

Tour Report

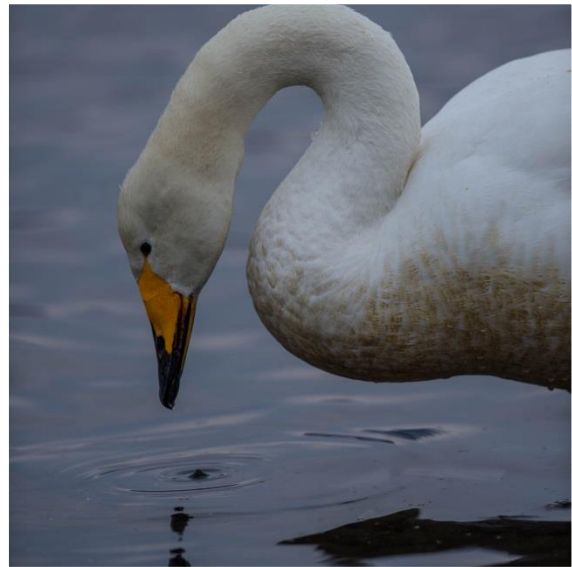
Japan – Japan's Winter Wildlife

14 – 24 February 2019

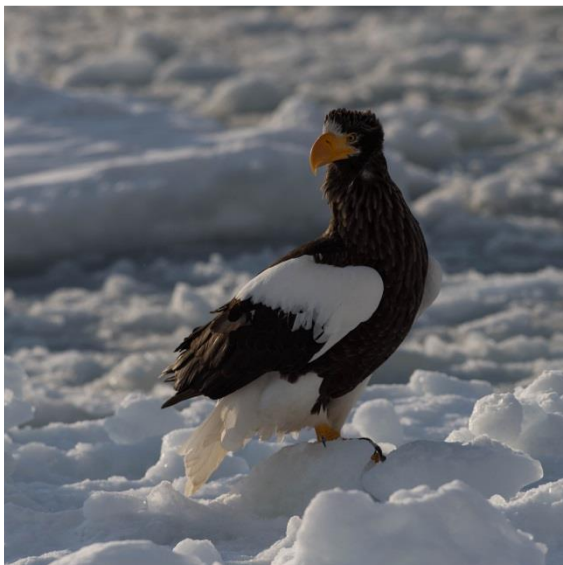
Red-crowned cranes



Whooper swan



Steller's sea eagle



Red fox



Compiled by Terry Goble

Tour Leader: Terry Goble and 11 participants

This trip is based around the iconic species of Japan and we were to enjoy fantastic views of all the species we set out to see. From elegant red-crowned cranes to the intimidating Steller's sea eagle, Hokkaido certainly lived up to its reputation. There was also a great supporting cast of white-tailed eagle, Blakiston's fish owl, a massive owl and possibly the largest species of owl in the world. Ural owl was also a popular sighting with two seen roosting in a large tree. Sika deer and red fox represented the mammals and very close views were enjoyed of both.

The excursion into the Japanese Alps was also successful. Although the unseasonably warm weather meant that the macaques were reluctant to use their 'hot tub', we were fortunate enough to watch one macaque enjoying a hot water pool. We spent a couple of fun hours watching the social interactions of the monkeys, from the infants playing and fighting to the males exerting their dominance and, more peacefully, group grooming. We were also lucky to discover two Japanese serow up on the surrounding hills and, for those who stayed to watch, these curious creatures later descended, giving much better views.

Wildlife aside, Japan is a fascinating country and staying in traditional inns gave us a taste of their culture, a chance to enjoy the cuisine and hot spring baths, and to experience the hospitality of the Japanese people. We also managed to visit a few temples and listen to an account of the history of the country and buildings from our local guides. This all added to the richness of the tour.

Day 1: Flight from Heathrow to Tokyo

Thursday 14 February 2019

The clients enjoyed an uneventful overnight flight from Heathrow and landed in Haneda Airport.

Day 2: Arrive Tokyo & fly to Hokkaido

Friday 15 February 2019

The BA007 flight arrived more or less on time just after 7.30am. I met the group in arrivals, except for two group members, who had flown in the day before and were going to meet the rest of us at the Domestic Terminal 2. Once we had all gathered and introduced ourselves we headed off to the shuttle bus to Terminal 2. En route we glimpsed a few birds, including dusky thrush and a small party of oriental greenfinch.

