



SEA OF OKHOTSK

9th – 22nd JUNE 2016

A [Tropical Birding](#) SET DEPARTURE tour



Ancient Murrelet is a target for many on this expedition. Off of Talan we bobbed among hundreds in our Zodiacs.

Guided by: Lisle Gwynn

*All photos in this report were taken by Lisle Gwynn. Species pictured are highlighted **RED**.*

INTRODUCTION

Russia is a land that is difficult to put into words. Almost every single stereotype you've ever heard about the place is true, and yet it is nothing like you may imagine. It blindsides you with constant surprises, and yet it is comfortingly homely, despite being undeniably unfamiliar. The people are incredibly friendly, more so than many other destinations around the globe, and even here in the far far *far* east where a culture of paranoia and suspicion is a way of life strangers are met not with caution and wariness as you might imagine, but with open arms, warm smiles and some of the most friendly greetings I have ever experienced.

Without Heritage Expeditions' *'Spirit of Enderby'*, a 50 passenger, Russian-flagged, Russian-crewed and tastefully refitted expedition vessel, birding this part of the world would be, with no exaggeration, impossible. The vast majority of sites we visit in this itinerary, and indeed all of our Russian Far East itineraries, are inaccessible by land and it is only by combination of ship and Zodiac inflatable boat that we are able to explore in the way that we do.

A small pocket of cold water sitting inside of the Kuril Island chain, bordered by the warmer Pacific, the Sea of Okhotsk is a hidden gem full of palpable history, great wildlife and thick atmosphere. Our adventure began with a short extension on the unique island of Sakhalin where we sought local endemics like Sakhalin Leaf Warbler and Sakhalin Grasshopper Warbler. From here we made our way along the coast northwards to the landmark town of Magadan, stopping frequently to explore. Our first stop was at Piltun Bay where we cruised alongside Gray Whales and bobbed below flocks of Aleutian Terns, whilst in the Shantar Archipelago we faced thick ice that held hundreds of 'Arctic seals' like Ringed, Larga, Bearded and the most beautiful of all pinnipeds, and a Russian Far East speciality, Ribbon Seal. We also enjoyed watching Steller's Sea Eagles hunting fish in their icy homeland. Further along the coast we made a stop to bird within an abandoned military base, finding Pallas's Warbler, Siberian Rubythroat and Siberian Accentor among other highlights, before pulling into the town of Okhotsk. Within Okhotsk we watched 20+ Steller's Sea Eagles at close range, a flock of hundreds of Aleutian Terns, and enormous flocks of gulls. We ended the expedition with three glorious days in clear sunshine along the coast north-east of Magadan and at the Yamskie Islands. Our time at Talan was a stunning highlight, not only for its huge seabird colony, approachable puffins and Middendorf's Grasshopper Warblers, but also for our time spent sitting among a flock of several hundred Ancient Murrelets as the sun went down. Along with Yankicha in the Kurils, Yamskie must rate among the world's best birding spectacles. Sitting on our Zodiacs in perfect quiet as the alcids start to arrive at their burrows, first in flocks of tens, then hundreds, and then suddenly the sky is black with auklets, flocks of tens of thousands and a total of several million. This could only be topped off with a bright day in pristine Taiga forest surrounded by Spotted Nutcrackers, Brown Shrikes, Siberian Rubythroats, Arctic and Pallas's Warblers, and several stunning Brown Bears. A long King Eider and flocks of hundreds of Goosander saw us out to the port of Magadan.

Tundra, Taiga and ice, the Sea of Okhotsk is as varied as it is stunning, and surely holds some of the greatest numbers of birds anywhere on the planet. This is a unique expedition, and one that teams perfectly with the very different 'Ring of Fire' expedition that precedes it.

Sakhalin birding extension

With some time free between the Spirit of Enderby arriving in the port of Korsakov and leaving again for the Sea of Okhotsk expedition it was arranged for the birders leaving the ship, and those joining it, to team up to target some of the island's endemic and special birds.

Starting at the port we made our way along the coast to one of the world's largest LPG plants where, in a slightly security-tight area, they found **Black-browed Reed Warbler**, **Spotted Nutcracker**, **Oriental Greenfinch**, **Eurasian Siskin**, **Stejneger's Stonechat**, **Black-backed Wagtail**, **Temminck's Cormorant** and had superb views of displaying **Latham's Snipe**. Moving on along the coast to a site that Lisle and Chris had up their sleeves, lunch was taken among a bounty of singing **Black-browed Reed Warblers** and **Black-faced Buntings**, whilst a fly-over **Eye-browed Thrush** provided a little distraction, but not as much as a group of 20+ hauled out **Largha Seals** did. With a little time and patience, and a lot of effort from the guides to make sure everyone saw the bird, we also achieved excellent views of the normally ultra-skulky **Sakhalin Grasshopper Warbler**, a relatively recent split from Gray's Grasshopper Warbler and a Sakhalin endemic.

Moving across the road and into an idyllic forested valley we encountered two **Eastern Buzzards** being mobbed by a **Eurasian Sparrowhawk** and **Large-billed Crows**, whilst closer to Earth we found the endemic and ordinarily-tricky **Sakhalin Leaf-Warbler** with fair ease with one bird coming within a few feet of the ecstatic crowd. Another leaf warbler, **Arctic Warbler** was found in the valley before it came time to leave for the next site: a town park.

Some town parks are devoid of life, but this is not the case in Yuzhno-Sakhalinsk where Gagarin Park is an excellent birding spot.

Over our time here, which was a mere couple of hours, we found stunning **Narcissus Flycatchers**, slightly more drab **Asian Brown Flycatchers**, **Japanese** and **Coal Tits**, **Eurasian Nuthatch**, **Eastern Crowned Warbler**, **Russet Sparrow**, and eventually everybody had walk-away views of the extremely difficult **Rufous-tailed Robin**,



otherwise known as Swinhoe's Robin.

Day 1: Port of Korsakov and at Sea

The expedition began in earnest today, with the entire group congregating at the port in the morning ready to board the ship. After being shown to cabins the expeditioners sipped Ginger Ale in the bar and chatted through their hopes for the next couple of weeks. As the ship moved off from the wharf, the bar was deserted and the ships decks became a vibrant meeting place for all onboard.

Around the port **Temminck's Cormorants**, **Pacific Swifts**, **Brunnich's Guillemot** and a **Black-eared Kite** saw us off, and moving through the bay and away from Korsakov we tallied **Rhinoceros Auklets** in their hundreds, **Short-tailed Shearwaters** in their thousands and even a handful of **Harbour Porpoise** and **Minke Whale**. After a series of briefings and safety drills the bridge and decks once again became watching posts where **Pacific Fulmar**, **Ancient Murrelet** and **Dall's Porpoise** were seen, whilst **Short-tailed Shearwaters** reached numbers above 10,000 individuals – quite the spectacle!

