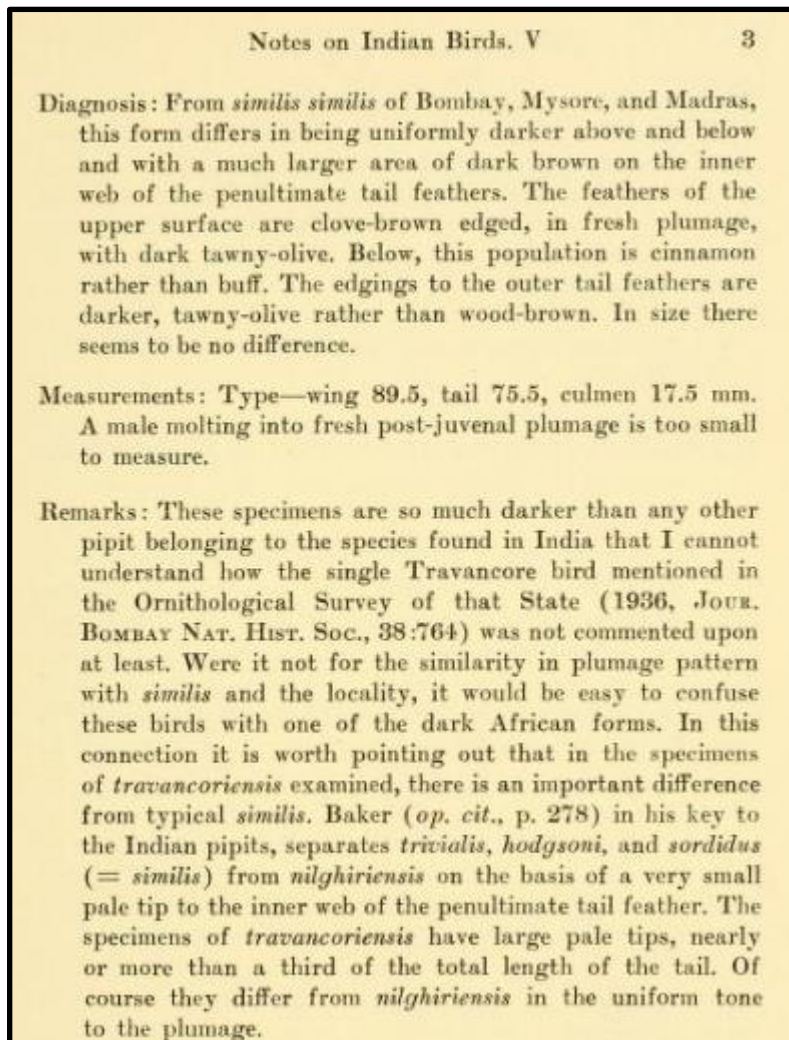


Motacillidae: Recognize subspecies *Anthus similis travancoriensis* Ripley, 1953

Avilist has synonymised *Anthus similis travancoriensis* Ripley, 1953 (Type locality: Road to Muthukuzhi, Ashambu hills, S Tamil Nadu) with *Anthus similis similis* (Jerdon, 1840) (Type locality: Jalna, Maharashtra) based on the base-taxonomy used for Avilist subspecies (=IOC). IOC probably followed Alstrom & Mild (2003), which do not recognise this subspecies. However, [Clements](#) do recognise *travancoriensis* and so does [H&M4](#) and [BLI](#). The request here is to accept the status quo - rather than follow only the IOC. This has not been previously assessed by TaxCom.



[Ripley \(1953\): 3](#) Original Description

10.3, SD 3.11, n=5), 10.25–30 (mean 25.6, SD 2.71, n=5). Probably smaller than *jerdoni*, but sample too small to be conclusive (cf. MEASUREMENTS). Juvenile shows distinctly darker centres above than juvenile *decapus*; differs from juvenile Paddyfield Pipit by same characters as juvenile *yamethini*. We tentatively include '*travancoriensis*' (ranging from the Ashambu hills north probably to the Palni hills: Ripley 1953, Ali & Ripley 1998), said to differ from *similis* in being "uniformly darker above and below", "cinnamon rather than buff" on the underparts, and in having edgings of outer rectrices "darker, tawny olive rather than wood-brown" and "a much larger area of dark brown on the inner web of the

Alström & Mild (2003):205 statement was tentative, probably not enough specimens were sampled.

