



ROCKJUMPER

Worldwide Birding Adventures

Japan

Ryukyu Islands Extension

25th November to 1st December 2014 (7 days)



Ryukyu Robin by David Hoddinott

Tour Leaders: David Hoddinott & Bryan Shirley

Trip Report compiled by: David Hoddinott

Tour Summary

For those participants arriving early we enjoyed a visit to the nearby Kasai Rimkai Koen Park in Tokyo, which proved most rewarding even though it was windy and raining. Some of the highlights of our time here included great views of Azure-winged Magpie, Red-necked and Black-necked Grebes, delightful Common Kingfisher, large flock of White-cheeked Starlings, Pale and Dusky Thrushes and Black-faced Bunting.

Our Ryukyu Islands adventure then started off in earnest with a flight to the southern island of Amami. We were soon enjoying our first endemics as we stopped to enjoy a Grey-faced Buzzard – and then out popped both Japanese Wood Pigeon, which we enjoyed great scope views of, and the first of several beautiful Lidth's Jays! Our good fortune continued as we enjoyed a remarkably great time at Kinsakubaru Forest where we obtained awesome views



Amami Woodcock by David Hoddinott

(see photo) of the highly prized Amami Woodcock, elusive Whistling Green Pigeon, several cracking Ryukyu Scops Owls, lovely White-backed Woodpecker, Ryukyu Minivet, striking Varied Tit, Japanese Bush Warbler, reclusive Amami Thrush, low density Brown-headed Thrush and stunning Ryukyu Robin (see photo above).

Stopping along the coast we picked up Pacific Reef Heron, splendid Japanese Cormorant, more Grey-faced Buzzard and a bit of a surprise – two Brown Boobies! On our final morning on the island we made a stop at Ushuku Port, which produced wonderful views of Pacific Golden Plover and Richard's and Red-throated Pipits, and then at Ose wetland and coastline we found Grey-tailed Tattler,



Amami Thrush by David Hoddinott

Ruddy Turnstone, Red-necked Stint, Little Ringed, Kentish and Lesser Sand Plovers, and migrant Brown Shrike. This ended off a fabulous stay on Amami, and so we headed off in high spirits on the short flight to Okinawa.

Our time at Yambaru was most rewarding as we notched up superb views of several Okinawa Rail, which was only described as recently as 1981, and two pairs of Okinawa Woodpecker, which is now considered to be the rarest woodpecker in the world with a population of only some 600 individuals! Leaving Yambaru we then stopped off at Kijoka Wetland where we enjoyed good views of White-breasted



Waterhen, Common Snipe, Wood and Green Sandpipers, Light-vented Bulbul and Zitting Cisticola.

Our next port of call was the Kin wetland which was very rewarding, with good sightings of many waders including several Long-toed Stints, a flock of Scaly-breasted Munia and a very nice surprise in the form of Oriental Pratincole.

Our final stop was at Sankaku Pond where we notched up a good selection of species including Northern Shoveler, Northern Pintail, Common Pochard, Black-faced and Eurasian Spoonbills, Black-crowned Night Heron, Common Redshank, several Ruff and vagrant Common Starling.

Thus ended our short yet fabulous trip to the Southern Islands and we boarded a flight back to Tokyo to connect with the rest of the group for the main Japan – Dancing Cranes and winter birding tour.



Ryukyu Scops Owl by David Hoddinott

Annotated Checklists of Birds & Mammals

ANNOTATED LIST OF BIRDS (102 species seen)

Note: Names and taxonomical order of the bird species list follows that of IOC (International Ornithological congress), Gill, F. and M. Wright. 2014; Birds of the World: Recommended English Names. Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press (version 4.4). Names in square brackets represent names given by IOC and omitted by Clements whereas names in round brackets represent names given by Clements and omitted by IOC. Names without square or round brackets represent the name given by both IOC and Clements. A notes section can be found where notably distinctive subspecies or races are concerned and where the taxonomy of a species differs between Clements and IOC. Clements names and taxonomy is derived from version 6.8.

Key to abbreviations:

E: an endemic species

NE: a near-endemic species

BE: a breeding endemic species

I: an introduced species

Ducks, Geese & Swans Anatidae

Gadwall

Anas strepera

One female was seen at Sankaku Pond, Okinawa.

Eurasian Wigeon

Anas penelope

Small numbers were seen daily at Sankaku Pond, Okinawa.



