

**The second through fourth records
for North America of the
Pechora Pipit, *Anthus gustavi***

With notes on the identification of a most elusive species

Ben King

THE FIRST PECHORA PIPIT for North America was collected at Gambell, St. Lawrence Island, Alaska, in the northern Bering Sea, by Paul Silook (Friedmann, 1938) in 1937 (date unspecified). The specimen is in the U.S. National Museum. There were no additional records for 38 years until the recent flurry of birding activity in Alaska produced the three sight records to be reported here, one of which was mentioned in Kessel and Gibson (1978).

The second Pechora Pipit for North America was found on St. Lawrence Island by George E. Hall, Susan and Thompson Marsh and myself in a "boneyard" about 1 km east of Gambell on June 16, 1975. It was shy, hiding in grass and behind bones and mounds of dirt, but over a period of several hours, we obtained excellent views, as did 21 or 22 other birders.

Ken Irely and I found the third pipit on Attu, the westernmost island of the Aleutian Chain, on May 22, 1979, near the Coast Guard Loran Station about 50 m west of the N/S runway. It was very shy and remained hidden and out of sight inside piles of twisted rusty metal matting used for surfacing airstrips, during most of our three-hour observation

period. Some patient waiting for it to emerge resulted in good views for most of the 28 other birders who saw it. The pipit was part of a large wave of East Asian migrants that reached Attu May 20-22, 1979, in the wake of a storm. Most, including the pipit, were gone on May 23. This was the first record for the Aleutian Islands in spite of the fact that the Pechora Pipit breeds on the Commander Islands, only about 300 km to the west.

The fourth occurred on Sevuokuk Mountain about 1.5 km east of Gambell on St. Lawrence Island June 6, 1979. Frank Freese, Ken Irely, Douglas Kraus, Arnold Small and I discovered it at 3 p.m. on open tundra, in vegetation which averaged about 10 cm high, and ranged up to 20 cm above the ground. Like the others, this bird was also shy and difficult to observe, staying mostly hidden by the vegetation and taking flight when we approached close enough to see it. Nonetheless, during a 30-minute period, we got good views. At about 9 p.m., another group of birders and I returned to the area and rediscovered the bird. In spite of a low fog, we managed to obtain excellent views through 25X telescopes at about 20 m. The pipit could

University of California

birding study tours

**Mexico's Mayaland:
Birds of the Yucatan**

December 20-30, 1980

Eleven days afield in the Yucatan to study birds and tropical wildlife amidst the Yucatan's most spectacular lowland Mayan cities. We will make daily excursions to review the history and culture of these Mayan cities, and observe birds in a variety of habitats. Mayan centers to be explored are Dzibilchaltun, Uxmal, Kabah, Sayil, Mul Chic, jungle-covered Becan, coastal Tulum, and Chichen Itza. Instructor Bruce Elliott is a wildlife biologist who has done graduate study in Mayan archeology.

Some 430 species of birds have been recorded in our study area including Jabiru Storks, flamingo, Singing Quail and other forms found nowhere else. Write for fee and details.

Australasian Wildlife

January 19-February 4, 1981

A 17-day trek by air and auto to observe Australia's unique fauna and flora in the flower-carpeted Victorian Alps, the temperate coastal Eucalypt forest and duck-billed platypus habitat of the Mungambeegee River, and the tropical gallery forest of the Cape York Peninsula. Guided by Wildlife biologist Bruce Elliott.

Koalas, Satin Bowerbirds, kangaroos and wombats, anteaters, 45 different parrot species, and nearly 1,200 kinds of birds are found in our study area.

Fee of \$3,302 Includes tuition, round-trip air fare from San Francisco, air and ground transportation in Australia, first class hotels, breakfasts and some lunches.

For brochure, write or phone:

**Gaile Ann Knarr
University Extension
University of California
Santa Cruz, California
95064
Phone (408) 429-2761**



*The
Chickadee* INC.

"Everything for the Wild Bird Enthusiast"

BOOKS FOR BIRD LOVERS

In Print: Write for free list of Books and Records

Out of Print: Books bought and sold. Want lists encouraged.

You will be quoted if or when available.

Bushell Optical Equipment available at 25% discount.

702 Marshall St., Houston, Texas 77006

(713) 528-0139

not be found the following day.

