



## Kamchatka – Ring of Fire

27th May– 7th June 2012

### SYSTEMATIC LIST

The taxonomy and English names used in this checklist generally follow *The Clements Checklist of the Birds of the World* with revisions made where an alternative name/taxonomy is considered more appropriate.

This systematic list was compiled by Chris Collins (based on the figures agreed at the nightly logs) and includes all species recorded between leaving Petropavlovsk-Kamchatskiy (27 May) and the ship reaching Yuzhno-Sakhalinsk (8 June).

Accurately counting seabirds at sea is extremely difficult (eg as one can never be sure which birds are following or revisiting the ship), so the system outlined below was adopted, with this also used for the more numerous landbirds:

1-10 = actual number seen

11-100 = A

101-1,000 = B

1,001-10,000 = C

10,001-100,000 = D

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### BIRDS

**Falcated Duck**                      *Anas falcate*

This species is only occasionally recorded in this part of the Russian Far East but a pair of these gorgeous ducks were seen at the Zhupanova River (31 May).

**Eurasian Wigeon**                      *Anas penelope*

Seen on both 2 and 3 June with the higher count being on Atlasova (2 June) where a low A was logged.

**Mallard**                                      *Anas platyrhynchos*

Only seen on four dates after leaving Petropavlovsk-Kamchatskiy with a total of seven birds logged.

**Northern Shoveler**                      *Anas clypeata*

Two birds were seen on three days (1, 5 and 7 June).

**Northern Pintail**                      *Anas acuta*

The highest count of this species was at the Zhupanova River, Kamchatka where six individuals were recorded (31 May). A single bird was then seen the following day at Bukhta Russkaya, with also four at Atlasova (2 June).

**Eurasian Teal**                              *Anas crecca*

Not recorded on the voyage itself but two birds were seen on the lake in central Petropavlovsk-Kamchatskiy shortly before departure.

**Tufted Duck**                              *Aythya fuligula*

Only seen on one day (2 June) with four birds on Atlasova Island.

**Greater Scaup**                      *Aythya marila*

The highest count was on pools not far from the wharf in Petropavlovsk-Kamchatskiy where a low B (ie over 100 individuals) was recorded on 27 May. Small numbers were also seen on three other dates.

**Harlequin Duck**                      *Histrionicus histrionicus*

This handsome duck was seen in good numbers (ie A or B) on four dates with single figure counts on three further days. The highest counts were off Bering Island (29 May) where a low B was logged.

**White-winged Scoter**                      *Melanitta (fusca) stejnegeri*

This species was recorded on three dates, with six individuals offshore from the Zhupanova River (31 May), four on 3 June (Onekotan and Ekarma) and two off Urup (5 June).

There is an increasing debate as to the species limits within the Velvet/White-winged/Stejneger's Scoter complex and if the birds in Eastern Russia are treated as different from Europe and North America, those seen on the trip would be Stejneger's Scoters.

**Black Scoter**                      *Melanitta nigra*

Seen on three dates with A logged on 3 June (Onekotan and Ekarma), eight offshore from Urup (5 June) and a lone bird the following day off Iturup.

**Common Goldeneye**                      *Bucephala clangula*

The only sighting was a lone bird on Atlasova Island (2 June).

**Smew**                      *Mergellus albellus*

Three birds at the Zhupanova River on 31 May were the only sightings on the expedition.

**Goosander**                      *Mergus merganser*

Seen in small numbers on four dates with the highest count being six birds at Bukhta Russkaya on 1 June.

**Red-breasted Merganser**                      *Mergus serrator*

This species was found on four occasions with the first sightings being off Bering Island (29 May) when two were logged. The final records were off Urup on 5 June when again only two individuals were seen.

**Red-throated Diver**                      *Gavia stellata*

Seen on two dates with a low A recorded whilst cruising on the Zhupanova River, Kamchatka on 31 May. The only other sighting was a lone bird between Kunashir and Sakhalin (7 June).

**Black-throated Diver**                      *Gavia arctica*

A confirmed 'black-throat' was seen between Kunashir and Sakhalin (7 June). Birds which were either this species or Pacific Diver were seen on three other dates but the views were insufficient for them to be positively identified.

**White-billed Diver**                      *Gavia adamsii*

This species was recorded on two dates with single birds off Bering Island (30 May) and Bukhta Russkaya (1 June).