The first spectacular dinner of the expedition was presented in the evening, prior to 'The Chris and Lisle Show', otherwise known as the species log where the birders and other naturalists gathered to exchange notes on sightings, species and numbers for the day.

Day 2: Tyuliney Island and at Sea

With instructions from Rodney that this morning's landing would be entirely dependent on the weather conditions we were faced with on arriving at Tyuliney Island (or Seal Island), it was with anticipation that most expeditioners gathered on the bridge of the ship to watch a small team of staff scout the landing site to see if it was at all possible to land in the swell, chop and generally messy seas we had been dealt. Unfortunately the news came back negative, our first landing of the trip was a no go, however from the ship we enjoyed views of **Steller's Sea Lions**, **Northern Fur Seals**, **Common** and **Brunnich's Guillemots (next page top)**, **Rhinoceros** and **Crested Auklets**, **Glaucous-winged** and **Black-tailed Gulls**, **'Stejneger's' White-winged Scoters** and lots of **Black-legged Kittiwake** and **Pacific Fulmar**.





Moving away from Tyuliney the weather failed to cease throughout the day, and it was a bumpy but not uncomfortable day spent at sea. For those that spent time on the bridge, the rewards were great with highlights including **Aleutian Tern**, **Great Northern Diver**, several **Laysan Albatross** and at dusk even a handful of **Fin Whale** giving great views not far off of the ship. Alongside the watching there were also lectures on seabirds and human history of the region to attend, as well as more meeting and greeting and passengers getting to know one another over cups of tea and coffee.

Day 3: At sea and Pil'tun Bay

With some distance left to run to the destination for the day, Pil'tun Bay on the east side of Sakahlin Island, the ship trundled along the coast whilst we kept a keen look out for anything of interest. Fortunately we were rewarded with good looks at **Red-necked Phalarope**, **Brunnich's Guillemot**, **Crested Auklet**, **Rhinoceros Auklet**, **Arctic Skua**, **Black-throated Diver** and even a **Fin Whale**.

Arriving off of Pil'tun Bay five Zodiacs were launched and the first off-ship activity of the expedition was under way. The target here was to see Gray Whales which come here each year on their lengthy migration, with some heading east and south-east to Mexico, and others thought to head south into the South China Sea. Fortunately for all we managed to find three **Gray Whales** which gave spectacular views and photo

opportunities, allowing superb looks at these graceful and peaceful giants. Other wildlife was of course plentiful with hundreds of **Aleutian Terns**, many flocks of **Black** and **White-winged Scoter**, **Long-tailed Duck**, **Harlequin Duck**, and even some of the *longipennis* race of **Common Tern**.

Back at sea the ship headed further north still toward the island of Loney and the evening was spent getting great looks at new species like **Long-billed Murrelet** and **Horned Puffin** whilst old favourites flanked us as usual, including a bounty of **Aleutian Terns** perched on debris wood and logs.



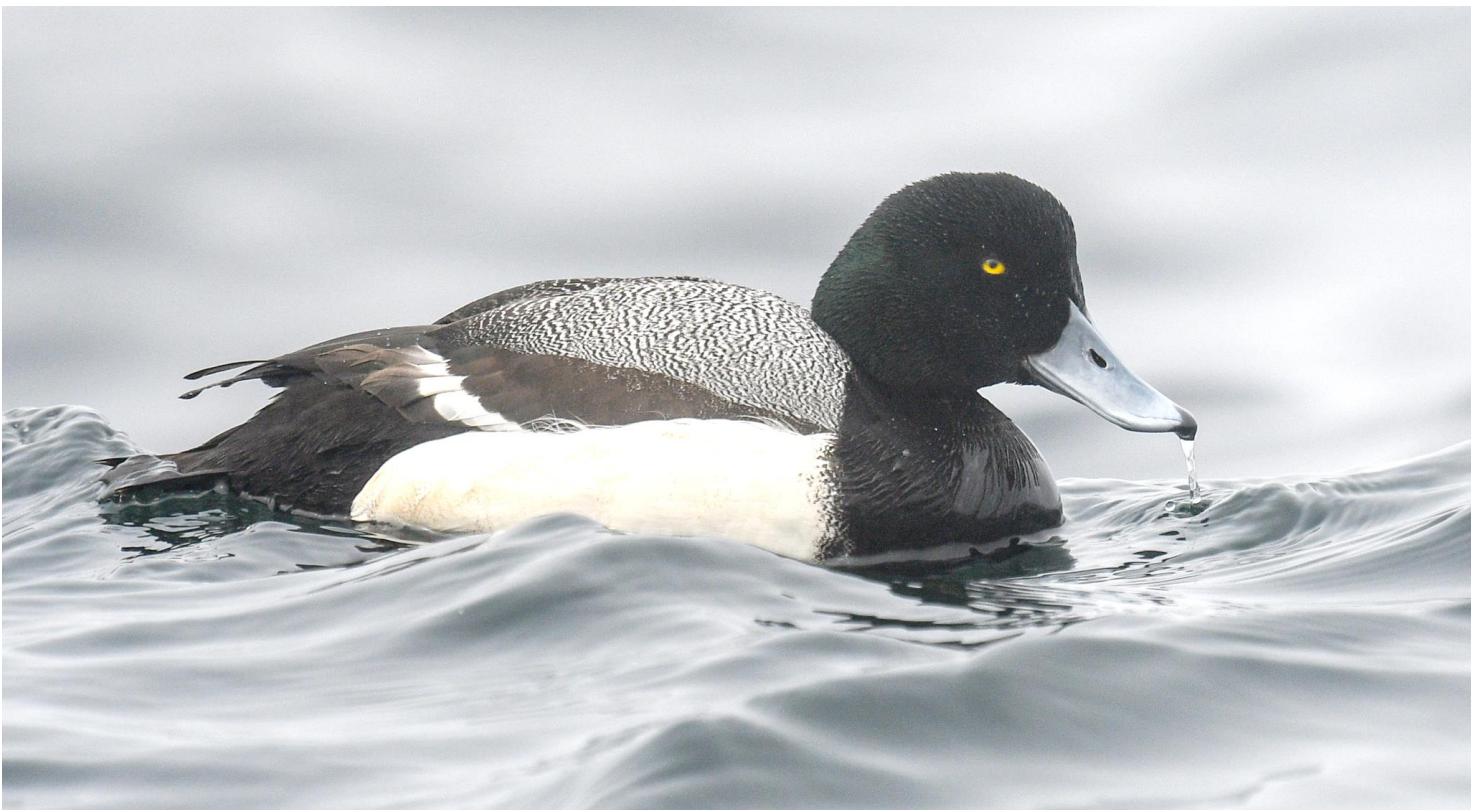
Day 4: Loney Island

Little more than just a group of rocks laying in the middle of the Sea of Okhotsk, Loney is home to tens of thousands of seabirds and thus presents quite the marvel for the few visitors that Heritage Expeditions brings here each year, the only operator to do so.

