

CURRENT COLOUR MARKING SCHEMES

by D.J. Townshend

It is about two years since I assumed the task of organising the WSG International Register of Colour-marking Schemes, and three years since the last listing of schemes (*WSG Bull.* 33: 22-25). During my term of hard labour, registration of wader colour-marking schemes in Britain has become a statutory requirement (see *WSG Bull.* 38: 5-6 & 39: 1-2). This article updates the previous lists of colour-marking schemes, outlines WSG procedures and policy on organising and registering schemes, and explains WSG policy in publishing requests for information in the *Bulletin*.

Anyone proposing to start a colour-marking scheme for waders is strongly advised to consult me well in advance of the expected starting date of the project. For British ringers this consultation is obligatory. If a proposal is approved by WSG, a marking scheme compatible with existing schemes will be devised. Anyone operating a scheme which has not been registered with WSG should contact me immediately in order to avoid any potential overlap with existing marking schemes, and, in the case of British markers, to ensure that their activities lie within the regulations of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (see *WSG Bull.* 38: 5-6 & 39: 1-2).

Below are listed all the current colour-marking schemes registered with WSG. Permanent and temporary marking methods are listed separately.

PERMANENT MARKING METHODS

Each project uses only conventional coloured leg-rings, unless stated otherwise in brackets after the name of the marker. The codes given in brackets are 1 = tall coloured code-rings, engraved with stripes, letters or numbers; 2 = permanent leg-flags, which may likewise be engraved; 3 = wing-tags. For each species, the registered schemes for the UK are listed separately from those in other countries, simply because separate regulations apply to the UK schemes. Species not listed below have no current marking scheme that has been reported to WSG, although for some of these species there have been previous marking schemes.

Additionally, those projects still listed in the WSG Colour-marking Register, but who have not yet replied to the recent request they were sent asking for details of their current marking activities, are marked with an asterisk (*). I hope that this reminder will encourage these ringers to contact me as soon as possible, to supply the Register with details of the current status of their colour-marking and, of course, to enclose annual servicing fees where appropriate (these have been notified individually). Information from projects that are no longer colour-marking waders is as important as that from continuing schemes, as discontinued schemes may free marking combinations for use by other workers.

If you know of any schemes listed below that are no longer marking waders, please inform me. Also, if you are able to exert pressure on any markers to reply to my request for information, please do so! WSG cannot certify that any

British schemes either not listed below, or marked with an asterisk, are properly licensed.

Dystercatcher *Haematopus ostralegus*

U.K.: 3 schemes (K.B. Briggs (+ 3), J.D. Goss-Custard (+ 1), M.P. Harris (+ 1))
Non-U.K.: 7 schemes (R. Lambeck (1), *A. Martinez, P. Meire, C. Smit (+ 1), *B.W. Svensson, *G.O. Toft, *P. Triplet)
Discontinued: at least 11 schemes

Black-winged Stilt *Himantopus himantopus*

U.K.: 0 schemes
Non-U.K.: 1 scheme (P.-J. Dubois) (also 2 in Italy not yet registered)
Discontinued: 1 scheme

Avocet *Recurvirostra avosetta*

U.K.: 0 schemes
Non-U.K.: 7 schemes (P. Adret, M. Engelmoer, R. Lambeck, *J.-D. Reese, *A. Siefke, *M. Sueur, *J. Traff)
Discontinued: 1 scheme

Stone Curlew *Burhinus oediacnemus*

U.K.: 1 scheme (*R.A. Morgan)
Non-U.K.: 0 schemes
Discontinued: 0 schemes

Little Ringed Plover *Charadrius dubius*

U.K.: 0 schemes
Non-U.K.: 4 schemes (*A. Hedenstrom, *B. Riedel, *L. Sandgren, *T. Wesolowski)
Discontinued: 0 schemes

Ringed Plover *Charadrius hiaticula*

U.K.: 4 schemes (N.E. Buxton, P.N. Ferns, *G.E. Jackson, M.W. Pienkowski)
Non-U.K.: 5 schemes (*L.J. Alberto, *P. Andell, M. Ojanen, A. Siefke (2), *T. Wesolowski)
Discontinued: 2 schemes