**Red-necked Grebe**                      *Podiceps grisegena*

A single bird recorded shortly after leaving Petropavlovsk-Kamchatskiy was the only sighting of the voyage (27 May).

**Laysan Albatross**                      *Phoebastria immutabilis*

Seen in reasonable numbers on nine consecutive days with the first sightings on the sea day between Petropavlovsk-Kamchatskiy and the Commander Islands (28 May). A was logged on four dates, B on 28 May and single figure counts on all other days.

**Short-tailed Albatross**                      *Phoebastria albatrus*

A single sub-adult bird was seen whilst cruising between Shimushir and Yankicho Islands (4 June). Interestingly this area was where three individuals were also seen on the 2011 expedition.

**Northern Fulmar**                      *Fulmarus glacialis*

An extremely common bird throughout the voyage with sightings on a daily basis. The minimum number recorded was a low A (ie between 10-30 individuals) with the highest numbers being around Ekarma Island where hundreds of thousands breed and the estimated count for the day was E (ie 100,000-1,000,000 individuals).

Almost all the birds seen were “Blue fulmars” with the percentage of pale birds (ie similar to those encountered in UK waters) being very small.

**Short-tailed Shearwater**                      *Puffinus tenuirostris*

This species was seen on nine dates with the highest count being whilst cruising from Kunashir towards Sakhalin where D was logged (7 June).

This species moults in large numbers in the southern part of the Sea of Okhotsk and several of the flocks numbered thousands of individuals. Many of the birds were part way through their moult and were extremely tatty; indeed, some could barely fly as they had shed so many flight feathers.

**Fork-tailed Storm-Petrel**                      *Oceanodroma furcata*

This species was seen in variable numbers on eight dates. The highest count was on the sea day between Petropavlovsk-Kamchatskiy and the Commander Islands (28 May) when a low C was logged (ie at least 1,000 birds). Good numbers (ie A or B) were also recorded on three other days with single figure counts on all other occasions.

**Leach's Storm-Petrel**                      *Oceanodroma leucorhoa*

Seen on three dates during the voyage, with the highest count being late in the evening of 2 June (whilst cruising between Atlasova and Onkotan) when a couple of dozen birds were seen. Slightly smaller numbers were seen the following day, with the only other record being a lone bird off Urup Island.

**Japanese Cormorant**                      *Phalacrocorax capillatus*

Seen in small numbers on the last two days of the voyage (6-7 June) with six birds off Iturup and a lone individual the following day off Kunashir.

**Red-faced Cormorant**                      *Phalacrocorax urile*

The most range-restricted of the cormorant species seen on the voyage. Good numbers were, however, seen on five days with the highest concentration being around Paramushir Island where C was logged on 2 June.

**Pelagic Cormorant**                      *Phalacrocorax pelagicus*

The commonest of the three species of cormorants with daily sightings throughout the expedition. The typical count was either A or B with this logged on seven dates with single figure counts on all other occasions.

**Osprey**                      *Pandion haliaetus*

A single bird was seen near the landing site on Iturup (6 June).

**White-tailed Eagle**                      *Haliaeetus albicilla*

Seen on two dates in the latter stages of the expedition with four individuals on Urup (5 June) and three the following day on Iturup.

**Steller's Sea-Eagle**                      *Haliaeetus pelagicus*

One of the undoubted highlights of the expedition was the extraordinary experience of an adult eagle landing on the ship whilst we were just offshore from Bukhta Russkaya. This sat on the mast for over half an hour giving everyone some incredible views of this stunning raptor.

At least 25 individuals were logged during the expedition with the largest concentration being at the Zhupanova River where a minimum of twenty birds were recorded.

**Northern Goshawk**                      *Accipiter gentiles*

A single individual of the comparatively poorly known subspecies *albidus* was seen at Bukhta Russkaya on 1 June.

It is worth noting that the bird was incredibly pale (ie much whiter than illustrated in ‘Birds of East Asia’ by Mark Brazil) and initial thoughts were that it might even be albino, until photos confirmed this was not the case.

**Eastern Buzzard**                      *Buteo (buteo) japonicus*

A lone bird was seen on Iturup (6 June).

**Rough-legged Buzzard** *Buteo lagopus*

Two individuals were seen during the expedition with single birds on Atlasova and Onekotan Islands (2-3 June).

