

# **PEREGRINE BIRD TOURS**

## **SOUTH KOREA and SOUTHERN JAPAN**

6 – 19 NOVEMBER 2006

### **TOUR REPORT**

**LEADER:** CHRIS DOUGHTY

With all the talk in the media of late; regarding the dire predictions resulting from global warming, it was somewhat of a shock to find much of South Korea blanketed in snow and ice and in the middle of its coldest winter for 15 years!

The region of Siberia comprises some 10 million square kilometres, and supports substantial populations of breeding birds. In winter, however, this entire area is unsuitable for most insectivorous species and for many predatory and granivorous species. Perhaps as many as five thousand million birds must leave this area every autumn for more southerly wintering grounds. A great many of these birds choose to winter in South Korea, and on this unique tour it was our intention, to observe as many of them as we could.

South Korea is a very mountainous country and the valleys between the mountains are all intensely cultivated. There are also many man-made reservoirs and natural lakes all surrounded by cultivated areas, which in winter attract huge concentrations of wintering wildfowl. The mountains are covered in natural forest, which is a mix of deciduous and coniferous woodland, which in turn attract a large number of wintering passerines. The extensive coastline attracts large numbers of wintering divers, grebes, auklets, murrelets and a bewildering array of gulls.

Amongst the 136 species of birds we saw, there were substantial numbers of wintering migrants, including some of the most sought-after Siberian specialities. There was also a number of uncommon endemic birds and the icing on the cake, included a few vagrant species. Particular mention should go to the following: the endemic Temminck's Cormorant, the endangered Black-faced Spoonbill, the large flocks of the very uncommon Baikal Teal, smaller numbers of Falcated Teal, three vagrant American Wigeon, a family party of Harlequin Ducks, small flocks of male and female Smews, in fantastic, full breeding plumage, the critically endangered Scaly-sided Merganser, a pair of immature White-tailed Eagles, an immature Imperial Eagle, 500 plus Cinereous Vultures, a couple of very uncommon Upland Buzzards, five species of cranes, which included two vagrant species, Common Crane and Sandhill Crane, the very uncommon Long-billed Plover, a pair of seldom seen Solitary Snipe, an amazing 11 species of gulls, a small flock of Lesser Short-toed Larks, two over-wintering Brown Shrikes, an over-wintering Japanese Robin, two over-wintering Little Buntings, the uncommon Pallas' Reed-Bunting, superb Pallas' and Long-tailed Rosefinches and a flock of vagrant

Eurasian Starlings, and the quality really begins to shine through. Add to this a couple of mammals; we very much enjoyed watching the antics of a family party of Eurasian Red Squirrels, who were climbing onto the ground from the trees, picking up handfuls of snow and eating it. The Korean race of the Eurasian Red Squirrel, is all black in colour, with a contrasting white belly, but it does retain the characteristic long ear tufts. We also enjoyed watching good numbers of Eastern Roe Deer, in the demilitarised zone, between the two Koreas.

On the first day of the tour we visited Cheorwon in the demilitarised zone between the two Koreas. On the drive there from our airport hotel at Incheon Island we recorded the ever present Eurasian Magpie and large wintering flocks of Greater White-fronted Geese. Our visit to Cheorwon was memorable for two reasons; firstly, the two species of cranes that winter here, Red-crowned and White-naped were both very beautiful and seen very well. The second memorable event was the huge number of wintering Cinereous Vultures that are attracted to the area by the animal carcasses provided for them. We saw over 500 of these magnificent birds, together with a large number of Jungle Crows and an immature Imperial Eagle, which were all attracted by the carcasses. Other birds in this area included Rufous Turtle-Dove, Japanese Pygmy-Woodpecker, Brown-eared Bulbul and Eurasian Tree Sparrow. We also saw several Eastern Row Deer, in this area. We then drove to a small forested area which had a large monument in it, commemorating the Korean War. The birding here was surprisingly good, and we added Northern Goshawk, Marsh and Great Tits, Eurasian Nuthatch, Hawfinch, Eurasian Jay and best of all superb scope views of both male and female Pallas' Rosefinch. On the drive back to our hotel, alongside a small river at Galmal, we added a Great Egret and a Grey Heron.

The following morning we set off to do some birding in a large forested area at the National Arboretum. On the way, we stopped at a small river near Ildong Hawaii, where we found a small flock of Spot-billed Ducks, the very uncommon Long-billed Plover and a solitary Green Sandpiper. In the reeds along the edge of the river we enjoyed watching a large flock of Vinous-throated Parrotbills, which was to be the first of many flocks that we saw. On reaching the National Arboretum, we set off to do some forest birding. Before leaving the car park we found a flock of five Bullfinches, of the far-eastern race *griseiventris*. At a small stream, mainly covered in ice we stumbled across a mixed flock of Rustic and Yellow-throated Buntings; all the Rustic Buntings were in non-breeding plumage, but many of the Yellow-throated Buntings, were in full breeding plumage. As we walked along the small track a female Ring-necked Pheasant suddenly burst from cover, we watched a fine White-backed Woodpecker, pecking away in a small tree; we were delighted to find the range restricted Bull-headed Shrike, followed by a large flock of Long-tailed Tits. Returning to the small stream, we added Little Egret, Common Sandpiper and best of all, a pair of the rarely seen Solitary Snipe, which froze along the edge of the river, allowing us great scope views. In the afternoon, we set off for Cheonsu Bay, where we would spend much of our time the following day. During the drive, we added Common Kestrel and Feral Pigeon. In the late afternoon, we arrived at Cheonsu Bay in time to do some birding. The main target species here was the Baikal Teal; South Korea is the main wintering area for this uncommon species, and Cheonsu Bay is the most favoured area they choose to winter, with flocks of in excess of 100,000 birds being

