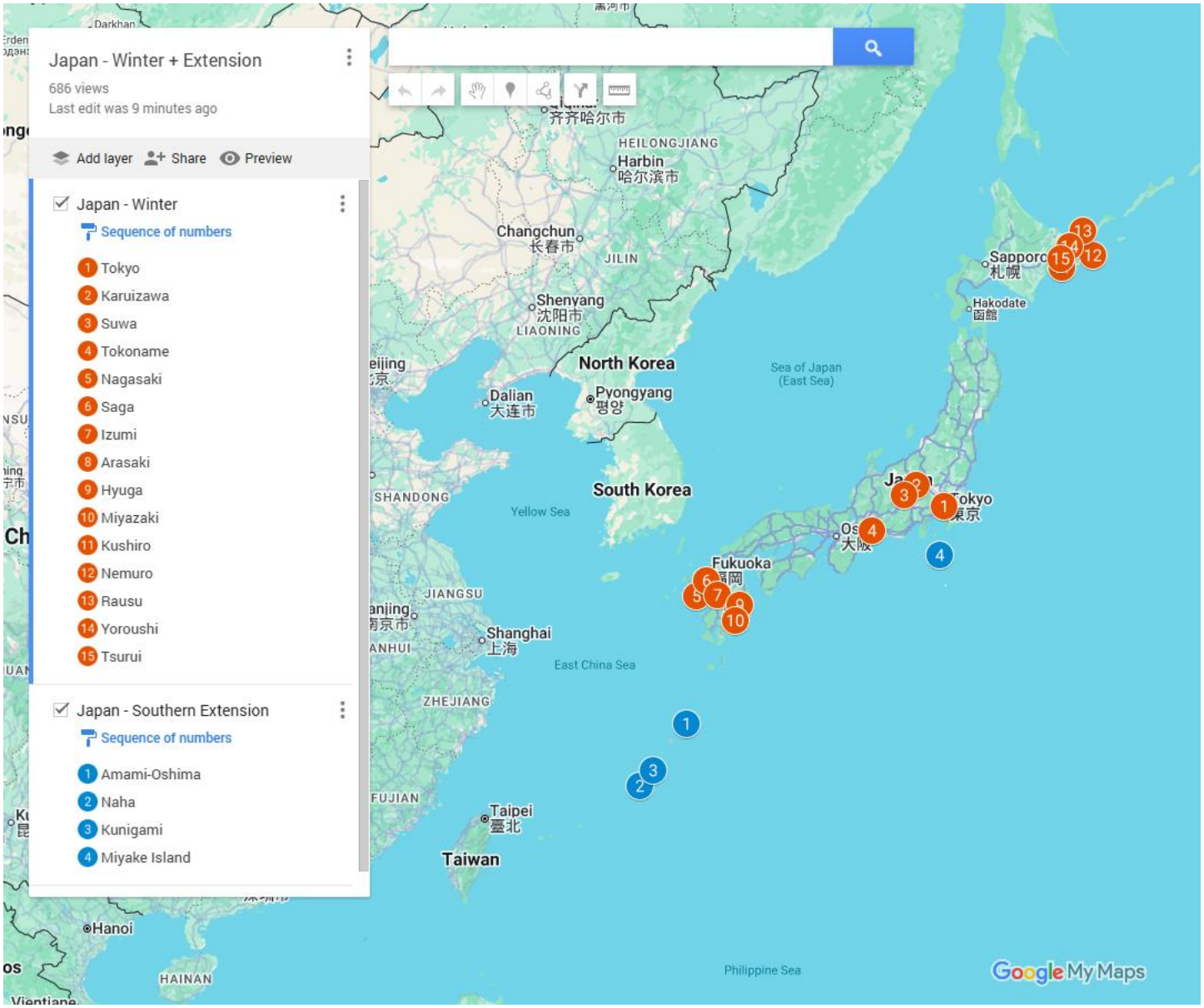
Itinerary & Map

Dancing Cranes & Winter Birding

Day 1	**Tokyo to Karuizawa [Honshu]**
Day 2	**Karuizawa**
Day 3	**Karuizawa to Suwa via Jigokudani**
Day 4	**Suwa to Tokoname City via Seto Kaisho Forest & Chokushi-ike Park**
Day 5	**Tokoname City & Lake Biwa**
Day 6	**Tokoname City; flight to Nagasaki, transfer to Saga [Kyushu]**
Day 7	**Saga to Izumi**
Days 8 to 9	**Izumi & Arasaki areas**
Day 10	**Izumi to Nobeoka via Kagoshima Prefectural Forest**
Day 11	**Hyuga boat cruise, transfer to Miyazaki**
Day 12	**Miyazaki; flight to Kushiro [Hokkaido]**
Day 13	**Kushiro to Nemuro via Kiritappu & Ochiishi**
Day 14	**Nemuro pelagic, Cape Nosappu & surrounds**
Days 15 & 16	**Rausu area & boat cruises**
Day 17	**Rausu to Yoroushi**
Day 18	**Yoroushi to Kushiro via Tsurui Ito**
Day 19	**Kushiro; flight to Tokyo & final departure**

Southern Islands Extension

Day 1	**Arrival in Tokyo**
Day 2	**Tokyo; flight to Amami-Oshima**
Day 3	**Amami Natural Forest**
Day 4	**Amami-Oshima; flight to Naha & transfer to Kunigami**
Days 5 & 6	**Kunigami area**
Day 7	**Naha; flight to Tokyo, ferry to Miyake Island**
Day 8	**Miyake Island to Tokyo & final departure**


Japan - Winter + Extension
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Sequence of numbers
1 Tokyo
2 Karuizawa
3 Suwa
4 Tokoname
5 Nagasaki
6 Saga
7 Izumi
8 Arasaki
9 Hyuga
10 Miyazaki
11 Kushiro
12 Nemuro
13 Rausu
14 Yoroushi
15 Tsurui
Japan - Southern Extension
Sequence of numbers
1 Amami-Oshima
2 Naha
3 Kunigami
4 Miyake Island
齐齐哈尔市
HEILONGJIANG
Harbin
哈尔滨市
Changchun
长春市
JILIN
Shenyang
沈阳市
LIAONING
North Korea
Pyongyang
평양
Dalian
大连市
Sea of Japan
(East Sea)
South Korea
Yellow Sea
SHANDONG
Fukuoka
福岡
JIANGSU
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Birding sites in detail

Karuizawa area. Karuizawa is situated in the scenically beautiful, forested highlands of central Honshu.