**Peregrine Falcon** *Falco peregrinus*

Recorded in very small numbers (ie one or two individuals) on three dates between 2-4 June inclusive.

**Pacific Golden Plover** *Pluvialis fulva*

The only sighting was of four birds on Atlasova Island (2 June).

**Mongolian Plover (Lesser Sandplover)** *Charadrius mongolus*

This species breeds at Nikol'skoye on Bering Island in the Commander Islands and five birds were seen there on 29 May. The only other sighting was a lone bird on Atlasova Island (2 June) with a small flock of Pacific Golden Plovers.

**Wood Sandpiper** *Tringa glareola*

Two birds were seen during the zodiac cruise on the Zhupanova River on 31 May.

**Far Eastern Curlew** *Numenius madagascariensis*

Three individuals were seen at the Zhupanova River (31 May) with the only other record being a lone bird at Shimushir (4 June).

**Latham's Snipe** *Gallinago hardwickii*

A single individual was seen on Iturup Island (6 June).

**Common Snipe** *Gallinago gallinago*

A lone bird on Bering Island (29 May) was the only sighting on the expedition.

**Ruddy Turnstone** *Arenaria interpres*

Single individuals were seen on Bering and Atlasova Islands (30 May and 2 June).

**Long-toed Stint** *Calidris subminuta*

A total of seven birds were found during the expedition with four in some wet grasslands near the mouth of the Zhupanova River (31 May) and three on Atlasova Island (2 June).

**Rock Sandpiper** *Calidris ptilocnemis*

One of the speciality waders of the voyage, with some nice views along the shoreline at Nikol'skoye village on Bering Island (29 May) where six individuals were logged.

**Dunlin** *Calidris alpina*

Good numbers of summer plumage birds were seen during the shore excursion on Bering Island (29 May) with at least one hundred individuals logged at Nikol'skoye. The only other record was a lone bird at the Zhupanova River (31 May).

**Red-necked Phalarope** *Phalaropus lobatus*

At least ten individuals were seen whilst cruising between Paramushir and Atlasova Islands on 2 June.

**Grey [Red] Phalarope** *Phalaropus fulicarius*

One of the surprises of the expedition were the large number of Grey Phalaropes with birds seen on six dates including D (ie 10,000+) whilst cruising off Bering Island on 30 May.

**Red-legged Kittiwake** *Rissa brevirostris*

This North Pacific endemic was only seen during the early stages of the voyage with the first records being four birds during the crossing to the Commander Islands (28 May).

Whilst exploring the archipelago over the following two days, decent numbers of this speciality were recorded (including some close encounters of birds on their nests) with A logged on 29 May and B the following day.

**Black-legged Kittiwake** *Rissa tridactyla*

This species was seen daily except on the last sea day when thick fog impacted on visibility and hence the birding. The numbers logged varied markedly (but were always A or higher) with the largest concentrations being around Bering Island (30 May) when D was recorded.

**Black-headed Gull**                      *Larus ridibundus*

Only seen on two dates after leaving Petropavlovsk-Kamchatskiy, with a single bird on Bering Island (29 May) and A logged two days later at the Zhupanova River, Kamchatka Peninsula.

**Black-tailed Gull**                      *Larus crassirostris*

A single individual off Kunashir was, somewhat unexpectedly, the only sighting of the voyage (7 June).

**Kamchatka Gull (Common/Mew Gull)**      *Larus (canus) kamtschatschensis*

The only sightings of this putative split from Common/Mew Gull were on the Zhupanova River, Kamchatka (31 May) where it can be reasonably numerous with A being logged.

**Slaty-backed Gull**                      *Larus schistisagus*

By far the commonest gull which was recorded on almost every day of the voyage with A, B or C logged on all but three dates. The only blank days were at Bering Island (29 May) and off Kunashir (7 June) with two birds on Bering Island (30 May).

**Glaucous-winged Gull**                      *Larus glaucescens*

This species is the commonest gull around the Commander Islands and good numbers (ie B) were logged each day (29-30 May) with A also logged during the crossing to the archipelago (28 May). The only other sighting was a lone bird at Bukhta Russkaya on 1 June.

**Glaucous Gull**                      *Larus hyperboreus*

Single individuals were found near the landing site at the mouth of the Zhupanova River (31 May), off Paramushir (2 June) and on Kunashir (7 June).

