

THE USE OF COLOUR CHARTS IN THE PHOTOGRAPHY
OF CAPTURED BIRDS

Rina Biggs

The mensural study of raptors (described in Safring News vol 7, no. 2) also involves a plumage study. Exact colour details are particularly important in the very variable brown eagles (e.g. Tawny Eagle Aquila rapax) and in the immature brown forms of most other eagles.

Lighting differs in routine photography, especially where different photographers are at work and where natural light is used. The worst problems occur when only one badly exposed shot of an unusual bird is taken, or when photos are taken late in the afternoon. To a lesser extent almost every good shot has its own slight colour bias too. To overcome the problem of comparing photos taken under these differing conditions, Dr Alan Kemp suggested the use of Kodak colour charts with colour and grey scales. When photos are compared and one wishes to establish more accurately what the true colour is, the colour charts are compared with actual colour charts, and plumage then compared on this basis.

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RINGS FOR WADERS

M. Waltner

Recently we trapped two Curlew Sandpipers Calidris ferruginea, which were ringed with stainless steel rings in 1972 and 1973 respectively. Both rings were unsoiled and clearly legible. The appearance of the outer surface did not differ much from a new ring. Inside wear is difficult to judge, but these two samples and various other retraps suggest that the life of the ring far outlasts the lifespan of this species.

Similarly we find the 4 series monel ring adequate for wader work. We use this size mainly to mark Knot Calidris canutus. So far we

have had no reason to replace monel rings on retrapped birds. However we have had no retraps with a time lapse of more than five years.

Wader ringers will find the introduction of the 5,25 mm monel ring, D-series, a welcome addition to the range. We find this size very useful on Grey Plovers, Squatarola squatarola and Greenshank Tringa nebularia for which the 4-series ring is too tight, and the 5-series too loose a fit. Overlapping a stainless steel ring is a tricky business at the best of times, therefore this intermediate size is certainly welcome when dealing with these two species.

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BODY MASS OF RAPTORS

D. Whitelaw

Assessing the mass of raptors is complicated by variability in the amount of food retained in the crop. In an attempt to correct for this, I grade the contents in small raptors (in practical terms Black-shouldered Kites, Elanus caeruleus and Rock Kestrels Falco tinnunculus as follows:

- O : Nothing left in the crop
- + : A small very mobile mass, less than 1 cm diameter
- ++ : A mobile mass between 1 and 2 cm diameter
- +++ : A mass no longer mobile, easily felt
- ++++ : Crop visibly bulging

Recently I was able to form a rough idea as to how this correlated with actual masses: A first year Black-shouldered Kite was stunned by a motor vehicle and brought to me. It had not suffered any obvious damage and it was decided to release it. Before release I force fed it on raw chicken gizzard, cut into strips approximately 1 g in mass, its crop was palpated at intervals, and the bird weighed. This showed the following correlation: