

# American Pipit

*Anthus rubescens*

Class: Aves

Order: Passeriformes

Review Status: Reviewed (Alaska)

Version Date: 03 February 2023

## Conservation Status

Table 1 Conservation status according to state, national, and international organizations and agencies.

Organization	Rank
NatureServe	G5/S5
ADF&G	Species of Greatest Conservation Need
IUCN	Least Concern
Audubon Alaska	Watch

## Final Rank

Conservation Category: **II. Red**

High status and either high biological vulnerability or high action need

Table 2 ASRS categorical scores. Higher numerical scores denote greater concern.

Category	Range	Score
Status	-20 to 20	6
Biological	-50 to 50	-32
Action	-40 to 40	4

## Status

Variables measure the trend in a taxon’s population status or distribution. Higher status scores denote taxa with known declining trends. Status scores range from -20 (increasing) to 20 (decreasing).

### Population Trend in Alaska (-10 to 10)

According to Alaska Audubon's Alaska WatchList, the American Pipit is suspected to be declining (Warnock 2017c). An analysis by Sauer et al. (2017) using Breeding Bird Survey (BBS) data did not detect a significant trend, however, this species is considered poorly monitored in Alaska and BBS is not suitable for monitoring this species (Hendricks and Verbeek 2020).

Score: 6

### Distribution Trend in Alaska (-10 to 10)

Unknown.

Score: 0

**Status Total: 6**

## Biological

Variables measure aspects of a taxon's distribution, abundance and life history. Higher biological scores suggest greater vulnerability to extirpation. Biological scores range from -50 (least vulnerable) to 50 (most vulnerable).

### Population Size in Alaska (-10 to 10)

Uncertain, but likely >25,000 (Handel et al. 2009; PIF 2019). PIF (2019) estimates a population size of 190,000, with high uncertainty (95% CI [37 000, 520 000]).

Score: -10

### Range Size in Alaska (-10 to 10)

Common and widespread breeder through much of Alaska, west to the eastern Aleutian Islands (Gibson and Byrd 2007; Armstrong 2008). In northern Alaska, breeds throughout the Brooks Range; it is uncommon along the coast of the Beaufort Sea (Johnson and Herter 1989). As this species is considered "casual or accidental" in the winter (Armstrong 2008), we only consider its breeding range. Estimated range size is >400,000 sq. km, based on range map from ACCS (2017a).

Score: -10

### Population Concentration in Alaska (-10 to 10)

Does not concentrate (Hendricks and Verbeek 2020).

Score: -10

### Reproductive Potential in Alaska

#### *Age of First Reproduction (-5 to 5)*

Unknown, but possibly within their first year (Hendricks and Verbeek 2020).

Score: -5

#### *Number of Young (-5 to 5)*

Females typically lay a single brood ranging in size from 4 to 7 eggs, with an average of ~6 eggs (Kessel 1989; Hendricks 1997; Gibson and Byrd 2007). In other parts of its North American range, the American Pipit can re-nest if the first clutch is lost (Hendricks 1991b). It is unknown whether this re-nesting occurs in Alaska.

Score: 1

### Ecological Specialization in Alaska

#### *Dietary (-5 to 5)*

Little data available for Alaska. Elsewhere in its North American range, the diet of the American Pipit is comprised almost exclusively of arthropods (Hendricks and Verbeek 2020). Because invertebrates are an ephemeral and potentially unpredictable food source (e.g. Nebel et al. 2010), we rank this question as B- Moderately adaptable with key requirements common.

Score: 1

*Habitat (-5 to 5)*

In Alaska during the breeding season, inhabits treeless tundra and sparsely vegetated habitats up to at least 550 meters (Tibbitts et al. 2006; Gibson 2011; Hendricks and Verbeek 2020). Nests are placed on the ground under cover such as overhanging vegetation or under rocks (Kessel 1989).

Score: 1

**Biological Total: -32**

**Action**

Variables measure current state of knowledge or extent of conservation efforts directed toward a given taxon. Higher action scores denote greater information needs due to lack of knowledge or conservation action. Action scores range from -40 (lower needs) to 40 (greater needs).

Management Plans and Regulations in Alaska (-10 to 10)

Protected under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA 1918).

Score: 2

Knowledge of Distribution and Habitat in Alaska (-10 to 10)

Habitat associations and distribution are well-known from multi-species bird surveys, where this species is commonly detected (e.g., Tibbitts et al. 2006; Ruthrauff et al. 2007; Phillips et al. 2017; Amundson et al. 2018). Its breeding status on St. Lawrence Island and other islands of the Bering Sea is uncertain (Lehman 2019).

Score: -10

Knowledge of Population Trends in Alaska (-10 to 10)

Although this species is detected during the Breeding Bird Survey (BBS) and the Christmas Bird Count, data are inadequate for determining trends (Sauer et al. 2017; Hendricks and Verbeek 2020).

Score: 2

Knowledge of Factors Limiting Populations in Alaska (-10 to 10)

Little is known about the factors that limit this species' population size in Alaska or elsewhere in North America (Hendricks and Verbeek 2020). Inclement weather and predation may be important factors affecting nestling survival. In addition, earlier hatch dates may favor larger clutch sizes (Hendricks and Verbeek 2020). These factors, however, are largely speculative and additional research is needed.