Japanese Pygmy Woodpecker by Dušan Brinkhuizen

Our main birding targets in the area include the stunning, but elusive Copper Pheasant, endemic to Japan's Honshu and Kyushu islands. The Karuizawa area supports a rather healthy population of the species, yet due to its furtive habits, we may have to work hard and be patient to see this special endemic. This area also supports a wealth of other interesting and sought-after species, partly since the residents have attempted to maintain an environment attractive to birds, as well as introducing building restrictions to maximise their available habitat. Birding walks should see fair numbers of Varied, Long-tailed, Japanese, Willow and Coal Tits, Brown-eared Bulbul, the eye-catching and distinctive *japonicus* subspecies of Eurasian Jay, and Great Spotted and Japanese Pygmy Woodpeckers. We will also search for the uncommon Japanese Green Woodpecker, Siberian Long-tailed Rosefinch, Japanese Accentor and Japanese Grosbeak and will keep our eyes peeled for any of the rarer and more erratic winter visitors like Japanese and Bohemian Waxwings, and White's Thrush. We also have a chance of finding the reticent Japanese Serow, a kind of forest-dwelling even-toed ungulate.

Saku area. We'll be search for the attractive Smew, as well as large numbers of other more common and widespread waterfowl such as Great Crested and Little Grebes, Eurasian Wigeon, Eastern Spot-billed Duck, Northern Pintail, Eurasian Teal, Common Pochard, Tufted Duck and Common Merganser. Baikal Teal is sometimes recorded, and we will scan the neighbouring river for Japanese Wagtail and the scarce Long-billed Plover. The surrounding scrub and reedbeds may yield Masked, Meadow and Rustic Buntings, Siberian Long-tailed Rosefinch and Dusky Thrush, as well as the gorgeous Green Pheasant.