Kentish Plover *Charadrius alexandrinus*

U.K.: 0 schemes
Non-U.K.: 1 scheme (P.E. Jonsson)
Discontinued: 3 schemes

Dotterel *Charadrius morinellus*

U.K.: 2 schemes (*J. Callion, *D.W. Oliver)
Non-U.K.: 0 schemes
Discontinued: 1 scheme

Golden Plover *Pluvialis apricaria*

U.K.: 2 schemes (R. Parr, D.B.A. Thompson)
Non-U.K.: 0 schemes
Discontinued: 2 schemes

Grey Plover *Pluvialis squatarola*

U.K.: 1 scheme (D.J. Townshend)
Non-U.K.: 3 schemes (R. Lambeck, P. Martin, C. Smit)
Discontinued: 1 scheme

Lapwing *Vanellus vanellus*

U.K.: 5 schemes (M.F. Cuthbert, R.W. Furness, T.P. Milsom, K.V. Tayles, D.B.A. Thompson)
Non-U.K.: 3 schemes (I. Byrkjedal, L.-A. Flodin, *A. Siefke (2))
Discontinued: 6 schemes

Sanderling *Calidris alba*

U.K.: 1 scheme (D.J. Townshend)
Non-U.K.: 0 schemes
Discontinued: 2 schemes

Temminck's Stint *Calidris temminckii*

U.K.: 0 schemes
 Non-U.K.: 2 schemes (T. Breiehagen, M. Ojanen)
 Discontinued: 0 schemes

Purple Sandpiper *Calidris maritima*

U.K.: 3 schemes (J.A. Clark, J.D. Craggs, M. Nicoll)
 Non-U.K.: 0 schemes
 Discontinued: 3 schemes

Dunlin *Calidris alpina*

U.K.: 1 scheme (M.W. Pienkowski)
 Non-U.K.: 3 schemes (P.E. Jonsson, E. Krol, A. Siefke)
 Discontinued: 3 schemes

Ruff *Philomachus pugnax*

U.K.: 0 schemes
 Non-U.K.: 3 schemes (D.B. Lank, OAG Munster, +A. Siefke (2))
 Discontinued: 0 schemes

Common Snipe *Gallinago gallinago*

U.K.: 0 schemes
 Non-U.K.: 1 scheme (+A. Siefke(2))
 Discontinued: 0 schemes

Black-tailed Godwit *Limosa limosa*

U.K.: 1 scheme (R.E. Green(1))
 Non-U.K.: 3 schemes (A.J. Beintema, OAG Munster, +A. Siefke(2))
 Discontinued: 1 scheme

Bar-tailed Godwit *Limosa lapponica*

U.K.: 1 scheme (D.J. Townshend)
 Non-U.K.: 3 schemes (R. Lambeck, P. Meire, C. Smit)
 Discontinued: 1 scheme

Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus*

U.K.: 0 schemes
 Non-U.K.: 2 schemes (P. Martin, J. Ylimaunu)
 Discontinued: 1 scheme

Curlew *Numenius arquata*

U.K.: 3 schemes (+N.A. Clark(+ 2), P.N. Ferns(2), D.J. Townshend)
 Non-U.K.: 6 schemes (M. Kipp, R. Lambeck(1), +J.L. Mulder, +A. Siefke(2), C. Smit(+ 1), J. Ylimaunu)
 Discontinued: 2 schemes

Spotted Redshank *Tringa erythropus*

U.K.: 0 schemes
 Non-U.K.: 1 scheme (OAG Munster)
 Discontinued: 0 schemes

Redshank *Tringa totanus*

U.K.: 3 schemes (+N.A. Clark(+ 2), S. Greenstreet(2), M.W. Pienkowski)
 Non-U.K.: 3 schemes (R. Lambeck, OAG Munster, +A. Siefke(2))
 Discontinued: 3 schemes

Greenshank *Tringa nebularia*

U.K.: 0 schemes
 Non-U.K.: 3 schemes (OAG Munster, C. Smit, +A.J. Tree)
 Discontinued: 1 scheme

Green Sandpiper *Tringa ochropus*

U.K.: 1 scheme (K.W. Smith)
 Non-U.K.: 2 schemes (OAG Munster, +A. Siefke)
 Discontinued: 0 schemes

