

# Photographic Guide to Colour-marked Red Knot

Rose Maciewicz & Peter Knight

[p.j.knight@leeds.ac.uk](mailto:p.j.knight@leeds.ac.uk)

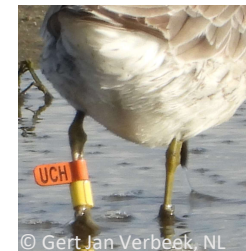
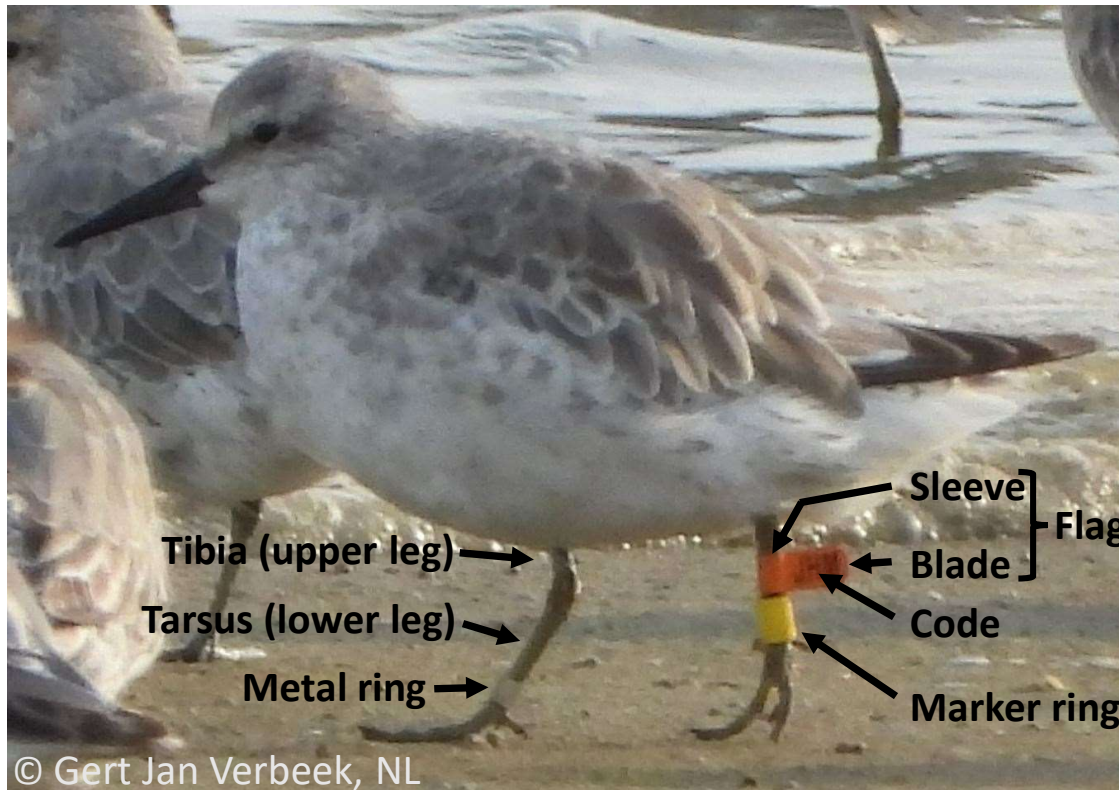
Revised July 2023

## Overview

- Yellow flags with black codes have been fitted in Norway or Iceland in May.
- Orange flags with black codes have been fitted across the UK and Ireland.
  - A single series of codes has been used for yellow flags, and many of the same codes are used on orange flags.
  - Therefore, all you have to do is to note flag colour and read the code to identify an individual bird.
  - However, if the code can't be read, recording the colour and position of ring and flag (*e.g.* which leg and whether it is upper (tibia) or lower (tarsus)) will be useful.
  - It will help in design of future projects to report whether the Knot was feeding or roosting when the flag was read.
- Email contacts: yellow flags is Jim Wilson [jimwils@online.no](mailto:jimwils@online.no)  
orange flags is Rose Maciewicz [rosemac1955@outlook.com](mailto:rosemac1955@outlook.com)
- The following pages show the various variations, a few other schemes seen in UK and some pointers to getting a correct code reading.
- For one-letter codes for colours see: <https://www.waderstudygroup.org/projects/colour-marking/describing-combinations/>
- To match any colour-ringed wader to a scheme, use the International Wader Study Group Register at <https://www.waderstudygroup.org/projects/colour-marking/the-register/>

# How to Describe a Flagged Knot

Flagpole or leg is on: left or right



Front of flag

Back of flag

*Important note:* wear at blade-tip can erode:  
 last character on front  
 first character on back

## Norwegian Y-flags on Upper Leg

- These are from catches in May 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2013, 2016.
- Distinguishing features:
  - Upper left leg: yellow flag (Yf) with three letter code. The codes were imprinted into the plastic and inked in; some ink has faded (see photo) and these codes are readable only when close enough to see the imprint.
  - **OR** yellow flag with a two-character alphanumeric code. These codes are engraved into a yellow-black laminate, so cannot fade.
  - Upper right leg: red ring ('red on the right means Norway').
  - Lower right leg: metal ring (not visible in this picture). This is not an essential feature to see.