**Aleutian Tern**                      *Sterna aleutica*

The only sightings of this much-wanted bird were at the Zhupanova River, Kamchatka (31 May) where we enjoyed some great views with a minimum of eight individuals being seen.

**Common Tern**                      *Sterna hirundo*

A was logged during the zodiac cruise on the Zhupanova River, Kamchatka (31 May) with four also seen during the crossing to the Commander Islands (28 May).

All the birds in this part of Eastern Russia are of the black-billed subspecies *longipennis*.

**Arctic Tern**                      *Sterna paradisaea*

Two birds were seen at sea whilst crossing to the Commander Islands on 28 May.

**Pomarine Skua**                      *Stercorarius pomarinus*

Birds were recorded on three dates during the voyage with the highest count being off Bering Island on 30 May where A was logged. Three individuals were also seen on both 28 and 29 May (at sea towards the Commander Islands and off Bering Island).

**Arctic Skua**                      *Stercorarius parasiticus*

A total of six birds were recorded with three during the crossing to the Commander Islands (28 May) and then lone birds on three widely spaced dates across the rest of the expedition.

**Long-tailed Skua**                      *Stercorarius longicaudus*

Eight birds were seen at sea on the way to the Commander Islands (28 May), with two more off Bering Island (30 May) and the final sightings the following day not far from the Zhupanova River.

**Common Guillemot**                      *Uria aalge*

Seen on a daily basis between Petropavlovsk-Kamchatskiy (27 May) and Urup (5 June). The numbers recorded varied markedly with C logged on three dates and A or B on a total of five occasions.

**Brunnich's Guillemot**                      *Uria lomvia*

This species was seen on seven dates with the highest numbers during the first four days of the expedition when A or B was logged daily.

**Pigeon Guillemot**                      *Cephus columba*

Recorded on ten dates with the largest counts (with B logged) being around Bering Island (30 May) and between Paramushir and Atlasova Islands (2 June).

Of the three subspecies which were seen during the voyage, probably the most interesting was *snowi* which is only found in the Kuril Islands. This generally lacks the prominent white wing panel of the other subspecies and also seems to have a browner background colour than the other subspecies. It is interesting to note that in *Birds of East Asia*, Mark Brazil suggests there is an argument for splitting *snowi* and our experiences of this rarely seen taxa certainly confirmed that it seems more distinct from other Pigeon Guillemots than, for example, Pigeon Guillemot is from Black Guillemot.

**Spectacled Guillemot**                      *Cephus carbo*

A total of four individuals of this localised alcid were seen on the expedition with lone birds in Avacha Bay, Petropavlovsk-Kamchatskiy (27 May) and off Urup (5 June). Two birds were also seen off Kunashir (7 June).

**Long-billed Murrelet**                      *Brachyramphus perdix*

Another comparatively range-restricted alcid which was only seen in small numbers, with five offshore from the Zhupanova River (31 May) and one the following day at Bukhta Russkaya.

**Ancient Murrelet**                      *Synthliboramphus antiquus*

This species was recorded on seven days during the voyage, although it was only ever seen in comparatively small numbers (single figure counts or A). The first records were in Avacha Bay, Petropavlovsk-Kamchatskiy (27 May) with the final sightings being off Iturup (6 June).

**Parakeet Auklet**                      *Aethia psittacula*

This comparatively scarce alcid was seen on six dates with daily single figure counts on 27-29 May and 3-4 June inclusive. The only day when there was a higher count was whilst travelling between Paramushir and Atlasova when A was logged with twenty birds being the estimated count.

**Whiskered Auklet**                      *Aethia pygmaea*

This species was seen on three dates with the largest concentrations being around Yankicho Island (4 June) where big numbers were seen just offshore from the island. These then joined the Crested Auklets in flying inshore in the early evening creating what is surely one of the most impressive avian spectacles on the planet. The only other records were off Medney Island (30 May) where a low A was recorded and a lone bird the day north of Yankicho.

**Crested Auklet**                      *Aethia cristatella*

This species was recorded on six dates during the voyage with the first individuals observed during the sea crossing to the Commander Islands (28 May). The largest numbers were, however, at Yankicho Island (4 June) where the swarms of birds coming in at dusk were truly breathtaking and undoubtedly one of the major highlights of the voyage. In practice, it was impossible to accurately estimate the numbers, although a high E was logged (ie hundreds of thousands of individuals).