Wood Sandpiper *Tringa glareola*

U.K.: 0 schemes
 Non-U.K.: 1 scheme (OAG Munster)
 Discontinued: 0 schemes

Common Sandpiper *Tringa hypoleucos*

U.K.: 2 schemes (T. Cadwallender, P.K. Holland)
 Non-U.K.: 1 scheme (+L. Lofaldi)
 Discontinued: 4 schemes

Turnstone *Arenaria interpres*

U.K.: 2 schemes (D.J. Townshend, P. Whitfield)
 Non-U.K.: 1 scheme (+T. Carlen)
 Discontinued: 5 schemes

TEMPORARY MARKING METHODS

Schemes employing temporary marking methods, such as colour dyes and coloured leg flags, receive approval from WSG for one year only, and must re-apply if further marking is planned for future years. Approval is not automatic - there is a severe shortage of dyes and this often leads to conflict between more and less urgent schemes.

The following species are the subject of one or more studies involving temporary marking in 1984/5:

Oystercatcher, Avocet, Ringed Plover, Golden Plover, Grey Plover, Lapwing, Knot *Calidris canutus*, Sanderling, Little Stint *Calidris minuta*, Curlew Sandpiper *Calidris ferruginea*, Purple Sandpiper, Dunlin, Ruff, Common Snipe, Black-tailed Godwit, Bar-tailed Godwit, Whimbrel, Curlew, Redshank, Greenshank, Turnstone.

The following ringers/organisations have registered their temporary-marking projects for 1984/5 with WSG:

S.R. Baillie, BTO, U.K.
 D. Bredin, LPO, France
 P. Buckley, University College, Galway
 M. Engelmoer, State Forest Service, The Netherlands
 P.R. Evans, University of Durham
 R.W. Furness, University of Glasgow
 R.G.M. de Goede, Vrije Universiteit, Amsterdam
 A. Goodall, University of Hull
 R.E. Green, RSPB, U.K.
 H. Hotker, OAG Munster
 K. Laursen, Vildtbiologisk Station, Denmark
 P. Martin, University of Port Elizabeth, S. Africa
 M.E. Moser, BTO & Landguard BO, U.K.
 T. Piersma, University of Groningen
 P. Prokosch, Staatliche Vogelschutzwarte, FRG
 R. Rufino, CEMPA, Portugal
 F.L. Symonds, NCC, U.K.
 R. Summers, Norwich, U.K.
 D.J. Townshend, University of Durham
 B. Trolliet, ONC, France

Because of the shortage of possible dye-marks there is a serious risk of overlap and confusion between schemes, to the detriment of all the projects concerned. THEREFORE, IT IS VITAL THAT NO OTHER SCHEMES USE COLOUR-MARKS WITHOUT PRIOR CONSULTATION AND AGREEMENT WITH WSG.

SIGHTINGS

One of the main functions of the WSG Register is to ensure that sightings of marked birds are passed on to their marker, and that observers are informed of the history of the birds that they have seen. Reports of sightings of colour-marked waders should be sent directly to D.J. Townshend, Wader Study Group, Department of Zoology, University of Durham, South Road, Durham, DH1 3LE, U.K.. The report should give as much detail as possible concerning type(s) and position(s) of marks (e.g. colour and position of dye on body, whether leg flags and rings are above or below the joint and on which leg(s)), position of metal ring if seen, and date and place of sighting. I shall endeavour to identify the marker and forward the sighting to him.

In order to improve the efficiency of the running of the WSG Register, I have been fortunate to enlist the assistance of WSG Committee member Hector Galbraith. Once he is familiar with the system, Hector will take over responsibility for dealing with sightings, leaving me to devote my energies towards co-ordinating new marking schemes, including that annual dilemma, the arranging of dye codes.

ENQUIRIES & PLANNING YOUR COLOUR MARKING SCHEME

Any enquiries or requests for further information regarding the colour-marking of waders should be sent to me. Workers about to propose a new marking scheme should first consider the question they are asking in their study. Because of the limited supply of marking combinations and the longevity of waders, colour-marking should be used only if it is essential to give an answer to the question being addressed. If colour-marking must be used, temporary marks should be used in preference to permanent ones. Individual marking should be avoided if marking by groups, e.g. age-classes, migration periods, is adequate. Restricting the number of combinations registered for your scheme will allow more scope for others and reduce potential overlap. For markers operating within the British ringing scheme, it will also reduce the level of their Annual Servicing Fee (see Annual Servicing Fees and Donations below).

