

BIRD IN THE HAND

by A. R. McEvey, drawings by Lorene Arnold, National Museum of Victoria, Melbourne

The Larks and the Pipit

Alaudidae: Horsfield Bushlark *Mirafra javanica*

Skylark *Alauda arvensis* (Introduced)

Motacillidae: Pipit *Anthus australis*

In the hand, the Bushlark is small and rather sparrow-like by comparison with the Skylark and Pipit, though the paleness of its inland races renders their plumage rather like that of the Skylark and Pipit; confusion may arise in distinguishing between the latter two species.

In the Skylark and Bushlark, the area of the wing is greater in proportion to body length than that of the wing of the Pipit. The Skylark and Bushlark obviously have a proportionally larger wing than has the Pipit. (See figure page 92).

These three species have white or mostly white

outer tail feathers. The Songlarks (*Cincloramphus* spp.) have no white on their outer tail feathers.

Primaries are usually numbered from the inside outwards. Here they are numbered from the outside inwards for convenience.

Horsfield Bushlark *Mirafra javanica*

Primaries:

No. 1 (small outer). Exposed length (about the same length as primary covert) c. 14 mm; situated *under* the leading edge of primary No. 2.

No. 2 and No. 6. Equal length and slightly shorter than Nos. 3-5.

Nos. 3-5. Equal length and longest.

Wing length: 69-79 mm (19 measured).

Hind claw: 6-8 mm (9 measured).

Skylark *Alauda arvensis*

Primaries:

No. 1 (small outer). Exposed length c. 8 mm; situated *under* the leading edge of primary No. 2.

No. 2 and No. 4. Equal and slightly shorter than No. 3.

No. 3. Longest.

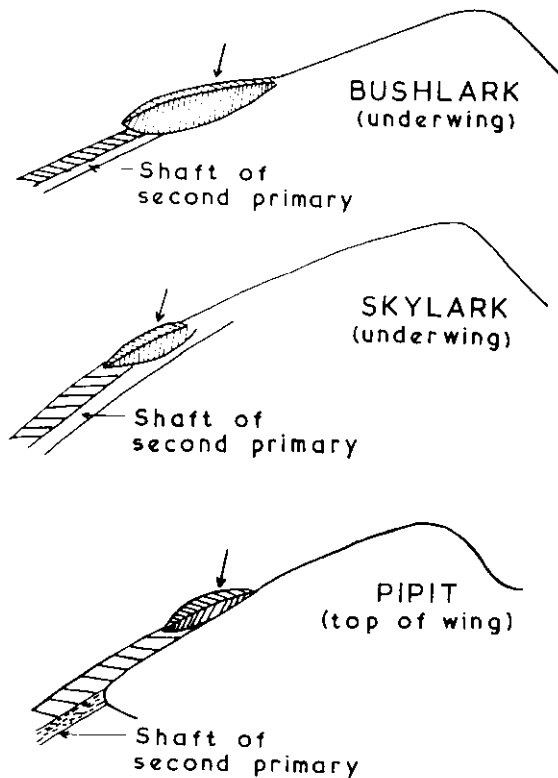
No. 5. Shorter than No. 4.

No. 6. Much shorter than No. 5.

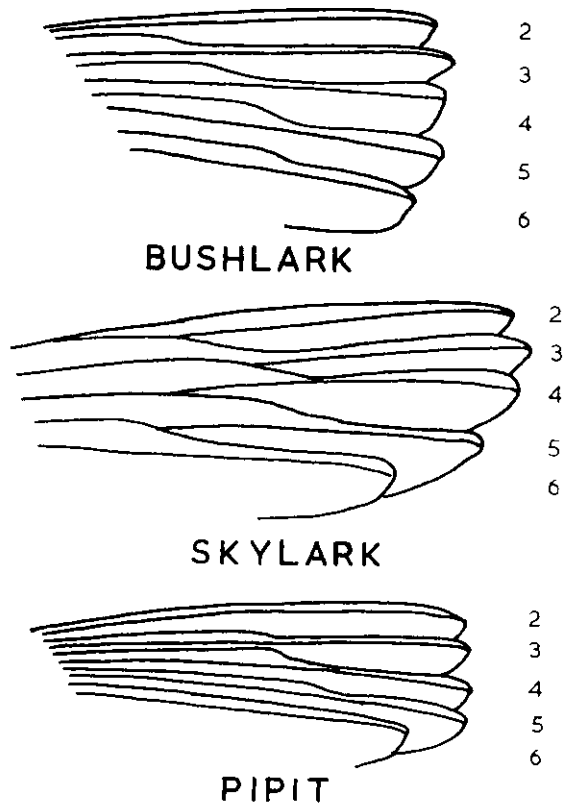
Wing length: 97-112 mm (11 measured).

Hind claw: 12-22 mm (10 measured).

No. 1 (small) Primary



Primaries Nos. 2-6



Pipit *Anthus australis*

Primaries:

No. 1 (small outer). Exposed length c. 7 mm; situated *on top of* leading edge of primary No. 2 and hidden by primary coverts.

Nos. 2-5. Longest and almost equal.

No. 6. Much shorter than No. 5.

Wing length: 80-87 mm (9 measured).