**Rhinoceros Auklet**                      *Cerorhinca monocerata*

This species was only recorded on two dates during the latter stages of the voyage with A logged around Iturup and Kunashir Islands (6-7 June).

**Horned Puffin**                      *Fratercula corniculata*

Recorded on a daily basis between 27 May – 3 June (Petropavlovsk-Kamchatskiy – Ekarma). It was, however, generally only seen in relatively small numbers (single figure count or low A) with the highest numbers being around Bering Island where a high A was logged on 30 May.

**Tufted Puffin**                      *Fratercula cirrhata*

Undoubtedly one of the ‘classic’ alcids of the Russian Far East and seen in good numbers on almost every day of the expedition. Birds were recorded on a total of eleven dates with B or higher logged on seven occasions.

**Oriental Turtle-Dove**                      *Streptopelia orientalis*

Only encountered during the late stages of the trip, with five individuals on Iturup (6 June) and one the following day on Kunashir.

**Common (Eurasian) Cuckoo** *Cuculus canorus*

This migrant was heard more frequently than it was seen, although birds were observed at Bukhta Russkaya (1 June) and on Urup Island (5 June).

**Oriental Cuckoo** *Cuculus (saturatus) optatus*

This species closely resembles Common Cuckoo but the song is quite different and Oriental Cuckoos were heard on both Urup and Iturup (5-6 June), with two birds also seen on the latter island.

**Pacific (Fork-tailed) Swift** *Apus pacificus*

This species was seen on both Urup and Iturup (5-6 June), with the higher count being a low A on Iturup.

**Common Kingfisher** *Alcedo atthis*

A single bird on Iturup (6 June) was the only record of the voyage.

**Wryneck** *Jynx torquilla*

A single bird on Iturup Island (6 June) was the first record of this species for any of the expeditions on the *Spirit of Enderby* to the Russian Far East.

**Pygmy Woodpecker** *Dendrocopos kizuki*

Five birds were seen on Iturup on 6 June.

**Great Spotted Woodpecker** *Dendrocopos major*

Two individuals of this widespread species were logged on Iturup (6 June).

**Eurasian Nutcracker** *Nucifraga caryocatactes*

A total of six birds were recorded with single birds on Urup and Iturup (5-6 June) and four on Shimushir (4 June).

**Carrion Crow** *Corvus corone*

This species was recorded on two dates with sightings at the Zhupanova River and Bukhta Russkaya (31 May-1 June) with A logged on both days.

**Large-billed Crow** *Corvus macrorhynchos*

This species was the common corvid during the last three days of landings (ie Urup, Iturup and Kunashir) with the highest count being on Iturup (6 June) where A was recorded.

**Common Raven** *Corvus corax*

There were single figure counts of this species on seven dates between Bering Island (29 May) and Kunashir (7 June) with a total of sixteen birds seen.

**Sky Lark** *Alauda arvensis*

This species was recorded in small to moderate numbers (single figure count to A) on six dates during the voyage with the first sightings at the Zhupanova River (31 May). It was then seen on a daily basis from 2-6 June.

**Sand Martin** *Riparia riparia*

Only recorded on Iturup (6 June) with a low A logged.

**Barn Swallow** *Hirundo rustica*

The only sightings were on Shimushir, Urup and Iturup (4-6 June) with a total of four birds being logged.

**Marsh Tit** *Poecile palustris*

Five birds were seen on Kunashir (7 June).

**Willow Tit** *Poecile montana*

According to 'Birds of East Asia' (M.Brazil 2009), Marsh and Willow Tits are far closer in appearance in Eastern Russia than in Europe with colouration and calls not considered entirely reliable ways of separating them. Indeed, to complicate matters still further, whilst some birds in this region resemble the birds in Europe, others seem quite different having frostier plumage, darker wings and a short crest.

Several birds which were considered to be Willow Tits were, however, seen on Urup (5 June: 4 birds) and Iturup (6 June: 6 birds).

**Coal Tit** *Pariparus ater*

The subspecies which occurs in the Kuril Islands is a lot greyer than the birds found in the UK and was seen on Iturup (6 June) and Kunashir (7 June) with the higher count being on Iturup where a low A was logged.

**Great Tit** *Parus major*

This species was only recorded on Kunashir (7 June) with four individuals logged.