Departing the ship and beginning our Zodiac cruise among fog so thick each Zodiac could barely see the others we eventually found some clear air and started to see some birds. Once we reached the islands it became quite apparent that this is a very special place. **Brunnich's Guillemot** occupied every space they could whilst **Common Guillemot** were scattered among them. **Spectacled Guillemot** were also seen by a few people, whilst everybody enjoyed the bounty of auklets, with **Parakeet**, **Crested**, **Least** and the endemic subspecies of **Whiskered** all being seen extremely well. The Whiskered Auklets here are of particular interest as they are often touted as being distinct enough to warrant species status in their own right. Featuring more numerous and longer whisker plumes than the other two races they are particularly engrossing birds. Moving to the offshore islets a **Mongolian Plover** stole our attention aside some **Harlequin Duck** and a **Red-necked**

Grebe, whilst a **Common Sandpiper** flitted about. A drake **Greater Scaup** (next page) gave even those familiar with the species arguably their best ever looks. Passerines wayward and lost included **Brambling**, **Grey Wagtail** and **Taiga Flycatcher**. The real stars of the show though were the bountiful, curious, inquisitive, enormous and intimidating **Steller's Sea Lions**. Occupying every metre of rock available we saw huge males, large females and tiny pups. Exploring a few caves, we were met with the barks, roars and rumbles of sea lions at every turn, showing all why the legends of cave-dwelling sea monsters were so convincing.

Back on the ship, and after another hearty lunch, the afternoon was spent cruising through the north-western Sea of Okhotsk toward the Shantar Archipelago with our first sightings of ice on the horizon. The day was completed by a handful of **Minke Whale**.



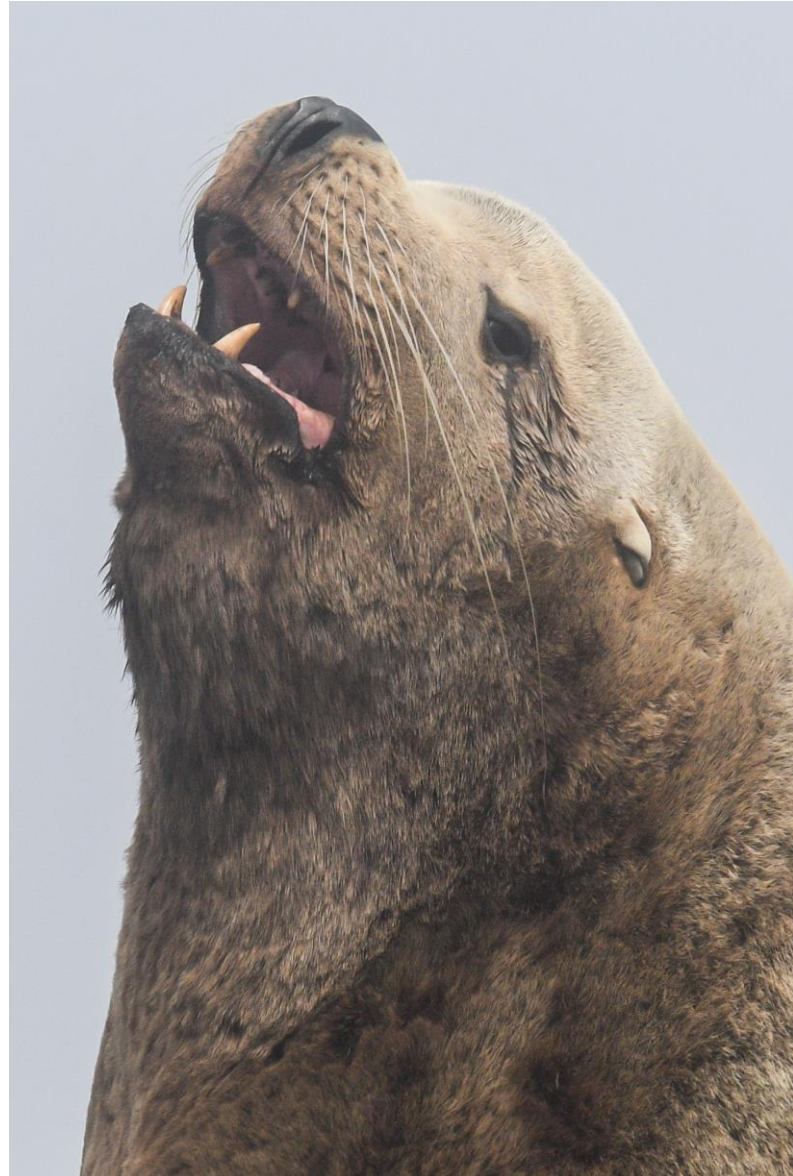
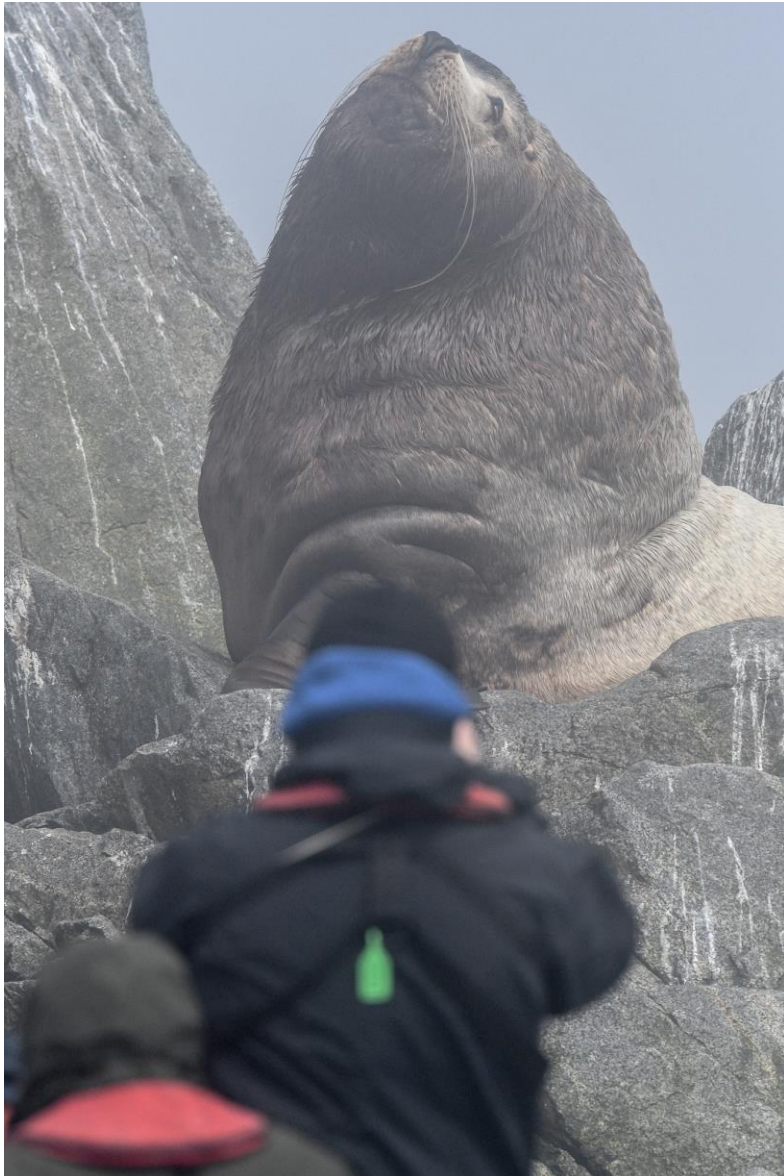


