

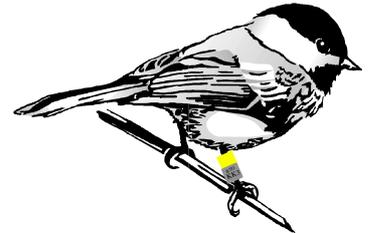
# Colour Mark Coding Summary

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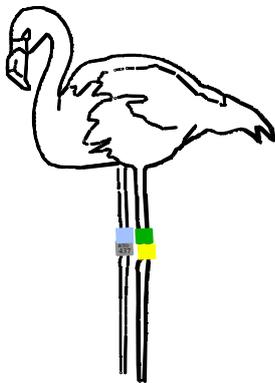
This document describes the standard coding specification adopted by the British Trust for Ornithology for recording colour marks.

Each leg bone can have up to four colour marks attached. Wing and neck up to two. Each of these body parts are known as *positions*. Marks are always recorded from the top down. The reading of any digits e.g. BIN should be from left to right as if you were reading out the letters from a word. The orientation of the writing on the ring whether it goes round or up or down should not affect the code.

The first two characters denote the position LB: left below the inter-tarsal joint ("knee"), LA: left above, RB: right below, RA: right above, NC: Neck collar, RW: right wing tag, LW: left wing tag. NS: Nasal tags and saddles

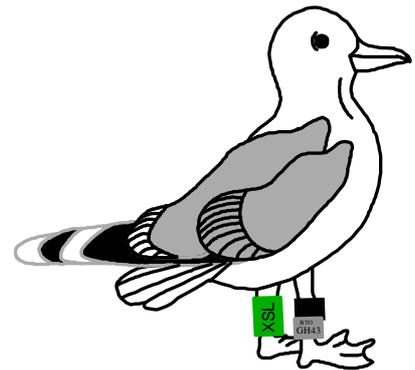


The colour marks at each position are listed from top down separated by commas (.). So for red over BTO ring on the right leg on the tarsus (below the tarsal joint) we have RBY,M.



If colour marks are on multiple positions each position code is separated by a semicolon e.g. LAG,Y;RAP,M .

If the colour mark has digits encribed these are recorded after the mark's colour code in parentheses. The colour of the digits is required this is recorded as the second colour of a two colour code e.g. a Green darvic with Black digits on a Gull's left tarsus with code XSL would be LBGN(XSL);RBN,M when the red over BTO position is added. If there are bars around the ring then these are recorded using the forward slash (/) symbol. Example 1: letter R separated from letter B by a bar (all black) round a white ring (on the left tarsus) would be LBWN(R/B); Example 2: as example 1 except that the bar is replaced by a bar at each end of the ring would be LBWN(/RB/).



If a two-colour mark is used with different colour digits on each it should be recorded as two marks; if they are the same colour then see below under two colour marks.

To record leg flags a suffix to the colour of the letter F. e.g. LBRF is a red flag on the left tarsus. To record a tall ring a suffix code of T is used. For 'Wasp' rings with positional bands on a (tall) ring a suffix of a hash (#) is used; the wasp bands are recorded as for encriptions except that the only characters allowed are 0 for 'no band', 1 for thin band and 2 for 'thick band'. For a yellow wasp ring with black bands on the left tarsus with a thin band over a thick band over 'no band' is coded LBY#N(120).

Nasal tags and saddles are both recorded using the NS position code. Nasal saddles follow the standard convention e.g. NSRB(QQ) for a Red Nasal Saddle with a Blue "QQ" encription. Nasal tags always come in pairs and are treated as two marks on the same position with the tag on the bird's right side being recorded first. Tags also have a shape which is recorded after the colour code within square parentheses. Tag shape codes are: square [Q], rectangle [R], triangle [T], circle [C], hexagon [H], octagon [O], star [S]. For a bird with a red, square tag on the right and green circular tag on the left the coding is NSR[Q],G[C].

For two-colour marks a number after the colour indicates the type. Blank is the default for a single colour, 2 for narrow (multiple stripes of each colour) stripes and 3 for thick (one stripe of each colour) stripes. e.g. RAPC2,M for a Pale Blue/Dark Pink narrow striped ring over BTO metal. The top colour, if applicable, should be the first letter of the code. If a striped colour mark has digits encribed that are all the same colour then the colour code of the digits follows the colour codes for the ring. e.g. a white and green thick striped neck collar with dark blue digits XYZ would be recorded as NCWG3B(XYZ).

Observations of Colour Marks can sometimes lead to partial or incomplete records. In these cases a "?" character can be used in place of a single colour code or encription colour character or in place of the

BTO standard specification for coding colour marks v2 (April 2000).

Note that, except for simple colour rings, colour marking in the UK requires licencing from the BTO

Left or Right indicator for the mark position i.e. ?B, ?A or ?W. For example if the encription colour is not visible then a code such as LBO?(AHT) could be used.