**Japanese Bush-Warbler** *Cettia diphone*

This species is fairly elusive and was seen in small numbers on both Urup and Iturup (5-6 June) and was also heard on Shimushir.

**Long-tailed Tit** *Aegithalos caudatus*

Two individuals were recorded on Kunashir (7 June).

**Eurasian Nuthatch** *Sitta europaea*

Only seen on Iturup (6 June) where five individuals were recorded.

Like the Coal tits, the nuthatches in Eastern Russia are a much "colder" colour than their counterparts in Western Europe and also have a somewhat different call. Indeed, some authorities (including the IOC) now treat these birds as a different species with the proposed name being Siberian Nuthatch, *Sitta arctica*.

**[Winter] Wren** *Troglodytes troglodytes*

This species was seen in small numbers on Onkotan, Shimushir, Iturup and Kunashir (3,4,6,7 June) although it was reasonably common by voice on most of these islands.

**Dusky Warbler** *Phylloscopus fuscatus*

This species was heard, but not seen, during the zodiac cruise on the Zhupanova River (31 May).

**Kamchatka Leaf-warbler/Arctic Warbler** *Phylloscopus examinandus/borealis*

A recent paper in the British Ornithologists' Union's journal *Ibis* proposed splitting Arctic Warbler into three species and if these recommendations are followed, the birds recorded singing (and on territory) were Kamchatka Leaf-warblers. It is certainly possible, however, that Arctic Warblers could also be present since these breed to the north of Kamchatka Leaf-warbler and the passage of migrants was clearly ongoing.

Birds were seen on three dates during the voyage with records on Shimushir, Urup and Iturup Islands (4-6 June) with the highest numbers (a low A) on the last of these islands.

**Lanceolated Warbler** *Locustella lanceolata*

The only records of this species were on Atlasova where two individuals were seen (2 June).

**Middendorff's Grasshopper Warbler** *Locustella ochotensis*

This species was seen on both Onkotan (3 June: 3 birds) and Urup (5 June: 2 birds).

**Grey-streaked Flycatcher** *Muscicapa griseisticta*

Four individuals were seen on Atlasova Island (2 June).

**Asian Brown Flycatcher** *Muscicapa dauurica*

Single birds were seen on three islands, Atlasova (2 June), Shimushir (4 June) and Iturup (6 June).

**Taiga (Red-throated) Flycatcher** *Ficedula albicilla*

This species was heard at the Zhupanova River (31 May).

**Japanese Robin** *Erithacus akahige*

Unlike its British counterpart, this species is often difficult to locate as it creeps around in the understory. The sightings this year, however, were exceptional with at least five birds seen well during the excursion to the mountains on Iturup (6 June) with several singing from open song perches.

The only other records were the previous day on Urup where this species was only heard.



**Siberian Rubythroat**                      *Luscinia calliope*

This stunning species was seen on a daily basis between Atlasova and Iturup (2-6 June) with the typical count being a low A. On many occasions males were seen singing from bare branches.

**Red-flanked Bluetail**                      *Tarsiger cyanurus*

This species was reasonably common in the mountains on Iturup (6 June) with a low A logged during the excursion.

**Siberian Stonechat**                      *Saxicola maura*

Only observed on Iturup (6 June) where a single bird was seen near our landing site.

**Eye-browed Thrush**                      *Turdus obscurus*

A single bird at Bukhta Russkaya (1 June) was the only record of the voyage.

**Brown-headed Thrush**                      *Turdus chrysolaus*

This species was recorded on five dates with sightings on Atlasova, Onekotan, Shimushir, Urup and Iturup Islands (2-6 June) with the highest count being on Shimushir where A was logged.

**Chestnut-cheeked Starling**                      *Sturnia philippensis*

Two birds were seen near the landing site on Iturup (6 June).

**Japanese Accentor**                      *Prunella rubida*

Seen well, but briefly, in the mountains on Iturup (6 June). Although this species had been heard here on a previous visit, this was the first occasion when it had actually been seen.

**Eastern Yellow Wagtail**                      *Motacilla [flava] tschutschensis*

The taxonomy of the Yellow Wagtail group remains controversial, although most authorities now split the complex into two, with the birds in this part of Eastern Russia all being Eastern Yellow Wagtails, *Motacilla tschutschensis*.

