

BAND SIZES FOR SHOREBIRDS

By Betty Knorr

The returns I've been getting on shorebirds during the past few years indicate that a change in band sizes is necessary for some species. For some shorebirds, the band sizes recommended in the Banding Manual are causing injuries, crippling, and loss of toes and feet.

Approximately 35% of the returns I've gotten on Semipalmated Sandpipers have had varying degrees of leg and foot injury from the recommended size 1 bands. The size 1 band seems like a perfect fit for this species, until the birds return a year or two later!

Tiny foreign particles, such as bits of shell, sand etc., often become lodged under the bands. The close fitting bands do not allow these particles to be swished out by natural water action and the resulting irritation causes swelling of the leg around the band. In some cases the foot becomes withered and useless. With one such bird, the shrivelled foot actually fell off in my hands.

To avoid this unsuspected source of injury, a larger size band should be used. A few suggested changes are as follows:

	<u>Size recommended in Banding Manual</u>	<u>Newly recommended size (Knorr)</u>
Ruddy Turnstone	2	3
Spotted Sandpiper	1B	1A
Pectoral "	1A-1B	2
Least "	1	1-1B
Semipalmated "	1	1B
Western "	1	1B

Some individuals of other species of shorebirds may also benefit by using slightly larger bands than those recommended in the Banding Manual. As long as care is taken to make a perfect closure of the bands, I do not think the slightly larger size bands will have any adverse affects on the birds. The larger size bands will also allow the birds to dislodge some foreign particles by probing with their bills. It should be emphasized, however, that banders should use their own best judgment, as leg sizes do vary in most species. Care should be taken, also, not to use a band that is large enough to slip up the tarsus and over the heel joint.