Score: 10

**Action Total: 4**

## Supplemental Information

Variables do not receive numerical scores. Instead, they are used to sort taxa to answer specific biological or management questions.

**Harvest:** None or Prohibited

**Seasonal Occurrence:** Breeding

**Taxonomic Significance:** Monotypic species

**% Global Range in Alaska:** >10%

**% Global Population in Alaska:** <25%

**Peripheral:** No

## References

- Alaska Center for Conservation Science (ACCS). 2017a. Wildlife Data Portal. University of Alaska Anchorage. Available online: <http://aknhp.uaa.alaska.edu/apps/wildlife>.
- Amundson, C. L., C. M. Handel, D. R. Ruthrauff, T. L. Tibbitts, and R. E. Gill. 2018. Montane-breeding bird distribution and abundance across national parks of southwestern Alaska. *Journal of Fish and Wildlife Management* 9(1):180–207. DOI: 10.3996/062017-JFWM-050
- Armstrong, R. H. 2008. Guide to the birds of Alaska, 5th edition. Alaska Northwest Books, Anchorage, AK, USA.
- Gibson, D. D. 2011. Nesting shorebirds and landbirds of interior Alaska. U.S. Geological Survey Contract Order No. G10PX02562. Prepared by AVESALASKA, Ester, AK, USA. DOI: 10.3996/062017-JFWM-050.S11
- Gibson, D. D., and G. V. Byrd. 2007. Birds of the Aleutian Islands, Alaska. Nuttall Ornithological Club, Cambridge, MA, USA.
- Handel, C. M., S. A. Swanson, D. A. Nigro, and S. M. Matsuoka. 2009. Estimation of avian population sizes and species richness across a boreal landscape in Alaska. *Wilson Journal of Ornithology* 121(3):528–547.
- Hendricks, P. 1991b. Site fidelity and renesting of female American pipits. *Journal of Field Ornithology* 62(3):338–342.
- Hendricks, P. 1997. Geographical trends in clutch size: A range-wide relationship with laying date in American pipits. *The Auk* 114(4):773–778. DOI: 10.2307/4089300
- Hendricks, P., and N. A. Verbeek. 2020. American Pipit (*Anthus rubescens*), version 1.0. In Billerman, S. M., ed. Birds of the World. Cornell Lab of Ornithology, Ithaca, NY, USA. DOI: 10.2173/bow.amepip.01
- Johnson, S. R., and D. R. Herter. 1989. The birds of the Beaufort Sea. BP Exploration Inc., Anchorage, AK, USA.
- Kessel, B. 1989. Birds of the Seward Peninsula, Alaska: Their biogeography, seasonality, and natural history. University of Alaska Press, Fairbanks, AK, USA.
- Lehman, P. E. 2019. The Birds of Gambell and St. Lawrence Island, Alaska. Studies of Western Birds 4. Western Field Ornithologists, Camarillo, CA, USA.
- Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA). 1918. U.S. Code Title 16 §§ 703-712 Migratory Bird Treaty Act.

- Nebel, S., A. Mills, J. D. McCracken, and P. D. Taylor. 2010. Declines of aerial insectivores in North America follow a geographic gradient. *Avian Conservation and Ecology* 5(2):art1. DOI: 10.5751/ACE-00391-050201
- Phillips, L. M., C. L. McIntyre, J. D. Mizel, E. J. Williams, and G. M. Colligan. 2017. Monitoring passerine birds in the Central Alaska Network. Report NPS/CAKN/NRRS—2017/1478, National Park Service, Fort Collins, CO, USA.
- Partners in Flight (PIF). 2019. Population Estimates Database, version 3.0. Available online: <http://pif.birdconservancy.org/PopEstimates> [accessed 09 April 2019].
- Ruthrauff, D. R., T. L. Tibbitts, R. E. Gill, and C. M. Handel. 2007. Inventory of montane-nesting birds in Katmai and Lake Clark National Parks and Preserves. Report NPS/AKRSWAN/NRTR-2007/02, U.S. Geological Survey Alaska Science Center, Anchorage, AK, USA.
- Sauer, J. R., D. K. Niven, K. L. Pardieck, D. J. Ziolkowski, and W. A. Link. 2017. Expanding the North American Breeding Bird Survey analysis to include additional species and regions. *Journal of Fish and Wildlife Management* 8(1):154–172. DOI: 10.3996/102015-JFWM-109
- Tibbitts, T. L., D. R. Ruthrauff, R. E. Gill, Jr., and C. M. Handel. 2006. Inventory of montane-nesting birds in the Arctic Network of National Parks, Alaska. Report NPS/AKARCN/NRTR-2006/02/, Arctic Network Inventory and Monitoring Program, National Park Service, Alaska Region, Fairbanks, AK, USA.
- Warnock, N. 2017c. The Alaska WatchList 2017, Declining. Audubon Alaska, Anchorage, AK, USA.

Alaska Center for Conservation Science  
Alaska Natural Heritage Program  
University of Alaska Anchorage  
Anchorage, AK