Brunnich's Guillemot is a dapper, large auk



Whiskered Auklets on Iony are particularly interesting





Steller's Sea Lions are impressive in the water and out

Day 5: Shantar Archipelago

The Shantar Archipelago is an area known primarily for its outstanding marine mammal diversity, with an Arctic-type fauna at a relatively low latitude. In this shallow corner of the sea where a large river flows in there are populations of Bowhead Whale, Beluga, Ringed and Bearded Seals, and of course the Russian Far East specialty, the simply gorgeous Ribbon Seal.

Waking early, a handful of eager watchers were rewarded with hundreds of **Tufted Puffins**, many **Horned Puffins** and other auks including **Crested** and **Parakeet Auklets**, **Brunnich's** and **Common Guillemots** and **Spectacled Guillemot**. Mammals were represented on the early watch by our first **Largha Seals** of the day

and at least 12 **Minke Whale** including some very close individuals. After breakfast though is when the day began in earnest with the ship entering the ice.

This year we were fortunate to find a large amount of ice around the Shantar Archipelago and it certainly translated to some good sightings. We spent the remainder of the day travelling on transects into and out of the ice, spending time both within the ice and along the edge. For some it was their first experience of ice cruising, others were old hands. Along the way we found several colossal and much desired **Steller's Sea Eagles (page 12 bottom)** looking regal upon ice piles, with one even wow-ing the crowd by taking to the air and snatching a large fish from the sea right in front of us – extremely impressive! Other birds of note included the cute and attractive **Kamchatka Gull**, a putative split from Mew Gull which is certainly very different looking indeed, whilst **Spectacled Guillemots** passed us by in the stretches of open water. The day was not about birds though, but mammals, and seals in particular. Throughout the day we racked up impressive numbers of **Ringed Seal (next page top)**, several **Bearded Seal (next page bottom)**, many **Largha Seals (page 12 top)** and, the ultimate and enormously desired target here, the most beautiful pinniped of them all, the regal **Ribbon Seal**. Some had travelled to the Russian Far East with the sole intention of seeing this species, and it was with great delight that we found three individuals in the morning and several more in the afternoon, including one obliging male that gave us incredible looks before slinking off into the icy depths.

With a landmark day completed, we celebrated dutifully in the bar before dinner and enjoyed a stunning clear sunset surrounded by light ice, open water and stunning views of the archipelago at twilight.







Day 6: Shantar Archipelago

After yesterday's success with our target animals, mainly the 'ice seals', we decided to hang around the area with the aim of trying to get better views of Ribbon Seal, or perhaps bumping into one of the near-mythical Bowhead Whales that inhabit the area.

By breakfast at 7:30am, and after a stunning sunrise over the ice, we had amassed an impressive diversity of life including 3 **Ribbon Seals**, many **Largha Seal**, a couple of **Bearded Seals** and a couple of dozen **Ringed Seal**. Interestingly, the Ringed Seals in the Sea of Okhotsk appear to be quite different to those found further north in the Arctic, and certainly compared to those in the Atlantic Arctic. Here the species is much more tapered in the body, slimmer, longer-necked, on average much paler, and appears larger, making identification and separation from Largha Seal quite difficult. Mere pondering, but there could be a surprise waiting for us when someone does some genetic work on these seals...



Sunrise in the Shantar Archipelago, Sea of Okhotsk

After breakfast and for the rest of the day well into the evening we travelled back and forth along the ice edge looking for life, of which we saw plenty. On the bird front we totaled many hundreds of **Parakeet** and **Crested Auklets**, **Horned** and **Tufted Puffins**, both large **Guillemots**, dozens of **Spectacled Guillemot**, a single **Pigeon Guillemot**, and most welcome of all a modest estimate of c.20 **Steller's Sea Eagles**, including one attempting to catch a fish and another with prey consisting of an unidentified bird – extremely impressive! As for the mammals, we lucked in with many more of **Ringed**, **Largha** and **Bearded Seals**, but in a bizarre twist of fate the many more Ribbon Seals we'd hoped to find amounted to just one further individual **Ribbon Seal**. With a lot more ice than normal in the area we suppose the seals remained in inaccessible corners of the archipelago. Still, we did have a run of luck with cetaceans with two **Minke Whale** being seen well along the ice edge and, most welcome of all, two stunning male **Orca** hunting along the ice edge. All in all, a wonderful day spent among the ice of subarctic Russia.



Scouring the ice for life; viewing and photographing a Bearded Seal

Day 7: Mal'mynskie Islands and Aldona Bay

The weather beat us this morning, there is simply no other way of putting it. Arriving off of Mal'mynskie we were met with heavy swell, messy seas and driving rain, not to mention the strong wind, making a landing or Zodiac cruise absolutely impossible. Fortunately we did manage to find a bit of shelter in Aldona Bay, on the coast of mainland Russia, allowing us to get off of the ship and stretch our legs for a while.

Aldona, like several other stops on the Russian Far East expeditions, is an old military base from the Soviet era, left almost intact and appearing to have been left in a hurry. All around, vehicles, buildings and guard posts lay abandoned and reclaimed by nature. It is quite surreal birding among a Soviet military base, to say



the least, but given the time since these places were abandoned the natural wealth has once again returned to the area, meaning the birding can be quite good. Unfortunately we were still plagued by heavy rain and generally unpleasant weather but we managed to make a wet landing regardless. Once on land we scoured the scrub, woodland and base for a few hours turning up gems like **Siberian Rubythroat** and some really rather cute **Dusky Warblers**. Far and away the highlights of the afternoon though were an obliging **Siberian Accentor** and an unbelievably cooperative **Pallas's Leaf Warbler** – truly brilliant. Along the shore we found **Ringed Plover**, **Eurasian Skylark** and **Steller's Sea Eagle** whilst others found a **Siberian Chipmunk**.