However, Rasmussen & Anderton (2012) statement was definitive to keep it separate.

hindclaw; note (at most) scarcely streaked breast but **relatively dark underparts**, weakly streaked back, and **buffy to rufous outer rectrices**; lacks streaked flanks of Nilgiri. Relatively shorter-legged than Richard's group. Sexes similar. Juvenile has scaly upperparts and breast and is very like juvenile Richard's in pattern but not shape. **Variation** Marked. Varies from nearly as pale and greyish as Tawny in NW *decapus* to dark and rufescent above and buff or cinnamon below in widespread N *jerdoni* and S Peninsular nominate and *travancoriensis*; *travancoriensis* perhaps most heavily streaked, which are dark and heavily and distinctly streaked. **Size** (NW *decapus*¹, Himalayan *jerdoni*², W Ghats *travancoriensis*³) Length (°) 160–180, (°) 154–165, (°) 146–162; head (°) 39–42, (°) 38–41, (°) 40–42; tail (°) 89–92, (°) 83–93, (°) 79–84; hindclaw (°) 9–12.

Rasmussen & Anderton (2012):319 recognised this subspecies clearly

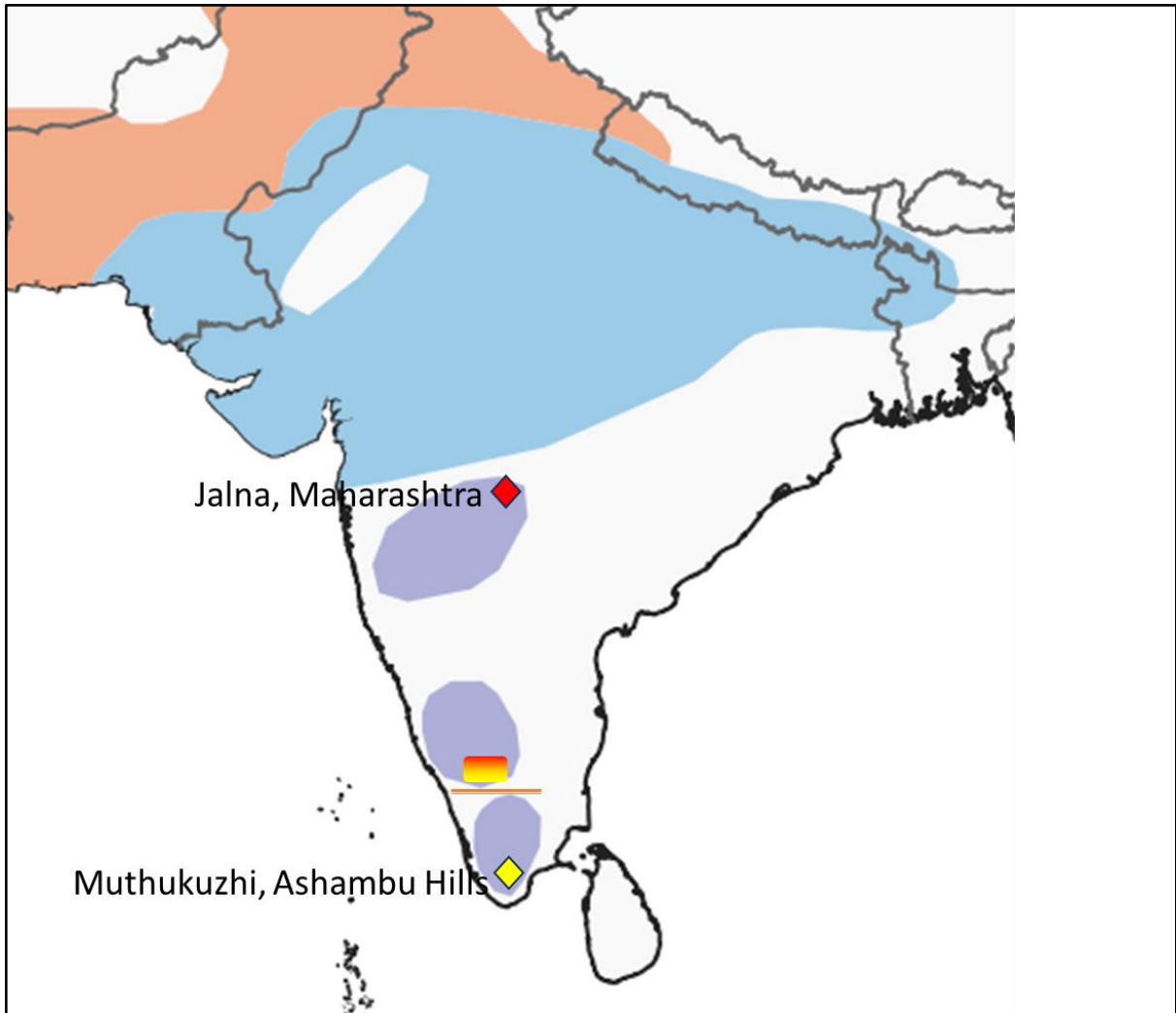


Fig 1. The distribution range of Long-billed Pipit in Peninsular India from [Birds of the world](#) showing type localities of *similis* (red) and *travancoriensis* (yellow) respectively (Jalna and Muthukuzhi) and the generally accepted break in subspecies distribution. However, Nilgiris, just immediately north of that line, is the zone of intergradation.

