

nature's wilder side, notably the floods and gales of the late 1980s and 1990s. Despite a long struggle against cancer, Colin Tubbs remained active until the end, producing a stream of thoughtful papers on the broad theme of man and wildlife, and represented the European Forum on Nature Conservation and Pastoralism. The key to salvation, as he saw it, lay in the reform of the European Union's Common Agricultural Policy.

Without it, much of Europe's wildlife and wild places will sooner or later be destroyed. Colin Tubbs was a thorn in the side of the establishment, and the honours which he deserved and many expected him to receive were not forthcoming. To many conservationists he was a hero - even, it is suggested, a saint, although if so it would be a St George, riding against the dragons of greed and thoughtless development.

However, he remained what he always was, a conscientious, quietly-spoken man with a deep reverence for nature, who enjoyed nothing more than a pint of real ale or a favourite bottle of wine in the right kind of company. He is survived by his wife, Jenni, whom he married in 1968, and who was also a professional colleague and lifelong companion in the field.

### Non-estuarine Coastal waterfowl Survey (NEWS)

The counting phase for NEWS is now completed and we are looking forward to the next stage of analysing the data. At the time of writing, we are beginning to receive a steady flow of UK data, with Fair Isle (Shetland) returning their first batch of counts in early December! Overall, we are very pleased with the quality of the data received. It is interesting to note that several observers have commented on the scarcity of some wader species during recent years along their 'local coastline'.

Away from the UK, Gibraltar was the first country to inform us of the results of their survey. These were interesting, (if somewhat disappointing for the local ornithological society, whose counters had worked hard to provide thorough coverage), as only a single Whimbrel was recorded! This was apparently a 'staggeringly low count' for wintering waders on the island.

The weather was generally unseasonably mild for most of the NEWS period in the UK, but regular gales and heavy rain presented problems in many northern and western parts. Towards the end of the counting period (the second half of

January), temperatures returned to the seasonal norm. It is unlikely that the weather had much effect on the numbers and distribution of the coastal waterfowl. We would like to say a very big thank you to all those who took part in NEWS, whether as a local or national organiser or as a volunteer willing to count sections of coastline. Without all of your efforts, surveys such as NEWS could not happen. Finally, if there are any of you who still have count data, then please send them to your local/national organiser or to the BTO as soon as possible. Many thanks.

*Steve Holloway (NEWS Project Officer)*

## The WSG Colour-marking Register.

**We regularly get letters from people who have reported colour-ringed waders but have not received a reply from the ringer who marked the bird. When we get a report of a colour-ringed bird we reply giving the name of the ringer we believe to have ringed the bird and an indication of the area/country where the bird was marked. We also tell the person reporting the bird that the ringer will contact them with more details.**

Unfortunately, it appears that some ringers do not respond. This is not only disappointing for the person who sent in the sighting, but also it does not give them an incentive to report the next colour-ringed bird they see. We therefore request that every ringer who is sent a sighting, either direct or via the register, responds giving as much detail as possible about the bird in question. We are aware that not every ringer is interested in sightings away from their

study site, but to ensure that people continue to send in sightings for those ringers who are interested, please reply. If the sighting is not of one of your birds please return it to the register.

### Untraceable sightings

A number of the sightings we receive are untraceable, usually for one or more reasons. The commonest reasons are usually inaccurate recording of details by the person reporting the bird, difficulty in seeing all the rings, loss of rings and unregistered schemes. In order to overcome some of these problems, we give a few hints on reporting colour-ring sightings and on ringing itself. The following are commonly-made mistakes.

### Advice on reporting sightings of colour-ringed birds

- If possible always report your colour-ring sighting using a standard form, which is available from the address below. If you are unable to use a standard form, a diagram of the bird's legs showing whether the rings are on

the tarsus or tibia is very useful.

- Always report the location of the metal ring, this is important for separating different schemes.
- If possible, try to note the size of the rings; some schemes use 'tall' and others 'short' rings. A number of schemes use flag-shaped rings.
- Always ensure when you report rings as being on the left or right leg that it is the bird's left or right leg. This may seem obvious, but this is a common mistake.
- Remember that there are two colours of 'blue' and 'green': light and dark.
- Always indicate if any parts of the legs are not visible, *i.e.* in mud or under water.
- If reporting via E-mail always give your postal address as well in case the ringer is not on E-mail.

