

Birds and Cicadas: Heralds of the Changing Seasons

Gray-Faced Buzzard **Scientific name:** *Butastur indicus* (**Dialect name:** *Taka*)

Gray-faced buzzards, which migrate here from early October, are classified as raptors. They are around 50 centimeters in length with a wingspan of over 1 meter. From spring to summer, they breed in Honshu and fly to the warmer climes of Southeast Asia for winter. The Keramas are a transit point, although some individual birds do spend the winter here. The sight of them in the sky emitting their call of *pi-kwee* announces the coming of autumn to the Keramas. In the old days, they were much loved by the children on the islands, who referred to them affectionately as *chin-mii*, the Japanese version of their call.

Ryukyu Ruddy Kingfisher **Scientific name:** *Halcyon coromanda* (**Dialect name:** *Kokaru*)

This bird migrates to the Keramas to breed around April. Its distinctive high-pitched descending trill, *kyorororo-kyorororo*, is heard frequently from dark forested valleys in the morning and evening. The bright-red beak is rather large in proportion to its 30-centimeter-long body. The upper part of its body is reddish-brown, while the plumage on its back is a glossy deep purple. The lower part of its body is orange. Its call echoing through the forest heralds the coming of the rainy season.

Ryukyu Large Brown Cicada **Scientific name:** *Graptopsaltria bimaculata*

These cicadas start to sing around June. The more frequent their *jirijirijiriji* cry, the closer it is to the end of the rainy season. Endemic to the Ryukyu Islands, these cicadas are found from the Amami Islands down to the main island of Okinawa and its vicinity. They are around 5 centimeters in length and their wings are a somewhat bright brown color. As they stop singing when people approach, these cicadas can be difficult to spot.

Japanese Cicada **Scientific name:** *Meimuna kuroiwae*

When this cicada starts to sing *jiiwa-jiiwa* in low-lying places close to the seashore, autumn is just around the corner. Found from Cape Sata in Kagoshima Prefecture down to the main island of Okinawa, this cicada, with its roughly 3.5-centimeter-long body, is slim compared to other cicadas. It has transparent wings and is distinguished by a pattern of dark mottled chartreuse on its back. Even when approached, it will often stay in place and keep singing, so it is possible to get a good look at it from close up.

Black Cicada **Scientific name:** *Cryptotympana facialis*

These cicadas announce the end of the rainy season by loudly singing *shaa-shaa*, mostly in the morning, in and around local communities in mid-June. Originally found in the warmer areas of western Japan (Kinki, Chugoku, Shikoku and Kyushu) and southward, their habitat is now moving north to include the Kanto region. At 6 to 7 centimeters long, they are the biggest species of Japanese cicada after the Yaeyama black cicada. They have transparent wings and a lustrous black body. Since they do not fly away when people approach, they are one of the easier cicadas to spot and study at close range.