We arrived at the terminal and made our way to departures and finally met up with the last two members, to complete the group. Once we had all negotiated check-in and security we had a three-hour wait for our onward flight so we mostly sat and chatted. During the wait the weather had turned and the bright crisp morning became thick with snow flurries. This delayed our flight by half an hour as the plane went through a defrosting process.

Once on our way north the flight was quite spectacular. The land beneath us was covered in snow and there were some impressive mountain ranges visible to the west. We touched down in Kushiro an hour and a half later and met up with our local guide, Hiro, and our driver. Due to the delay we hurried on to our first destination Tsurui to see the gathering of red-crowned (Japanese) cranes. These are found only on Hokkaido and gather here as they are fed by the local people. Over the years this has become quite a popular spectacle and many people gather to see the cranes. En route we saw a couple of red-crowned cranes just by the roadside, which was a bonus. We also saw – among the ubiquitous Japanese and oriental crows – a couple of white-tailed eagles, black-eared kite and an eastern buzzard. The wildlife was few and far between in this cold and sometimes brutal climate (we did see deer tracks everywhere), but the scenery was stunning: white fields blanketed in snow stretching off into the distance being met by large volcanic mountain ranges. It was simply beautiful.

We arrived at Tsurui, but had missed the feeding. Still there were many of the beautiful red-crowned cranes around with a small flock of whooper swans. We watched the cranes squabbling and flying in and

Find out more about our [Japan's Winter Wildlife](#) trip or [contact us](#)

01962 302086 sales@wildlifeworldwide.com www.wildlifeworldwide.com

out of the feeding fields. Occasionally one would throw its head back and call in the species' iconic way. Once we'd had our fill of these elegant birds we moved on towards Lake Kussharo. There was a brief stop to allow anyone feeling peckish to grab a snack in a store by the feeding station.

We arrived in the Sunayu area of the vast Lake Kussharo and went down to a patch of open water on the otherwise frozen lake. Here some natural hot water bubbles rise, through thermal vents, for man and beast to take advantage of. A flock of whooper swans gathered and fed within touching distance of bathers and photographers. There were a few ducks, mostly mallard, and we also got our first group sighting of spot-billed duck. Another highlight was the feeding station that attracted a number of different woodland birds. When we came away from the swans for a few minutes we found great spotted woodpecker, Eurasian nuthatch (much paler and whiter underneath than the ones we see at home), brown-eared bulbul, willow tit and glimpses of the very attractive varied tit. There were, of course, many corvids and tree sparrows around.

We pressed on to our final stop of the day at Kotan, again by Lake Kussharo. En route we finally caught up with the sika deer that had been making the tracks, as we spotted some feeding on the woods. Kotan was much the same scene with thermal baths keeping the water open. We were invited to bathe our feet in the hot spas, but this was politely declined by the group. The light was now fading fast and the temperature dropping. We drove to the Kawayu Kanko Hotel nearby and settled into our traditional Japanese rooms. These had low tables and chairs without legs. The beds were futons which are made up for you whilst at dinner. The rooms were warm and charming.

We all met at 6.30pm for our traditional Japanese meal. We were given chairs as a compromise to our Western ways. The food was a series of dishes warmed over a candle. Hiro guided us in the best ways to eat our food and told us what it all was. We were soon tucking in to some delightful dishes. The portions were plentiful and we were all quickly full. We spent the rest of the evening having some light-hearted conversation and ran through the next day's itinerary before we dispersed to our rooms, tired after an eventful and enjoyable day.

Day 3: Tsurui Ito Crane Sanctuary

Saturday 16 February 2019

We gathered in the lobby at 6.30am to collect our packed breakfast and set off to Otowa Bridge in the hope of watching cranes in the river. It was a cold and bright morning (-10°C) as we boarded the bus. Just after setting off some people had a view of a handsome dog fox by the side of the bus. We arrived at the bridge in good time, but unfortunately the cranes had moved quite a distance down the river and although viewable were too far away to photograph. There were a few other bird species around including woodland birds such as great tit, willow tit and a spotted woodpecker. We also saw a common sandpiper and Japanese wagtail foraging down at the river's edge. There were a few ducks around, the most notable being a goldeneye which flew overhead.

We waited at the river for a while as the cranes began to fly off and we hoped some would fly overhead. However, it was getting close to feeding time at the Tsurui Crane Sanctuary and we headed off to watch the spectacle. There were already plenty of cranes around when we got there and we were able to watch as a steady stream of birds flew in. We got to watch as they interacted, sometimes aggressively and sometimes in courtship. A few even managed to do their flight dance which was lovely to see. Around the sanctuary were the usual corvids and sparrows. There were also a few woodland birds: we watched Eurasian nuthatch and brown-eared bulbul among others there.

