

be heard throughout the year. Typically, singing is most intense in the early morning—starting just before sunrise—and late afternoon, but may continue throughout the day and even after sunset.

Several displaying males are sometimes audible from one point and displays are often initiated when rivals intrude into a male's territory or when an adjacent male begins singing. Perched birds may launch into short, half-hearted display flights when flushed.

The displaying bird utters a mono-syllabic, or sometimes a scratchy, disyllabic note during each loop of the display flight, commencing on the diagonal take-off phase. May

sing during either the upward or downward loop of the display flight. During the diagonal take-off phase the bird climbs progressively in a series of shallow steps, varying in number between 2-18 with an average of 8.8 steps (Hockey et al. 2005).

The song note is rapidly repeated 2-11 (usually 3-6) times in quick succession, every 1.5-4 seconds e.g. *chree-chree-chree-chree...chree-chree-chree-chree...* while the bird cruises in large circles for 100-150m. This is followed by a continuous stream of 12-26 notes as the bird dives back down to the ground or a low perch (Hockey et al. 2005; Maclean 1993). In this respect the song and

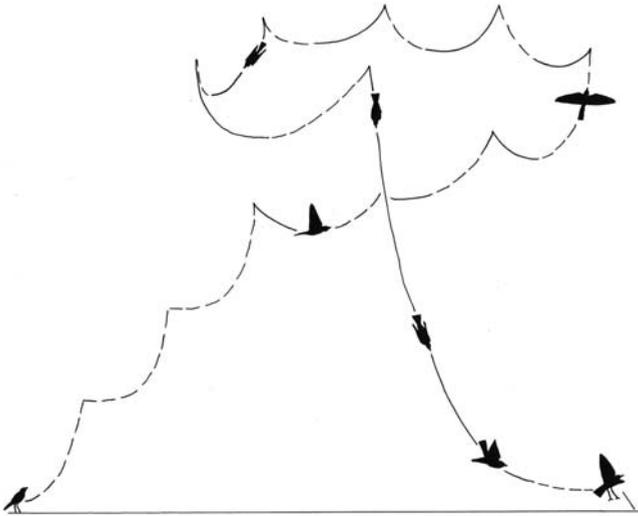


Fig. 69. African Pipit display flight diagram. Dotted line indicate wing flapping and solid lines indicate gliding or plummeting. During the diagonal take-off phase the male bird climbs to cruising height in a series of shallow steps (2-18, av. 8.8), beginning to sing a repeated phrase of 2-11 *chree* notes. Once cruising height is attained the bird executes a variable number of undulations, calling either during the flapping ascending phase of each loop, or during the gliding descending phase. While singing the bird may move in large, random 'circles' or simply progress in one direction. During the final descent phase, the bird gives one last upward flutter and then plummets downwards with closed wings while giving a continuous stream of *chree-chree-chree* notes. Opens wings just before the ground, flying a few metres horizontally just above the surface and sometimes hovering briefly before landing.