Mallard*Anas platyrhynchos*

Four birds were seen at Kasai Rimkai Koen Park in Tokyo.

Eastern Spot-billed Duck*Anas zonorhyncha*

Forty were seen at Kasai Rimkai Koen Park in Tokyo and three at Ose Wetland, Amami.

Northern Shoveler*Anas clypeata*

Up to fifteen were seen daily at Sankaku Pond, Okinawa.

Northern Pintail*Anas acuta*

A single female was seen at Kijoka wetlands and another at Sankaku Pond, Okinawa.

[Eurasian] (Green-winged) Teal*Anas crecca*

Small numbers at wetlands on Okinawa.

*NOTE: IOC splits the above species into Eurasian Teal A. crecca and Green-winged Teal A. carolinensis whereas Clements only recognizes one species, Green-winged Teal A. crecca.***Common Pochard***Aythya farina*

At least 100 at Kasai Rimkai Koen Park in Tokyo and one at Sankaku Pond, Okinawa.

Greater Scaup*Aythya marila*

A flock of about 100 was seen at Kasai Rimkai Koen Park in Tokyo.

Grebes Podicipedidae**Little Grebe***Tachybaptus ruficollis*

Three were seen at Kasai Rimkai Koen Park in Tokyo and another at Ose Wetland, Amami.

*NOTE: IOC splits Little Grebe Tachybaptus ruficollis into two species: Little Grebe Tachybaptus ruficollis and Tricolored Grebe Tachybaptus tricolor, whereas Clements only recognizes one species, Little Grebe Tachybaptus ruficollis.***Red-necked Grebe***Podiceps grisegena*

Two birds were seen at Kasai Rimkai Koen Park in Tokyo.

Great Crested Grebe*Podiceps cristatus*

We had good scope views of five at Kasai Rimkai Koen Park in Tokyo.

Black-necked (Eared) Grebe*Podiceps nigricollis*

We had great views of one at Kasai Rimkai Koen Park in Tokyo.

Ibises & Spoonbills Threskiornithidae**Eurasian Spoonbill***Platalea leucorodia*

We had great views of four at Sankaku Pond, Okinawa.

Black-faced Spoonbill*Platalea minor*

We were thrilled to find 17 of these rare and threatened ibis at Sankaku Pond on our final morning on Okinawa.

Bitterns & Herons Ardeidae**Black-crowned Night Heron***Nycticorax nycticorax*

Two adults and a juvenile were seen at Sankaku Pond, Okinawa.

[Eastern] Cattle Egret*Bubulcus coromandus*

A few birds were found in the Kin area, Okinawa.

*NOTE: Clements lumps this species with Western Cattle Egret B. ibis as Cattle Egret B. ibis.***Grey Heron***Ardea cinerea*

Small numbers were seen at scattered wetlands throughout the tour.

Great Egret*Ardea alba*

Small numbers were recorded at wetlands on both Amami and Okinawa.

Intermediate Egret*Egretta intermedia*

Small numbers seen daily on Okinawa.



Little Egret

Egretta garzetta

Several seen daily on Okinawa.

Pacific Reef Heron

Egretta sacra

Small numbers were seen on both Amami and Okinawa Islands with peak numbers of 6 at Ose Wetland, Amami.

Gannets, Boobies Sulidae

Brown Booby

Sula leucogaster

We had great views of two birds flying off the coast of Amami Island.

Cormorants, Shags Phalacrocoracidae

Great Cormorant

Phalacrocorax carbo

About 100 seen at Kasai Rimkai Koen Park in Tokyo.

NOTE: IOC splits this species into Great Cormorant *P. carbo* and White-breasted Cormorant *P. lucidus*, whereas Clements only recognizes one species: Great Cormorant *P. carbo*.

Japanese (Temminck's) Cormorant

Phalacrocorax capillatus

We enjoyed stunning scope views of three birds during the drive from Kinsakubaru to Ose Wetland, Amami.

Ospreys Pandionidae

[Western] Osprey

Pandion haliaetus

Good views of several individuals on Amami and Okinawa Islands.

NOTE: NOTE: IOC recognizes two species: *P. haliaetus* Western Osprey and *P. cristatus* Eastern Osprey, whereas Clements only recognizes one species, *P. haliaetus* Osprey.

