

Breeding birds and migrants of Japan

Birdwatching Breaks are pleased to offer you a summer tour to Japan concentrating on Honshu, Hokkaido and the Ryuku 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 Ryuku 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 nights 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 situated in forest and undulating hills close to Asamayama, a volcano rising to 2500 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, however, is Hoshino Onsen an area of fast-flowing rivers, forests and clearings. Along the rivers we should find Ruddy and Crested Kingfishers, White-backed, Japanese and Grey Wagtails and Brown Dipper. The woodlands support Copper Pheasant, Japanese and White-backed Woodpeckers and summer visitors including White's, Japanese Grey and Brown-headed Thrushes, Ashy Minivet, Siberian Blue Robin, Japanese Bush and Pale-legged Warblers and Blue-and-White and Asian Brown Flycatchers and with a little luck the endangered Japanese Yellow Bunting. Near Karuizawa, abandoned rice fields hold Japanese Green Pheasant, Latham's Snipe, Black-browed Reed Warbler and Chestnut-eared Bunting.

Dates

Tuesday May 28th – Sunday June 16th 2024

Leaders: Mark Finn and Kiwako Minami
Group size: 8
Species: 190-220

Days 5-6: Today we transfer to Gotemba which is located near Mount Fuji and its extensive forested slopes on the north and eastern edge. 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 Leaf Warbler, Goldcrest, Grey-bellied 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 Pygmy Woodpecker, Izu Robin and Izu Tit. Around the island we may find Styan's Grasshopper Warbler, Brown Shrike and Lesser Cuckoo. At Tairo-ike Western Osprey and Black-eared Kites are possible with the surrounding forest hold-



Arctic Warbler Jo Finn

ing 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 back 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 Ryuku 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 numer-

ous with Ryuku Green Pigeon, Owston's Woodpecker, Ryuku 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 Ryuku Scops Owl.

Day 10: Today we check the forest areas and gardens for two island endemics - Lydth's Jay and Amami Robin. The coast has rocky headlands and bays attracting Striated Heron and Common Kingfisher and occasionally migrant waders and terns. If required we take another night drive if missing any other species.

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

Days 13-14: Morning flight to Okinawa and transfer to the small town of Ada for two nights. The Yambura Forest is close by which attracts Ryuku Robin, Pryer's 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 and an internal flight to Kushiro in Eastern Hokkaido via Tokyo and transfer to Nemuro our base for four nights.

Days 16-18: Our first stop is Furen-ko, an exceptional area for birds. 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 with summering Whooper Swans. Furen-ko is home to White-tailed Eagles and majestic Red-crowned Cranes. 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 Eagle Owl. Tofutsu-ko, adjacent to the Sea of Okhotsk,

is our destination, a large lake with reed-beds and sand dunes. At Tofutsu-ko we should locate Siberian Rubythroat, Sakhalin Grasshopper Warbler and Lanceolated Warblers 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 Gulls. Cape Kiritappu is a large rocky promontory jutting into the sea. Our main interest is locating Tufted Puffins, 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: £5,995
Single room: £500
Deposit: £500
*Air Fare: £1500

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

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

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



Siberian Rubythroat Jo Finn