## Colour codes for colour marks

R	Red	P	Pale Blue
W	White	O	Orange
G	Dark Green	C	Dark Pink (Carmine)
L	Light Green (Lime)	K	Light Pink
N	Black (Niger)	B	Blue (Dark)
M	Scheme Metal Ring	V	Violet/Mauve/Purple
Y	Yellow	S	Silver/Grey
A	Other metal ring	U	Brown (Umber)

# Colour Mark Recording

[IPMR Home](#)

This document describes a standard way of recording colour marks (combinations of colour rings, colour rings with encriptions, multi-coloured rings, leg flags, neck collars, wing tags, nasal tags and saddles...). Many thanks to Alain Fosse for putting together this web page to better show the use of the coding standard ([link](#)). Some of the text is in French and English.

See illustrations of colour marks on the web site produced by Holmer Vonk : <http://www.holmer.nl/birdrings.htm>

## Colour codes

<b>R = red</b>	<b>O = orange</b>
<b>W = white</b>	<b>C = dark pink (carmine)</b>
<b>G = dark green</b>	<b>K = light pink</b>
<b>L = light green (lime)</b>	<b>B = dark blue</b>
<b>N = black (niger)</b>	<b>U = brown</b>
<b>M = metal ring</b>	<b>V = violet/mauve/purple</b>
<b>Y = yellow</b>	<b>S = grey/silver</b>
<b>P = pale blue</b>	<b>A = other metal ring</b>

## 1. Legs

### 11. Rings

111. Which leg (**L** = gauche/left, **R** = droit/right)

112. Position on the leg either above or below the tarsal joint (**B** = tarse/below, **A** = tibia/above)  
we have

**LB** = left tarsus

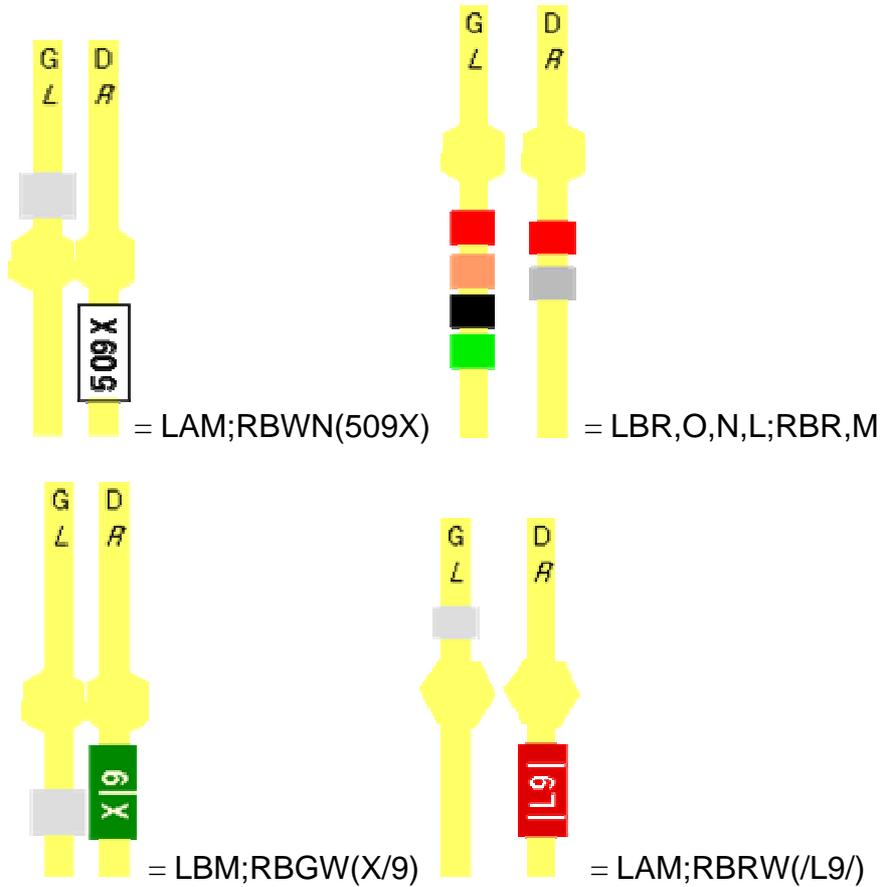
**LA** = left tibia  
**RB** = right tarsus  
**RA** = right tibia

**The leg codes are separated by a semicolon**

**?B** = tarsus (side unknown), **?A** = tibia (side unknown)

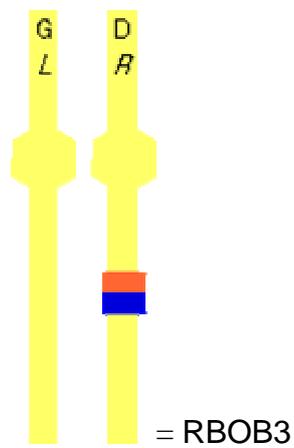
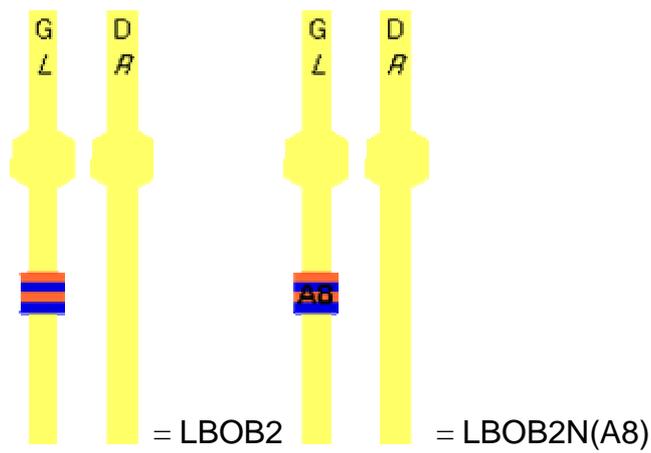
113. in order of height from the top down the colours are separated by commas