Despite the weather, an enjoyable day was had and we polished off the birding with at least 20 **Spectacled Guillemots** giving arms-length fly-bys as we returned to the ship where some delicious Salmon, roasted pork or vegetable curry was waiting – yum!

Day 8: Town of Okhotsk

After a week dedicated to seeking and seeing wildlife of various descriptions it was about time for a bit of culture to be thrown in, and we certainly got our fair share in the historic border and frontier town of Okhotsk. Sitting on the north-western shore of the Sea of Okhotsk, the town features a fascinating maritime history, including laying claim to the original starting point of Vitus Bering's expeditions in these waters.

The Zodiac ride in to the river beside the town was eventful in itself with new trip birds like **Vega Gull** and **Black-headed Gull**, and eleven **Steller's Sea Eagles**. Once in the town itself we spent the afternoon perusing its various sites, from the obligatory statue of Lenin to the town natural history museum. The museum was fascinating and provided quite the insight into the local fauna and flora, as well as its history. We were particularly surprised to find locally collected specimens of Spot-billed Duck, Mandarin Duck, Great Grey Owl, tantalizing Black-billed Cappercaillie and Siberian Crane which, apparently, pass through in small numbers seasonally.

Moving into a square near the town centre we enjoyed various cultural displays, concerts and shows including displays from both the local indigenous people and the Slavic settlers. Good local food and sweet tea was enjoyed, the passengers and staff danced with locals throughout the afternoon, others sang, and we enjoyed dance shows performed with considerable precision and admirable talent.

It was a shame when we finally had to depart the town and leave our warm and welcoming hosts behind, but after goodbyes and final entertainment with the local kids we made our way back out into the estuary. Here the numbers of birds had risen considerably and we spent some time photographing the 25 **Steller's Sea Eagles** that had congregated on the mudflats, as well as sitting in awe as we watched thousands of *longipennis* **Common Tern** and **Aleutian Tern** whirl around in the sky, watched keenly by the dozens of local **Largha Seals** and **Vega Gulls**. The eagles put on quite the show and allowed remarkably close approach, but soon it was time to head back to the ship for a short period socializing in the bar before dinner. The bird list with Chris and Lisle was completed afterwards, and it was soon bed time for most onboard.



Day 9: Talan Island

Arriving off of the picturesque island of Talan at around midday there was a buzz of excitement among the passengers. Something strange had happened and a rare sight indeed had been seen – the sun! It was with the sun on our backs that we made our way ashore on Talan after lunch.

Opting to first of all cruise the island in the Zodiacs we spent a couple of hours perusing the coastal wonders of the island. We were excited to find several **Steller's Sea Eagles**, including two nests with chicks, whilst the alcid or auk presence was diverse with **Parakeet**, **Crested** and **Rhinoceros Auklets**, **Brunnich's**, **Spectacled** and **Common Guillemots**, **Tufted** and **Horned Puffins**, all in great numbers. The photographers and birders were in heaven, whilst everybody enjoyed seeing huge numbers of birds up close and personal. After we'd had our fill of seabirds we made a short landing on the island where some went to the puffin colony and had super views of **Tufted** and **Horned Puffins** at their burrows as well as **Crested Auklets**, whilst some of the birders went with Chris and Lisle to try and find one of the trickier residents of the island. It was only after considerable effort and trying that we managed to find and score stonking views of a **Middendorf's Grasshopper Warbler**, but they were well rewarded indeed.



After returning to the ship for dinner most of the passengers returned low to the water once again and took to the Zodiacs for an evening cruise around the island. This proved a wise decision as even better views of a lot of species were obtained, including the localized and special **Spectacled Guillemot** swimming beneath the bow of the Zodiacs giving unprecedented views. The highlight of the evening for all though was a quite special encounter with several hundred **Ancient Murrelets (next page)**. These birds are often skittish and unapproachable so it was with significant surprise that we were able to drift among them for unparalleled views and photo opportunities. Cutting the engine, drifting, and hearing hundreds of Ancient Murrelets calling around you is a once in a lifetime experience. Add to this of course the flocks of thousands of **Crested Auklets** and all of the aforementioned seabirds and this made for a special evening indeed. The beautiful sunset just added to the experience and no one could be seen without a wholly content smile on this evening.





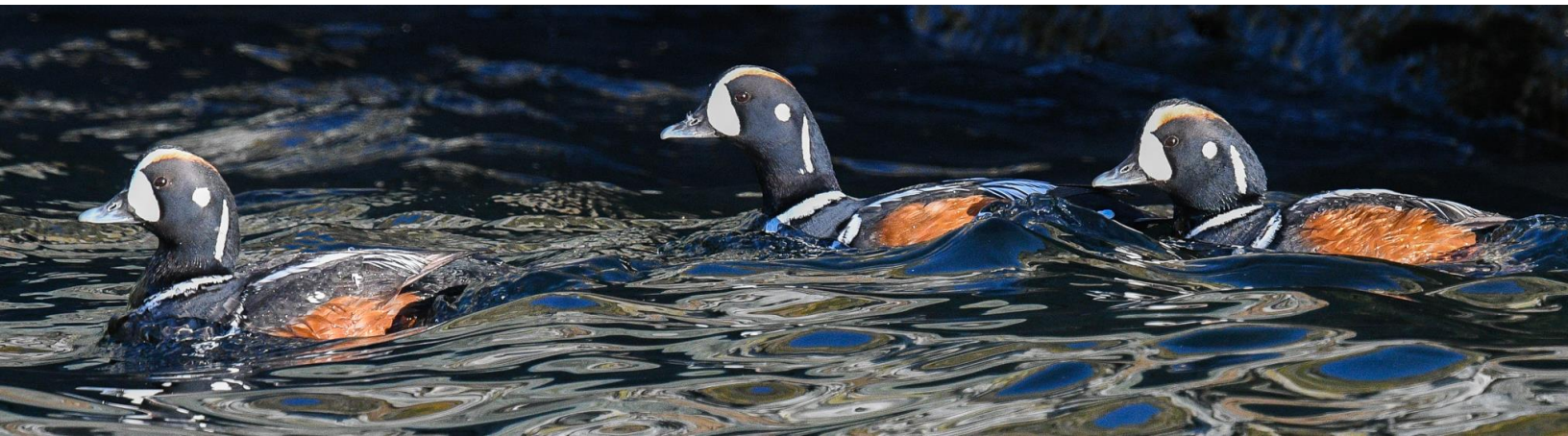
Day 10: Yamskie Islands

The Yamskie island group lays off of the coast of the northern Sea of Okhotsk, east of Magadan, and featured as our destination today for one special reason: alcids! Literally millions of alcids.

