



With heartfelt thanks to Aleksander Mao
Your photographs, captured with such patience and clarity,
brought these pages to life. Your eye for beauty and quiet
detail not only revealed the birds of Japan—but reminded
me why I love doing this in the first place. Your work
inspires my own.

This guide wouldn't be the same without you.

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日本の鳥

Callyssa Childs

English Birding Guide to

Birds of Japan

Birding Guide to Japan

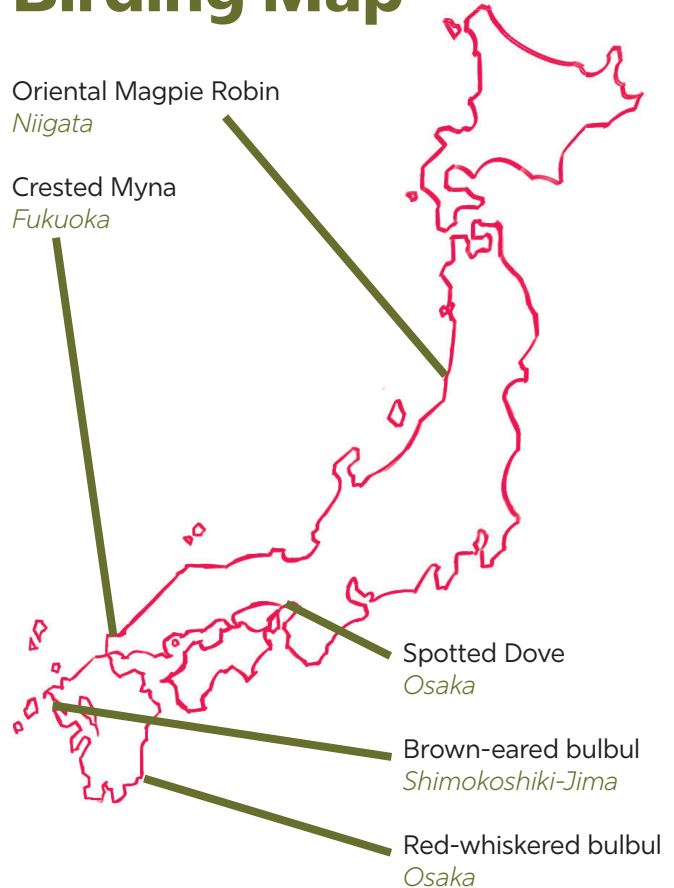
“To watch a bird is to borrow its eyes, if only for a moment.”

Spring is one of the most rewarding seasons to begin birding in Japan. As the sakura bloom and the forests come alive with sound, birdwatchers—new and seasoned—gather to witness the migration and courtship displays of countless species. Whether you’re strolling through city parks or hiking quiet mountain paths, the flutter of wings and melodic calls are never far.

Birding is more than just spotting rare species—it’s a way of tuning into nature’s quiet rhythm. It sharpens your senses, rewards patience, and brings a sense of calm and discovery to every walk. In spring, you might see the elegant Japanese white-eye flitting among blossoms, or catch the flash of a narcissus flycatcher deep in the canopy.

No matter where you are in Japan, birding offers a universal language—one of awe, stillness, and shared joy with the wild. So grab your binoculars, and let the season lead you.

Birding Map



A Winged Guide to Japan

Think of this map as your passport to Japan's most charming springtime residents. From the city-chattering Brown-eared Bulbul to the songful Oriental Magpie-Robin of the southern isles, each region hums with birds waiting to be discovered.

Some species travel far, others never leave home. Some are bold enough to sing from telephone wires, while others keep to forest shadows. Use this guide to see where each bird tends to roost, feed, and perform its seasonal chorus.

Keep your eyes peeled and your ears open—you don't need to be an expert to start birding. Sometimes, all it takes is slowing down and noticing a flicker of feathers in the trees. Who knows? The bird might be watching you too.





Brown-eared bulbul

Hypsipetes amaurotis

Loud, lively, and almost always in motion—the Brown-eared Bulbul is one of the most commonly encountered birds throughout all regions of Japan, making it an excellent companion for travelers new to birding. Named for the smudgy brown patch behind its eye, this greyish-brown bird may look modest, but it makes up for it with its voice: a sharp, metallic call often heard before the bird is seen.

Brown-eared Bulbuls are adaptable and widespread, found in city parks, forests, farmlands, and even temple courtyards. In spring, they become particularly active, feeding on flowers, berries, and insects, and sometimes squabbling over food in trees or gardens.

Though sometimes overlooked due to their abundance, these bulbuls are wonderfully expressive and full of personality. Their energetic presence and recognizable calls make them a great “first bird” to identify—proof that sometimes, the most rewarding birding moments are hiding in plain sight.



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Red-whiskered bulbul

Pycnonotus jocosus

With its elegant black crest, crisp white cheek patch, and striking red whisker-like streaks, the Red-whiskered Bulbul is a delight to spot—bold in appearance and full of personality. These lively birds are known for their cheerful, bubbling calls and social behavior, often seen perched in pairs or small groups.

