

# Japan

Dates: 7<sup>th</sup> – 23<sup>rd</sup>/25<sup>th</sup> Jan 2022

Guide: Nigel Moorhouse

Price: £4900 (£5470 with extension)

**Covid-19 Note:** Please be aware that dates may need to change by a day either way, as we do not know what the airline schedules may be post-Covid at present.



## 8<sup>th</sup> Jan: Arrive Narita

After overnight flight, arrive at Tokyo Narita. You will be met by your guide and then head out to wetland areas close to Narita. Here we can look for species hard to find elsewhere on the tour, including Japanese Reed Bunting, Green Pheasant and Brown-headed Thrush. Lakes in the area often have Baikal Teal.

## 9<sup>th</sup> -10<sup>th</sup> Jan: Tokyo – Karuizawa

After some local birding in the morning, we will head to Karuizawa in the Japanese Alps, with some potential stops en route. At Karuizawa, there are a number of trails, easily accessible on foot, which have good numbers of wintering passerines. Species include Japanese Green and Japanese Pygmy Woodpeckers, Brown Dipper, Japanese Grosbeak, Dusky and White's Thrushes and Elegant and Rustic Buntings. Scarcer species include Copper Pheasant, Long-tailed and Pallas' Rosefinches, and Japanese Accentor can usually be found. We visit the Snow Monkeys at Jigokundani on one morning and visit ponds on the way which can hold Baikal Teal, Japanese Wagtail and Long-billed Plover.

## 11<sup>th</sup> Jan: Karuizawa – Tokyo – Kushiro – Tsurui

We have all morning to look for species we may have missed, before heading back to Tokyo for a flight to Kushiro on Hokkaido, and on to our hotel at Tsurui, which is famous for Red-crowned Cranes.

## 12<sup>th</sup> Jan: Tsurui – Yoroushi

We may be able to find a roosting Ural Owl as we head towards Yoroushi Onsen. The woods in this area can hold wintering passerines, and, in the evening, there is a very good chance of Blakiston's Fish Owl at the ponds outside of our lodging. There is often Solitary Snipe somewhere along the river.

## 13<sup>th</sup> Jan: Yoroushi / Rausu

Head to Rausu for the day. On the way, we can stop and look over harbours, where, especially if the weather has been bad at sea, we may find Spectacled and Brünnich's Guillemots, and possibly Long-billed and Ancient Murrelets and Least Auklet. Slaty-backed, Glaucous and Glaucous-winged Gulls are all present. On the way, we are bound to encounter both Steller's and White-tailed Sea Eagles in good numbers. The harbour and rivermouth at Rausu are very good for Harlequin Duck, and Bufflehead has been seen here regularly in recent winters.

## 14<sup>th</sup> Jan: Yoroushi - Nemuro

After breakfast, we'll head to Nemuro, where we will explore the Nosappu Cape, and Lake Furen. Red-faced Cormorant is usually present among the many Pelagics, and seawatching may add Ancient Murrelet and Least Auklet. Nearby rocks can hold Rock Sandpiper. There are various hides and feeders in the area, which attract a range of passerines. If people wish and conditions allow, we can take a pelagic to get closer to some of the alcids (¥10,000 paid locally).

## 15<sup>th</sup> Jan: Nemuro – Kushiro - Tokyo

After some final birding in the Nemuro area, we'll head back to Kushiro for an afternoon flight to Tokyo. On the way we'll visit the coast at Akkeshi, which has gatherings of seaducks and Kiritappu Peninsula, where and we may be lucky and find Asian Rosy Finch. After arrival in Tokyo, we take the overnight ferry to Hachijojima. \*

\* The ferry does get cancelled on occasion, in which case we will spend the following day in the Tokyo area, where there are various good birding sites.

## 16<sup>th</sup> Jan: Ferry - Tokyo

On arrival at Hachijojima \*, we will have about 30 minutes to look around the port area, where Izu Thrush is regularly seen, and Izu Robin is possible with a lot of luck. We return by ferry to Tokyo, where we have the journey to seawatch from our large and comfortable ferry. Species vary with weather conditions, but can include Black-footed, Laysan, and Short-tailed Albatrosses, Streaked Shearwater and Tristram's Petrel, and rarer species are always possible. Between the islands on the way, Japanese Murrelet is regularly encountered.

\* if the weather looks not too bad, then we may make the decision to stop on Miyakejima instead of Hachijojima, which will give us much more time to look for Izu Thrush, Izu Robin and Owston's Tit. This doesn't affect the seawatching too much, as most seabirds are seen north of Miyakejima.

### *17<sup>th</sup> Jan – 18<sup>th</sup> Jan: Tokyo – Kumamoto – Izumi*

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We will take a morning flight to Kumamoto, where we will have time to visit some excellent nearby mudflats, which will be filled with waders, including Pacific Golden Plover and Lesser Sandplover. Saunders' Gull is regular and Black-faced Spoonbill is seen most years. Among the commoner duck species, Falcated Duck and Baikal Teal can often be found. There are always a number of passerines in the reeds and trees here and we need to keep an eye out for the localized race of Common Magpie (Oriental Magpie).