After a morning at sea in dense fog having seen just a handful each of the usual suspects like **Horned** and **Tufted Puffins**, **Brunnich's** and **Common Guillemot** and a bonus pair of **Fork-tailed Storm Petrels**, it was with great excitement that we started to see birds from the islands as we approached in the clearing fog. Slowly, mile by mile, the numbers of birds increased until out of the fog we emerged into bright sunshine to be faced by a most spectacular island. After an early dinner we boarded the Zodiacs and made the very short dash to the vicinity of the island, thanks in no small part to Chief Mate Max and the Captain's skillful positioning of the ship close to the island. The fun was just about to begin.

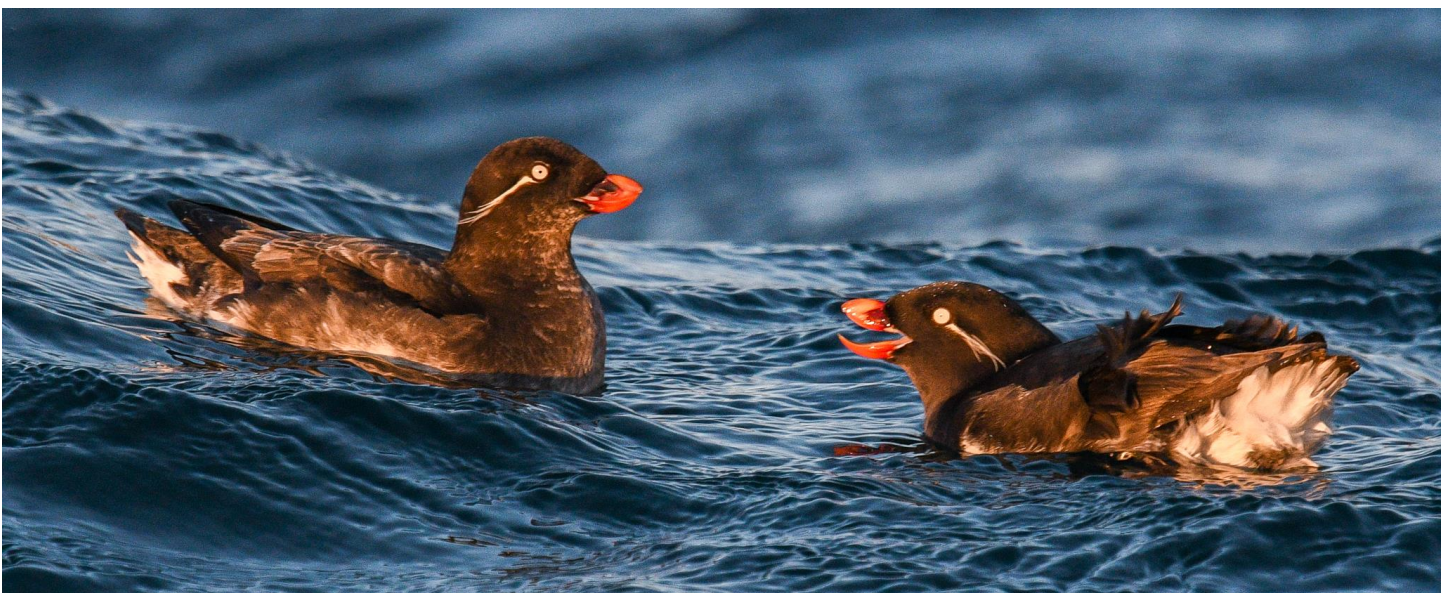
We spent the next 5 hours cruising beside the island watching as the number of birds slowly increased as the light faded. We began in bright sunshine with absolutely phenomenal views of the spectacular **Spectacled Guillemot** as they swam around the Zodiacs and posed for photos on the rocky shore. Next up were small groups of gorgeous **Harlequin Ducks (next page bottom)** which posed dutifully for the cameras, only to be showed up by the ever increasing number of alcids. Turning back to the more open water we were faced with a now incredible concentration of birds with starling-like wheeling and twisting murmurations visible all along the horizon and now over the island itself. Looking up at the ridges of the island revealed swarms of auklets that looked more like large groups of mosquitos than birds. Though puffins and guillemots were present in their thousands, impressive in itself, the real draw here are the breeding colonies of **Crested, Parakeet** and the stunning tiny **Least Auklet (next page top)**. Around the island the auklets carpeted the sea, on land they filled every available inch of space, and overhead and to the horizon they filled the air thick. Among them were lesser numbers of **Ancient Murrelet**, but for the photographers the auklets were the absolute prize at the end of the journey we had undertaken from Sakhalin here to the furthest point of our journey.

The sun finally lowered in the sky to the horizon line casting the sky in pastel tones of pink, purple, blue and silver, wildly dotted with millions upon millions of auklets. Words literally cannot describe the spectacle here, and it is made even better by the knowledge that less than c.300 people have ever seen it. Watching a trio of **Steller's Sea Eagles** wheel through the huge swarms of **Black-legged Kittiwake**, we finally made the dash back to the ship as the light faded. Arriving back, Chris and Samuel were already on the back deck of the ship eating amazing white chocolate and boysenberry cr me brulees, their groups desiring to abandon the birding in favour of dessert some time before the last of us arrived 'home'. What a day – one of the absolute greatest bird spectacles on Earth.





Spectacled Guillemot is a unique and good looking alcid, and a specialty of the area.



Parakeet Auklets with their clog-like bills are photogenic and numerous at Yamskie.



Zodiac cruising Yamskie can only be described as alcid heaven.

Day 11: Astronomic Bay, Koni Peninsula

Today was the final full day, and final landing of the expedition. Unfortunately our adventuring had come to a close, much to everyone's dismay, but there was just enough time for one more landing and a few more surprises in this surprise-laden corner of the globe.

The very early risers were rewarded with the first **Brown Bear** sightings of the day with a female and cub, and a lone male, seen before breakfast. After we had eaten and boarded the Zodiacs we made our way to shore where two further bears were found, though at some distance, along with hundreds of **Common Goldeneye**, hundreds of **Goosander**, several **Pacific Eider** and even a surprise **King Eider** – and a stunning drake at that. Surprise of the early morning though came from the 7 or so **Bearded Seals** and 100+ **Largha Seals** inhabiting the bay.

Overall the morning was a well-enjoyed, well-deserved and roaring success. Three walks went ashore and all three encountered stunning wildlife, amazing vistas and pristine untouched Taiga forest. Between them they saw 11 **Brown Bears**, **Brown Shrike**, **Hazel Grouse**, **Willow Ptarmigan**, **Pallas's Leaf Warbler**, 6+ **Steller's Sea Eagles**, 2 **Osprey** and lots more besides. The highlight of the morning though, as was agreed by all, was merely the opportunity to make a landing in bright sunshine on a perfect calm day and to enjoy a last foray into the wilderness and desolate beauty of the Russian Far East.