Varied Tit by Dušan Brinkhuizen

Jigokudani area. This area is a well-known site for the resident population of Japanese Macaques, also known endearingly as 'Snow Monkeys'. Watching troops of these monkeys playing in the snow, squabbling over food scraps, or even bathing in their own 'hot tub', will undoubtedly be one of the highlights of the tour. In the surrounding coniferous forests, we are likely to encounter several species of passerine such as Eurasian Treecreeper, Goldcrest, Long-tailed, Varied, Coal and Japanese Tits and Eurasian Jay.

Seto Kaisho Forest. The mixed forest and edge habitat attract winter residents such as Chinese Bamboo Partridge, Japanese Grosbeak, Japanese Pygmy Woodpecker and Meadow Bunting.



Japanese Macaque (Snow Monkeys) by Glen Valentine

Chokushi-ike Park. The lake and wetland habitat support the attractive Smew and sought after Falcated Duck as well as Ferruginius Duck and Solitary Snipe.

Lake Biwa. The largest lake in Japan, the site often holds large numbers of waterfowl in winter. With some luck, we may get good scope views of Baikal Teal, sometimes in their hundreds. Taiga and Tundra Bean Geese are also usually present, along with a few Falcated Duck, Mandarin Duck and Smew. Most of the waterfowl will however consist of Eastern Spot-billed and Tufted Ducks, Northern Shoveler, Eurasian Wigeon and Mallard. The lake edge may reveal Bull-headed Shrike and Japanese Green Pheasant. As most species here are reasonably widespread, we may elect to visit other sites for rarities or species we may not have seen yet.

Chubu Airport area. The fields and wetlands near the airport produce large numbers of Tundra Swans, mostly comprising the *bewickii* subspecies (Bewick's Swan) but occasionally supporting a few of the *columbianus* subspecies (Whistling Swan). Small to large flocks of White-fronted Geese are also usually present and vigilant searching may even turn up a vagrant Lesser White-fronted Goose. Eastern Marsh and Hen Harriers can be seen quartering low over the grasslands. The stubble fields are also home to a flock or two of Grey-headed Lapwings, and there is even a slim chance of flushing a Japanese Quail.



Japanese Murrelet by Greg de Klerk

Izumi area. Close to Izumi, we'll bird a large area of sandbanks and mudflats to locate the scarce Saunder's Gull, which can usually be found here in small numbers. In fact, the area is an excellent site for several different species of gulls, and we are also likely to find Black-headed, Black-tailed, Vega and Common Gulls. Lesser Black-backed (this race sometimes split as Heuglin's), Slaty-backed and Pallas's Gulls are occasionally seen here, and we also stand a good chance of finding several other

interesting species such as the endangered, Black-faced Spoonbill, Kentish Plover, Eurasian Curlew, Osprey, Great Cormorant and Common Shelduck.



Japanese Hawk-Eagle by Dušan Brinkhuizen

Arasaki & surrounds. Our focus here will be the fallow fields and rice paddies where thousands of Hooded and White-naped Cranes congregate and feed during the winter months. During good years, it is not unusual to count over 12 000 Hooded and 1 000 White-naped Cranes, and they are usually joined by very small numbers of Sandhill and Common Cranes. Both Demoiselle and Siberian Cranes have been recorded on several occasions over the past but are rare vagrants to the area. However, the immense numbers of Hooded and White-naped Cranes undoubtedly makes for one of the most spectacular avian gatherings on Earth!

Although Arasaki is understandably most famous for this spectacle, the diversity of habitats in the area also makes it one of the richest places for winter birding in Japan. The reedbeds fringing the rivers often harbour Chinese Penduline Tit, Common Reed Bunting and Brown-cheeked Rail, while Japanese Quail can sometimes be found amongst the rice fields. The rivers themselves hold Crested Kingfisher and the highly desirable Long-billed Plover, while in the more wooded areas; we should find the handsome Daurian Redstart, Warbling White-eye, Bull-headed Shrike, White-cheeked Starling, fair numbers of Dusky and Pale Thrushes and, with luck, the rare Brown-headed Thrush.