### Advice on colour ringing.

Compiled by Niall Burton, BTO

- Only colour-rings made from DARVIC should be used on waders. Other materials (celluloid and acetate)



have a lower colour retention (after exposure to UV light) and are less hard wearing and are therefore more likely to fall off.

- Although Robinson & Oring (1997 - WSG 84:45-47) suggest that DARVIC also fades, this may be due to environmental (saline) conditions at their study site. This is being tested by the UK's main manufacturer of colour-rings.
- For wader species which use muddy habitats it is preferable for the majority of rings to be on the tibiae and not the tarsi.
- For short-legged waders which do not use muddy habitats, e.g. Turnstones, Purple Sandpipers etc, it is preferable for rings to be on the tarsi as rings on the tibiae may be hidden by feathers.
- Ideally two rings of the same colour should not be placed next to each other on the same part of the leg as they may, at a distance, look like only one ring.
- If possible, dark colours (e.g. black, dark blue, dark green) should not be used next to each other on the same part

of the leg. At a distance these colours may be hard to differentiate and/or the two rings will look like one.

- Studies have shown that on certain estuaries an encrustation may form on rings, turning white rings to yellow. This has been observed on Redshanks, Curlews and Black-tailed Godwits. Ringers should be aware of this when receiving reports of birds with yellow rings in the wrong place. It may be preferable not to use white rings on the tarsus.

For some species which have a large number of registered schemes the location and colour of rings which can be used is limited and governed by what is available. However, some of the above points are likely to be applicable to all schemes.

The following list contains all the sightings of colour-marked waders which have been received by the WSG Colour-marking register and which cannot be traced to a registered scheme.

The // indicates the birds tarsal joint (or 'knee'). The colours are listed from top to bottom. So a bird seen with Red above the left knee, yellow above white below the left knee, metal above the right knee and blue below the right knee is listed as **R//Y,W M//B**. When the colour of a ring is uncertain, such as 'Red/Orange' it is indicated as (R,O). When nothing is written either side of the // it means no ring was recorded either above or below the knee. If the knee (//) is not indicated the precise location of the rings is not known. ?? indicates that the observer did not see that particular part of the leg. The following abbreviations are used for the colours R=Red, O=Orange, Y=Yellow, G=Green, L=Light Green, B=Blue, P=Pale Blue, N=Black (Niger), W=White and M=Metal.

**Stephen Browne & Harriet Mead**  
Wader Study Group Colour Register  
British Trust for Ornithology  
The Nunnery, Thetford  
Norfolk IP24 2PU, United Kingdom  
Fax: +44 01842 E-mail:  
Stephen.Browne@bto.org

Code	Left Leg	Right Leg	Place Seen
<b>Black-tailed Godwit</b> <i>Limosa limosa</i> 98/BW1	P	P,O,P	Suffolk, UK
<b>Curlew</b> <i>Numenius arquata</i> 98/CU1	Pink,N//	W,N//M	Hampshire, UK
<b>Kentish Plover</b> <i>Charadrius alexandrinus</i> 98/KP1	B	Y	Spain
<b>Lapwing</b> <i>Vanellus vanellus</i> 98/LP1	M	G	Scotland
<b>Marsh Sandpiper</b> <i>Tringa stagnatilis</i> 98/MS1	Y(flag)//??	Y(flag)//??	Romania
<b>Oystercatcher</b> <i>Haematopus ostralegus</i> 98/OC1	B//G	O,B//G,M	France
<b>Purple Sandpiper</b> <i>Calidris maritima</i> 98/PS1	//G,P	//M	Denmark
<b>Redshank</b> <i>Tringa totanus</i> 98/RK1	Y	EIRE	
<b>Ringed Plover</b> <i>Charadrius hiaticula</i> 98/RP1	N(?)	O,G,R	Lancashire,UK
98/RP2	//Y,R	//	Eire
98/RP3	//	G	Pembrokeshire, UK
98/RP4	R,W	G,M	S. Yorkshire, UK
98/RP5	//R(flag)	N(flag)//	France
98/RP6	B//N	//Y,M	France
<b>Ruff</b> <i>Philomachus pugnax</i> 98/RF1	M,R//	O,W//	The Netherlands
<b>Whimbrel</b> <i>Numenius phaeopus</i> 98/WB1	W//Y	R//W	France