Once back onboard the ship we enjoyed a superb buffet carvery style dinner and many assorted desserts which tightened lips and waistlines. Unfortunately the expedition had come to an end and the departure from Magadan loomed, along with the long journeys home for most.



A dusk visit to Yamskie will probably rate as a career highlight for any birder.

BIRD LIST

The taxonomy of the bird list follows: Clements, James F., White, Anthony W., and Fitzpatrick, John W. The Clements Checklist of Birds of the World. Cornell, 2007.
This list is up to date with the major changes published by Cornell up until August 2014.

Column 2 lists species' IUCN Red List status

HO in column 5 denotes species that were heard only

EO in column 5 denotes species that were seen only on the pre-tour extension

Numbers: 136 bird species and 17 mammal species recorded

ANSERIFORMES: Anatidae

1	Gadwall	<i>Anas strepera</i>	
2	Eurasian Wigeon	<i>Anas penelope</i>	
3	Northern Pintail	<i>Anas acuta</i>	
4	Eurasian Teal	<i>Anas crecca</i>	
5	Greater Scaup	<i>Aythya marila</i>	
6	King Eider	<i>Somateria spectabilis</i>	
7	Common Eider	<i>Somateria mollissima</i>	
8	Harlequin Duck	<i>Histrionicus histrionicus</i>	
9	Surf Scoter	<i>Melanitta perspicillata</i>	Rare/Accidental
10	White-winged Scoter	<i>Melanitta deglandi</i> <i>deglandi</i>	
11	Stejneger's Scoter	<i>Melanitta deglandi stejnegeri</i>	
12	Black Scoter	<i>Melanitta americana</i>	Near-threatened
13	Long-tailed Duck	<i>Clangula hyemalis</i>	Vulnerable
14	Common Goldeneye	<i>Bucephala clangula</i>	
15	Smew	<i>Mergellus albellus</i>	
16	Common Merganser	<i>Mergus merganser</i>	
17	Red-breasted Merganser	<i>Mergus serrator</i>	

GALLIFORMES: Phasianidae

18	Hazel Grouse	<i>Bonasa bonasia</i>	
19	Willow Ptarmigan	<i>Lagopus lagopus</i>	
20	Rock Ptarmigan	<i>Lagopus muta</i>	

GAVIIFORMES: Gaviidae

- | | | | |
|----|--------------------|-----------------------|-----------------|
| 21 | Red-throated Loon | <i>Gavia stellata</i> | |
| 22 | Arctic Loon | <i>Gavia arctica</i> | |
| 23 | Pacific Loon | <i>Gavia pacifica</i> | |
| 24 | Yellow-billed Loon | <i>Gavia adamsii</i> | Near-threatened |

PODICIPEDIFORMES: Podicipedidae

- | | | | |
|----|------------------|---------------------------|--|
| 25 | Red-necked Grebe | <i>Podiceps grisegena</i> | |
|----|------------------|---------------------------|--|

PROCELLARIIFORMES: Diomedidae

- | | | | |
|----|------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------|
| 26 | Laysan Albatross | <i>Phoebastria immutabilis</i> | Near-threatened |
|----|------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------|

PROCELLARIIFORMES: Procellariidae

- | | | | |
|----|-------------------------|-----------------------------|--|
| 27 | Northern Fulmar | <i>Fulmarus glacialis</i> | |
| 28 | Short-tailed Shearwater | <i>Ardenna tenuirostris</i> | |

PROCELLARIIFORMES: Hydrobatidae

- | | | | |
|----|--------------------------|------------------------------|--|
| 29 | Fork-tailed Storm-Petrel | <i>Oceanodroma furcata</i> | |
| 30 | Leach's Storm-Petrel | <i>Oceanodroma leucorhoa</i> | |

SULIFORMES: Phalacrocoracidae

- | | | | |
|----|-------------------|--------------------------------|--|
| 31 | Pelagic Cormorant | <i>Phalacrocorax pelagicus</i> | |
|----|-------------------|--------------------------------|--|

ACCIPITRIFORMES: Pandionidae

- | | | | |
|----|--------|--------------------------|--|
| 32 | Osprey | <i>Pandion haliaetus</i> | |
|----|--------|--------------------------|--|

ACCIPITRIFORMES: Accipitridae

- | | | | |
|----|----------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 33 | Eurasian Sparrowhawk | <i>Accipiter nisus</i> | |
| 34 | Northern Goshawk | <i>Accipiter gentilis</i> | |
| 35 | Black Kite | <i>Milvus migrans</i> | |
| 36 | White-tailed Eagle | <i>Haliaeetus albicilla</i> | |
| 37 | Steller's Sea-Eagle | <i>Haliaeetus pelagicus</i> | Breeding endemic Vulnerable |
| 38 | Eastern Buzzard | <i>Buteo japonicus</i> | |

CHARADRIIFORMES: Charadriidae

- | | | | |
|----|----------------------|-----------------------------|--|
| 39 | Mongolian Plover | <i>Charadrius mongolus</i> | |
| 40 | Common Ringed Plover | <i>Charadrius hiaticula</i> | |
| 41 | Little Ringed Plover | <i>Charadrius dubius</i> | |

CHARADRIIFORMES: Scolopacidae

42	Common Sandpiper	<i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>	
43	Gray-tailed Tattler	<i>Tringa brevipes</i>	Breeding endemic Near-threatened
44	Common Greenshank	<i>Tringa nebularia</i>	
45	Wood Sandpiper	<i>Tringa glareola</i>	
46	Little Curlew	<i>Numenius minutus</i>	Breeding endemic
47	Whimbrel	<i>Numenius phaeopus</i>	
48	Ruddy Turnstone	<i>Arenaria interpres</i>	
49	Red-necked Stint	<i>Calidris ruficollis</i>	
50	Dunlin	<i>Calidris alpina</i>	
51	Latham's Snipe	<i>Gallinago hardwickii</i>	
52	Common Snipe	<i>Gallinago gallinago</i>	
53	Red-necked Phalarope	<i>Phalaropus lobatus</i>	
54	Red Phalarope	<i>Phalaropus fulicarius</i>	

CHARADRIIFORMES: Stercorariidae

55	Pomarine Jaeger	<i>Stercorarius pomarinus</i>	
56	Parasitic Jaeger	<i>Stercorarius parasiticus</i>	
57	Long-tailed Jaeger	<i>Stercorarius longicaudus</i>	