recorded! Unfortunately, due to the particularly harsh winter, almost the entire bay was frozen over. The small patches of open water were crowded with wintering waterfowl, but not one of them was a Baikal Teal. Nevertheless, we enjoyed watching small flocks of Temminck's Cormorant, large flocks of Bean Geese, huge flocks of Mallards and small numbers of Common Pochard, Tufted Duck, Common Goldeneye and Red-breasted and Common Mergansers. Large numbers of Black-headed and Vega Gulls were also wintering here along with small numbers of Common Buzzard, Eurasian Curlew, Black-backed Wagtail and best of all, a superb Chinese Great Grey Shrike. As the light began to fade, in the late afternoon we spotted an immature Black-crowned Night-Heron, along the edge of the bay. This species is a rare straggler to South Korea, with only a handful of sightings, so we were very fortunate to find one.

The following morning found us back at Cheonsu Bay, continuing our quest for the very beautiful Baikal Teal. We were pleasantly surprised to find several species present today, that we had not observed yesterday afternoon. These included several Little Grebes, a few Black-necked Grebes and good numbers of Great Crested Grebes. We found a single Great Cormorant amongst a flock of Temminck's Cormorants and large flocks of wildfowl included, Common Shelduck, Eurasian Teal, stunning Falcated Teal, Eurasian Wigeon, brilliantly plumaged male and female Smews, a flock of Grey Plover, a pair of Black-tailed Gulls, a Heuglin's Gull and best of all a huge flock of the endangered Saunderson's Gull. There were an amazing 133 birds in the flock, not more than a few metres away from us. This must surely be one of the largest flocks of this species ever recorded. However, there was not even one Baikal Teal. In a small patch of scrubland on the edge of the bay, we enjoyed watching a Great Spotted Woodpecker, a superb male Daurian Redstart and a pair of Eurasian Red Squirrels. The squirrels climbed down from trees and picked up large handfuls of snow and ate it. In the afternoon we birded along the Geumgang River at Gusan; before reaching the river we watched a solitary Common Snipe in a roadside rice paddy. The Geumgang River was mainly frozen over, but the small patches of open water were crowded with flocks of wildfowl, and at last, we found good numbers of Baikal Teal. The males had still not gone into eclipse plumage and were sporting immaculate breeding plumage; with complex buff, green, white and black head markings and elongated black, white and cinnamon scapulars. They looked wonderful in the scope. There were also good numbers of Whooper Swans, small numbers of Northern Pintail and a small flock of Eurasian Coots. There was also a large flock of gulls roosting on the ice; careful examination of the flock produced a few Common Gulls, a few Slaty-backed Gulls and a single Glaucous Gull. Further towards the mouth of the river, we found some tidal mudflats, where there were a dozen or so Northern Lapwings. We then drove to Mokpo, where we spent the night.

Mokpo is surrounded by dozens of small bays; all of them had small flocks of wildfowl wintering in them. Careful inspection of just some of the flocks produced two more species of wildfowl, Northern Shoveler and Gadwall. The rest of the day was spent exploring a patchwork of cultivated land around Haenam, which was home to large numbers of wintering Greater White-fronted and Bean Geese. The first new bird for the day, came in the form of a small flock of Grey Starlings, which didn't stay around for long. As we continued driving through agricultural land, we came to a screeching halt as

a female harrier flew by. Careful examination of the bird, revealed it to be an adult female Hen Harrier, throughout the day we saw over half a dozen Hen Harriers, including some splendid males. Next a buzzard flew into a nearby tree, we drove close to the tree and the bird took off, the large white patch at the base of the primaries and the lack of a dark terminal tail band, proved conclusively that this was the very uncommon Upland Buzzard. A small flock of birds then descended into a disused rice paddy, they proved to be rather flighty but they eventually showed well and we enjoyed watching our first Buff-bellied Pipits of the tour. We then played hide-and-seek with a small flock of Pallas' Reed Buntings, in a small patch of reeds along the edge of the rice paddy. While doing so we flushed a couple of Japanese Quail, who burst into flight, close to our feet. Suddenly, another small flock of birds dropped into the disused rice paddy, careful examination in the scope revealed them to be Lesser Short-toed Larks, these birds are rare stragglers to Korea. At a small lake, great spotting by Michael produced a Brown Shrike, although this is a common breeding species in Korea, in winter all but a handful of birds migrate to winter in southern China and Southeast Asia. Later in the afternoon, we were to find a second Brown Shrike, but no more were found during the tour. We then enjoyed great scope views of a superbly plumaged Dusky Thrush and a small flock of Japanese White-eyes. Later in the afternoon in an area of grassland, we enjoyed watching two Little Buntings, which are only occasional winter visitors to South Korea.

We spent the following morning exploring Sunchon Bay; an extensive area of tidal mudflats, rice paddies and reedbeds. It was very cold this morning, with temperatures hovering just above freezing point. We were greeted by the evocative calls of a large flock of Hooded Cranes. This is a regularly wintering area for this species; the flock normally numbers approximately 100 birds. However, this year there were over 250 birds in attendance. We enjoyed great scope views of them and were able to watch them flying around in small flocks and displaying to one another on the ground. We then went on a boat trip along the edge of some very good tidal mudflats; with skillful maneuvering of his boat, the local boatman enabled us to get fairly close to the birds that were both feeding and roosting on the mudflats. We enjoyed great looks at good numbers of Kentish Plovers and Dunlins. We also found two other birds of great interest to us, a female Greater Scaup and an Osprey, which is a rare visitor to Korea. Shortly following the boat trip, a Eurasian Spoonbill flew overhead. In the afternoon we visited Junam Reservoir, near Changwon, new birds here included two superb immature White-tailed Eagles feeding on a couple of large fish, on the ice of the frozen reservoir. In a nearby small stream, we found a few Common Moorhens.