Kites, Hawks & Eagles Accipitridae

[Grey] (Gray)-faced Buzzard

Butastur indicus

Fair numbers were seen daily on both Amami and Okinawa Islands.

[Eastern] (Common) Buzzard

Buteo japonicus

A single bird was seen perched at Kasai Rimkai Koen Park in Tokyo.

NOTE: IOC splits Common Buzzard *B. buteo* into 5 separate species: Common Buzzard *B. buteo*, Eastern Buzzard *B. japonicus*, Himalayan Buzzard *B. burmanicus*, Cape Verde Buzzard *B. bannermani* and Socotra Buzzard *B. socotraensis*, whereas Clements only recognizes one species: Common Buzzard *B. buteo*.

Falcons Falconidae

[Common] (Eurasian) Kestrel

Falco tinnunculus

Several birds were seen during our time on Amami Island.

Rails, Crakes & Coots Rallidae

Okinawa Rail (E)

Gallirallus okinawae

We were thrilled to obtain excellent views of this mega endemic on several occasions in the Yambaru in northern Okinawa.

White-breasted Waterhen

Amaurornis phoenicurus

We had great views of one at Kijoka wetlands, Okinawa.

Common Moorhen

Gallinula chloropus

Small numbers were encountered at wetlands on Okinawa.

Eurasian Coot

Fulica atra

Good numbers at Kasai Rimkai Koen Park, Tokyo and several on Amami and Okinawa Islands.



Plovers Charadriidae

- Pacific Golden Plover** *Pluvialis fulva*
At least 21 at Ushuku Port and 50 at Kin wetland, Okinawa.
- [Grey] (Black-bellied) Plover** *Pluvialis squatarola*
Several birds were seen at Ose Wetland, Amami and Toyosaki mudflats, Okinawa.
- Little Ringed Plover** *Charadrius dubius*
One was seen at Ose Wetland, Amami and 30 at Kin wetland, Okinawa.
- Kentish Plover** *Charadrius alexandrinus*
A handful was seen at Ose Wetland, Amami and 15 at Kin wetland, Okinawa.
- Lesser Sand Plover** *Charadrius mongolus*
We had wonderful views of 100 at Ose Wetland, Amami.

Snipes & Sandpipers Scolopacidae

- Amami Woodcock (E)** *Scolopax mira*
A single bird was seen exceptionally well during a night drive in Kinsakubaru Forest.
- Common Snipe** *Gallinago gallinago*
Eight birds were seen at Kijoka wetland and 30 at Kin wetland, Okinawa.
- Whimbrel** *Numenius phaeopus*
4 were seen at the Toyosaki mudflats and a further one at Sankaku Pond, Okinawa.
- Eurasian Curlew** *Numenius arquata*
4 were seen at the Toyosaki mudflats, Okinawa.
- Common Redshank** *Tringa tetanus*
Two were seen at Sankaku Pond, Okinawa.
- Common Greenshank** *Tringa nebularia*
Several seen at Ose Wetland, Amami and ten at Kin wetland, Okinawa.
- Green Sandpiper** *Tringa ochropus*
A few birds seen at Kijoka wetland, Okinawa.
- Wood Sandpiper** *Tringa glareola*
One was seen at Kijoka wetland and a further 3 at Kin wetland, Okinawa.
- [Grey] (Gray)-tailed Tattler** *Tringa brevipes*
Six were encountered at Ose wetland and three at Toyosaki mudflats, Okinawa.
- Common Sandpiper** *Tringa hypoleucos*
Small numbers were seen on both Amami and Okinawa Islands.
- Ruddy Turnstone** *Arenaria interpres*
15 were seen at Ose Wetland, Amami and 5 at the Toyosaki mudflats, Okinawa.
- Red-necked Stint** *Calidris ruficollis*
Six birds were found at the Ose wetland, Amami and one at Sankaku Pond, Okinawa.
- Long-toed Stint** *Calidris subminuta*
Twenty were seen at Kin wetland with at least 6 being found at Sankaku Pond, Okinawa.
- Dunlin** *Calidris alpina*
Ten were seen at Ose Wetland, Amami and a further ten at Toyosaki mudflats, Okinawa.
- Ruff** *Philomachus pugnax*
We had wonderful views of 5 at Sankaku Pond, Okinawa.

Coursers, Pratincoles Glareolidae

- Oriental Pratincole** *Glareola maldivarum*



We enjoyed wonderful scope views of one at Kin wetland. A wonderful surprise!