CHARADRIIFORMES: Alcidae

58	Common Murre	<i>Uria aalge</i>	
59	Thick-billed Murre	<i>Uria lomvia</i>	
60	Pigeon Guillemot	<i>Cephus columba</i>	
61	Spectacled Guillemot	<i>Cephus carbo</i>	
62	Long-billed Murrelet	<i>Brachyramphus perdix</i>	Near-threatened
63	Ancient Murrelet	<i>Synthliboramphus antiquus</i>	
64	Parakeet Auklet	<i>Aethia psittacula</i>	
65	Least Auklet	<i>Aethia pusilla</i>	
66	Whiskered Auklet	<i>Aethia pygmaea</i>	
67	Crested Auklet	<i>Aethia cristatella</i>	
68	Rhinoceros Auklet	<i>Cerorhinca monocerata</i>	
69	Horned Puffin	<i>Fratercula corniculata</i>	
70	Tufted Puffin	<i>Fratercula cirrhata</i>	

CHARADRIIFORMES: Laridae

71	Black-legged Kittiwake	<i>Rissa tridactyla</i>
72	Black-headed Gull	<i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>
73	Black-tailed Gull	<i>Larus crassirostris</i>
74	Kamchatka Gull	<i>Larus canus kamschatschensis</i>
75	Vega Gull	<i>Larus vegae</i>
76	Slaty-backed Gull	<i>Larus schistisagus</i>
77	Glaucous-winged Gull	<i>Larus glaucescens</i>
78	Glaucous Gull	<i>Larus hyperboreus</i>
79	Aleutian Tern	<i>Onychoprion aleuticus</i>
80	Common Tern	<i>Sterna hirundo</i>

COLUMBIFORMES: Columbidae

81	Oriental Turtle-Dove	<i>Streptopelia orientalis</i>
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CUCULIFORMES: Cuculidae

82	Common Cuckoo	<i>Cuculus canorus</i>
83	Oriental Cuckoo	<i>Cuculus optatus</i>

APODIFORMES: Apodidae

84	Pacific Swift	<i>Apus pacificus</i>
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PICIFORMES: Picidae

85	Pygmy Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos kizuki</i>
86	Great Spotted Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos major</i>

FALCONIFORMES: Falconidae

87	Peregrine Falcon	<i>Falco peregrinus</i>
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PASSERIFORMES: Laniidae

88	Bull-headed Shrike	<i>Lanius bucephalus</i>
89	Brown Shrike	<i>Lanius cristatus</i>

PASSERIFORMES: Corvidae

90	Carrion Crow	<i>Corvus corone</i>
91	Large-billed Crow	<i>Corvus macrorhynchos</i>

92 Common Raven *Corvus corax*

PASSERIFORMES: Alaudidae

93 Sky Lark *Alauda arvensis*

PASSERIFORMES: Hirundinidae

94 Common House-Martin *Delichon urbicum*

95 Asian House-Martin *Delichon dasypus*

PASSERIFORMES: Paridae

96 Coal Tit *Parus ater*

97 Willow Tit *Poecile montanus*

98 Japanese Tit *Parus minor*

PASSERIFORMES: Aegithalidae

99 Long-tailed Tit *Aegithalos caudatus*

PASSERIFORMES: Sittidae

100 Eurasian Nuthatch *Sitta europaea*

PASSERIFORMES: Cettiidae

101 Japanese Bush-Warbler *Horornis diphone*

PASSERIFORMES: Phylloscopidae

102 Dusky Warbler *Phylloscopus fuscatus*

103 Pallas's Leaf Warbler *Phylloscopus proregulus*

104 Arctic Warbler *Phylloscopus borealis*

105 Kamchatka Leaf Warbler *Phylloscopus
examinandus*

106 Sakhalin Leaf Warbler *Phylloscopus borealoides*

107 Eastern Crowned Leaf Warbler *Phylloscopus coronatus*

PASSERIFORMES: Acrocephalidae

108 Black-browed Reed-Warbler *Acrocephalus bistrigiceps*

PASSERIFORMES: Locustellidae

109 Sakhalin Grasshopper-Warbler *Locustella amnicola*

Breeding endemic

110 Middendorff's Grasshopper-Warbler *Locustella ochotensis*

PASSERIFORMES: Muscicapidae

111 Dark-sided Flycatcher *Muscicapa sibirica*

112 Asian Brown Flycatcher *Muscicapa latirostris*

113 Gray-streaked Flycatcher *Muscicapa griseisticta*

114 Rufous-tailed Robin *Larvivora sibilans*

Breeding endemic

115 Bluethroat *Luscinia svecica*

116 Siberian Rubythroat *Calliope calliope*

117 Narcissus Flycatcher *Ficedula narcissina*

118 Taiga Flycatcher *Ficedula albicilla*

119 Stejneger's Stonechat *Saxicola maurus
stejnegeri*

PASSERIFORMES: Turdidae

120 Eyebrowed Thrush *Turdus obscurus*

121 Brown-headed Thrush *Turdus chrysolaus*

PASSERIFORMES: Sturnidae

122 European Starling *Sturnus vulgaris*

PASSERIFORMES: Prunellidae

123 Siberian Accentor *Prunella montanella*

Breeding endemic

PASSERIFORMES: Motacillidae

124 Eastern Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla tschutschensis*

125 White Wagtail *Motacilla alba*

126 Olive-backed Pipit *Anthus hodgsoni*

PASSERIFORMES: Calcariidae

127 Lapland Longspur *Calcarius lapponicus*

128 Snow Bunting *Plectrophenax nivalis*

PASSERIFORMES: Emberizidae

129 Rustic Bunting *Emberiza rustica*

130 Reed Bunting *Emberiza schoeniclus*

PASSERIFORMES: Fringillidae

131	Brambling	<i>Fringilla montifringilla</i>
132	Pine Grosbeak	<i>Pinicola enucleator</i>
133	Oriental Greenfinch	<i>Chloris sinica</i>

PASSERIFORMES: Passeridae

134	House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>
135	Russet Sparrow	<i>Passer rutilans</i>
136	Eurasian Tree Sparrow	<i>Passer montanus</i>

Mammals

1	Arctic Ground Squirrel	<i>Citellus parryi</i>
2	Siberian Chipmunk	<i>Tamias sibericus</i>
3	Red Fox	<i>Vulpus vulpus</i>
4	Brown Bear	<i>Ursus arctos</i>
5	Short-tailed Weasel	<i>Mustela erminea</i>
6	Ringed Seal	<i>Pusa hispida</i>
7	Ribbon Seal	<i>Phoca fasciata</i>
8	Spotted (Largha) Seal	<i>Phoca larga</i>
9	Bearded Seal	<i>Erignathus barbatus</i>
10	Steller's Sea Lion	<i>Eumetopias jubatus</i>
11	Northern Fur Seal	<i>Callorhinus ursinus</i>
12	Orca	<i>Orcinus orca</i>
13	Dall's Porpoise	<i>Phocoenoides dalli</i>
14	Fin Whale	<i>Balaenoptera physalus</i>
15	Minke Whale	<i>Balaenoptera acutorostrata</i>
16	Humpback Whale	<i>Megaptera novaeangliae</i>
17	Gray Whale	<i>Eschrichtius robustus</i>