Today, the whole day was set aside to go sea-watching off the Guryongpo Peninsula. Unfortunately, it was to rain heavily throughout the whole day. Undaunted; we left our beautiful hotel high in the mountains in Gyeongju National Park and drove to the coast, a little to the south of the Guryongpo Peninsula. We joined the coast at Gampo, where we found a flock of Oriental Greenfinches perched on overhead wires, along the roadside. We decided to do a quick sea-watch a little to the south of the peninsula, at Yangpo. We were rewarded with good, close looks at an Ancient Murrelet. Throughout the day, we stopped to scan the sea at numerous points along the east coast of the Guryongpo Peninsula. It was to prove rewarding, new species for the trip included a solitary Arctic

Diver, a few Horned Grebes, a solitary Red-necked Grebe, a delightful family party of Harlequin Ducks, which included a superbly plumaged male. We enjoyed great scope views of a Black-legged Kittiwake, perched on nearby rocks and a solitary Rhinoceros Auklet, just off the coast. At one time, a Japanese Lesser Sparrowhawk flew close by and we found a Blue Rock-Thrush, sitting on top of one of the buildings. In the late afternoon we stopped to do some birding in an area of mixed forest in Gyeongju National Park. New birds here included Goldcrest and the stunning Varied Tit.

Much of our last day in Korea; was taken up by the long drive to Seoul, however, we did have one important birding stop, at the Nakgongdong River, at Andong. The Nakgongdong River is the longest river in South Korea and in recent years, small numbers of the extremely rare Scaly-sided Merganser have been found wintering here. Following a great deal of searching and several false alarms, in the form of Common Mergasers, Ruth pointed out a female Scaly-sided Merganser, swimming in the river. We were elated, as we enjoyed good scope views of this extremely rare species. While we had been searching for this bird we had also added three new species of passerines; several Japanese Wagtails, a winter visitor from Japan, were found on the sandbanks in the river. The reedbeds along the edge of the river held good numbers of Meadow Buntings and a female Long-tailed Rosefinch.

A morning flight from Seoul, took us to Kagoshima, on the southern Japanese Island of Kyushu. From here we drove northwards to the Arasaki Crane Reserve, where we were to spend the next three days. On the outskirts of Kagoshima, we found large flocks of Rufous Turtle-Doves. We also found the Uwatoko Park, where we went for a short birding walk; here we saw Common Buzzard, Japanese Pygmy-Woodpecker, Daurian Redstart, Goldcrest, Meadow Bunting and Jungle Crow, all of which we had seen in South Korea. There were also a couple of new species for the tour, a Eurasian Sparrowhawk circled overhead and a Japanese Bush-Warbler, flitted through the undergrowth. We made a second stop at the Sendai Gawa River, at Miyanogo; were we added Little Grebe, Little Egret, Mallard, Spot-billed Duck, Eurasian Teal, Eurasian Wigeon, Tufted Duck, Eurasian Coot and Black-backed Wagtail. There were also new species for the tour, there were plenty of Black Kites flying overhead, a Grey Wagtail, on rocks in the middle of the river and best of all, amongst the large numbers of ducks were three American Wigeon, this is an uncommon, though annual vagrant to Japan. In the township of Miyanogo, we also saw Feral Pigeon, Brown-eared Bulbul, Oriental Greenfinch and Eurasian Tree Sparrow. At a small forested area, just outside Miyanogo, we observed two new birds for the tour, large numbers of Carrion Crows and surprisingly, an over-wintering Japanese Robin! While driving through Izumi, we observed a Common Kestrel.

We spent the next two days birding in and around the Arasaki Crane Reserve, where over 20,000 Hooded and White-naped Cranes were wintering, this is the largest concentration of cranes in Asia. During our time here we enjoyed some wonderful close-up views of the cranes, especially early in the morning when large numbers came into feed directly outside the guest house, where we were staying. In addition to Hooded and White-naped Cranes, Arasaki attracts small numbers of other species of cranes and we were very

fortunate to pick out a Common Crane and a Sandhill Crane. Arasaki was simply fabulous and is justifiably famous throughout the world for its amazing flocks of cranes; however, its diversity of habitat, and mosaic of rice paddies, rivers, drainage canals, reedbeds, scrub, woodland and intertidal mudflats also make it one of the richest places for general winter birding in Japan. We observed the following species here, which we had already seen in South Korea: Black-necked Grebe, Temminck's Cormorant, Grey Heron, Great Egret, Black-crowned Night-Heron, Common Shelduck, Northern Shoveler, Gadwall, Northern Pintail, Greater Scaup, Osprey, Common Moorhen, Dunlin, Green and Common Sandpipers, Black-tailed, Black-headed, Vega and Slaty-backed Gulls, Buff-bellied Pipit, Bull-headed Shrike, Blue Rock-Thrush, Dusky Thrush, Varied Tit, Grey Starling and Eurasian Jay. Fortunately, we also added a good number of new birds for the tour; these included the rare Black-faced Spoonbill, Mute Swan, Peregrine Falcon, Yellow-legged and Glaucous-winged Gulls, Common Kingfisher, Eurasian Skylark, Olive-backed Pipit, Brown Dipper, Pale Thrush, Black-faced and Common Reed Buntings, Russet Sparrow, Eurasian Starling, a rare vagrant to Japan, and Rook.