Huge flocks of Rooks dominate the gaps in the fields between the cranes and careful scanning usually reveals a few Daurian Jackdaws amongst them. Areas of thickets and scrub are home to several species of bunting that include Black-faced, Meadow, Chestnut-eared and Rustic Buntings, while several waterfowl can be seen in the rivers and ponds throughout the area along with occasional flocks of Black-faced and Eurasian Spoonbills. Other grassland species we'll be on the lookout for while driving around the agricultural lands include Eastern Marsh and Hen Harriers, Northern Lapwing, Eurasian Skylark (the subspecies occurring here sometimes split as Japanese Skylark) and Siberian Pipit. If we are very lucky, we may even encounter some of Arasaki's rare but generally annual visitors like Merlin, Eurasian Goshawk, Short-eared Owl and Red-billed Starling. Some of the other interesting and noteworthy species we may encounter during our time in the area include Japanese Bush Warbler, Green Sandpiper, Ruddy-breasted Crake, Eastern Buzzard, House Swift, Russet Sparrow, Asian House Martin and Grey Wagtail.



Dusky Thrush by Erik Forsyth

Hyuga. This coastal town situated on the north-east coast is a great site to search for the localised, endemic Japanese Murrelet.



Black-faced Spoonbill by Greg de Klerk

At Hyuga Harbour we board a boat that will take us around the harbour and the bay in search of the murrelet, and our chances of seeing this Japanese specialty are excellent. Other species that we are likely to observe during this outing include Black-tailed, Vega and Common Gulls, and Great and Japanese Cormorants. If we do not find the murrelet on the boat trip, we will scan out to sea from a nearby headland where previous trips have produced scope views. We will also keep a lookout for the scarce Black Wood Pigeon that is sometimes present in the forest that lines the trail to the viewpoint.

Kagoshima Prefectural Forest. This vast park has well maintained trails, allowing us a second chance at finding Copper Pheasant, as well as Japanese Green Woodpecker and White-bellied Green Pigeon.

Miyazaki area. Time permitting, we'll visit these mudflats for Siberian Sand Plover amongst many other waders, as well as Black-faced and Eurasian Spoonbills.

Kushiro area. A nearby river hosts close to a hundred Red-crowned (Japanese) Cranes, mingling about at the icy river-edge, the condensation puffing out from their beaks while they bugle away before heading off to their



The endemic Green Pheasant on Honshu by Glen Valentine

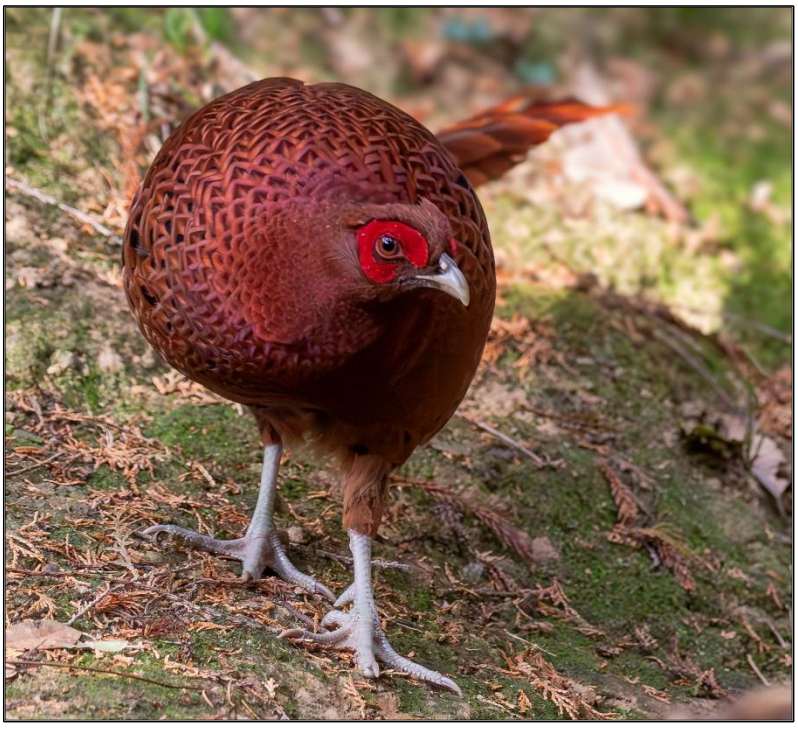
feeding grounds nearby. We'll also visit a nearby crane feeding area where we are again likely to see many of these handsome and stately cranes feeding, dancing, calling, neck-stooping and wing-mantling in the snow-covered fields. This is certainly birding in Japan in winter at its best. These elegant and iconic birds are paired-off and patchily distributed throughout the island's difficult-to-access wetlands during the summer months, but in winter they congregate in large flocks at a few sites at the edge of the marshlands, just north of Kushiro. As we marvel at this spectacle, it will become extremely clear why we ventured to this remote and frigid corner of Japan!