Its furtiveness and close similarity to other species make the Pechora Pipit an unusually difficult Asian vagrant to record, and it may well occur in North America more often than these few records would indicate. Its breeding area includes the land areas along the western shores of the Bering Sea: Anadyr Territory, central parts of Chukotsk Peninsula, Koryatsk Land, the eastern shore of Kamchatka, and the Commander Islands (Dement'ev *et al.*, 1954; Ivanov, 1976). It breeds as far west as the Pechora River region, just west of the northern Ural Mountains in European U.S.S.R., from whence its name was derived. It winters in the Philippines, Sundas, Celebes and Molucca islands.

THE BEST FIELD MARK, the prominent, long whitish stripe running down each side of the back, forming a broken "V", was noted on all three birds. Each bird also had a whitish throat and belly which contrasted slightly with the buffy breast. These two marks differentiate the Pechora Pipit from the fall-plumaged Red-throated Pipits which lack pinkish rufous on the

throat and in which plumage they are occasionally seen in spring. These fall Red-throated Pipits have two buffy stripes on each side of the back and rather uniform buffy underparts. Otherwise the plumage of these two species is similar. However, the fresh-plumaged Pechora Pipit has a much brighter appearance than the fall Red-throated Pipit, a yellowish tinge on the breast and the sides of the head and the neck, and a rufescent tinge on the upperparts. This brighter look was most apparent on the Attu bird. Each of the three birds uttered calls different from those of Red-throated Pipits but no description was obtained because they were soft, infrequent and difficult to hear owing to continual wind, the rustle of clothing, and the voices of observers.

The two prominent whitish stripes also serve to distinguish the Pechora Pipit from the other pipits that occur in the Holarctic Region. Of the three other pipits that have occurred in Alaska, the Water Pipit, *Anthus spinoletta*, the Olive Tree-Pipit, *Anthus hodgsoni*, and the Brown Tree-Pipit, *Anthus trivialis*, the Water Pipit and the Olive Tree-Pipit

never have pale stripes on the back, and the Brown Tree-Pipit either lacks or has dull and darker, less conspicuous pale stripes on the back.

Otherwise the Pechora Pipits we observed were about the size of a Red-throated Pipit, with slender straight bills. They had warm dark brown upperparts with distinct and prominent black streaks from crown to upper tail coverts. The outer pair of tail feathers was mostly whitish. The breast and flanks were heavily streaked with black. Observers who saw the Attu bird were impressed with its brightness, which reminded them of a Savannah Sparrow. With its extreme furtiveness and relative silence, the Pechora Pipit is most un-pipit-like, especially to those familiar with only the Water Pipit.

I wish to thank Vernon and Beda Slwooko for their exuberant hospitality at Gambell, the personnel of the U.S. Coast Guard Loran Station at Attu for their hospitality and assistance, and the personnel of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in the Aleutian Islands for their help. Jon Dunn and Davis W. Finch kindly made their notes on the Attu bird available to me. Finch, Dan Gibson, George E. Hall, Peter J. Grant and Will Russell provided many good ideas and much valuable criticism during the preparation of the manuscript. Mrs. Marion Steeves graciously translated the relevant portion of Ivanov (1976). The staff of the Ornithology Department of the American Museum of Natural History kindly allowed me the use of the collection and library in its care.

Bibliography

- Dement'ev, G. P., N. A. Gladkov *et al.* 1954. Birds of the Soviet Union. (Trans. from Russian in 1968 by Israel Program for Scientific Translations, Jerusalem). Vol. V. Friedmann, H. 1938. Further Records from St. Lawrence Island, Alaska, *Condor* 40 (2):88.
- Ivanov, A. I. 1976. Katalog Ptits Sovetskogo Soyuzu (Checklist of Birds of the Soviet Union). Leningrad, "Nauka". 276 pp. (In Russian).
- Kessel, B., and D. D. Gibson. 1978. Status and Distribution of Alaska Birds. *Studies Avian Biol.* 1, Cooper Ornithol. Soc. 100 pp.

—c/o Ornithology Dept., American Museum of Natural History, Central Park West at 79th St., New York, N. Y. 10024.

Bird Bonanzas, inc.

celebrates its 10th anniversary in 1980. We are still the tours with the small groups of birds and large numbers of birds.

Our 1980 tours include Alaska, Minnesota, Mexico, Costa Rica, Panama, Colombia, Venezuela, Surinam, England, Israel, Africa, India, Nepal, Ceylon, Australia and others.



For additional information write:

BIRD BONANZAS

Suite 501

12550 Biscayne Boulevard,
North Miami, Florida 33161

Tawny Frogmouth
by Len Robinson, Australia.