We enjoyed luxurious accommodation throughout the length and breadth of South Korea and in contrast a very friendly and informal guesthouse, in Japan. We enjoyed huge amounts of superb food throughout South Korea and interesting food in Japan! All in all, it was a superb tour, which we all enjoyed immensely.

## **SYSTEMATIC LIST**

#### GAVIIDAE

**Arctic Diver** *Gavia arctica* A rare winter visitor to Korea, a single individual was seen briefly, off the Guryongpo Peninsula.

#### PODICIPEDIDAE

**Little Grebe** *Tachybaptus ruficollis* A common resident in both Korea and Japan, small numbers were present in most wetland areas.

**Red-necked Grebe** *Podiceps grisegena* An uncommon winter visitor to Korea, a single individual was seen briefly, off the Guryongpo Peninsula.

**Great Crested Grebe** *Podiceps cristatus* Good numbers were wintering throughout wetlands in the southern provinces of South Korea.

**Horned Grebe** *Podiceps auritus* A rare winter visitor to Korea, we enjoyed prolonged, close looks at a pair of birds, off the Guryongpo Peninsula.

**Black-necked Grebe** *Podiceps nigricollis* This species is a very uncommon winter visitor to Southern Korea, where we saw it well on a couple of occasions. In Japan this species is an uncommon winter visitor, we saw a pair very well in Izumi Harbour.

#### PHALACROCORACIDAE

**Great Cormorant** *Phalacrocorax carbo* A very uncommon winter visitor to Korea, we enjoyed good scope views of a single bird amongst a large flock of Temminck's Cormorants in Cheonsu Bay.

**Temminck's Cormorant** *Phalacrocorax capillatus* Endemic to Japan and Korea, where it is the common cormorant, we saw it well on many occasions.

#### ARDEIDAE

**Grey Heron** *Ardea cinerea* In Korea this species is mainly an abundant summer visitor, but small numbers of hardy individuals winter annually in southern Korea. It is a fairly common resident throughout Japan.

**Great Egret** *Ardea alba* In both Korea and Japan there is a fairly common resident race and in winter there is an influx of Siberian birds, which winter predominantly in both southern Korea and southern Japan, where we saw many birds.

**Little Egret** *Egretta garzetta* A common resident throughout Korea and Japan.

**Black-crowned Night-Heron** *Nycticorax nycticorax* In Korea this species is a rare straggler, we were extremely fortunate to observe an immature bird very well, late one afternoon at Cheonsu Bay. In Japan it is a common resident, we observed a pair of adult birds flying along in broad daylight, at the mouth of the Takaono River.

#### THRESKIORNITHIDAE

**Eurasian Spoonbill** *Platalea leucorodia* This species is an extremely uncommon winter visitor to Korea. We were very fortunate to observe a solitary bird fly overhead at Sunchon Bay; later in the day we saw a flock of five birds at Junam Reservoir.

**Black-faced Spoonbill** *Platalea minor* A rare winter visitor to Japan; we saw four birds very well at Ariake Bay, the most likely place for this bird to occur in Japan. The

total world population is believed to be less than 1,000 birds, this species is consequently listed as 'Endangered' in Threatened Birds of the World.

#### ANATIDAE

**Mute Swan** *Cygnus olor* There is a small feral population of Mute Swans throughout Japan, we saw a single bird at the mouth of the Takaono River.

**Whooper Swan** *Cygnus cygnus* A common winter visitor to Korea, we saw several large flocks.

**Bean Goose** *Anser fabalis* We saw thousands of birds wintering in Korea, which has to be the main wintering ground for this species.

**Greater White-fronted Goose** *Anser albifrons* We also saw thousands of this species wintering in Korea, though not as many as the above species.

**Common Shelduck** *Tadorna Tadorna* In Korea, this species is a very uncommon winter visitor, we saw several birds very well in Cheonsu Bay. In Japan this species is a locally common winter visitor to the mudflats of Ariake Bay, exactly where we saw them. They are an accidental winter visitor elsewhere in Japan.

**Eurasian Wigeon** *Anas penelope* A very common winter visitor to both Korea and Japan, we saw huge flocks while in Japan.

**American Wigeon** *Anas americana* A rare but annual winter visitor to Japan, occurring within flocks of Eurasian Wigeon. We were extremely fortunate to observe two males and a female of this species amongst a large flock of Eurasian Wigeon, on the Sendai Gawa River, at Miyanojo.

**Falcated Duck** *Anas falcate* An uncommon winter visitor to Korea, we saw several small flocks including many iridescent males, in full breeding plumage.

**Gadwall** *Anas strepera* In Korea this species is an uncommon winter visitor, we observed a few birds in a coastal bay close to Mokpo. In Japan it is a fairly common winter visitor, once again we saw a few birds amongst a large flock of wildfowl, on the Izumi River.

**Baikal Teal** *Anas Formosa* South Korea is the major wintering ground for this rapidly declining species of wildfowl, which is listed as 'vulnerable' in Threatened Birds of the World. Most of the world's population winters in Cheonsu Bay, but this year the bay was nearly all frozen over and the normally huge flock that occurs here had splintered into smaller groups, of which we saw several very well. It is without doubt one of the most attractive species of wildfowl in the world. This bird was voted equal bird of the trip, with the Solitary Snipe.