Blakiston's Fish Owl by Glen Valentine

Kiritappu. Our main target here is the scarce and erratic Asian Rosy Finch, which is usually present somewhere in the area during the winter months. Secluded bays in the area often harbour wintering Brant Goose, as well as the occasional Smew and Falcated Duck. The area is surrounded by beautiful, verdant coniferous forest but accessing these forests during the winter months can be challenging and sometimes impossible if there is too much snow and ice around. If conditions are favourable, we will venture into the forest along a side-track where we may encounter the impressive Black Woodpecker and Hazel Grouse, a difficult species at the best of times, but especially challenging to see in winter. We also hope to hear about an active and reliable Ural Owl roosting site while we are in the area, and we will also check several roost sites where we have previously seen this beautiful owl.

Mammals are tough to find here, although we stand a chance of seeing Sika Deer, Harbour and Spotted (Largha) Seals and even the rarely seen Sea Otter.



Copper Pheasant by Greg de Klerk

Nemuro area. Time permitting, we'll visit a nearby bird observatory where the feeders and surrounding trees often attract Eurasian Nuthatch, Great Spotted Woodpecker, Marsh, Japanese and Long-tailed Tits, Hawfinch, Eurasian Bullfinch, Red Crossbill, Eurasian Treecreeper, Goldcrest, Common Redpoll and Grey-capped Greenfinch.

Nemuro pelagic. We'll enjoy a short pelagic trip off Nemuro, where we could expect some of the best sea-watching of the tour. Large numbers of sea ducks will compete for our attention with Red-throated Loon, Red-necked Grebe and Greater Scaup. We also stand a chance of finding the scarce and localised Red-faced Cormorant amongst the commoner Pelagic Cormorants. Other specialities that we will look



Dancing Red-crowned Cranes on snowy Hokkaido by Glen Valentine

out for include Spectacled and Pigeon Guillemots, Thick-billed (Brünnich's) and Common Murres (Guillemots), Rhinoceros and Least Auklets, and Ancient Murrelet. If we are very fortunate, we may even find a Crested Auklet or Long-billed Murrelet, both of which are annual but only occur in very small numbers.

Cape Nosappu. This area should produce the rare Red-faced Cormorant, of which there are typically a few birds hanging out with the abundant Pelagic Cormorants on the rocks. A sea-watch here may also prove worthwhile and could produce any of the already-mentioned sea ducks and auks.

Notsuke Peninsula. We'll make several stops along the road where we have good visibility out to sea. Scanning out across the open, icy waters we are likely to encounter our first Black and Stejneger's Scoters, the immaculate Harlequin and Long-tailed Ducks, Spectacled Guillemot, Ancient Murrelet, Red-necked Grebe and Slaty-backed, Glaucous and Glaucous-winged Gulls. Patches of open ground and grass tufts occasionally support several species of seedeater such as Common Redpoll, Eurasian Siskin, Grey-capped Greenfinch, and more sporadically Snow Bunting and Asian Rosy Finch.



White's Thrush by Greg de Klerk

Rausu area. We'll board a small boat and take a ride into the harbour to enjoy and photograph the incredible spectacle of good numbers of regal Steller's and White-tailed Sea Eagles sitting out on the pack-ice or the harbour walls, as well as several species of gull that includes Glaucous, Slaty-backed, Common, Vega and Glaucous-winged.



Hooded and White-naped Cranes by David Hoddinott

Rausu Harbour can also be extremely productive during January and February when several species of auk shelter in these calm waters. Past tours have produced Least and Crested Auklets, Common and Thick-billed Murres, Spectacled Guillemot and Ancient Murrelet. A scan out to sea should be fruitful for waterfowl and loons. Here we may find Red-throated, Black-throated and Pacific Loons, Long-tailed and Harlequin Ducks, Common Goldeneye, Common and Red-breasted Mergansers, Stejneger's and Black Scoters, Red-necked and Horned Grebes, Spectacled Guillemot, Ancient Murrelet and Rhinoceros Auklet.