Next we had the tricky task of finding the Ural owl roost with only a vague hand-drawn map as a guide. However, we need not have worried as when we arrived at the site a well-worn path led the way. We all managed excellent views of these gorgeous owls as they sunned themselves in the hollow of a tree. A long-tailed tit was also seen and a calling eastern buzzard made the owls react. When we had sated ourselves with views and photographs of these owls we set off again for lunch at a nearby restaurant in Tsurui.

Find out more about our [Japan's Winter Wildlife](#) trip or [contact us](#)

01962 302086 sales@wildlifeworldwide.com www.wildlifeworldwide.com

We had a traditional boxed (bento) lunch, which comprised of a series of small compartments containing portions of different dishes. It was very filling, but that didn't stop some from buying an ice cream at the end of a lovely meal.

We were soon on our way again climbing the hills to Lake Mashu. En route we had a double eagle delight as both a white-tailed eagle and Steller's sea eagle could be seen in close proximity in the tops of trees by the roadside. A great little taster for the boat trip (we hoped). We arrived at Lake Mashu and walked up to the edge. It was a spectacular setting. The lake is completely enclosed by steep walls (it is essentially a collapsed magma chamber) and overlooked by Mount Mashu. The lake itself was mainly frozen and is sterile. The wooded hillsides held several sika deer, some close to where we were observing from. There was a little birdlife with a fly-by jay being new for the trip.

Our last stop of the day was at Mount Io, which was previously mined for its sulphur. Today people visit to see the thermal vents at the side of the mountain still spewing sulphuric steam. There were curious bright yellow mounds of sulphur-covered rocks and the accompanying smell of rotten eggs. It was a fascinating place to end the day and as the sun started to dip and the temperatures drop we decided it was time to head back to our hotel and get ready for dinner.

We all met up at 6pm after some of the group had made use of the public baths, where the water is heated from the Io volcano we had visited earlier. We had another traditional Japanese dinner, which was delicious and unusual in equal measure. The meal was also very filling with lots of portions. We chatted after for a bit and discussed the itinerary for the next day. We were to meet in the lobby with our cases at 7am to get ready to depart promptly at 7.45am to catch our boat.

Day 4: Drive to Rausu

Sunday 17 February 2019

As requested we all met in the lobby at 7am to load our luggage onto the minibus. We all then went for breakfast, which was traditional Japanese but buffet-style. After breakfast we boarded the bus and set off for Rausu – about two and a half hours' drive including two rest stops for toilets and snacks. En route we did see one or two white-tailed eagles and at one stop, a black-eared kite drifted around. On our approach to Rausu Harbour we passed a river with a few whooper swans feeding.

We arrived at Rausu harbour in good time and were in fact too early for the boat, so we had a little bit of time searching through the ducks and gulls in the sheltered harbour waters. The pick was a small flock of harlequin ducks with a few stunningly handsome males. Among others were greater scaup, goldeneye, tufted duck, goosander (common merganser), red-breasted merganser and a little grebe. The gulls were mostly slaty-backed, with a few vega and common gulls around.

Our boat arrived after about 20 minutes' wait and we boarded promptly. Despite being a little crowded, everyone found space to watch for wildlife as we set off. The sea had a little bit of a swell, despite appearing calm, so standing was a little tricky at times. We sailed around to a spot where eagles had accumulated and the crew threw out a few fish to encourage the eagles in. We had some great views as the white-tailed eagles homed in on the fish, competing with the slaty-backed gulls and Japanese crows. After a few minutes the captain sailed the boat back into the harbour where some pack-ice had formed. Here it was easier to get the eagles to land and we had stunning views as they flew down onto the ice just a few meters away. Eventually one or two Steller's sea eagles arrived and we had fantastic views of both of these spectacular birds. Other birds noted were pelagic cormorants and possible great/Temminck's cormorants.

We then docked in the harbour and drove a short distance to gather some lunch from a convenience store and from there we continued to the Hotel Manenoyu to check in and relax in our rooms for a few hours. Some braved the snow and went for a walk at the back of the hotel along a stream. There were at least five brown dippers seen along the stream, along with a few female harlequin ducks. We continued up the hill to the Rausu Visitor Centre and whiled away an hour looking at the exhibits about the region's wildlife. As we

Find out more about our [Japan's Winter Wildlife](#) trip or [contact us](#)

01962 302086 sales@wildlifeworldwide.com www.wildlifeworldwide.com

wandered around, the snow became heavy and a wind blew up. We decided it was best to head back to the hotel as it was now snowing hard.