For those ringers and observers still awaiting replies from me, I apologise for the delay. As I run the register unpaid and in my spare time, it is very difficult to keep up-to-date. However, as I shall acquire shortly the assistance of Hector Gaibraith in running the Register this will, I hope, improve the service.

ANNUAL SERVICING FEES AND DONATIONS

It should be apparent to most wader colour-markers that WSG has been forced to introduce Annual Servicing Fees for UK colour-marking schemes in order to cover the administrative costs (but not labour costs) of running the WSG register (see *WSG Bull.* 38: 5-6 & 39: 1-2). Although these regulations do not apply to markers outside the UK, these markers have been requested to offer donations at a level equivalent to that paid by British markers.

The majority of UK workers currently colour-marking waders have paid the Annual Servicing Fee as requested. Unfortunately a small minority have not done so. Some have been concerned that their limited schemes are subsidising larger marking projects. Although I fully appreciate that these fees introduce an additional financial burden on ringers, I must stress that no ringer is subsidising others. Indeed WSG (or, rather, its appointee at any particular period) continues to subsidise all the colour-marking projects, because the labour required to run the Register is provided free. When assessing the full costs of running the Register, my predecessor estimated that, if labour had to be paid for in addition to expenses, the level of Annual Servicing Fees would have to be ten times higher. The Annual Servicing Fee for each scheme is determined in part by the number of combinations available to the marker. Thus, by requesting only a few combinations each year, workers marking only a limited number of birds each year can reduce their fees.

PUBLICATION OF REQUESTS FOR SIGHTINGS: WSG POLICY

WSG receives requests from individual schemes to publish short notices in *WSG Bulletin* asking for details of sightings of their marked birds to be sent directly to the marker. The difficulty here is that the marker may receive, in addition to sightings of his own birds

letters relating to birds marked by other projects. (Note that there is more than one current permanent marking scheme registered for 21 of the 28 species listed above.) These must then be sent on to the WSG Colour-marking Register at Durham, for forwarding to the correct marker. This negates one of the primary functions of the Register - to act as a central 'clearing-house' for sightings. Furthermore, some markers are not interested in occasional sightings from other observers and may fail to pass on such letters to WSG. WSG is anxious not to return to the rather chaotic way in which sightings have, in the past, been dealt. We know that observers reporting marked birds find it much easier and less confusing to send all sightings (whatever the species of wader) to one address, rather than search through past issues of *WSG Bulletins* or other journals to identify possible markers of the bird they have seen. Remember that many studies using colour-marked birds rely on networks of voluntary observers for many of their sightings: such observers must be encouraged.

For these reasons *WSG Bulletin* does not usually publish separate detailed requests for sightings of colour-marked waders. Instead we publish periodically (as here) a listing of all current marking schemes for waders which are known to us, and ask that all sightings of colour-marked waders should be reported through the Register: the address for such reports is Dr. D.J. Townshend, WSG Colour-marking Register, Department of Zoology, University of Durham, South Road, Durham, DH1 3LE, U.K.

WSG Bulletin is, however, prepared to consider for publication separate requests where additional information (e.g. plumage states, particular behaviours) is required above that normally recorded by observers. The address for such sightings should remain the Colour-marking Register since the crucial element, identifying the correct marking scheme, remains.

Such central 'clearing-houses' for sightings do not exist for all groups of birds. Where there is no such scheme, WSG is prepared to consider publication of requests for information on sightings, provided that the birds are likely to be seen by WSG members, e.g. coastal species. Two such requests appear in this *Bulletin*.

NEW PLUMAGE DYES AND NEW COLOURS FOR LEG-RINGS

There is a severe shortage of good plumage dyes for waders, and of good colours of rigid PVC sheeting of the 'Darvic' (ICI) type plastic for leg-rings. If anyone knows of additional colours that can be used satisfactorily (waterproof dyes: colours other than yellow, pink, blue; leg-rings: bright colours other than red, white, orange, yellow) could they please let me know as soon as possible, so they can be put to good use. Also if markers have devised new and successful methods of visible marking suitable for waders, I would be extremely keen to hear from them. Markers using coloured leg-rings are very strongly advised to use rings made from Darvic or equivalent rigid PVC sheeting, and not celluloid rings, as the latter fade and change colour even over short periods, making correct identification impossible.

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