Small, icy streams just inland from the coast may yield the captivating Brown Dipper and the scarce but impressive Crested Kingfisher, while the snow-covered meadows and forested hillsides are likely to produce herds of Sika Deer and the occasional Red Fox.



Asian Rosy Finches by Glen Valentine

Yoroushi. This area of eastern Hokkaido is home to a few pairs of the very impressive Blakiston's Fish Owl. It may require us staying up all night, but we certainly have an excellent chance of seeing this spectacular bird during our stay in the area. Staring into the giant eyes of this nocturnal beauty, the largest owl on Earth must rank as one of the world's great birding experiences!

Greater Tokyo area. Birding the many canals, drainage ditches and parks dotted around the city can be very productive. Brown-headed and White's Thrushes are two of the country's very scarce and elusive

target species sometimes easiest to find in Tokyo itself. Whilst searching for these two key species, we are also likely to encounter several common and widespread waterfowl species, as well as Brown-eared Bulbul, Dusky Thrush, and Warbling White-eye.



Saunders's Gull by Glen Valentine

City parks support woodland, ponds, reedbeds and seashore with good path systems and normally a plethora of birds such as White-cheeked Starling, Oriental Turtle Dove, Masked Bunting, Large-billed Crow, Brown-eared Bulbul, Japanese Bush Warbler, Red-flanked Bluetail, lovely Azure-winged Magpies, Eurasian Bullfinch and both Pale and Brown-headed Thrushes.

Naze area. We'll scan offshore rocks for our primary target, Japanese (Temminck's) Cormorant. We may also find Brown Boobies flying low over the breakers, as well as Pacific Golden Plovers and Ruddy Turnstones roosting on the rocks. Wooded areas close to Naze could produce our first suite of exciting Amami specialties such as the vibrantly coloured Lidth's Jay, the scarce and unobtrusive Black (Japanese) Wood Pigeon, Ryukyu Minivet, Japanese Pygmy Woodpecker and Warbling White-eye.

Kinsakubaru Forest Reserve. This reserve protects the lush, extensive and verdant forests that cloak the hills above Naze. Here we hope to locate the rare and endemic Amami Thrush. As dusk approaches, we will search the gravel roads for the endemic Amami Woodcock, furtive Ryukyu Scops Owl and if we are extremely lucky maybe even a Long-eared Owl or the little known and seldom-recorded Japanese Scops Owl.



Lidth's Jay by Glen Valentine

Amami Natural Forest. One of our main target species here will be the beautiful Lidth's Jay. These birds are reasonably common, but fairly shy and sometimes difficult to observe. However, we are almost certain to achieve excellent views of these gems during our time on the island. Other species that we will be on the lookout for include the endemic owstoni subspecies of White-backed Woodpecker, the scarce and furtive Black Wood Pigeon, very shy Ryukyu Green Pigeon, the rare, endemic Ryukyu Flycatcher, the scarce and shy Ryukyu Robin, Varied and Japanese Tits, and Warbling White-eye. In the early afternoon we will make our way to the coast where we'll scan an area of tidal mudflats and rocky coastline where we are likely to encounter Japanese and Great

Cormorants, Kentish, Siberian Sand and Pacific Golden Plovers, Grey-tailed Tattler, Dunlin and Red-necked Stint, while the distinctive, rufous-bellied philippensis subspecies of Blue Rock Thrush is often seen around the edge of the beach.



Ryukyu Robin by David Hoddinott

We have another chance for a nocturnal excursion in search for the island's scarce nocturnal endemics, and we may also find the black Amami Rabbit, an endearing species endemic to this island.

Yanbaru National Park. Our main reason for being in Yanbaru is to find the stunning Okinawa Rail, a bird only described to science as recently as 1981. We are likely to hear them calling, but we will have to be fortunate to obtain a view of these skulking, flightless rallids. They sometimes come to the road-edge and forest-edge in the early morning to feed but if we cannot find one at or just after dawn, we will search again this evening when singletons and pairs can sometimes be seen roosting on fairly open branches at the edge of the forest and sometimes within arm's reach from the edge of the road.

