

Birds of Prey

Western osprey / *Pandion haliaetus* / Misago / ミサゴ

This large bird of prey (54 to 64 centimeters long) breeds in the summer in Hokkaido and Siberia, and winters at seashores in southern climes like that of Amami-Oshima. Its upper parts are dark brown with a bluish tinge, the neck and chest are white, and a black band runs from the eyes to the back of the neck. It is ideally suited to an almost exclusive diet of fish, with unique inverted toes to catch its prey, valves in its nostrils, and oily, water-resistant plumage. The bird strikes with speed and lifts its prey out of the water with powerful wingbeats. An attractive bird and impressive hunter, the Western osprey has been celebrated in Japan since ancient times, appearing in written records like the eighth-century *Nihon shoki* (Chronicles of Japan).

Gray-faced buzzard / *Butastur indicus* / Sashiba / サシバ

The gray-faced buzzard is a bird of prey that breeds on the main islands of Japan and migrates to southern climes, including Amami-Oshima, for winter. It is medium-sized (47 to 51 centimeters long), and despite its name has a brown head and back, a white throat, a white-and-brown patterned belly, and bright-yellow eyes. This bird is found mainly in woodlands and farmlands, where it feeds on a varied diet of reptiles, amphibians, insects, and small mammals and birds. While quite common globally, gray-faced buzzards have been decreasing in number in Japan—enough to worry some researchers. On Amami-Oshima, however, it is common to see the bird perching on utility poles and power lines.