**Eurasian Teal** *Anas crecca* A common winter visitor throughout Korean and Japan.

**Mallard** *Anas platyrhynchos* An abundant winter visitor throughout both Korea and

- Japan and was by far the commonest species of duck we encountered
- Spot-billed Duck** *Anas poecilorhyncha* A very common resident throughout both Korea and Japan, we enjoyed many good sightings of this attractive species.
- Northern Pintail** *Anas acuta* Yet another common winter visitor to both Korea and Japan, the males surprisingly, were still in full breeding plumage.
- Northern Shoveler** *Anas clypeata* This species is a fairly common winter visitor to both Korea and Japan, we saw small numbers in both countries and once again, many males were in full breeding plumage.
- Common Pochard** *Aythya ferina* A fairly common winter visitor to both Korea and Japan. We only saw it in Korea, where it proved to be fairly plentiful.
- Tufted Duck** *Aythya fuligula* A common winter visitor to both Korea and Japan, where we saw several small flocks.
- Greater Scaup** *Aythya marila* The literature states that this bird is a common winter visitor to both Korea and Japan. However, we only observed one female during the boat trip on Sunchon Bay, in South Korea, followed by a second female, at the mouth of the Izumi River, in Japan.
- Harlequin Duck** *Histrionicus histrionicus* A fairly common winter visitor along the east coast of Korea; thanks to great spotting by Michael, we very much enjoyed watching a family party, including a splendid male, close inshore, off the Guryongpo Peninsula.
- Common Goldeneye** *Bucephala clangula* This species is a common winter visitor to Korea; where we observed many small flocks.
- Smew** *Mergellus albellus* An uncommon winter visitor to southern Korea; we enjoyed watching a few small flocks, the white males, in full breeding plumage, were absolutely stunning.
- Red-breasted Merganser** *Mergus serrator* A fairly common winter visitor to Korea, which we saw well on several occasions.
- Common Merganser** *Mergus merganser* An uncommon winter visitor to Korea, where we enjoyed several small flocks.
- Scaly-sided Merganser** *Mergus squamatus* Listed as 'Vulnerable' in Threatened Birds of the World, this rare species winters in Korea in very small numbers. Great spotting by Ruth enabled us to enjoy good scope views of a female bird on the Nakgongdong River, at Andong.

#### PANDIONIDAE

- Osprey** *Pandion haliaetus* The Osprey is a rare visitor to Korea, during the boat trip on Sunchon Bay, we were very fortunate to observe one sat on the top of a large pole, sticking out of the water. In Japan it is a common resident, we saw several along the edge of Ariake Bay.

#### ACCIPITRIDAE

**Black Kite** *Milvus migrans* A common resident throughout Japan, where we enjoyed many sightings.

**White-tailed Eagle** *Haliaeetus albicilla* An uncommon winter visitor to Korea, great spotting by Ruth enabled us to enjoy prolonged scope views of a couple of immature birds feeding on fish, on the ice, of the frozen Junam Reservoir.

**Cinereous Vulture** *Aegypius monachus* Until recently, this species was considered a rare winter visitor to Korea. That is certainly not the case now; one of the highlights of the tour was to watch in excess of 500 birds at a feeding station at Cheorwon, in the demilitarised zone of South Korea.

**Hen Harrier** *Circus cyaneus* A fairly common winter visitor to Korea, where we saw half a dozen or so birds, patrolling agricultural land, near Haenam. The male birds were particularly attractive.

**Japanese Lesser Sparrowhawk** *Accipiter gularis* A fairly common resident of Korea, where we enjoyed a couple of good sightings.

**Eurasian Sparrowhawk** *Accipiter nisus* A fairly common resident throughout Japan, with numbers increasing in winter, due to an influx of birds from further north in Asia. We enjoyed a couple of good sightings during our time in Japan.

**Northern Goshawk** *Accipiter gentiles* An uncommon winter visitor to Korea, which we saw well on a couple of occasions.

**Common Buzzard** *Buteo buteo* This species is a common winter visitor to Korea and southern Japan, where we enjoyed many good sightings.

**Upland Buzzard** *Buteo hemilasius* An uncommon winter visitor to Korea, we saw two birds very well in agricultural land, near Haenam.

**Imperial Eagle** *Aquila heliaca* A rare winter straggler to Korea. The vulture feeding station at Cheorwon, in the demilitarised zone, attracted 500 plus Cinereous Vultures and one immature Imperial Eagle, which we enjoyed watching through the scope. This species is listed as 'Vulnerable' in Threatened Birds of the World.

#### FALCONIDAE

**Eurasian Kestrel** *Falco tinnunculus* A common resident throughout both Korea and Japan, we enjoyed many good sightings.

**Peregrine Falcon** *Falco peregrinus* The Peregrine Falcon is a very uncommon resident in Japan. In winter the numbers are increased by the arrival of birds from further north. We enjoyed watching a close immature bird, as it flew overhead, along the Arasaki River.

#### PHASIANIDAE

**Japanese Quail** *Coturnix japonica* Small numbers of this species winter in southern Korea. We flushed a couple of birds while birding in agricultural land, near Haenam.

**Ring-necked Pheasant** *Phasianus colchicus* A common resident throughout Korea, which we saw well on several occasions.

#### GRUIDAE

**Sandhill Crane** *Grus canadensis* A rare vagrant to Japan, in the last few years three to four birds have been wintering annually with the other cranes, at the Arasaki Crane Reserve. We were very fortunate to enjoy great scope views of this species amongst the thousands of other cranes at Arasaki.

**White-naped Crane** *Grus vipio* A common winter visitor to both Korea and Japan, we enjoyed breathtaking looks at thousands of these splendid birds at Cheorwon, in Korea and Arasaki, in Japan. Approximately one quarter of the world's population of this species winters at Arasaki. It is listed as 'Vulnerable' in Threatened Birds of the World.