Though not native to Japan, the Red-whiskered Bulbul has established a small but stable population in select regions, most notably in parts of southern Japan such as Kagoshima and the Ryukyu Islands, where the subtropical climate suits it well. You'll most likely encounter them in urban gardens, wooded areas, or even temple grounds, especially near fruiting trees.

Their adaptability makes them easy to observe, particularly in the early morning when they are most active. For travelers new to birding, the bulbul offers a perfect introduction—vivid, vocal, and often unbothered by human presence.

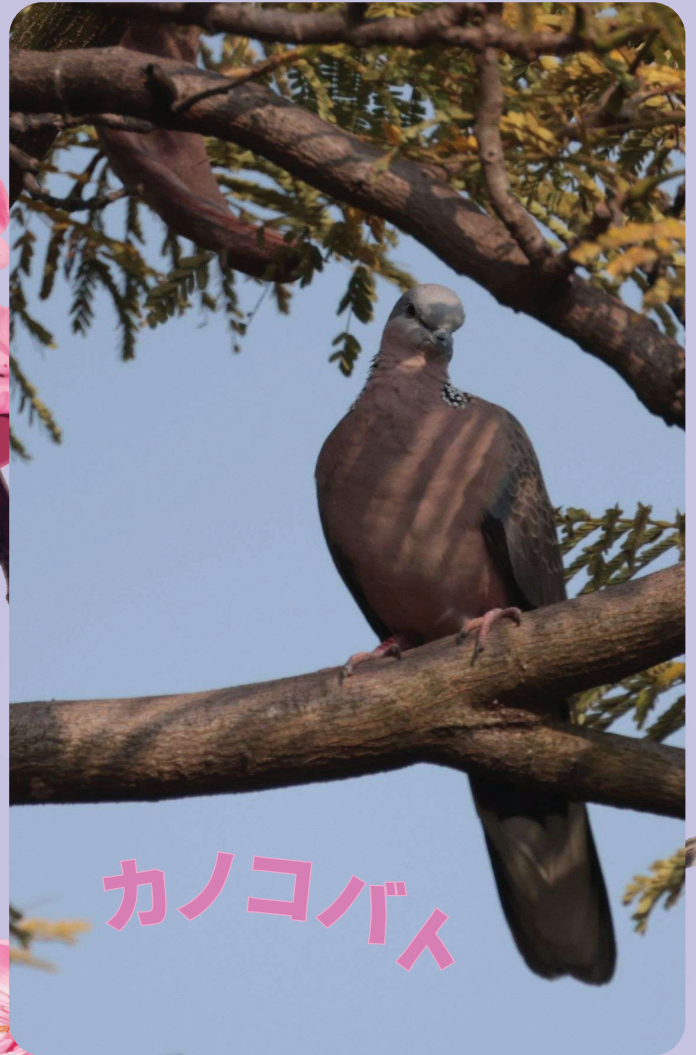
Oriental Magpie Robin

Copsychus saularis

The Oriental Magpie-Robin is a charming songbird with a sleek black-and-white contrast and a tail that flicks with every hop. Males wear glossy black plumage with a white belly and wing bars, while females sport softer grey tones—but both share a rich, varied voice that fills the spring air with cascading whistles and trills.

In Japan, these robins are not widespread but can be found in central regions, particularly near Niigata and along the coast. They favor lowland forests, parks, and quiet gardens, often foraging on the ground or perching openly while singing.

These birds are curious and charismatic—easy to love and surprisingly confident around humans. Their playful movements and vocal prowess make them a favorite among birders, especially beginners looking for a species that's both eye-catching and approachable. Spotting one feels like meeting a tiny performer, bold and full of personality.



Spotted Dove

Spilopelia chinensis

Graceful and soft-spoken, the Spotted Dove is a familiar and peaceful presence across many urban and rural areas in southern Japan, but is especially in Osaka. This slender dove is easily recognized by its warm brown body, long tail, and distinctive black-and-white checkerboard patch on the nape—like a tiny beaded necklace.

Often seen foraging on the ground or perched quietly on rooftops and wires, the Spotted Dove is a calm companion to the bustling cities and quiet gardens it frequents. Its gentle, rhythmic cooing—low and meditative—adds a soothing soundtrack to spring mornings.

For beginner birders, the Spotted Dove offers a lovely introduction: easy to identify, unbothered by humans, and active during daylight hours. Their presence serves as a quiet reminder that birding isn't always about the rare and elusive—sometimes, beauty is found in the birds we walk past every day.



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Crested Myna

Acridotheres cristatellus

With its glossy black plumage, jaunty crest, and sharp yellow eyes, the Crested Myna carries itself with an almost theatrical flair. Originally native to parts of Southeast Asia, this bold and intelligent bird has made its way into urban environments and is occasionally spotted in southern Japan, particularly in areas with a warmer climate and dense human activity.

Crested Mynas thrive in cityscapes—perching on telephone wires, scavenging near markets, and chattering noisily in flocks. They are highly social and adaptable, often mimicking sounds and exhibiting curious, almost mischievous behavior.

For travelers birding in Japan's southern cities or suburban edges, spotting a Crested Myna can be an unexpected delight. They're not shy, and their distinctive silhouette makes them easy to pick out. Their presence is a reminder that not all birding happens in deep forests—sometimes, nature sings loudest right in the heart of the city.