The snow continued to fall, but it was still possible to drive the short distance to the Blakiston's fish owl hide. The hide was quite busy when we arrived just after 4.30pm. We settled into our windows (which were removed!) and were comfortable in the warm hide, despite the temperatures dropping to -8°C. Soon the floodlights were switched on and we thought we would be in for a tense wait to see the owl before it was time to leave. However, we needn't have worried as the first owl sighting came quickly after the lights came on. We knew there were two birds in the area, a female (five years old) and a male (eight years old). We were not sure which one we were looking at but eventually we saw both birds. These are big and impressive owls. They both settled in a nearby tree before alighting by a shallow pool at the edge of the river. Here they fished out the bait that had been left for them before they flew off. Many of the group took excellent photographs; others just enjoyed the spectacle. After the two birds had visited we were informed that they were unlikely to return until the early hours. We stayed anyway in case they did return or any other wildlife could be seen. Unfortunately it remained quiet, but we enjoyed a cup of coffee before we returned to the hotel for dinner.

On our return we met in the restaurant for the now familiar traditional buffet. It was still an experience, with the odd surprise including an edible 'bag of vegetables' and some unfamiliar pickles, but a delicious and enjoyable experience. After the meal we chatted for a while but were soon heading for bed as we had an early start for the cruise tomorrow.

Day 5: Rausu boat cruise

Monday 18 February 2019

We gathered in the lobby at 5.30 am and drove to the harbour to catch the boat, which was due to sail at 6am. It was still dark as we waited at the harbour to board the boat, but gradually getting lighter as we set off. Just outside the harbour entrance we encountered hundreds of pelagic cormorants that had been roosting on the harbour wall as they peeled off, then flew in front of our boat in long ribbons.

Due to concerns about the weather we stayed close to the harbour and followed the same itinerary as the previous day. However, this early morning trip was much more productive. In particular the number of adult Steller's sea eagles was staggering. Soon the sky was full of both white-tailed and Steller's sea eagles, competing with the slaty-backed gulls and Japanese crows. After we'd had our fill of eagles fishing off the side of the boat we returned to the pack-ice that had gathered in the harbour. Here we were able to see the eagles at very close quarters as they came down and landed by the side of the boat. These impressive birds gave amazing views as they fished for scraps on the ice. We watched and photographed them for over an hour before it was time to return to the harbour.

We returned to the hotel for breakfast, very happy with the morning's sightings. After a more Western-style breakfast (toast and jam) we gathered again to drive up the coastal road until its end, about 24km away. We drove along whilst Hiro told us a little about the history, religions and legends of the region. We also kept an eye out for wildlife. We saw plenty of birds at sea, but nothing new except a few glaucous-winged gulls. Although very common, the male harlequin ducks were a pleasure to see as they are gorgeous. On our return we stopped to photograph eagles roosting in trees on the hills along the roadside. A bonus red fox was also seen, but only by a few of the group.

Our next stop was for lunch at a local restaurant. After getting over the initial difficulties of identifying what was on offer, we ordered and chatted whilst waiting for the food to arrive. Everyone seemed to enjoy their meals and, despite the delay in ordering, we were only a few minutes late arriving back at the hotel for our scheduled time of 2pm. Some people chose to take some time out, whilst another group walked over to the river to see brown dippers. We also spotted a few dusky thrushes and harlequin ducks in the stream. We all then went up the road to look over the bridge and check out sulphurous plumes of steam. We got there to find it was some kind of industrial extraction plant and not the natural geyser we had hoped for! We were compensated by a few views of white-tailed eagles soaring over the mountains and views of dippers and

Find out more about our [Japan's Winter Wildlife](#) trip or [contact us](#)

01962 302086 sales@wildlifeworldwide.com www.wildlifeworldwide.com

dusky thrushes again. We then headed back to the hotel to get ready for our evening date with the Blakiston's fish owl.

We all set off just after 4.30pm for the short drive to the owl hide. We arrived in good time and settled into our seats by the window. Shortly thereafter the lights were turned on and we sat in anticipation. Unfortunately, despite our patience, the owl didn't show this evening. We noted it had been particularly active at the hide the previous night and in the early hours this morning. It also appears to have been engaging in courtship behaviour, presenting food to the female. It seems that they may have had other things on their minds this evening. We could always hope for better luck the following evening at the next hotel.

