



Chatham Island pipit *Anthus novaeseelandiae chathamensis*

19 cm

CHATHAM ISLANDS ENDEMIC SUBSPECIES,
NOT THREATENED

Identification

The Chatham Island pipit is currently considered an endemic subspecies of the New Zealand pipit. However, recent research suggests that Chatham Island pipits, along with pipits from Antipodes, Auckland and Campbell Islands, may be a separate species, distinct from the mainland pipit. Further study is required. Pipits look similar to the introduced skylark, but they lack the skylark's small crest, and have a prominent white eyebrow. Pipits are more approachable than skylarks, and typically walk away from the observer, flicking their tails up and down.



Right: Chatham Island pipit,
The Sisters.
Photo: Christopher
Robertson (DOC).
Below: Chatham Island pipit
carrying food for chicks,
Rangatira.
Photo: Helen Gummer.

Distribution and ecology

Pipits are abundant on Chatham Island, Pitt Island, Rangatira, Mangere, Star Keys, The Forty Fours, The Sisters, and The Pyramid. They prefer open habitat, rough pasture and coastal areas, including rocky islands. There are no estimates of population size, but a study of densities on Chatham Island found that pipits were more numerous there than in similar North Island habitats.

Pipits are strongly territorial during the breeding season, with some breeding pairs remaining on territory all year. They eat a range of insects, spiders and sandhoppers, and also seeds of grasses, clover and other plants. Most food is taken from the ground, but some insects are caught on the wing. The female builds a deep cup nest, well concealed in vegetation. Two or three broods are typically raised between August and February.



Chatham Island pipit at nest,
Mangere, December 1981.
Photo: Rod Morris (DOC).

Threats and conservation

The Chatham Island pipit is not regarded as threatened. Despite the introduction of cats, three species of rats, mice and hedgehogs to Chatham Island, pipits have remained numerous. They have probably benefited from land clearance and the creation of more open country.