

A Historical Walk Around Kyoto

Flying over Winter Kamo River –*Yurikamome*–



When winter comes in Kyoto, there are the migratory birds that take a long journey of 3,000km from Kamchatka, Russia to Kamo River. They are “*Yurikamome*”, a kind of gulls, about 40cm long of the Laridae family in Charadriiformes order. The Japanese name means they are gulls (*Kamome*) in white as a lily (*Yuri*) because they are white in winter. Since the birds have the chocolate-brown head in summer, their English name is black-headed gull. When their head color changed, it looks almost like another bird.



Yurikamome in winter (the upper one)
& in summer (the lower one)



Yurikamome started appearing in Kamo River around in 1974. They had been rarely seen in Kyoto before. They spend the daytime in Kamo River where they prey, and go to the Biwa Lake into the night. The scenery of the flock spirally soaring into the sky is just like blooming of the white flowers all over the river. It is one of the winter charming sights in Kyoto. They can be seen in Kamo River by spring. When it becomes warmer, they go back to their northern hometown.

There is another bird in Kamo River, *Charadrius placidus* “*Ikaruchidori*”, which is a kind of plover. Many *Ikaruchidori* used to appear in Kamo River, but the number decreased due to river improvement works. Now, that seems to recover little by little.

Right nearby Kamo River, there is a Ponto-cho Street crowded with eating/drinking restaurants colored by lanterns of small birds’ patterns. This small bird is called “*Chidori*” using a motif of “*Ikaruchidori*”.



Japanese called tipsy steps “*Chidori-ashi*”, expressing a manner of drunken person walking in zigzag.

It is because the intoeing steps of *Ikaruchidori* are similar to how drunken person do. If you drink at Ponto-cho, be careful not to take “*Chidori-ashi*”.



Ikaruchidori