Fictitious Birds in Japanese Art
Introduction

Birds have been depicted in the printed art of Japan for more than three hundred years. For most of this time artists chose to depict only real bird species, with one exception – the hō-ō bird shown in Figure 1. In Japanese mythology this fictitious species symbolizes the five virtues of obedience, purity, loyalty, justice and kindness. The number of fictitious bird species appearing in Japanese printed art has increased dramatically since 1950. The modern philosophy of art encourages artists to be inventive which likely accounts for this dramatic increase in fictitious species. Twenty examples of these fictitious birds are included in this virtual exhibition, with each fictitious species drawn by a different Japanese artist whose bird prints feature mostly fictitious rather than real species. For each print the artist’s name is given along with print size, title (if any) and printing method. These twenty prints are part of the Reader Collection of Japanese Art.

Figure 1 - Hō-ō bird by Yoshitsuna Utagawa, included in Ehon Kachō Soroi (i.e., Complete Picture Book of Flowers and Birds)
1  Fictitious bird by **Yukio Fukazawa**, entitled bird, intaglio, 385 x 475 mm

2  Fictitious bird by **Hiroki Makino**, entitled standing bird, woodblock, 260 x 340 mm
3  Fictitious bird by **Masuo Ikeda**, entitled a happy blue bird, lithograph, 165 x 230 mm

4  Fictitious bird by **Fumiko Odajima**, entitled **MELODY II**, woodblock, 140 x 140 mm
5  Fictitious bird by **Kazu Wakita**, entitled bird and fruit bowl, lithograph, 400 x 505 mm

6  Fictitious bird by **Keiko Arakawa**, entitled walking on the way to home, intaglio, 305 x 485 mm
7  Fictitious bird by Kunihiro Amano, entitled morning 30, woodblock, 230 x 175 mm

8  Fictitious bird by Keiko Minami, intaglio, 570 x 380 mm
9  Fictitious bird by Hideo Hagiwara, woodblock, 175 x 125 mm

10  Fictitious bird by Takeo Takei, woodblock, 145 x 125 mm
11  Fictitious bird by **Fumio Fujita**,
entitled forest bird, woodblock, 410 x 305 mm

12  Fictitious bird by **Seishi Ozaku**,
intaglio, 260 x 210 mm
13 Fictitious bird by Umetarō Azechi, woodblock, 130 x 110 mm

14 Fictitious bird by Gorō Kumagai, woodblock, 145 x 120 mm
15 Fictitious bird by Ay-ō Iijima, entitled sings B, woodblock, 170 x 120 mm

16 Fictitious bird by Chieko Ishida, woodblock, 160 x 120 mm
17 Fictitious bird by Yoshikane Mita, entitled bird in the countryside, lithograph, 500 x 350 mm

18 Fictitious bird by Takeji Asano, entitled bird and fruit, woodblock, 400 x 295 mm
19  Fictitious bird by Teruo Emori, entitled nest, screenprint, 275 x 195 mm

20  Fictitious bird by Kōzō Inoue, entitled egg a bird ?, screenprint, 325 x 250 mm