Gulls & Terns Laridae

Black-headed Gull *Chroicocephalus ridibundus*

A flock of fifty was seen at Kasai Rimkai Koen Park, Tokyo.

Black-tailed Gull *Larus crassirostris*

We had good views of one at Kasai Rimkai Koen Park, Tokyo.

[Vega] (Herring) Gull *Larus vegae*

At least 30 were seen in and around Kasai Rimkai Koen Park, Tokyo.

Pigeons & Doves Columbidae

Rock [Dove] (Pigeon) (I) *Columba livia*

Widespread in urban areas throughout.

Japanese Wood Pigeon (NE) *Columba janthina*

We enjoyed wonderful scope views of one in the late afternoon en route to Kinsakubaru Forest, Amami.

Oriental Turtle Dove *Streptopelia orientalis*

Common and seen daily in all habitats.

Whistling Green Pigeon

One was scoped and seen well at Kinsakubaru Forest, Amami Island.

Owls Strigidae

Ryukyu Scops Owl *Otus elegans*

Sensational views were had of this species at night in Kinsakubaru Forest, Amami.

Kingfishers Alcedinidae

Common Kingfisher *Alcedo atthis*

One bird was seen at Ooze Beach, Amami and singletons were later encountered at wetlands on Okinawa.

Woodpeckers Picidae

Japanese [Pygmy] Woodpecker *Dendrocopos kizuki*

Small numbers were seen daily in Kinsakubaru Forest, Amami and a couple at Yambaru, Okinawa.

White-backed Woodpecker *Dendrocopos leucotos*

Several of these handsome birds were seen feeding in Kinsakubaru Forest, Amami.

Okinawa Woodpecker (E) *Sapheopipo noguchii*

Three separate sightings were had of this scarce and shy endemic. We enjoyed wonderful views of what is now considered the rarest woodpecker in the world with a population of less than 600.

Cuckooshrikes Campephagedae

Ryukyu Minivet (E) *Pericrocotus tegimae*

A total of six birds were found during our time in Kinsakubaru Forest, Amami.

Shrikes Laniidae

Bull-headed Shrike *Lanius bucephalus*

We enjoyed great views of three during our day at Kasai Rimkai Koen Park, Tokyo.



Crows & Jays Corvidae

Eurasian Jay *Garrulus glandarius*

We had good but brief views of one at Kasai Rimkai Koen Park, Tokyo.

Lidth's Jay (E) *Garrulus lidthi*

Small groups of this striking endemic were encountered daily on Amami Island. First seen at Kinsakubaru Forest.

Azure-winged Magpie *Cyanopica cyanus*

We had splendid views of four at Kasai Rimkai Koen Park, Tokyo.

Large-billed Crow *Corvus macrorhynchos*

Seen in reasonable numbers on every day of the trip.

NOTE: Clements lumps this species with Indian Jungle Crow C. culminatus and Eastern Jungle Crow C. leuallantii as Large-billed Crow C. macrorhynchos, whereas IOC splits all three of these species into distinct species.

Tits, Chickadees Paridae

Varied Tit *Poecile varius*

Small numbers were seen in forest habitat on both Amami and Okinawa islands.

Japanese Tit *Parus minor*

Seen in fair numbers on both Amami and Okinawa islands.

Bulbuls Pycnonotidae

Light-vented Bulbul *Pycnonotus sinensis*

Good numbers were seen at Kinigami and Kijoka wetlands, Okinawa.

Brown-eared Bulbul *Hypsipetes amaurotis*

Good numbers were seen daily during the extension.

Swallows & Martins Hirundinidae

Pacific Swallow *Hirundo tahitica*

Seen on every day of the extension.

Cettia Bush Warblers & Allies Cettiidae

Japanese Bush Warbler *Horornis diphone*

Good views were had of many on both Amami and Okinawa Islands.

Leaf Warblers & Allies Phylloscopidae

Arctic Warbler *Phylloscopus borealis*

We had good views of one at Kinsakubaru Forest, Amami.

Cisticolas & Allies Cisticolidae

Zitting Cisticola *Cisticola juncidis*

A few birds were seen at the edge of wetlands on Okinawa.

White-eyes Zosteropidae

Japanese White-eye *Zosterops japonicus*

Small groups were seen on most days of the extension.



