Japan Winter Wildlife Tour#2 2023 Part 1



Mar 21, 2023

This week we will start what will probably be a three-part series to walk you through my second Japan Winter Wildlife tour and workshop for 2023. The first of these two tours was very productive. I came home with around 180 images that I really liked. That's a good crop, but for this second tour, I came home with one hundred more images than that, a whopping 280 photos that I was happy with, and, of course, that is while being very selective, and whittling down my selection a number of times.



I have done these trips many times now, and I often find it difficult to raise the bar, but some opportunities on this particular trip enabled me to do just that. As usual, we started with three days at the Snow Monkeys. The staff at the Snow Monkey park were calling me the Snow Man because they'd had very little snow throughout the season but a good snowfall shortly before my group arrived on both visits. Unfortunately, we didn't get any falling snow with the monkeys, but there was enough snow on the ground to enable some beautiful shots.

#### Does it Get Better Than This?

It was also, on average, around five degrees colder than usual, which gave rise to the first shot that I wanted to share today, and this is one of those shots that I feel will remain a firm favorite over the years. When it's cold, we tend to get more mist rising off the warm water in the pool that the Snow Monkeys bathe in. This is challenging from a photography perspective because, quite often, the mist hides the face of the monkeys, but if you are patient, there are patches of clarity that move through

the mist, and you can time your shot so that just the monkey is visible through the mist. The other difficult thing, of course, is finding a monkey doing something interesting for your photo. I was incredibly fortunate on this visit to find this monkey with its feet up on a small stepping stone just below the surface of the water, resting its hands on its feet while looking upwards slightly. This came together to give the monkey

a contemplative gaze in what would seem to be an idyllic environment, although harsh because of the cold, which is required to form the mist. I called this image, "Does It Get Better Than This?" as a question.



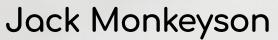
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### It Doesn't Get Better Than This

I try to avoid sharing similar images, but I got a second image of this same monkey shortly after this, which I called "It Doesn't Get Better Than This" without the question mark, as this monkey is no longer asking. It knows that it just doesn't get better than this. The question and the answer in two photos.



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I continued to have a little fun with my image captioning, as I called this next photo "Jack Monkeyson" because I thought the maniacal smile looked a bit like Jack Nicholson in The Shining. This also shows the monkey in the relatively deep snow beside the hot spring pool.



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# Serow in Snow #3

Another opportunity that I have not seen before, was this Japanese Komoshika or Serow, a kind of antelope, was walking around in the snow on the side of the valley where the path down to the hot spring pool is. I often see these animals on the other side of the valley, and they usually so far away that they require an Extender to even really see them in the frame. On this day, I was able to shoot this Serow at 500mm and almost have him fill the frame, as you can see in this photo.





# Thoughtful Preening

After three days with the monkeys, we drove back to Tokyo and headed over to Hokkaido on the fourth morning of the tour. We started with two days of photographing the elegant and beautiful Japanese Red-Crowned Cranes, and as I often do, while we had one of many lulls in the action, I shot some portraits of the cranes, of which this is one of my fovorites

## Ural Owl's Yawn







see the behind of one of this pair of landscape behind the birds in this shot courting cranes, showing, as I often quiz too. The regular enclosure doesn't have my tour guests, that the cranes's tails are this kind of feature, like the grasses and white. In most photos it looks like the Red- the bow of the tree to the left, and I think Crowned Cranes have black tails, but the these add some nice context to the black is actually the flight features along winter scene that these birds are so at the back edge of their wings.

episode of the series, and here we can I also like how there is a bit more of a home in.







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