

**SPRAGUE'S PIPIT**  
*(Anthus spragueii)*

**STATUS:** None.

**SPECIES DESCRIPTION:** The Sprague's pipit is a small passerine of the family Motacillidae that is endemic to the North American grassland. The Sprague's pipit is about 10-15 centimeters (3.9-5.9 inches) in length, and weighs 22-26 grams (0.8-0.9 ounce), with buff and blackish streaking on the crown, nape, and underparts. It has a plain buffy face with a large eye-ring. The bill is relatively short, narrow, and straight with a blackish upper mandible. The lower mandible is pale with a blackish tip. The wings and tail have two indistinct wing-bars, outer tail feathers are mostly white. Legs are yellowish to pale pinkish-brown. Juveniles are slightly smaller, but similar to adults, with black spotting rather than streaking. Sprague's pipit is most similar in appearance to the American pipit, which has less streaking (becomes uniformly gray in spring) and dark brown to blackish legs.

**HABITAT:** Nests in short-grass plains, mixed grass prairie, alkaline meadows, and wet meadows where the vegetation is intermediate in height and provides dense cover. More common in native grasslands than areas with introduced grasses. Native grass fields are rare in Arizona but cultivated, dry Bermuda grass, alfalfa fields mixed with patches of dry grass or fallow fields appear to support the species during wintering. They will not use mowed or burned areas until the vegetation has had a chance to grow.

**RANGE:** Breeding range includes portions of south-central Canada, North Dakota, northern portions of South Dakota, Montana, and Minnesota. Wintering range includes south-central and southeastern Arizona, Texas, southern Oklahoma, Arkansas, Mississippi, Louisiana, and northern Mexico. In Arizona, the species is considered rare but regular winter migrant from mid-October to March. Sprague's pipit winters mainly in the grasslands of San Rafael, Sonoita, and Sulphur Springs Valley in southeastern Arizona. A few individuals have also been found wintering in grass fields along the lower Colorado River from north of Yuma to Parker, and in grass and alfalfa fields near Phoenix and Sierra Vista.

**REASONS FOR DECLINE / VULNERABILITY:** Loss of native prairie habitat as a result of conversion of the land to agriculture, invasion of non-native plant species, poor livestock grazing practices especially in drought-prone areas, encroachment of woody vegetation, fire suppression, and urban development.

**LAND MANAGEMENT / OWNERSHIP:** Coronado National Forest, Arizona State Land Department, Audubon Research Ranch, and private lands.

**NOTES:** The Sprague's pipit is protected by the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA) (16 USC 703 *e. seq.*) and its implementing regulations (50 CFR Parts 20 and 21) which protects the species, their eggs, nests, and feathers from being killed, taken, captured, or pursued. The pipit is also listed as a species of conservation concern by the Arizona Game and Fish Department.