We returned to our hotel a little later than planned. We went to our rooms and then drifted down to the restaurant for dinner. It was the usual traditional Japanese meal (spider crab) and enjoyed by all. We chatted for a while until returning to our rooms to pack and get some rest.

Day 6: Rausu to Nakashi Betsu

Tuesday 19 February 2019

A few were up early and walked around the hotel enjoying the dippers and harlequin ducks, among other wildlife. We all met at 8.45am in the lobby to load our bags and board the bus for the journey to our next hotel. First we were to drive the Noisuka-hanto Peninsula, after a brief convenience stop. The peninsula is about 28km long and well known for its birdlife. However, it was the mammals that caught people's attention and as we drove down the peninsula the sighting of sika deer and red fox got better and better.

At first a distant red fox running away and a shy sika stag were seen. We got progressively better views until the stags were a few metres from the bus along the roadside, and a ridiculously tame fox took food a few metres away in the last car park. Although seeing changed natural behaviour of animals is concerning, there was no doubting this was a beautiful creature with luxuriant fur and tail. On the birding front we did manage a few new birds and sightings of some old favourites. Most notable were the black-eared kite by the roadside, and a Steller's sea eagle a little way out on the frozen sea. New birds included black scoter, white-winged scoter and glaucous gull. Other birds seen on the peninsula were white-tailed eagle, goosander, harlequin duck, greater scaup, and red-breasted merganser. We had enjoyed the mammal viewing so much we were now late for our restaurant booking and had to hurry for the rest of the journey to get to the restaurant.

This was a traditional restaurant and we were served Japanese food in the now usual way. Everyone seemed in good spirits, enjoying their meals and happy with the day's sightings. After our meal people were chatting happily and slow to leave, so we ushered everyone out to ensure we got to the Hotel Daiich in good time to enjoy the bird feeders ... and what a treat they were.

After checking in, a few people hung around the feeders and had superb views of great spotted woodpecker, Eurasian nuthatch, Eurasian jay and marsh, willow and great tits. For a brief period we also had a brown-eared bulbul (of the nominate race) and a cracking Japanese hawfinch. We finally tore ourselves away from the feeders and got ready to feed ourselves. We all met back at 5.30pm for a traditional Japanese meal, explained to us by the incredibly patient Hiro. After dinner most of the group went to the fish pool in the hope that the Blakiston's fish owl might show. We were treated to our seventh sighting of a red fox and a busy shrew (*Sorex* sp.).

Some of the group slowly started to drift off to bed as the evening wore on. The owl eventually showed about 10.30pm, to the delight of those who stayed up. The owl at such close quarters looked enormous as it fished in the little pool outside the hotel window. After the owl show everyone headed for their rooms to get a good night's sleep.

Day 7: Kushiro to Tokyo via Lake Sunset

Wednesday 20 February 2019

Find out more about our [Japan's Winter Wildlife](#) trip or [contact us](#)

01962 302086 sales@wildlifeworldwide.com www.wildlifeworldwide.com

Today we headed back to Tokyo and said goodbye to our excellent local guide and driver. But first we had a few more wildlife treats in store. We met in the lobby at 6am to load our bags (there was a further owl sighting at 4.30am) and set off to the airport with a few stops en route.

Our first stop was at Lake Sunset (Nemuro). Here we encountered a mass of black-eared kites in the trees just outside a roadside café overlooking the lake. There were also a few white-tailed eagles around, and in the distance across the lake a mass of Steller's and white-tailed eagles could be seen in the trees fringing the lake. There were also a few sika deer out on the ice.

It soon became apparent why they had all gathered, as a Ski-Doo delivered a load of dried fish on to the ice. Soon there were raptors flying in from every angle and it made your head spin trying to keep up with the number of birds. The raptors included a few stunning adult Steller's sea eagles. We enjoyed this spectacle for about an hour and a half. The squabbling birds had relaxed and the initial pandemonium had calmed. Soon it was time to head to our next destination, a shorter stop at Lake Furen. Here there were virtually the same birds as at Lake Sunset; indeed they may well have been the same birds relaxing to digest their meals. In the woods there were very few birds apart from the odd marsh tit and a single dusky thrush.

Apart from a stop for fuel we now headed straight to Kushiro airport for our 3pm flight to Tokyo. We said a heartfelt thanks to Hiro and Nakui san, our driver. We were soon on our way, departing and arriving on time. Cloud cover made the flight less scenic, but we landed in a much warmer climate. At the arrivals gate we met Tomoyo, who led us to the coach and escorted us to the Prince Shinagawa Hotel. We arranged to meet her again in the morning and then everyone dispersed to their rooms and made arrangements for their dinners. The rest of the evening was free for the group to spend as they wished.

