

amount of clinal variation. However, there are consistently dark grey or dark brownish markings on the back, often diffuse, but usually quite bold. The darker feather centres on the mantle often appear to be quite linearly arranged, forming seven darker lines down the mantle. However, the feathers are usually slightly dishevelled, creating a blurry, untidy linear effect. Edges of mantle and scapulars often paler and virtually unmarked, creating a paler shoulder, but this feature is sometimes also evident in related species. Back and rump more or less plain, often slightly warmer than mantle.

Wings. Centres of tertials and greater wing-coverts darker, shading to a narrow brown or rufous edge. Blackish centres of median wing-coverts often create a row of dark spots on the shoulder—again, note that

this feature is shared by several other species as well. Tips of wing-coverts usually have broader pale edges than lateral dimensions of feathers, creating two paler bars when viewed from a distance. The latter feature is more prominent in worn plumage, when the pale edges become whiter, but in heavily worn plumage the paler feather edges can be worn off completely. Often shows a paler or rufous wing panel on the secondaries on folded wing, although this character is never as prominent as in some of the *Mirafra* larks. Primaries and primary-coverts darker than rest of wing, with very narrow paler edges. Underwing coverts and axillaries buffy, never yellow as in Yellow-breasted Pipit.

Face. Nape and hind-neck less distinctly marked and generally paler than crown. Ear-coverts buffy brown to dark brown and plain,

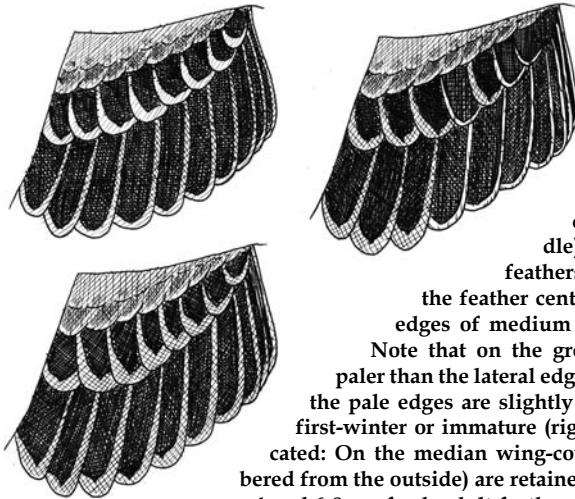


Fig 66. African Pipit secondary-coverts of juvenile (top), first-winter (right) and adult (bottom). All are of the right upperwing and show the lesser wing-coverts (upper two rows of feathers), median wing-coverts (rounded feathers, middle) and greater wing-coverts (long feathers, lower row). In juvenile (top), the feather centres are darkest, and the feather edges of medium width and pale creamy white.

Note that on the greater wing-coverts the tips are paler than the lateral edges of the feathers. Also note that the pale edges are slightly broader nearer to the body. In first-winter or immature (right) the pattern is more complicated: On the median wing-coverts, feathers 1-3 and 5 (numbered from the outside) are retained juvenile feathers while feathers 4 and 6-8 are fresh adult feathers. The retained juvenile feathers have slightly paler centres due to bleaching as they are older than the adult feathers. As a result of this bleaching, they also have paler (virtually pure white), but narrower edges (as a result of feather wear). The outermost feather's edge has been worn off completely. The older generation (juvenile) feathers are also slightly shorter than their adult equivalents. Of the greater wing-coverts the outer 7 are retained juvenile, with the same characteristics as described above. Note the obviously worn edges and the much narrower pale webs. In the bottom wing depiction (adult) all feathers are mature: Their edges are broader, with rich buff edges and tips.