**Common Crane** *Grus grus* A rare vagrant to Japan, in the last few years three or four birds have been wintering annually with the other cranes, at the Arasaki Crane Reserve. Great spotting by Michael, allowed us to enjoy great scope views of this species amongst the hordes of cranes at the Arasaki Crane Reserve.

**Hooded Crane** *Grus monacha* A common winter visitor to both Korea and Japan. We saw approximately 250 birds at Suncheon Bay, in Korea and several thousand birds at the Arasaki Crane Reserve, in Japan. This species is listed as 'Vulnerable' in Threatened Birds of the World.

**Red-crowned Crane** *Grus japonensis* This species is a common winter visitor to Korea and is without doubt one of the most attractive of all the cranes. It has a declining population of just over 2,000 birds and is listed as 'Endangered' in Threatened Birds of the World.

#### RALLIDAE

**Common Moorhen** *Gallinula chloropus* In Korea, this is a very uncommon species and we were fortunate to find an adult bird and an immature in a small drainage canal, close to Junam Reservoir. In southern Japan it is a fairly common resident, we saw it well on the Arasaki River.

**Eurasian Coot** *Fulica atra* This species is an uncommon winter visitor to Korea and an uncommon resident in southern Japan. We saw it well in both Korea and Japan.

#### CHARADRIIDAE

**Northern Lapwing** *Vanellus vanellus* This species is an uncommon winter visitor to Korea, which we saw well on a couple of occasions.

**Grey Plover** *Pluvialis squatarola* The Grey Plover is a fairly common passage migrant in Korea. I can find no record of it wintering there. We saw two small flocks during our time in Korea, so it is likely that small numbers sometimes overwinter.

**Long-billed Plover** *Charadrius placidus* This species is a very uncommon winter visitor to Korea, we were fortunate to enjoy two good sightings of this species, during our time in Korea.

**Kentish Plover** *Charadrius alexandrinus* This species is an uncommon winter visitor to Korea, during the boat trip on Suncheon Bay, we observed small numbers on the mudflats, along the edge of the bay.

#### SCOLOPACIDAE

**Solitary Snipe** *Gallinago solitaria* This species is a very uncommon winter visitor to Korea. We were very fortunate to enjoy super scope views of a pair of birds along the edge of a mountain stream at the National Arboretum, at Gwangneung. This species was voted equal bird of the trip, with the Baikal Teal.



**Common Snipe** *Gallinago gallinago* A fairly common winter visitor to Korea, we saw it very well on a couple of occasions.

**Eurasian Curlew** *Numenius arquata* A fairly common winter visitor to Korea, we saw a few small flocks, during our time there.

**Green Sandpiper** *Tringa ochropus* This species is mainly a passage migrant through both Korea and Japan, with very small numbers staying to winter in the south of Korea and Japan. We were therefore fortunate to enjoy good looks at a solitary bird in a small stream near Ildong Hawaii, in South Korea; followed by a second sighting of a solitary bird along the Takaono River, in Japan.

**Common Sandpiper** *Actitis hypoleucos* This species is also mainly a passage migrant through Korea, with very small numbers staying to winter in the south of the country, where we observed a few birds. It is a fairly common winter visitor throughout southern Japan.

**Dunlin** *Calidris alpina* The Dunlin is an uncommon winter visitor to both Korea and Japan. During the boat trip on Sunchon Bay, we saw good numbers feeding on the tidal mudflats there. In Japan, we saw a flock of approximately 70 or so birds, feeding on tidal mudflats in Ariake Bay.

#### LARIDAE

**Black-tailed Gull** *Larus crassirostris* The Black-tailed Gull is the most abundant breeding and wintering gull in Korea and Japan, where we enjoyed many good sightings.

**Common Gull** *Larus canus* An uncommon winter visitor to Korea, which we saw well on a couple of occasions.

**Glaucous-winged Gull** *Larus glaucescens* This species is an uncommon winter visitor to northern Japan and is a rare vagrant to southern Japan. We enjoyed very good scope views of a first year winter bird, at the mouth of the Izumi River, amongst a large gathering of gulls.

**Glaucous Gull** *Larus hyperboreus* This species is a very uncommon winter visitor to

Korea. We were fortunate to enjoy two sightings of this species, both were first winter birds and were found while searching through large flocks of gulls. The first sighting was at the Geumgang River at Gusan and the second occurred on the Guryongpo Peninsula.

**Vega Gull** *Larus vegae* An abundant winter visitor throughout both Korea and Japan.

**Yellow-legged Gull** *Larus cachinnans* A rare vagrant to Japan, we enjoyed good scope views of an adult bird, amongst a large flock of gulls, at the mouth of the Izumi River.

**Heuglin's Gull** *Larus heuglini* A very rare vagrant to Korea, we enjoyed good scope views of an adult bird amongst a large flock of gulls, in Cheonsu Bay.

**Slaty-backed Gull** *Larus schistisagus* An uncommon winter visitor to both Korea and Japan, we saw small numbers in both countries.

**Black-headed Gull** *Larus ridibundus* This species is an abundant winter visitor to both Korea and Japan. We saw enormous flocks in Korea, but surprisingly we only saw one bird during our time in Japan. A bird was observed very well in Akune Harbour.

**Saunders' Gull** *Larus saundersi* One of the rarest gulls in the world, we found fairly large numbers wintering in southern Korea. At one time we had a flock of 133 birds just a few metres away from us, in Cheonsu Bay. Good numbers were also present in Sunchon Bay, during the boat trip. All birds were in winter plumage. It is listed as 'vulnerable' in Threatened Birds of the World.