Day 8: Bullet Train (Shinkansen) to Nagano/Yamanouchi

Thursday 21 February 2019

We all met Tomoyo in the lobby on the second floor and she assisted us in getting from Shinagawa to Tokyo station where we boarded the Shinkansen to Nagano. We travelled on the bullet train, which was very quiet and a smooth ride, as well as speedy!

At Nagano we met Hitomi who escorted us to the Hotel Shibu and en route explained about the Japanese macaques' behaviour and how we should behave around them. We stopped briefly for some lunch at a convenience store, where we saw eastern greenfinch and brown-eared bulbul, with plenty of tree sparrows around. A Eurasian sparrowhawk scattered the finches and sparrows, but helped us get closer views. We were soon on our way and arrived at the hotel on time. We made arrangements to see Hitomi in a couple of days' time and settled into our rooms.

A few met in the lobby at 2pm to walk to a nearby Buddhist temple, while others set off exploring on their own. We arrived at the grandly named World Peace Kannon after about 20 minutes' walking down the side of the river before climbing up into a forested area. The temple had a large (slightly smiling) Buddha statue. There was also a cigarette statue to help people quit smoking or be healthy if they do.

We had a brief woodland stroll, but there was no wildlife to be seen or heard. When we returned we did encounter a few birds near the temple: a striking varied tit, many brown-eared bulbuls and a new bird, meadow bunting. A little further on, above the temple and Miroku Monument, we walked by an orchard where the apples had been left on the trees to rot. This seemed to be a magnet for the birds and we saw a plethora of species feeding, including some gorgeous bright green Japanese white-eyes, long-tailed, varied and great tits, dusky and pale thrushes, and of course more brown-eared bulbuls. We also glimpsed a Daurian redstart. After our avian feast we walked on to the smaller Takayakushi Temple with a strange monkey/bear figure. Just before we got there we had our first encounter with Japanese macaques as a family troop played along the rooftops for a few minutes before moving out of view. We walked around the temple for a while, but dropping temperatures and hungry tummies meant that we decided to head back to the hotel and prepare for dinner.

Find out more about our [Japan's Winter Wildlife](#) trip or [contact us](#)

01962 302086 sales@wildlifeworldwide.com www.wildlifeworldwide.com

Most ate at the Koishiya, a delightful traditional restaurant which served up some delicious and reasonably priced meals. Others went further afield and all seemed to enjoy the village main street and the restaurants available.

Day 9: Jigokudani Monkey Park

Friday 22 February 2019

We all met in the basement for breakfast at 7.30am. It was the now familiar arrangement of many small dishes, pickles, miso soup and fruit juice. After a filling breakfast we met our driver in the lobby at 8.15am to drive to the Jigokudani (Hell's Valley) Monkey Park. Before we set off we noted a few wagtails flying around, which proved to be Japanese wagtails. It was only a short drive to the car park. We then set off on the 1.6km walk to the entrance of the park. The path was fairly steep in places but, despite the warnings of icy paths, was easy to walk on. The recent warm weather had begun a thawing process (very early) so the icy path underfoot was now quite mushy. The bad news was that the monkeys do not use the hot spas when the weather warms up!

We walked for about 40 minutes and just as the stragglers were bringing up the rear the office opened and we all went in as a group. We were mightily relieved to see a macaque in the hot tub and all the photographers wasted no time in getting THAT picture. We were fortunate as not long after we arrived the monkey climbed out of the spa and, apart from a couple of fleeting moments, did not return. Instead the monkeys and humans enjoyed a gloriously warm morning. The monkeys sat tantalisingly close to the spas eating barley left for them but didn't go in. Instead we contented ourselves with observing macaque behaviour: fighting, grooming and play. They were delightful to watch and before we knew it two hours had passed.

Some of the group were starting to drift off after nearly three hours with the monkeys and wanted to walk back to the hotel. Unfortunately half the group had left by the time Terry eventually unearthed a Japanese serow. It turned out that there were two present, and some of the group managed to enjoy them. The group dispersed for the rest of the day to do their own thing and agreed to meet back up at the hotel later.

