

# Is it a Rock Pipit or Water Pipit?

You're walking along a beach during the winter and you see a group of pipits feeding on the insects in the seaweed. The default pipits at that time of year are likely to be Rock Pipit and maybe the odd Meadow Pipit, all in winter plumage. You notice that one of the Rock Pipits looks a bit brighter than the others but is it a trick of the light or maybe a paler Rock Pipit. Here is an attempt to help you identify the key points to identify a winter plumage Water Pipit.

Even in dull winter light **the underparts of the Water Pipit (WP) tend to jump out as brighter**, though the upperparts, at first glance, may not seem different from a Rock Pipit (RP).



## Note

It was only in 1987 that Water Pipit was split from Rock Pipit as a full species by the BOU.

Water Pipit is a regular winter visitor to Ayrshire shores. Often found in the company of Rock Pipits feeding on small insects in seaweed.

Good sites for winter birds include: Croy Shore, Troon south beach, Seamill, Doonfoot & Maidens.

Anywhere with a big build up of winter seaweed is worth a look!

## Rock Pipit (*Anthus petrosus*)



Dark, blurred streaking that goes down the whole body, set against a creamy coloured belly. Notice the blurred grey vent area.

Both can have a bold supercilium, but **WP eye stripe splits white eye ring**, compared to RP complete white eye ring. Note both species have dark lores (between the eye and bill), if lores are light coloured consider much rarer Buff-bellied Pipit.

## Water Pipit (*Anthus spinoletta*)



Streaks are paler, smaller and not as extensive, set against a **white coloured belly**, giving an overall paler look to the bird. Note the clear white vent.



Note the uniform dull grey look to this bird. The back has obvious dark streaking.

Both birds have double wing bars, but the **WP has distinct white bars** whilst the RP has light grey wing bars.



There is a **brown tinge** to the back and rump of this bird. There is some streaking on the back but not as dark as on a RP.



Note the extensive nature of streaking on the RP compared with the WP, which **tends to have a cleaner, whiter belly**.



Good luck!

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