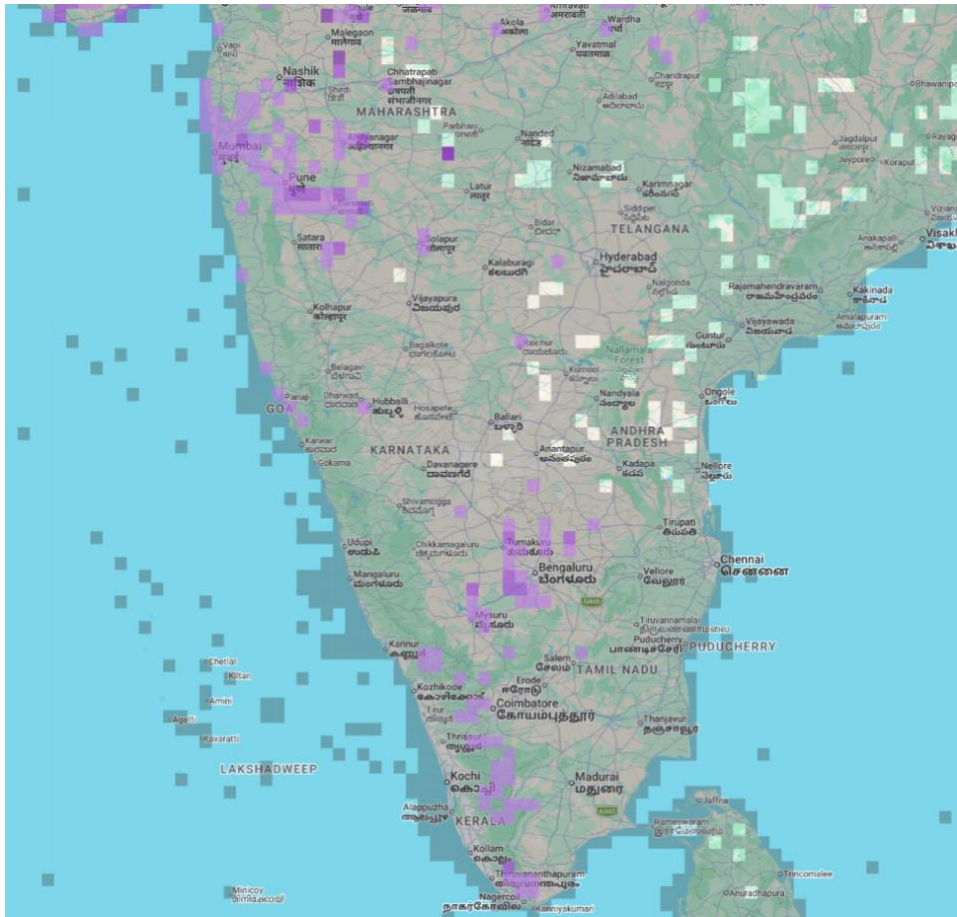


Fig 2. Distribution of Long-billed Pipit in Peninsular India from [eBird](#)

There does not seem to be any doubt about this treatment if one compares photographs (of the adults) in the Macaulay Library ([1] & [2]) from the northern Western Ghats (Mumbai & Jalna has same latitude) and from southern Western Ghats (Thiruvananthapuram and Ashambu hills has same latitude) - that the southern birds are generally much richer, more heavily streaked, and would easily meet the 75% criteria (Amadon 1949). Colour tones are dependent on camera and light, and hence best not compared from field photographs.



[1] The nominate Long-billed Pipit from Palghar, north-western Maharashtra that lies in the same latitude as the type location. [Photo](#): Dattaprasad Naik



[2] The *travancoriensis* Long-billed Pipit from Ponmudi, southern Kerala that lies in the same latitude as the type locality. [Photo](#): Sreya S Kumar

However, like most subspecies, there is a cline in the Western Ghats as the proportion of the darker individuals increases as one sample south from Jalna, most prominent in the Nilgiris of NW Tamil Nadu. However, still the birds from south of the Palakkad gap can be safely assigned to this subspecies while the birds in the Western Ghats, from north of the gap, like in Wayanad, are closer to the birds in Karnataka, which is the nominate. In this case at least, the Tropical Asian RAG thinks the burden of proof should rest with the IOC, which decided to synonymize *travancoriensis* with *similis*.

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