Some of us went beyond the temple to the orchard to where the rotting apples were. We saw much the same birds as before but in smaller numbers. The large female sparrowhawk circling overhead may have been something to do with that. A black-eared kite also kept us company. We then walked along a woodland path close to the temple and, despite not producing a twitter last time, this proved productive. We saw a number of Eurasian jays, grey-headed (Japanese) greenfinches, nuthatches, a great spotted woodpecker and a delightful Japanese green woodpecker. It was then time to head back to the hotel to see how the others had got on.

Day 10: Yamanouchi to Tokyo

Saturday 23 February 2019

Today was our last full day and on it we left the friendly and charming village of Yamanouchi and headed back to Tokyo. We gathered for breakfast at 8am and then met Hitomi just before 9am to start our journey back. Our first destination was the Zenkoji Temple. On our way Japanese wagtail, white-cheeked starlings, oriental greenfinch and other common birds were seen.

At the temple, birds included pale thrush, Japanese hawfinch, Japanese pygmy woodpecker, varied tit, great tit and tree sparrow. In the moat were a few spot-billed ducks. Hitomi gave an insight into the history and mystery that surrounds the temple. After spending an hour or so at the temple it was time to move on and we drove to Nagano Station and took the bullet train to Tokyo (checking-in for our BA flight en route with intermittent Wi-Fi).

Find out more about our [Japan's Winter Wildlife](#) trip or [contact us](#)

01962 302086 sales@wildlifeworldwide.com www.wildlifeworldwide.com

We arrived in Tokyo at 2.25pm and took a little while finding a place to store our luggage so we could visit the Imperial Palace grounds. Unfortunately, when we arrived at the palace we were not allowed to enter as they close early in winter, so we had to content ourselves with a walk around the moat, which held plenty of wildfowl. Grebes, ducks, gulls and cormorants were all seen, including lots of new birds: northern shoveler, gadwall, Eurasian wigeon, falcated duck (for a few), grey wagtail, mute swan and moorhen. Others included great cormorant, common coot, little grebe, white wagtail and an introduced red-eared slider terrapin. As the light began to fade we all met and walked back to Tokyo Station to board the express train from Platform 9 to Shinagawa.

We walked to the hotel and checked in to our rooms. We then dispersed for the evening, but agreed to meet up for breakfast to say goodbye to those group members who were staying to enjoy some of the cultural sights of the old town. Some went off to find nearby restaurants whilst others ate at the hotel.

Day 11: Flight to London Heathrow

Sunday 24 February 2019

We all met as agreed for our last breakfast as a group. We said farewell and the remainder of the group boarded the coach to the airport. We took off on time; the flight was smooth and uneventful and we landed a few minutes early in a warm and balmy Heathrow. We all met up at the baggage carousel and bade each other farewell as the trip came to a close.

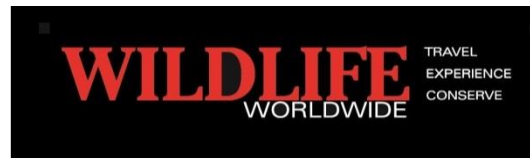
Sign up to our e-news

Sign up to our e-news to find out more about our tours, events, late availability, offers and tour reports at <https://www.wildlifeworldwide.com/subscribe>

Find out more about our [Japan's Winter Wildlife](#) trip or [contact us](#)

01962 302086 sales@wildlifeworldwide.com www.wildlifeworldwide.com

Checklist



	Common Name	Scientific Name
	BIRDS	<i>AVES</i>
1	Mute swan (introduced)	<i>Cygnus olor</i>
2	Whooper swan	<i>Cygnus cygnus</i>
3	Gadwall	<i>Anas strepera</i>
4	Falcated duck	<i>Anas falcata</i>
5	Eurasian wigeon	<i>Anas penelope</i>
6	Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>
7	Eastern spot-billed duck	<i>Anas zonorhyncha</i>
8	Northern shoveler	<i>Anas clypeata</i>
9	Eurasian teal	<i>Anas crecca (ssp crecca)</i>
10	Common pochard	<i>Aythya ferina</i>
11	Tufted duck	<i>Aythya fuligula</i>
12	Greater	<i>Scaup Aythya marila (ssp nearctica)</i>
13	Harlequin duck	<i>Histrionicus histrionicus</i>
14	White-winged	<i>Melanitta deglandi, (ssp stejnegeri)</i>
15	Black scoter	<i>Melanitta americana</i>
16	Long-tailed duck	<i>Clangula hyemalis</i>
17	Common goldeneye	<i>Bucephala clangula (ssp clangula)</i>
18	Goosander	<i>Mergus merganser (ssp orientalis)</i>
19	Red-breasted merganser	<i>Mergus serrator</i>
20	Little grebe	<i>Tachybaptus ruficollis (ssp poggei)</i>
21	Great egret	<i>Ardea alba (ssp modesta)</i>
22	Little egret	<i>Egretta garzetta (ssp garzetta)</i>
23	Pelagic cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax pelagicus (ssp pelagicus)</i>