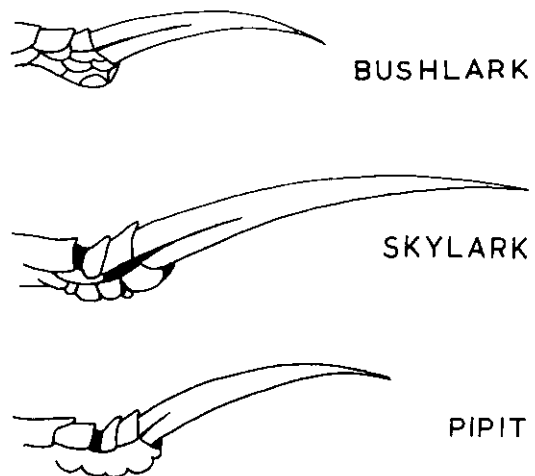
Hind claw: 8.0-14.5 mm (9 measured).

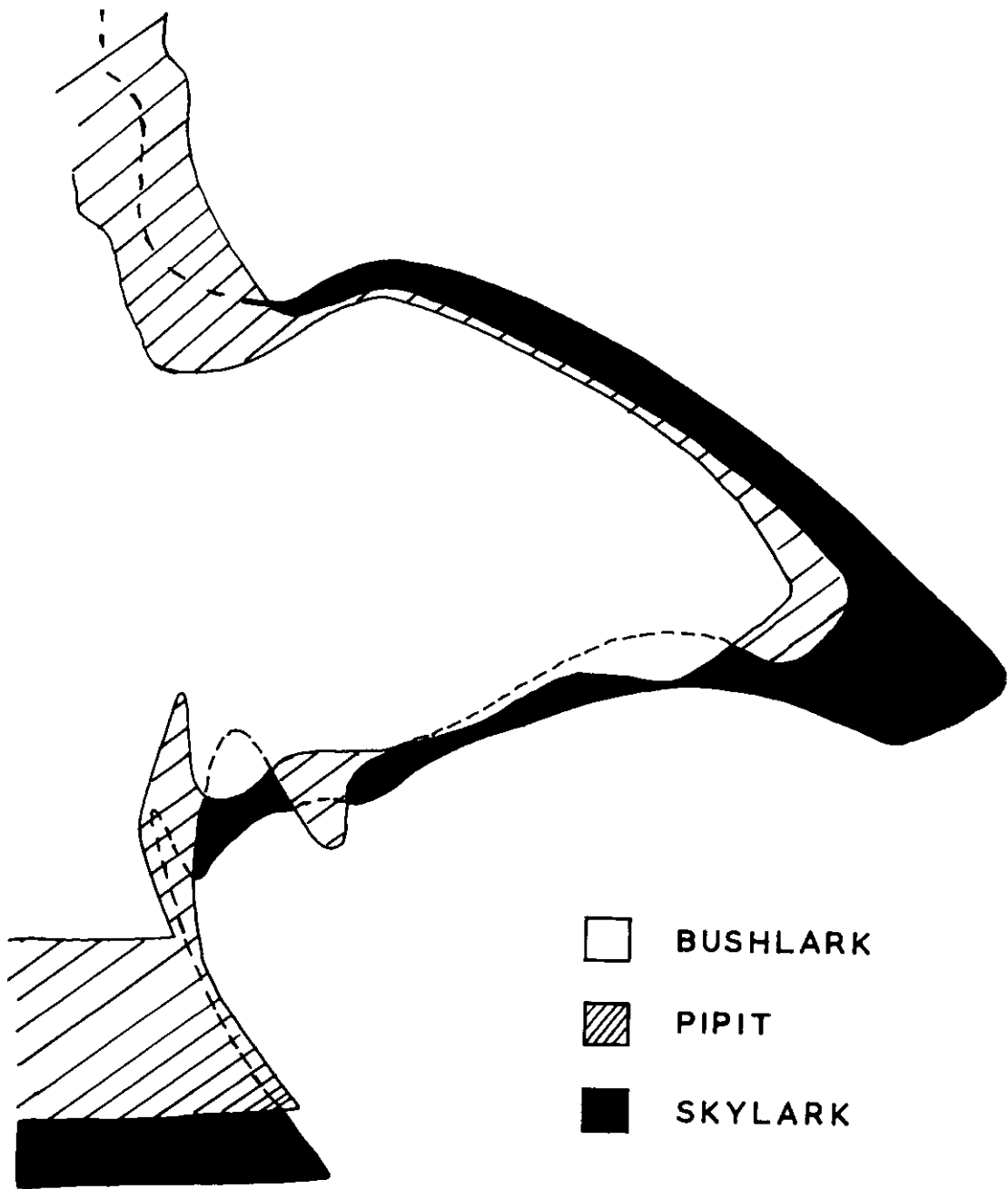
Note: The position of No. 1 (small outer) primary is a diagnostic distinction between the Skylark and the Pipit but because of moult or wear of the plumage, it may not be found easily.

Acknowledgements: Grateful acknowledgement is made to Mr H. J. de S. Disney for pointing out the diagnostic difference concerning the small outer (No. 1) primary.

Hind Claw

(about x5 natural size)





Wing Outlines (natural size)