

appearance during late autumn has become predictable. During November 2005 there was an exceptional incursion of at least 1,000 to New York State (Spahn and Tetlow 2006).

The differences in distribution and migration strategies between the two species indicate that Cave Swallow would be an unexpected vagrant, but clearly it is an outside possibility for consideration in light of the small numbers reaching the east coast of the USA.

Blyth's Pipit *Anthus godlewskii*

(Taczanowski, 1876). Breeds from southern Transbaikalia and northern Mongolia to extreme northeast China and south to Tibet. Winters locally throughout Indian subcontinent and strays west to Israel and Arabia.

Monotypic.

Increasingly regular vagrant from Siberia. Probably overlooked previously.

Status: There have been 20 records involving 21 birds, 20 of them since 1988.

1882 East Sussex: Brighton caught 23rd October

1988 Shetland: Fair Isle 13th-23rd October

1990 Cornwall: Skewjack 1st-winter c22nd October-1st November

1993 Scilly: St. Mary's 1st-winter 20th-22nd October

1993 Shetland: Fair Isle 1st-winter 31st October-4th November, trapped 1st November

1994 Suffolk: Landguard 1st-winter 4th-10th November trapped 10th; taken by Common Kestrel *F. tinnunculus* on 10th

1994 Kent: South Swale NR 7th November-11th December

1996 Norfolk: Sheringham and Weybourne 1st-winter 14th-16th October

1998 Dorset: Portland two 22nd-24th November, one to 6th December, both trapped 22nd November

1999 Norfolk: Happisburgh 25th to at least 28th September

2002 Nottinghamshire: Gringley Carr 1st-winter 28th December-5th January 2003

2004 Cornwall: Land's End 1st-winter trapped 15th November to at least 20th December

2005 Caernarfonshire: Bardsey 1st-winter 16th-17th October

2005 Scilly: St. Mary's 1st-winter 23rd October

2006 Shetland: Sumburgh 1st-winter 12th October

2006 Scilly: St. Mary's 1st-winter 18th-27th October

2006 Shetland: Fair Isle 21st-24th October

2007 Scilly: Tresco 1st-winter 16th-23rd October

2007 Shetland: Sumburgh 17th-18th October

2007 Shetland: Fair Isle 1st-winter 27th October, trapped, died later

Where: Most have been on Shetland (six birds) and Scilly (four birds), plus four between Dorset and Cornwall in the southwest and five between Norfolk and East Sussex along the east coast

(five birds). There is one Welsh record. The notable exception to coastal birds was an inland bird in Nottinghamshire, but given that Richard's Pipit *A. richardi* strays inland with some regularity this record might not be so unlikely as it first appeared. It has been suggested that inland Richard's might follow major river systems (Fraser and Rogers 2004). If so, perhaps Blyth's might behave similarly and further inland birds might be expected.

When: Blyth's is an early autumn migrant, leaving Mongolia in August and arriving on the winter quarters from early September. Surprisingly many of the European records occur significantly later than typical for Richard's Pipit (Alström and Mild 2003).

All have been in autumn or early winter. One in late September (25th, Happisburgh, Norfolk) was the earliest by some margin. Fourteen have been in October (13 between 12th and 27th). Five November birds are split between the early and latter part of the month. The inland bird was found in late December.

The arrival dates of Blyth's Pipits between Shetland and Scilly/Cornwall barely differ (median date 19th October versus 21st October), so there is no evidence of 'spill down' for this species from north to southwest. Arrivals may occur on a broad front so surely others in between are not being detected.

Discussion: Kenneth Williamson unearthed the first British Blyth's Pipit in 1963 when he was looking at specimens of Tawny Pipit *A. campestris* in the British Museum and discovered a specimen of Blyth's Pipit mislabeled as a Richard's Pipit *A. richardi*. Williamson said it was the most tatty skin that he ever inspected. The bird had been obtained at Brighton, Sussex, in October 1882 (Williamson 1977). It was not accepted in 1963 because it was thought to be an extremely unlikely vagrant to Britain. It was only when a bird was found in Finland in 1975 that the record was re-evaluated and accepted. This was published in the 10th BOURC Report (BOURC 1980) following rejection in the 8th Report (BOURC 1974) because "the majority of the committee was not convinced of the validity of the record".

Confusion reigned over the identity of a number of birds. Much of this was presumably due to this species being deemed an extraordinarily difficult bird to identify. Some of the confusion stemmed from reliance upon a supposedly diagnostic 'chep' call (for example, Kitson 1979a; Alström and Mild 1987, Alström and Mild 1988, Alström 1988; Heard 1990) which Blyth's

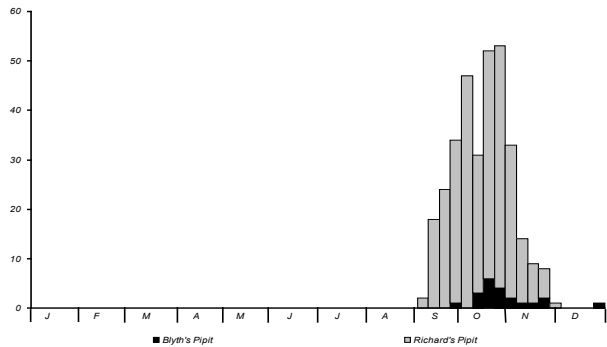


Figure 15: Timing of British Blyth's Pipit records 1882-2007 with an overlay of autumn Richard's Pipits in Yorkshire (to 2005).