Find out more about our [Japan's Winter Wildlife](#) trip or [contact us](#)

01962 302086 sales@wildlifeworldwide.com www.wildlifeworldwide.com

24	Great cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo (ssp hanedae)</i>
25	Eurasian sparrowhawk	<i>Accipiter nisus (ssp nisosimilis)</i>
26	White-tailed eagle	<i>Haliaeetus albicilla (ssp albicilla)</i>
27	Steller's sea eagle	<i>Haliaeetus pelagicus</i>
28	Eastern buzzard	<i>Buteo japonicus (ssp japonicus)</i>
29	Black-eared Kite	<i>Milvus migrans Lineatus</i>
30	Common moorhen	<i>Gallinula chloropus (ssp chloropus)</i>
31	Eurasian coot	<i>Fulica atra (ssp atra)</i>
32	Red-crowned crane	<i>Grus japonensis</i>
33	Black-headed gull	<i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>
34	Black-tailed gull	<i>Larus crassirostris</i>
35	Mew gull (common gull)	<i>Larus canus</i>
36	Glaucous-winged gull	<i>Larus glaucescens</i>
37	Vega gull	<i>Larus vegae (ssp vegae)</i>
38	Slaty-backed gull	<i>Larus schistisagus</i>
39	Feral (rock) dove	<i>Columba livia</i>
40	Oriental turtle dove	<i>Streptopelia orientalis (ssp orientalis)</i>
41	Blakiston's fish owl	<i>Bubo blakistoni (ssp blakistoni)</i>
42	Ural owl	<i>Strix uralensis (ssp japonica)</i>
43	Japanese pygmy woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos kizuki</i>
44	Great spotted woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos major (ssp japonicus)</i>
45	Japanese green woodpecker	<i>Picus awokera</i>
46	Eurasian jay	<i>Garrulus glandarius (ssp japonicus)</i>
47	Carrion crow	<i>Corvus corone (ssp orientalis)</i>
48	Large-billed crow	<i>Corvus macrorhynchos</i>
49	Varied tit	<i>Sittiparus varius</i>
50	Marsh tit	<i>Poecile palustris (ssp hensoni)</i>
51	Willow tit	<i>Poecile montanus (ssp sachalinensis, restrictus)</i>

Find out more about our [Japan's Winter Wildlife](#) trip or [contact us](#)

01962 302086 sales@wildlifeworldwide.com www.wildlifeworldwide.com

52	Japanese tit	<i>Parus minor</i>
53	Brown-eared bulbul	<i>Hypsipetes amaurotis</i>
54	Japanese white-eye	<i>Zosterops japonicus</i>
55	Eurasian nuthatch	<i>Sitta europaea (ssp asiatica)</i>
56	White-cheeked starling	<i>Spodiopsar cineraceus</i>
57	Pale thrush	<i>Turdus pallidus</i>
58	Dusky thrush	<i>Turdus eunomus</i>
59	Daurian redstart	<i>Phoenicurus auroreus</i>
60	Brown dipper	<i>Cinclus pallasii (ssp pallasii)</i>
61	Eurasian tree sparrow	<i>Passer montanus</i>
62	Grey wagtail	<i>Motacilla cinerea</i>
63	White wagtail	<i>Motacilla alba</i>
64	Japanese wagtail	<i>Motacilla grandis</i>
65	Hawfinch	<i>Coccothraustes coccothraustes (ssp japonicus)</i>
66	Grey-capped greenfinch	<i>Chloris sinica</i>
67	Meadow bunting	<i>Emberiza cioides (ssp ciopsis)</i>
	Mammals	
1	Sika deer	<i>Cervus nippon</i>
2	Japanese serow	<i>Capricornis crispus</i>
3	Red fox	<i>Vulpes vulpes japonica</i>
4	Japanese macaque	<i>Macaca fuscata</i>
5	Slender shrew	<i>Sorex gracillimus</i>
	Reptiles	
1	Red-eared slider (Introduced)	<i>Trachemys scripta</i>

Find out more about our [Japan's Winter Wildlife](#) trip or [contact us](#)

01962 302086 sales@wildlifeworldwide.com www.wildlifeworldwide.com