The name 'Yanbaru' means 'mountains and fields', and we will have time to explore this scenic and well-forested part of the island most of which comprises the Yanbaru National Park. The star bird in the 'Itajii', or evergreen oak forests, is probably the rare and furtive Okinawa (Pryer's) Woodpecker, the rarest extant woodpecker on Earth. This mega-rarity is listed as critically endangered, with an estimated population of fewer than 600 individuals. Other exciting species we hope to encounter during our woodpecker quest include Ryukyu Green Pigeon, Black Wood Pigeon, Ryukyu Minivet and the stunning Okinawa Robin. This island, along with Amami-Oshima is also known for its large population of 'Habu', a species of viper that is commonly seen, especially at night. We will also try for Ryukyu Scops Owl, should we have missed it on Amami, as well as Northern Boobook, and this will provide us with additional chances for Okinawa Rail if we have not yet located it.



Amami Woodcock by David Hoddinott

Rice paddies and irrigation channels in the area have Grey-faced Buzzard, White-breasted Waterhen, Pin-tailed and Common Snipes, Long-toed and Temminck's Stints, and the scarce and elusive Cinnamon Bittern if we are lucky

Kin rice fields. Possible species here include Cinnamon Bittern, Common and Pin-tailed Snipes, Temminck's and Long-toed Stints, Eastern Yellow Wagtail, Scaly-breasted Munia, Siberian and Red-throated Pipits, and the rare and elusive Brown-headed Thrush to name just a handful, though there is always the possibility of something unusual such as Greater Painted-snipe or Oriental Pratincole.



Okinawa Rail by Glen Valentine

Naha area. Several exciting and noteworthy species are available in this area with our main target being the endangered Black-faced Spoonbill. Many other migrants spend the winter here and we may also find Eurasian Curlew, Common Redshank, Little Ringed and Pacific Golden Plovers and Bar-tailed Godwit. We may even encounter a Ruddy-breasted Crake skulking at the edge of the reedbeds in the early morning.

Miyake Island. After a pre-dawn arrival on Miyake Island, we will head to an inland lake surrounded by dense forest. Here we will search for several special endemic birds including Black Wood Pigeon, Owston's Tit, the shy Izu Robin and, best of all, the Izu Thrush. Other more widespread species include Japanese Pygmy Woodpecker, Pale and Dusky Thrushes, Japanese Tit, Blue Rock Thrush, Japanese White-eye and Eurasian Siskin.



The critically endangered Short-tailed Albatross by Glen Valentine

Our anticipated return journey will be very exciting. Travelling through an area called the "Oshima Triangle" by local birders, we have very good chances for several mouth-watering pelagic species as soon as we leave the harbour, including Streaked and Sooty Shearwaters, Providence Petrel, Tristram's Storm Petrel, Northern Fulmar, Ancient and Japanese Murrelets, and Laysan, Black-footed and the highly sought-after Short-tailed Albatrosses. The latter species is now recovering steadily on its protected breeding grounds on Torishima Island, one of Japan's most southerly Islands, and is frequently seen at this time of year.

Tour Grading & Key

Overall Ease		Moderate. Suitable for all birding / wildlife interest levels & most mobility capabilities. Can be a little tiring due to travel & relatively long days.
Birding Ease		Undemanding, most species provide good views. A small number of scarce/rare target species.
Accommodation		Mostly good, some lodges are simple with shared or basic washroom facilities (minshuku).
Walking / Trails		Reasonably easy. Most walking is on flat terrain or on wide trails. There will be times when we walk on ice or through ankle-deep snow.
Vehicles / Roads		We use medium sized coaches for most of the tour. Some drives are long, mostly on sealed roads in good repair. Several internal flights & boat trips/pelagics. The extension spends one night on a ferry.
Photography		Good to excellent.
Annoyances		Need to take care with ice around lodges & when getting on/off vehicles. Miyake Island ferry is weather-dependent.

Financial Arrangements and Important Notes

Tour dates, prices, single supplement, approximate flight costs and tour spaces are displayed on our website.

Tour inclusions:

- All meals from breakfast on day 1 to breakfast on day 19 for those on the main tour;
- All meals from lunch on day 1 to dinner on day 8 for those on the extension;
- All lodgings;
- All ground transportation during the tour;
- All reserve entrance fees;
- All guiding services
- Tips for local guides, drivers and services.

Tour exclusions:

- Visa fees;
- ANY flights;
- Any beverages (including bottled water or mini-bar charges at hotels);
- Optional excursions;
- Special gratuities;
- Telephone calls, laundry and other items of a personal nature.