**Black-legged Kittiwake** *Rissa tridactyla* This species is a very uncommon winter visitor to Korea. We were therefore very fortunate to enjoy good scope views of an adult bird in winter plumage, at very close range, amongst a large flock of gulls, on the Guryongpo Peninsula.

#### ALCIDAE

**Ancient Murrelet** *Synthliboramphus antiquus* A fairly common winter visitor to southern Korea; we enjoyed several very close looks at this bird during our time on the Guryongpo Peninsula, most were just offshore, but one was inside a boat harbour.

**Rhinoceros Auklet** *Cerorhinca monocerata* An uncommon winter visitor to the east coast of Korea; we observed a solitary bird just offshore, while birding on the Guryongpo Peninsula

#### COLUMBIDAE

**Feral Pigeon** *Columba livia* We saw this introduced species on one occasion at Pyeongtack, in South Korea and it proved to be common in southern Japan.

**Oriental Turtle-Dove** *Streptopelia orientalis* This species proved to be abundant throughout both South Korea and Japan. Numbers increase in winter, with migrants from Manchuria.

#### ALCEDINIDAE

**Common Kingfisher** *Alcedo atthis* A common resident in southern Japan, we observed a couple of birds along the Takaono River.

#### PICIDAE

**Japanese Pygmy-Woodpecker** *Dendrocopos kizuki* A common resident throughout all wooded areas of both South Korea and Japan, we saw it well on several occasions.

**White-backed Woodpecker** *Dendrocopos leucotos* An uncommon resident of South Korea, where it is confined to larger areas of forest. We enjoyed good close looks at a bird in the National Arboretum, at Gwangneung.

**Great Spotted Woodpecker** *Dendrocopos major* A common resident throughout all wooded areas of South Korea. We saw a solitary bird at very close quarters in scrub, along the edge of Cheonsu Bay.

#### ALAUDIDAE

**Lesser Short-toed Lark** *Calandrella rufescens* The Asian Short-toed Lark has recently been lumped with the Lesser Short-toed Lark, it is a rare vagrant to Korea. We were very fortunate to enjoy good close scope views, of a small flock feeding in agricultural land, near Haenam.

**Skylark** *Alauda arvensis* This species is a common resident throughout southern Japan and commonly occurred in an around Arasaki Crane Reserve.

#### MOTACILLIDAE

**Black-backed Wagtail** *Motacilla lugens* A very common winter visitor to both South Korea and Japan, we saw it on most days of the tour.

**Japanese Wagtail** *Motacilla grandis* A rare winter visitor to Korea, from breeding grounds in Japan; we saw half a dozen or so of these very attractive birds along the Nakgongdong River, at Andong, in South Korea.

**Grey Wagtail** *Motacilla cinerea* A common breeding resident in southern Japan, where we saw it well on several occasions, one even flying onto the wing mirror of our vehicle.

**Olive-backed Pipit** *Anthus hodgsoni* In southern Japan, this species is a winter visitor from breeding grounds in northern Japan, China and Russia. We found a small number wintering around Izumi township.

**Buff-bellied Pipit** *Anthus rubescens* An uncommon winter visitor to South Korea and a common winter visitor to southern Japan; we saw small flocks very well in both countries.

#### PYCNONOTIDAE

**Brown-eared Bulbul** *Ixos amaurotis* This large and very noisy species of bulbul was commonly encountered throughout both South Korea and southern Japan.

#### REGULIDAE

**Goldcrest** *Regulus regulus* A locally common resident throughout both South Korea and Japan. We recorded it in Gyeongju National Park, in South Korea and in Uwataoko Park, in Kagoshima, in Japan.

#### CINCLIDAE

**Brown Dipper** *Cinclus pallasii* A fairly common resident of southern Japan, we observed this species very well in a small stream near Miyanojo, on the last day of the tour.

#### TURDIDAE

**Blue Rock-Thrush** *Monticola solitarius* A very uncommon winter visitor to the southern half of South Korea, where we were very fortunate to observe one sat on the roof of a small building on the Guryongpo Peninsula. In southern Japan it is a fairly common resident, which we observed on a few occasions.

**Pale Thrush** *Turdus pallidus* A very common winter visitor to southern Japan, where we saw it well on a couple of occasions.

**Dusky Thrush** *Turdus naumanni* A common winter visitor to both South Korea and Japan. In South Korea we only observed it on one occasions, in agricultural land, near Haenam.

#### SYLVIIDAE

**Japanese Bush-Warbler** *Cettia diphone* A common breeding resident throughout Japan, we enjoyed a few good sightings during our time there.

#### MUSCICAPIDAE

**Japanese Robin** *Erithacus akahige* This species is a fairly common summer visitor to southern Japan, from wintering grounds in southeastern China. I can find no records in the literature of this species over-wintering in Japan. So we were very fortunate to observe this species in a forested area, close to Miyanojo, on Kyushu Island, in southern Japan.

**Daurian Redstart** *Phoenicurus aureus* This very attractive species is a common winter visitor to both South Korea and southern Japan, where we enjoyed many good looks at both the attractive males and the more somber coloured females.

#### PARADOXORNITHIDAE

**Vinous-throated Parrotbill** *Paradoxornis webbiana* A common resident of South Korea, we recorded many large flocks, all of them were wintering in reedbeds.

#### AEGITHALIDAE

**Long-tailed Tit** *Aegithalos caudatus* A common resident of South Korea, where we observed two small flocks, at very close quarters.

#### PARIIDAE

**Marsh Tit** *Poecile palustris* A common resident of South Korea, we enjoyed several good looks in forested areas throughout the country.

