

# Breeding birds and migrants of Japan

Birdwatching Breaks is pleased to offer you a summer tour to Japan concentrating on Honshu, Hokkaido and the Ryukyu Islands of Okinawa, Amami Oshima, Ishigaki-jima and finally Miyake-jima – a part of the Izu Island chain. This tour takes you to some of the most beautiful and remote areas of Japan. ■ Please note the itinerary is subject to change at short notice due to weather conditions and air travel timetables in the Ryukyu Islands. We have alternative birding sites if this happens.

**Days 1-2:** A morning flight to Tokyo arriving on the following day. Transfer to Sasagawa for a night's stay. Our main interest is locating the scarce Marsh Grassbird which displays above the reeds. Other species present include Oriental Reed Warbler, Zitting Cisticola, Japanese Reed, Masked and Meadow Buntings. We may find Great, Intermediate and Little Egrets and possibly late waders – Eurasian Whimbrel, Ruddy Turnstone and Grey-tailed Tattler.

**Days 3-4:** Today we transfer to Karuizawa, which is situated in forest and undulating hills close to Asamayama, a volcano rising to 2,500 metres, for a two-night stay. Our base is situated among mixed deciduous and conifer forest. Hotels have bird feeders attracting Great Spotted and Japanese Pygmy Woodpeckers, Japanese Grosbeak and Grey-bellied Bullfinch. Our interest,



Varied Tit Photo: Neil Norvock

## Dates

Tuesday May 31st – Sunday June 19th 2022

Leaders: Mark Finn and Kiwako Minami

Group size: 8

Species: 190–220

however, is Hoshino Onsen, an area of fast-flowing rivers, forests and clearings. Along the rivers we should find Ruddy and Crested Kingfishers, Japanese and Grey Wagtails and Brown Dipper. The woodlands support Copper Pheasant, Japanese Green, Pygmy and White-backed Woodpeckers and summer visitors including White's, Japanese and Brown-headed Thrushes, Ashy Minivet, Siberian Blue Robin, Japanese Bush and Pale-legged Warblers and Blue-and-white and Asian Brown Flycatchers. With a little luck we may find the endangered Yellow Bunting. Near Karuizawa, abandoned rice fields hold Green Pheasant, Latham's Snipe, Black-browed Reed Warbler and Chestnut-eared Bunting.

**Days 5-6:** Today we transfer to Gotemba, which is located near Mount Fuji and its extensive forested slopes on the northern and eastern edges. On the afternoon of Day 5 we make an initial exploration of the forest searching for White-bellied Green Pigeon, Oriental Cuckoo, Northern Hawk-Cuckoo, Olive-backed Pipit, Red-flanked Bluetail, Eastern Crowned Warbler,



**Japanese Pygmy Woodpecker** Photo: Neil Norvock

Japanese Leaf Warbler, Goldcrest, Greybellied Bullfinch and the shy Siberian Thrush. Areas near the tree line offer us our best chances of the localised Japanese Accentor. On Day 6 we revisit forest areas before transferring to Tokyo docks and an overnight ferry to the island of Miyake-jima in the Izu Islands.

**Day 7:** On arrival in Miyake-jima we head to a forested area for Ijima's Leaf Warbler, Izu Thrush and the endemic island race of Warbling White-eye. Other species inhabiting the forest include the island-endemic race of Japanese Pygmy Woodpecker, Izu Robin and Izu Tit. Around the island we may find Styan's Grasshopper Warbler, Brown Shrike and Lesser Cuckoo. At Tairoike Western Osprey and Black-eared Kite are possible, with the surrounding forest holding the scarce Japanese Woodpigeon. After dinner we search wooded areas for Japanese Scops Owl and displaying Eurasian Woodcock.

**Day 8:** Today we recheck Miyake-jima for any species we may have missed. Afternoon ferry to Tokyo with possible sightings of

Laysan and Black-footed Albatrosses, Streaked and Short-tailed Shearwaters, Brown Booby, Pomarine Skua and Tristram's Storm Petrel. Night in Tokyo.