© Benjamin Gnep, DE

Yf CPX, September 2018, Griend, The Netherlands

## Norwegian Y-flags on Lower Leg

- Catch in May 2019.
- Distinguishing features:
  - Upper right leg: red ring.
  - Lower right leg: yellow flag (Yf) with a two- or three-character alphanumeric code. The flags are laminates so no fading.
  - Lower right leg: metal ring under the flag, holding the flag above the foot to make the flag easier to read and wear less. Metal ring is not an essential feature to see.



© Richard Smith, UK

Yf KA, December 2020, Meols, Cheshire, UK

## Icelandic Y-flags on Upper Leg

- These are from catches in May 2011, 2014, 2023.
- Distinguishing features:
  - Upper left leg: yellow ring.
  - Upper right leg: yellow flag (Yf) with three-character code. The three-letter codes were added with ink and many are faded, and thus are hard to read. In favourable conditions the imprint in the plastic can still be read. Three-number codes are engraved in yellow-black laminate, so will not fade.

### OR

- Upper left leg: red ring.
- Upper right leg yellow flag with two number code. Yellow-black laminate so no fading.
- Lower right leg: metal ring (not visible in the picture). This is not an essential feature to see.



Yf UVX, November 2020, Dee Estuary, Cheshire, UK



Yf 44, Stour Estuary, Essex, UK

## Icelandic Y-flags on Lower Leg

- Catches in May 2017, 2022, 2023. All use yellow-black laminate.
- Distinguishing features:
  - Yellow ring over yellow flag (**Y-Yf**): yellow ring on upper right leg; yellow flag with alphanumeric code on lower right leg with metal ring under it.
  - Yellow flag over yellow ring (**Yf-Y**): metal ring on upper right leg; yellow flag with (alpha)numeric code on lower right leg, with yellow ring under it.
  - Essential to note flag colour, as **Of-O** and **Of-Y** also exist (see pages 9, 10).
- Note the wear visible on bottom corner of flag: read with care! If possible, read both sides of the flag to be sure of start and end of code.
- Note: some birds have lost the whole flag or just the blade. The latter are confusable with the NIOZ scheme (p. 11). For monitoring the incidence of flag loss, it is helpful to report them.



© Richard Smith, UK

Y-Yf 30H, December 2020, Meols, Cheshire, UK



© Howard Stockdale, UK

Yf-Y 48C, February 2020, Heysham, UK

## NW England and N Wales O-flags

- Main catches: Sept 2017 (pale blue ring, P), March 2018 (green ring, G), March 2019 (taller G ring), July 2020 (taller P ring), May 2021 (taller G ring), March 2022 (taller G ring), April 2023 (taller G ring).
- Distinguishing features:
  - Lower *left* leg: laminated orange flag (Of) with alphanumeric code above P or G ring.
  - The codes are:
    - two alphanumeric codes (0A-9Y, A0-Y9, AA-MY) (P ring); 3 letters (taller P ring).
    - Two (NA-YY) or three letters or three alphanumeric codes (G or taller G ring).
    - Essential to note flag and ring colours. Height of ring is helpful – is it taller than the flag?
  - Lower right leg: metal ring. This is not an essential feature to see.
  - Like with Y-flags, some flag or blade loss happens. Please report such birds.



© Richard Smith, UK

OfP 74 and OfG AEV, March 2020, Meols, Cheshire, UK



## Welsh O-flags

- Orange flag (Of) over taller pale blue (P) ring on lower *right* leg.
- If you can't read the code it is useful to determine which leg the flag is on as this distinguishes Mid-Wales RG flags from NW England and N Wales Of.



OfP TMU, May 2022, Reykjanesbær, Iceland

## Irish O-flags

- Orange flag (Of) over taller orange (O) ring on lower *right* leg
- Note vertical black line on O ring is the edge of the O-N laminate used. It is not a code character!



OfO LCA, May 2020, Bardsey Island, Wales

## Scottish O-flags

- Orange flag (Of) above yellow (Y) ring that is either shorter or taller than the flag.
- Colour marks on lower *right* leg in most of Scotland (e.g. OfY HAL, below; also note short Y ring).
- OfY ringed near Inverness are colour-marked on the *left* leg (e.g. OfY JAP, below; also note tall Y ring).
- So even if you can't read the code it is useful to report which leg the colour marks are on and the height of the Y-ring.