Single Supplement: The single supplement cost for this tour will be charged if you wish to have single accommodation. If RBL cannot provide you with a rooming partner for these nights although you choose to share, the single supplement will become applicable. We will make all reasonable efforts to ensure that a rooming partner is found if you do wish to share.

Tipping: As noted above, gratuities (drivers, hotel staff, restaurants etc.) are included on this tour. However, this does NOT include your Rockjumper leader/s. If you feel that they have given you excellent service, it is entirely appropriate to tip them at your discretion.

- **Due to constantly fluctuating exchange rates, we quote our tours in 4 currencies. The tour price is fixed only in the currency printed in bold, and the actual cost in the other currencies listed will be adjusted according to prevailing exchange rates at the time of final invoicing. The same applies to approximate flight and single supplement rates.**
- **Rates are based upon group tariffs; if the tour does not have sufficient registrations, a small group supplement will be offered to confirm the tour.**
- **Tour prices are subject to unforeseen increases in tour related costs and may have to be adjusted as a result.**
- **The designated tour leader/s may be changed at short due to unforeseen circumstances.**
- **The itinerary is indicative only. Changes may need to be made to the order in which the tour is conducted, or some of the venues we visit closer to departure. We will attempt to adhere as close to the original program as possible.**

- To ensure your comfort and that of your companions, please limit yourself to one medium-sized suitcase or duffel bag (20 kg / 44 lb) and one carry-on bag, as space in the vehicles is limited.
- In some areas, it can get very cold, especially on Hokkaido. Days are short at this time of the year, and some of the birds also occur in low densities. You should expect to be in the field or travelling from one location to another on most days, without dedicated mid-day breaks at a lodge or hotel.
- Accommodations are of a good standard throughout the tour. We will do our utmost to make your stay as comfortable as possible, but at times we may experience maintenance problems that are beyond our control. In the remote areas, like in northern Okinawa, we opt for the best available accommodation; however, this is sometimes below the standard of what you may have come to expect but is always clean and comfortable.
- Some accommodations during the tour may have shared washroom facilities.
- Single rooms will not be available during the ferry crossings to and from Miyake Island, and cabin sharing will be required.
- The daytime ferry crossing will have more basic cabins than the overnight leg, as we anticipate daytime birding on deck, though there are several comfortable lounges to use if you wish.
- This tour does not require a high level of fitness, but participants should be in good general health as much of the birding will be done on foot and may require walking for several hours at a time.
- Japan has excellent, safe tap water, so bottled water is not supplied. We encourage you to bring a reusable water bottle.
- This tour is not suitable for guests who require wheelchairs, walkers, mobility scooters, walking frames or similar mobility aids. Guests must be able to walk independently, board and disembark vehicles unassisted, and manage their own luggage.

Internal ferries (or flights) to/from Miyake Island are subject to sea and weather conditions. As such, they cannot be guaranteed. If a visit to the island is not possible, we will bird elsewhere on the mainland.

Arrival and Departure Details

The main tour departs from our Tokyo hotel in the early morning of day 1. It is thus imperative to arrive the day before the tour begins. The tour will conclude after an afternoon flight into Tokyo on day 19.

The extension begins on day 1 with an arrival day in Tokyo and will conclude in the late evening of day 8 in Tokyo.

If arriving or departing from Tokyo's Narita Airport there is a shuttle bus that can be used to transfer between airports, the cost of this is approximately $50 return.

The above information in respect of arrivals and departures is a guide only. Precise arrival and departure information will be sent to you in your Tour Confirmation package once the tour has been officially confirmed. If you wish to arrive early and/or depart late and would like assistance in this regard, kindly contact the Rockjumper office.

Narita International Airport, Tokyo (IATA: NRT) handles most of Japan's leisure international flights, whilst Haneda Airport, Tokyo (IATA: HND) handles most of Japan's domestic flights and premier international business flight routes.

Visa requirements differ by country, nationality of the traveller and duration and purpose of your intended stay. It may be necessary to obtain a visa or an electronic travel authorization in advance of your travel. It is therefore vitally important that you check with your travel agent/consulate/embassy for exact visa requirements.

DO NOT book any flights until the Rockjumper Team have officially confirmed the tour.