114. If there is an inscription then following the colour ring code another colour code gives the colour of the inscription followed by the code enclosed within parentheses (bars around the ring are shown by the "/" character).



115. two colour rings

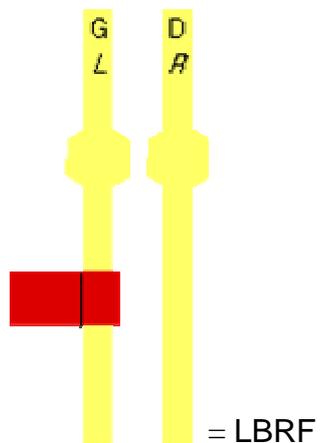
**2** = two colour striped rings (top colour given first)  
**3** = two colours side-by-side (top colour given first)



## 12. Leg flags

**F** = *flag*

See for example <http://www.mb.ec.gc.ca/nature/migratorybirds/pasp/dc29s01.fr.html>





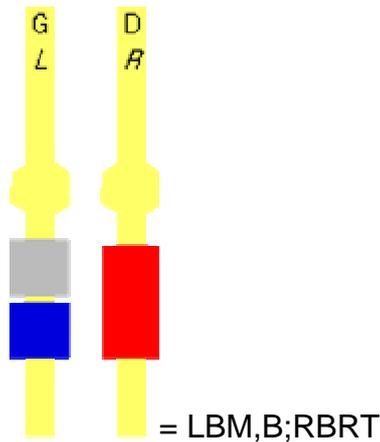
= LAOF;RAM;RBR,Y

Copyright: Hugh Insley

### 13. large rings

#### 131. simple

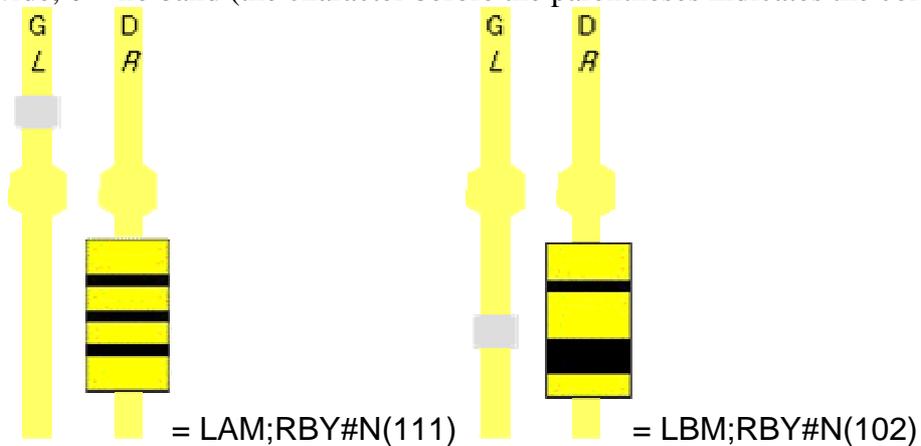
**T** = *tall*, the ring made twice the height of a normal ring



#### 132. wasp rings

= #, and within parentheses coded values for the width of the bands :

**1** = narrow, **2** = wide, **0** = no band (the character before the parentheses indicates the colour of the bands).



## 2. Neck

NC = *neck collar*



### 3. Wing

**RW** = *right wing tag*

**LW** = *left wing tag*

example : **RWO,B;LWN,W** = right tag with orange at the front and blue at the back, left tag black and white

### 4. Bill

**NS** = *nasal tag or saddle*

example : **NSRB(QQ)** = red saddle with blue "QQ"

see pictures: [http://www.holmer.nl/nasal\\_marks.htm](http://www.holmer.nl/nasal_marks.htm)

#### Shapes

[**Q**] = *square* [**R**] = *rectangle* [**T**] = *triangle* [**C**] = *circle*

[**H**] = *hexagon* [**O**] = *octagon* [**S**] = *star*

example : **NSR[Q],G[C]** = red square targe in the right and green circular tag on the left

### 5. Sighting uncertainties

Colour mark observations can be difficult and some details cannot always be seen. An incomplete sight record may still be of value.

In this case a question mark can be used to indicate some uncertainty in colour or even position :

**?B** = tarsus (side not noted), **?A** = tibia (side not noted)

**LBO?(AHT)** = colour of the enscription not discerned