Starlings Sturnidae

White-cheeked Starling

Spodiopsar cineraceus

A flock of 100 was seen at Kasai Rimkai Koen Park, Tokyo and 20 at Sankaku Pond, Okinawa.

[Common] (European) Starling

Sturnus vulgaris

We had good views of three at Sankaku Pond, Okinawa.

Thrushes Turdidae

[Amami] (Scaly) Thrush (E)

Zoothera major

After intensive searching for this rare and elusive endemic we were rewarded with great views of 3 of this shy and reclusive species on our final morning in Kinsakubaru Forest, Amami.

NOTE: NOTE: IOC splits Scaly Thrush *Zoothera dauma* into five species: Scaly Thrush *Zoothera dauma*, White's Thrush *Zoothera aurea*, Amami Thrush *Zoothera major*, Nilgiri Thrush *Zoothera neilgherriensis* and Sri Lanka Thrush *Zoothera imbricata*, whereas Clements only recognizes one species, Scaly Thrush *Zoothera dauma*.

Pale Thrush

Turdus pallidus

Good numbers were seen daily on both Amami and Okinawa Islands.

Brown-headed Thrush

Turdus chrysolaus

We had good views of one at dawn in Kinsakubaru Forest and a further 3 at Kijoka wetland, Okinawa.

Dusky Thrush

Turdus eunomus

One was seen very well at Kasai Rimkai Koen Park, Tokyo and another at Yambaru, Okinawa.

Chats, Old World Flycatchers Muscicapidae

Ryukyu Robin (E)

Erithacus komadori

A stunning male was seen superbly well in Kinsakubaru Forest, Amami. Further sightings of twenty were had in the Yambaru area, Okinawa. Although this endemic beauty is common it is rather shy and furtive and can be tricky to see well.

NOTE: An article in a recent *Oriental Bird Club Bulletin* suggests that both subspecies of Ryukyu Robin (*Komadori* on Amami Island and *namiyei* on Okinawa Island) should be classified as distinct species. However, neither Clements nor IOC recognize this split.

Daurian Redstart

Phoenicurus aureoreus

One male was seen whilst en route to Kasai Rimkai Koen Park, Tokyo and several more at Kinsakubaru, Amami.

Blue Rock Thrush

Monticola solitarius

Small numbers were seen daily on both Amami and Okinawa Islands.

Old World Sparrows Passeridae

Eurasian Tree Sparrow

Passer montanus

Seen around Tokyo and again on Okinawa.

Waxbills & Allies Estrildidae

Scaly-breasted Munia (I)

Lonchura punctulata

Five were encountered at the Kin wetlands on Okinawa.

Wagtails Motacillidae

Grey Wagtail

Motacilla cinerea

Small numbers were seen daily on both Amami and Okinawa Islands.

White Wagtail

Motacilla alba

Commonly seen on every day of the trip.



Richard's Pipit *Anthus richardi*

We had wonderful views of three at Ushuku Port, Amami.

Red-throated Pipit *Anthus rubescens*

A fabulous 8 birds were seen feeding in the fields at Ushuku Port and another at Kin wetland. They were still sporting their breeding plumage.

Finches Fringillidae

[Grey-capped] (Oriental) Greenfinch *Chloris sinica*

Five birds were seen during our first morning at Kasai Rimkai Koen Park, Tokyo.

Buntings & Allies Emberizidae

Yellow-throated Bunting *Emberiza elegans*

We had great views of a pair at Kinsakubaru Forest, Amami.

Black-faced Bunting *Emberiza spodocephala*

We had good views of one at Kasai Rimkai Koen Park, Tokyo.

ANNOTATED LIST OF MAMMALS (2 Species seen)

Names and taxonomical order of the mammal species list follows that of Garbutt, N. (1999) Mammals of Madagascar with recent changes as adopted by Mittermeier et al (2006) Lemurs of Madagascar.

Rabbits Leporidae

Amami Black Rabbit *Pentalagus furnessi*

We had wonderful views of two during our night drive at Kinsakubaru Forest, Amami.

Mongoose Herpestidae

Small Indian Mongoose (I) *Herpestes auropunctatus*

This introduced species was seen at the Kin Wetlands.

ANNOTATED LIST OF REPTILES (1 Species seen)

Sword-tailed Newt *Cynops cyanurus*

Up to three of these handsome reptiles were seen daily at Yambaru Forest. Great views were had!

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