In the afternoon, we will head south to Arasaki. Much of the time in the area will be spent at Arasaki Crane Reserve. This famous area where there is the possibility of six species of crane in a spectacular gathering, including over 8000 Hooded and 2000 White-naped, accompanied by a few Sandhill and Common Cranes, and occasional Siberian and Demoiselle. The whole area is excellent, and we can hope to find Daurian Redstart, Russet Sparrow, Chinese Penduline Tit, Oriental Greenfinch, Daurian Jackdaw, Japanese Grosbeak and Chestnut-eared, Meadow and Rustic Buntings.

While at Izumi, we can visit Kogawa Dam, where Grey and Elegant Bunting can sometimes be found. In addition, this is a good locality for Japanese Green and Japanese Pygmy Woodpeckers, Red-flanked Bluetail, Mandarin Duck and Crested Kingfisher. Baikal Teal is also occasionally seen here. Heading just inland, there are number of small rivers which Long-billed Plover frequent, and just to south, we may be able to find Japanese Murrelet. Areas to the south of Arasaki also have Japanese Murrelet.

### *19<sup>th</sup> Jan: Izumi – Kagoshima – Amamioshima*

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We'll fly from Kagoshima to Amamioshima, and our first stop is along the shore near the airport, and this is good for a variety of waders, Temminck's Cormorant and Pacific Reef Herons. We have previously found both Saunders' Gull and Far-eastern Curlew here. We next head to Amami Natural Forest, which is home to Lidth's Jay, Ryukyu Green and Japanese Wood Pigeons and Owston's Woodpecker. After dark we'll head out to look for Ryukyu Scops Owl and Amami Woodcock, as well as Ryukyu Spiny Rat and Amami Rabbit. If we are lucky, we may also find roosting Amami Thrush.

### *20<sup>th</sup> Jan - 21<sup>st</sup> Jan: Amamioshima – Naha Okinawa – Yanbaru*

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In the early morning, we will head into the forest and try to locate Amami Thrush, and may also find Ryukyu Robin, and more Lidth's Jays. In the afternoon, we'll take the short flight to Okinawa. After arrival on Okinawa, we may have time for some wader-watching in Naha, where we may find species including Grey-tailed Tattler and Greater and Lesser Sandpipers. Both Eurasian and Black-faced Spoonbills are usually present. As we head north, we will stop off at some paddyfields, where a range of waders are usually present. These include Eastern Cattle Egret, Temminck's and Long-toed Stints and Pacific Golden Plover. It will be dark as we reach the far north, but after our meal, we will be able to head out to look for Ryukyu Scops Owl and, if we are lucky, roosting Okinawa Rails.

We will spend the time around the Yanbaru Peninsula. Our target species here are the difficult and enigmatic Okinawa Rail (easy to hear, less easy to see), and the very scarce Pryer's Woodpecker. In addition to these we should be able to track down Okinawa Robin, and if the weather is right in the evening, we will look for Ryukyu Scops Owl and Amami Woodcock. Other species we will look for include Grey-faced Buzzard, Japanese Sparrowhawk, Black Woodpigeon, Ryukyu Green Pigeon, Pacific Swallow, Asian Stubtail and Ryukyu Minivet.

### *Option 1: Return home*

### *22<sup>nd</sup> Jan: Yanbaru – Naha Okinawa – Osaka Depart*

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We have most of the day to explore the Yanbaru Peninsula and sites heading back south before returning to Naha, where we take an evening flight to Osaka Kansai or Tokyo. After an overnight stay, take a morning flight on 23<sup>rd</sup> arriving back on the same day in the UK.

### *Option 2: Ishigakijima & Iriomote Extension*

### *22<sup>nd</sup> – 23<sup>rd</sup> Jan: Yanbaru – Naha Okinawa – Ishigaki/Iriomote*

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We have most of the day to explore the Yanbaru Peninsula and sites heading back south before returning to Naha, where we take an evening flight to Ishigakijima.

These two islands hold a number of birds which are considered by some authorities to be separate species. Few birders visit, so little is known about the seasonality on the islands. These include Ishigaki and Iriomote Tits and Ryukyu Serpent Eagle. They also offer the opportunity to look for Ruddy Kingfisher, Malayan Night Heron, Ryukyu Flycatcher, Ryukyu Scops Owl and other species which are scarce in Japan, such as Purple Heron.

### *24<sup>th</sup> Jan: Ishigaki/Iriomote*

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After some final time on the two islands, we will return to the airport for an evening flight back to Tokyo. After an overnight stay, take a morning flight on 25<sup>th</sup> arriving back on the same day in the UK.