© Mike Williamson, UK

OfY HAL, September 2020, Aberlady Bay, Scotland



© Gert Jan Verbeek, NL

OfY JAP, June 2022, Ameland, NL

## NIOZ - The Netherlands, France

- Distinguishing features:
  - Two colour rings and one *uncoded* flag on either left or right lower leg. Two colour rings on other lower leg.
  - Flag can be yellow (Y, current), black (N, recent), lime (L, older), green (G, rather old) or red (R, very old).
  - Flag can (rarely) be on the upper leg.
  - Essential to determine all the colours and all the positions on each leg as all possible combinations are used.
  - Note: flag and/or colour rings can be lost with age. Such birds are a likely source of Knot that don't match any of the schemes in this guide. They can sometimes be linked to a known bird, so are worth reporting.
  - The photos show GYfY+YR (left), and RN+YfRR and PR+PYNf (right)
- Email contact: Job ten Horn at [shorebirds@nioz.nl](mailto:shorebirds@nioz.nl)



## Humber Ringing Group scheme

- Four colour-marks, *all on left leg*. One on upper leg plus three on lower leg.
- Red uncoded flag (Rf) plus three rings. Flag can be on upper or lower leg.
- Note: some red flags and red rings have faded towards orange; orange rings have also been used – read with care! – in a close view, the faded reds have a pinky-orange colour, but look orange at distance.
- Email: Ian Nicholson [ian.n1000@btinternet.com](mailto:ian.n1000@btinternet.com)



© Richard Smith, UK  
Rf-BBR, Dec 2020 Dee Estuary, Cheshire, UK



© Ed Keeble, UK  
R-RfOB, Oct 2020, Stour Estuary, Essex, UK

## Wash Wader Research Group scheme

- Lime flag (Lf) with black lettering above a green (G) ring on lower left leg.
- Email contact: [sightings@wwrg.org.uk](mailto:sightings@wwrg.org.uk) or <https://wwrg.org.uk/contact-us/report-a-colour-marked-bird>



LfG CAE newly ringed,  
August 2020, The Wash, UK



LfG CAE in the field,  
November 2020, Dee Estuary, Cheshire, UK

## Polish flag scheme

- Yellow ring on upper left leg. Red flag (Rf) with white (W) characters on upper right leg.
- Email contact: [w.meissner@ug.edu.pl](mailto:w.meissner@ug.edu.pl) or <http://ring.stornit.gda.pl>



© Kim Fischer, DK

Y+Rf A05, July 2020, Fanø, Denmark



© Peter Knight, UK

(Y+)Rf A27, November 2019, Ribble Estuary, UK

## Pointers for getting correct O-flag readings in the field

- The characters look like this: **A C E H J K\* L M N\* P T U V X Y\* 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9**  
\*only used in two-character codes. The number font was chosen to reduce confusion amongst 3, 6, 8, 9.
- Confusion risk all the time:
  - **4** and **A**: for **A** none of the lines are vertical. Note that **4A**, **A4**, **AA**, **44** have all been used.
  - **1** and **7**: both have a top bit but the stem of **1** is vertical while **7** slopes.
  - **1** and **L** and **J**: only **1** has a top bit. Helpful to remember that when next to other characters, the vertical line of **L** is on the left while on **J** it is on the right.
  - **N** and **H**; **Y** and **V** or **T**; **K** and **X**: note that **N**, **Y**, **K** were only used in two-character codes, so if there are three characters then it has to be a **H**, **V**, **T** or **X**. Otherwise, take care!
  - **J** and **U**: take care especially when they follow verticals, e.g. **UJU** versus **UUJ**; **VHJ** versus **VHU**.
  - ‘number number letter’ and ‘letter letter letter’ codes are in use. Helpful, but surprisingly difficult, to sort out which it is at an early stage of reading. **BIL** is really **81L** (which is why we don’t use B or I!).
- On windy or heat haze days, some further challenges:
  - **9** and **P** – so what looks like **APE** might be **49E** .
  - **3**, **5**, **6**, **8** and **9** present lots of confusion possibilities with each other.
  - In heat haze some characters of a code may be clear at one moment and others at another. So if photographing, take multiple photos or a movie. When hazy, *reducing* optical magnification can enable a code to be read. When windy, image-stabilised cameras can be more productive of readings than the human eye.
- Photography: take (keep and share!) lots of photos - they are positive evidence of the reading  
- also, like with rare birds, ‘bad’ photos can contain vital clues in tricky cases.
- In general, if you think you have read the code, have you ruled out all other possibilities?
- An incorrect code reading is more damaging to analysis than no reading – please don’t guess!  
– but a partial reading can still be valuable and is worth reporting.