**Great Tit** *Parus major* The commonest forest bird in South Korea, we recorded it every day in Korea.

**Varied Tit** *Sittiparus varius* This very attractive species of tit is endemic to Korea and Japan, where it is a widespread breeding resident. In Korea we very much enjoyed watching a pair in the Gyeongju National Park and in Japan we observed a small flock near a small stream close to Miyanojo, on Kyushu Island.

#### SITTIDAE

**Eurasian Nuthatch** *Sitta europaea* This species is a common resident throughout South Korea, where we saw it well on a few occasions.

#### ZOSTEROPIDAE

**Japanese White-eye** *Zosterops japonicus* This species breeds in the two most southerly provinces of South Korea. We observed a large flock in agricultural land, near Haenam.

#### LANIIDAE

**Bull-headed Shrike** *Lanius bucephalus* A fairly common resident throughout both South Korea and southern Japan, we saw this attractive species of shrike, very well on several occasions.

**Brown Shrike** *Lanius cristatus* The Brown Shrike is a common summer breeding visitor to South Korea, but in winter, almost the entire population migrates south to winter in southern China and Southeast Asia. Only a handful of birds stay to winter along the south coast of South Korea. Therefore, we were very fortunate to find a couple of birds wintering in agricultural land, near Haenam.

**Chinese Grey Shrike** *Lanius sphenocercus* A fairly common winter visitor to South Korea, we saw it very well on a few occasions.

#### CORVIDAE

**Eurasian Jay** *Garrulus glandarius* A common resident throughout both South Korea and Japan, which we saw well on a few occasions.

**Eurasian Magpie** *Pica pica* The most common bird in South Korea, observed on every day of the tour there.

**Rook** *Corvus frugilegus* Thousands of rooks winter around the Arasaki Crane Reserve, at Izumi, on Kyushu Island. This is the only place in Japan where this species occurs!

**Carrion Crow** *Corvus corone* A very common resident of Japan, which we saw well on many occasions.

**Large-billed Crow** *Corvus macrorhynchos* An uncommon resident in South Korea, large numbers were recorded at the vulture feeding station at Cheorwon, in the demilitarised zone. In Japan it is a common resident, which we saw well on many occasions.

#### STURNIDAE

**Grey Starling** *Sturnus cineraceus* An uncommon winter visitor to South Korea and a common winter visitor to southern Japan. We saw it very well in both countries.

**European Starling** *Sturnus vulgaris* A rare but annual winter visitor to the Arasaki area of Kyushu Island. We were very fortunate to observe a flock of 21 birds sat on overhead wires in the township of Izumi, on Kyushu Island.

#### PASSERIDAE

**Russet Sparrow** *Passer rutilans* An uncommon winter visitor to southern Japan, we observed a large flock of this splendid sparrow along the Arasaki River, near Izumi.

**Eurasian Tree Sparrow** *Passer montanus* One of the commonest and most widespread birds of the tour.

#### FRINGILLIDAE

**Pallas' Rosefinch** *Carpodacus roseus* A fairly common winter visitor to South Korea, we enjoyed very good scope views of a pair of birds, including a splendid male, at a small monument, close to Cheorwon, in the north of South Korea.

**Oriental Greenfinch** *Carduelis sinica* A fairly common resident throughout both South Korea and Japan. In South Korea we observed a small flock on overhead wires in the township of Gampo, it was plentiful throughout our time in southern Japan

**Bullfinch** *Pyrrhula pyrrhula* The bullfinch is an uncommon and irregular winter visitor to South Korea. We observed a flock of five birds in the car park of the National Arboretum, at Gwangneung. They were of the very distinctive race *griseiventris*.

**Hawfinch** *Coccothraustes coccothraustes* In South Korea, the hawfinch is an irregular winter visitor, fortunately, we enjoyed a few very good looks at this attractive species.

**Long-tailed Rosefinch** *Uragus sibiricus* Once again, in South Korea, the Long-tailed Rosefinch is an irregular winter visitor. We were fortunate to observe a single male in winter plumage, in a reedbed along the edge of the Nakgongdong River, at Andong.

#### EMBERIZIDAE

**Meadow Bunting** *Emberiza cioides* A common resident throughout both South Korea and southern Japan. However, in South Korea, we only recorded it along the Nakgongdong River, at Andong, in Japan it proved to be common and widespread.

**Little Bunting** *Emberiza pusilla* A very uncommon winter visitor to South Korea. We were fortunate to enjoy good scope views of a pair of birds wintering in agricultural land, near Haenam.

**Rustic Bunting** *Emberiza rustica* This species is an abundant winter visitor throughout South Korea; where we saw many small flocks.

**Yellow-throated Bunting** *Emberiza elegans* This species is a common winter visitor to South Korea and we saw small flocks on almost every day during our time there.

**Black-faced Bunting** *Emberiza spodocephala* In southern Japan, this species is a common winter visitor, from breeding grounds in China and northern Japan. We saw it very well on a few occasions, on the last day of the tour.

**Pallas' Reed-Bunting** *Emberiza pallasi* A common winter visitor to South Korea, we

found a few small flocks, which were all wintering in reedbeds.  
**Common Reed Bunting** *Emberiza schoeniclus* A fairly common winter visitor to southern Japan, where we found a couple of small flocks, which were wintering in reedbeds.

## MAMMALS

**Eurasian Red Squirrel** *Sciurus vulgaris* We very much enjoyed watching the black race of this species, eating snow, during our time in South Korea.

**Eastern Roe Deer** *Capreolus pygargus* Good numbers were present around Cheorwon, in the demilitarised zone, of South Korea.