

PIPITS OF AFRICA

(APPENDIX I)

All pipits that have been recorded on the African continent (including North Africa) are discussed here. Brief mention is made of their systematics, distribution, status, field identification, subspecies and habitat. Twelve species are featured, which, together with the sixteen southern African species, brings the total number of pipits recorded in Africa up to 28 species. Further information is available in Clancey (1990), Keith et al. (1992), Mullarney et al. (1999), Stevenson & Fanshawe (2002), Alström & Mild (2003) and Sinclair & Ryan (2003). The chapter is divided into two sections: Breeding residents and non-breeding visitors.

BREEDING RESIDENTS

Long-legged Pipit *Anthus pallidiventris*, Sharpe 1885.

A long-tailed, long-legged, plain-backed pipit recalling Buffy Pipit and probably closely related. Endemic to the lower-lying areas of equatorial West Africa, occurring throughout most of Gabon, south-western Congo and Equatorial Guinea. Also occurs in the coastal zone of western Angola, with an isolated population in north-eastern Angola. Extends northwards in a narrow strip along coastal Cameroon.

Plain, unmarked appearance eliminates confusion with most other pipits and (although largely allopatric) Buffy, Long-tailed and Plain-backed Pipits are similar in plumage and habits. The large amount of yellow on the lower mandible, the longer legs and overall greyer appearance aids in identification when compared to Buffy Pipit (Sinclair & Ryan 2003). The Long-legged Pipit shares the deep, deliberate tail pumping of the Buffy Pipit. Its long bill and different carriage distinguishes it from the Long-tailed Pipit, which reportedly breeds further south-east in Zambia and adjacent Angola. Compared to Plain-backed Pipit, Long-legged is overall larger, more elongated, lighter in colour and shows paler underparts. The *A. l. prunus* subspecies of the Plain-backed Pipit (which occurs over much of Angola) has a noticeably shorter culmen and browner plumage than the Long-legged Pipit. The longer tarsi and hind-claw of the Long-legged Pipit possibly indicates that it utilizes denser and longer grass than does the related Plain-backed Pipit (Clancey 1990).

Locally common, occurring in pairs or small parties, and frequenting well-grazed grassy patches in forest clearings, open grasslands and even large, open gardens (Sinclair & Ryan 2003). Two subspecies are differentiated: The nominate *A. p. pallidiventris*, Sharpe 1885 and the more restricted *A. p. esobe*, Chapin 1937, from the DRC.

Jackson's Pipit *Anthus latistriatus*, Jackson 1899.

The type specimen of this enigmatic taxon was collected in the late 1800's in the Kavirondo area of south-western Kenya. The specimen was then sent to the British Museum where it was described as new species by Jackson in 1899. However, Sclater (in 1930) regarded it as a juvenile Long-billed Pipit while White (in 1960) regarded it as a melanistic variant of the African Pipit. Clancey suggested however, that it is indeed a unique species. In his review of the genus *Anthus*, Clancey (1990) included two subspecies of Jackson's Pipit: The nominate *latistriatus* (which has been collected in Uganda and Kenya—on the non-breeding grounds—and the