Realistic Japanese Printed Bird Art from the early 20th century

Large-billed crow (Corvus macrorhynchos) by Bihō Takahashi
Introduction

Japanese artists working in the early 20th century (i.e., 1900-1930s) drew birds in a much more realistic way than did their predecessors. For example, both the shape and coloring of the pair of Eurasian tree sparrows (*Passer montanus*) drawn by the early 20th century’s most prolific bird artist (i.e., Koson Ohara) in picture 1 were more true-to-life than in picture 2 drawn by Koson’s early 19th century counterpart (i.e., Hiroshige Utagawa). Making birds look more lifelike reflected the increased influence of realistic European art on early 20th century Japanese artists. At that time Japan was undergoing a process of modernization and the adoption of the more realistic European style of art was part of that process. Koson was only one of many Japanese artists whose art blended European realism with traditional Japanese idealism. The work of twenty-five of these artists is included in this virtual exhibition. A representative example of each artist’s work was chosen from bird prints in the Reader Collection of Japanese Art which includes more than one thousand early 20th century Japanese bird prints. The twenty-five artists are arranged by their total bird print production, starting with the most productive artist Koson Ohara.

Additional Reading

1 Black-billed magpie (*Pica pica*) by **Koson Ohara**, 190 x 355 mm
Mandarin duck (*Aix galericulata*) by Rakusan Tsuchiya, 615 x 470 mm
3 Mallard duck (*Anas platyrhynchos*) by Shōun Yamamoto, 190 x 365 mm
4  White-backed woodpecker
(*Drycopos leucotos*) by Gessō
Yoshimoto, 125 x 250 mm
Java sparrow (*Padda oryzivora*)
by Sōzan Itō, 170 x 380 mm
6  Crow (*Corvus* sp.) by Shōtei Takahashi, 185 x 125 mm
Japanese quail (*Coturnix japonica*) by Kōgyo Tsukioka, 275 x 275 mm
Japanese quail (*Coturnix japonica*) by Gekkō Ogata, 250 x 250 mm
Golden eagle (*Aquila chrysaetos*) by Kōitsu Tsuchiya, 195 x 390 mm
10  Hawk (*Accipiter* sp.) by Suikō Fukuda, 275 x 400 mm
11 Common kingfisher (*Alcedo atthis*) by Bihō Takahashi, 240 x 265 mm
12 Olive-backed pipit (*Anthus hodgsoni*)
by Gyōsui, 125 x 245 mm
Domestic fowl (*Gallus gallus*)

by Kakō Tsuji, 195 x 365 mm
14  Domestic fowl (*Gallus gallus*)
by Kōhō Shoda, 80 x 340 mm
15 Cockatoo (*Cacatua* sp.) by Hodō Nishimura, 275 x 395 mm
Blue-and-white flycatcher (*Cyanoptila cyanomelana*) by Chikuseki Yamamoto, 250 x 240 mm
17 Common moorhen (*Gallinula chloropus*) by Soseki Komori, 215 x 390 mm
Japanese bush-warbler (*Cettia diphone*) by Jō, 195 x 400 mm
Green pheasant (*Phasianus versicolor*) by Benji Asada, 450 x 295 mm
20 Green pheasant (*Phasianus versicolor*) by Suiian Hirafuku, 235 x 230 mm
21 Red-crowned crane (*Grus japonensis*) by Nisaburō Itō, 270 x 300 mm
22 Mallard duck (*Anas platyrhynchos*) by Hasui Kawase, 390 x 270 mm
Mallard duck (*Anas platyrhynchos*) by Goyo Hashiguchi, 405 x 265 mm
24  Common kingfisher (*Alcedo atthis*) by Fuyō Narazaki, 175 x 395 mm
25  Scarlet macaw (*Ara macao*) by Kōitsu Ishiwata, 250 x 510 mm