This 'species' was recorded on Bering Island (29 May), at the Zhupanova River (31 May), Bukhta Russkaya (1 June) and on Atlasova (2 June) with the highest count being at Bukhta Russkaya where A was logged.

**Grey Wagtail**                      *Motacilla cinerea*

Two birds were seen on Kunashir Island (7 June).

**White Wagtail**                      *Motacilla alba*

Like the Yellow Wagtails, the taxonomy of the 'black-and-white' wagtails which occur in this part of Eastern Asia is somewhat controversial with "Black-backed Wagtail" treated as a full species by some, *Motacilla lugens*, but lumped as a subspecies of the more widely distributed White Wagtail *Motacilla alba* by others.

Black-backed Wagtails were seen on the majority of landings with records on nine dates, although most counts were in single figures.

Other black-and-white wagtails of the subspecies *ocularis* were seen at Bukhta Russkaya and Atlasova (1-2 June).

**Pechora Pipit**                      *Anthus gustavi*

Only seen at Nikol'skoye, Bering Island (29 May) and at the Zhupanova River (31 May) with a total of seven individuals recorded.

**Buff-bellied [American] Pipit**                      *Anthus rubescens*

This species was seen on a daily basis between Atlasova and Urup (2-5 June) with A recorded on the first three days and two birds on Urup.

**Lapland Bunting**                      *Calcarius lapponicus*

This species is reasonably numerous at Nikol'skoye (the main settlement in the Commander Islands) with A logged on 29 May.

**Snow Bunting**                      *Plectrophenax nivalis*

Another species which was only seen in the Commander Islands with three birds at Nikol'skoye on 29 May.

**Rustic Bunting**                      *Emberiza rustica*

This handsome bunting was only recorded on Kamchatka with five seen at the Zhupanova River (31 May) and one the following day at Bukhta Russkaya.

**Yellow-breasted Bunting**                      *Emberiza aureola*

A single bird on Iturup (6 June) was the sole record on the expedition.

**Black-faced Bunting**                      *Emberiza spodocephala*

Seen in reasonable numbers on Urup and Iturup (5-6 June) with a low A recorded on both islands.

**Japanese Grey Bunting**                      *Emberiza variabilis*

This species is usually only seen in small numbers but two birds were well seen on Shimushir (4 June) with one a couple of days later on Urup.

**Reed Bunting**                      *Emberiza schoeniclus*

Only recorded during the middle section of the expedition with a total of ten birds noted during the landings at the Zhupanova River (31 May), Bukhta Russkaya (1 June) and Atlasova (2 June).

**Asian Rosy Finch**                      *Leucosticta arctoa*

One of the biggest surprises of the expedition was finding a pair of these smart birds during the shore excursion on Onekotan (3 June). This was the first time this species had been seen on any Wildwings trip to the Russian Far East on the 'Spirit of Enderby'.

**Pine Grosbeak**                      *Pinicola enucleator*

Three birds were seen on Shimushir on 3 June with two individuals recorded the following day on Onekotan. This species was also heard during the excursion into the mountains on Iturup (6 June).

**Common Rosefinch**                      *Carpodacus erthrinus*

This species was seen at Bukhta Russkaya, the Zhupanova River and on Onekotan (31 May, 1 June, 3 June) with a total of five birds recorded.

**Long-tailed Rosefinch**                      *Uragus sibiricus*

This handsome species was recorded on two dates during the latter stages of the voyage, with at least five birds on Urup (5 June) and one the following day on Iturup.

**Oriental Greenfinch**                      *Carduelis sinica*

A reasonably widespread species with records on four dates, although all counts were in single figures.

**Common Redpoll**                      *Carduelis flammea*

The only sightings were on Atlasova (2 June) where two individuals were logged.

**Eurasian Siskin**                      *Carduelis spinus*

This species was only seen during the mountain excursion on Iturup (6 June) with A logged.

**Eurasian (Grey-bellied) Bullfinch**                      *Pyrrhula pyrrhula*

Only seen in the latter stages of the trip with records on Shimushir, Urup and Iturup with the highest count being on Iturup where a low A was logged.

The subspecies which occurs in the Kuril Islands is very different from the birds in Western Europe as the males only have a pink throat, rather than this colour also extending down onto the breast and some treat this as a separate species, the Grey-bellied Bullfinch.