**Day 9:** Morning flight to Amami Oshima in the Ryukyu Islands for a two-night stay. On arrival we transfer to the main town of Naze which is close to the forest habitats of the island. Woodland species can be numerous, including Ryukyu Green Pigeon, Owston's Woodpecker, Ryukyu Flycatcher and Owston's Tit. As dusk falls it is a good time to look for the rare Amami Thrush on the forest floor or singing from a low perch. After dinner we embark on a night drive through the forest searching for the endemic Amami Woodcock, Ruddy Kingfisher and Ryukyu Scops Owl.

**Day 10:** Today we check the forest areas and gardens for two island endemics – Lidth's Jay and Amami Robin. The coast has rocky headlands and bays attracting Striated Heron, Common Kingfisher and occasionally migrant waders and terns. If required we take another night drive to catch up with any missing species.

**Days 11-12:** Transfer to the airport for a flight to Naha in Okinawa and then on to Ishigaki-jima, in the southern Ryukyu Islands. Our main interest is in locating Ryukyu Serpenty Eagle (another Japanese endemic) and Ishigaki Tit, while there is also a chance of the secretive and rare Malayan Night Heron. Other species we may see on Ishigaki-jima include Cinnamon Bittern, Pacific Reef Egret, Purple Heron, Eastern Spot-billed Duck, Common Moorhen, White-breasted Waterhen, Greater Crested and Little Terns, Emerald Dove, Pacific Swallow, Light-vented, Bulbul, Ryukyu Minivet and Eastern Blue Rock Thrush. Chinese Egret is another possibility and the island is also home to rarer species such as Watercock and Slaty-legged Crane.

**Days 13-14:** Morning flight to Okinawa and transfer to the small town of Ada for two nights. The Yambura Forest is close by and this site attracts Ryukyu Robin, Okinawa Woodpecker, Japanese Woodpigeon, Japanese Bush Warbler and Brown-eared Bulbul along with the beautiful Japanese Paradise Flycatcher. In the evening after dinner we take a night drive to locate the flightless Okinawa Rail and Pryer's Scops Owl. Several areas of rice paddies around the coast attract egrets and herons plus Black-naped and Roseate Terns in coastal waters.

**Day 15:** We take an internal flight to Kushiro in eastern Hokkaido via Tokyo and transfer to Nemuro, which is our base for four nights.

**Days 16-18:** Our first stop is Furen-ko, an exceptional area for birds which is home to White-tailed Eagle, Whooper Swan and majestic Red-crowned Crane. The lake is typical of those on Hokkaido, being extremely shallow and bordered by stands of fir and spruce. June brings Red-necked Grebe, Tufted and Falcated Ducks, Greater Scaup and Eurasian Teal to breed on the lagoon. Walking through woodland should bring us Eastern Buzzard, Grey-headed and White-backed Woodpeckers. On one night we visit a private farm for Blakiston's Fish Owl. Tofutsu-ko, adjacent to the Sea

of Okhotsk, is a large lake with reedbeds and sand dunes where we should locate Siberian Rubythroat, Sakhalin Grasshopper Warbler and Lanceolated Warbler singing from stands of wild roses. Other summer visitors include Latham's Snipe, Middendorf's Grasshopper Warbler, Meadow Bunting and Long-tailed Rosefinch. Open water with emergent vegetation attracts wildfowl, Eastern Marsh Harrier, White-tailed Eagle and Eurasian Hobby. Cape Ochiishi has a boardwalk leading to a lighthouse. At the cape, and on the sea below, a search may provide us with views of Pelagic and Red-faced Cormorants, Harlequin Duck, Spectacled Guillemot, Rhinoceros Auklet and Slaty-backed Gull. Cape Kiritappu is a large rocky promontory jutting into the sea. Our main interest is locating Tufted Puffin – a rare breeding bird in Japan. On our return to Nemuro we can search for Ural Owl along birch-dominated roadsides.

**Day 19:** Today we head back to Kushiro and our flight to Tokyo. En route, we make a return visit to Furen-ko for Japanese Robin and other woodland birds.

**Day 20:** Morning departure to Europe arriving later the same day.

## Prices

Ground Price: £5995  
 Single room: £500  
 Deposit: £500  
 \*Air Fare: £1500

This tour is fully inclusive of accommodation, meals, transport, entrance fees and permits, tips and taxes

**Not included:** drinks, insurance, and items of a personal nature.

\* Please refer to our terms and conditions relating to flights + provisional price