**Eurasian Tree Sparrow**                      *Passer montanus*

This species was only encountered on two islands during the trip with records on Bering Island and Iturup.

(NB The 2013 voyage will not be visiting the Southern Kurils and Sakhalin.)



## SYSTEMATIC LIST - MAMMALS

### **Tundra Vole**                      *Microtus oeconomus*

Good numbers were seen on Shimushir (4 June) with A logged.

### **Muskrat**                         *Ondatra zibethicus*

A single individual at the Zhupanova River (31 May) was the only record on the expedition.

### **Red Fox**                         *Vulpus vulpus*

A total of seven Red Foxes were seen during the second half of the expedition with the highest count being three on Onekotan (3 June). The other islands where this species was recorded were Shimushir, Urup and Kunashir.

### **Blue [Arctic] Fox**                 *Alopex lagopus*

Arctic Foxes were seen on Bering (29 May: 1 animal) and Yankicho (4 June: 6 animals), although the population on Yankicho is introduced.

### **Brown Bear**                      *Ursus arctos*

Brown Bears were seen on two dates with three at Bukhta Russkaya (1 June) and at least nine whilst shipping cruising at the southern end of Iturup (6 June).

### **Sea Otter**                         *Enhydra lutris*

Sea Otters were recorded on nine dates with the highest count being off the eastern side of Paramushir Island (2 June) where at least a couple of hundred animals were found. Good numbers were also seen during the two days around Bering Island (29-30 May) and at Bukhta Russkaya (1 June) with A logged on these dates.

### **Common [Harbour] Seal**                 *Phoca vitulina*

This species was seen on five days, with A logged around the Commander Islands (29-30 May), at the Zhupanova River (31 May) and off Paramushir Island (2 June).

### **Largha [Spotted] Seal**                      *Phoca larga*

This North Pacific endemic was seen on three dates with the highest count being around Paramushir where B was logged. Good numbers were also recorded at the Zhupanova River (31 May).

### **Steller's [Northern] Sea-lion**                 *Eumetopias jubatus*

Another species with a fairly restricted range which was also seen on three dates. The highest count was close to the mouth of Bukhta Russkaya (1 June) where B was logged. This site is a regular haul-out and the presence of good numbers of sea-lions seems to attract Orcas, as this species is often found patrolling directly in front of the sea-lions' favoured rocks.

The other sightings were at Bering Island (30 May) and offshore from Urup where A was recorded.

### **Northern Fur Seal**                      *Callorhinus ursinus*

Northern Fur Seals were recorded on five dates with low single figure counts on most days although A was logged around Yankicho on 4 June.

### **Orca [Killer Whale]**                      *Orcinus orca*

The Russian Far East and especially the Kuril archipelago are undoubtedly one of the best places in the world for finding Orca and during the expedition there were sightings on ten dates with at least 164 animals logged.

The highest count was off Iturup where a minimum of forty animals were seen but there were seven other days when there were double figure counts.

Whilst most of these sightings were 'at sea', we enjoyed some phenomenal views off Bukhta Russkaya (1 June) whilst zodiac-cruising with the animals seen a matter of metres from the zodiacs with a range of behaviours including tail-slapping witnessed.

### **Dall's Porpoise**                      *Phocoenoides dalli*

Like Orca, this cetacean was recorded on a regular basis with sightings on eleven days with at least 150 animals logged. Whilst a typical day count was in single figures, there were three occasions when A was recorded.

### **Sperm Whale**                      *Physeter macrocephalus*

This extremely widespread and deep-diving species was recorded on five dates with a total of seven animals seen. The highest count was off Urup (5 June) when three animals were noted.

**Fin Whale** *Balaenoptera physalus*

A total of ten Fin Whales were recorded on the expedition with eight seen on 28 May whilst cruising from Petropavlovsk-Kamchatskiy to the Commander Islands. The other sightings were off Bering Island a couple of days later.

**Northern Minke Whale** *Balaenoptera acutorostrata*

The only one record was a single animal whilst sailing from Petropavlovsk-Kamchatskiy to the Commander Islands (28 May).

**Humpback Whale** *Megaptera novaengliae*

This species was seen in good numbers during the first half of the trip with at least 43 animals logged. The highest count was during the crossing from Petropavlovsk-Kamchatskiy to the Commander Islands (28 May: 21 animals) but there were at least 26 other sightings over the subsequent four days.