



# Shorebird Colour Marking Protocol for the East Asian-Australasian Flyway

(adopted by MOP12 DD.10 (2025))



**Colour-marking** refers to the use of any colour mark attached to a bird that enables identification of the bird in the field (resighting). Along the East Asian – Australasian Flyway (EAAF), metal bands and plastic coloured leg flags/bands are being used to mark shorebirds. Most of the colour leg flags are also engraved with an individual code (referred to as engraved leg flag) to enable resightings of individual birds.

Researchers consolidate resighting data of colour marked shorebirds to study migration patterns, understand survival rate and longevity, and to work out population estimates and trends. This knowledge forms the scientific basis for conservation plans and actions to protect the shorebird species and the wetlands that they depend on.

**Shorebird Colour-Marking Protocol for the EAAF** was first developed in the early 2000s and was last updated in 2017 to better coordinate and communicate shorebird colour marking efforts on the EAAF. Unique colour marking combinations have been assigned to shorebird banding locations. Currently, there are over 70 individual colour marking sites/organisations along the Flyway. This 2025 colour chart shows the colour marking combinations where colour marking researches are currently active in the EAAF and in India and Sri Lanka.

**Researchers who plan to colour-mark shorebirds** must refer to this Protocol for the assigned colour combination of bands/leg-flags for their banding location. Before colour-marking any birds, researchers must approach the relevant national banding office(s) for permission to mark and for approval of the colour scheme. If a country where birds are planned to be marked does not have a national scheme, the scheme of a nearby country shall be requested for permission to use their national scheme and leg-flag colour scheme.

If colour-bands are planned to be used next to leg-flags, the choice of the colours and the colour scheme requires flyway-wide coordination. In the case of shorebirds, an approved band-colour scheme should be obtained from the EAAF Partnership Shorebird Working Group, to avoid multiple use of the same combinations.

Collecting resighting data is a vital part of any colour marking project and this can only be done by effective communication between researchers and observers who resight the colour marked birds in the field. After a new colour marking project begins, researchers should publicise via the EAAFP (webpage and e-newsletter; [example](#)) how colour marks were used by their project, and provide their contact information for observers to report sightings. It is the responsibility of the researchers to respond to observers who send them colour mark resighting records with the life history of the marked bird.

**Shorebird observers, birdwatchers, photographers, and citizen scientists** can use this colour chart as a “field guide” for observing birds with coloured leg flags/bands in the field, which helps to identify where an individual was marked. Observers are encouraged to record and report their sightings with the following information:

- Basic information: observer’s name and email address, observation date and location (preferably with GPS coordinates), and the species of the bird observed with the colour mark.
- Details about the colour mark: **the most ideal would be to take a photo/video of the bird showing all parts of the bird’s legs clearly**. If photographing is not possible, record in detail: the colour, type (i.e. flag or band), and position of the mark(s) on the bird’s leg(s) (left or right, upper or lower leg); any code (letter, number, symbol) engraved on the flag(s).

Observers can report their sightings directly to the researchers, or via any of the following channels. Administrators of these channels will relay the sightings to the corresponding researchers and feedback the life history of the marked bird once such information is received from the researchers:

- [“Shorebird leg-flag sightings in the EAAF”](#) Facebook Group
- [“BirdMark”](#) Website
- [“Shorebird Resighting Information of EAAF”](#) Website
- [“Reporting waterbird rings and flags sightings”](#) Webpage
- For Chinese birders/photographers, email to [flagsightings@163.com](mailto:flagsightings@163.com)
- For Japanese birders/photographers, [“Report form of marked bird resighting”](#) Website

*Updated: November 2025*



## Shorebird Colour Marking Protocol for the East Asian-Australasian Flyway *(Updated: April 2025)*



Key:	Upper flag	Banding location	Blue	Japan, Hokkaido (Furen Lake and Utonai Lake)	Black	Indonesia, Java and Madura Island [using plain flags only]
	Lower flag				Orange	
Pale blue	Orange	Russia, North-west Chukotka (Chaun Delta)	Blue	Japan, Hokkaido (Komuke Marsh) and Honshu (Lower Tone River)	Orange	Indonesia, Sumatra and Central Borneo [using plain flags only]
Orange			Blue		Black	
Pale blue		Russia, Northern Chukotka [using plain flags only]	Blue	Japan, Honshu (Tokyo Bay and Torinoumi)	Orange	Indonesia, West Papua [using plain flags only]
			White		Orange	
Lime		Russia, Southern Chukotka	Blue	Japan, Kyushu (Ariake Sea) and Okinawa (Okinawa Island and Miyako Island)	Yellow	Bangladesh [some Black-tailed Godwits are marked with 2 plain flags + 3 colour bands]
			Orange		Yellow	
Lime	White	Russia, Southern Chukotka	Green	China, Yalujiang Estuary (Dandong, Liaoning)	White	India (various sites: North; West; East coast; Inland)
White			Orange		White	
Black	Yellow	Russia, Kamchatka (various sites)	Blue	China, Bohai Bay (various sites)	Black	India, South
Yellow			Yellow			
Yellow	White	Russia, Sakhalin Island [using plain flags only]	Green	China, Jiangsu (Dongtai and Rudong)	Green	Sri Lanka
White			Blue		Green	
Red		Russia, Schaste Bay and Viakhtu Bay [on Nordmann's Greenshank, with colour bands]	White	China, Shanghai Chongming Dongtan Nature Reserve [before 2006, using plain flags only]	Yellow	Australia, Northern Territory
			Black		Blue	
Yellow (band)	Green	USA, Northern Alaska (Barrow) [on Dunlin, with colour bands]	Black	China, Shanghai Chongming Dongtan Nature Reserve [after 2006]	Green	Australia, Queensland (including Gulf of Carpentaria)
Green			White			
Orange (band)	Green	USA, North Western Alaska [on Dunlin, with colour bands]	Black	Blue	Orange	Australia, New South Wales
Green			White		Green	
Blue (band)	Green	USA, Western Alaska [on Dunlin, with colour bands]	White	China, Taiwan (various sites)	Orange	Australia, Victoria
Green			Blue		Orange	
Green (band)	Green	USA, Northern Alaska (Canning River) [on Dunlin, with colour bands]	White	China, Guangdong (Hong Kong, Shenzhen, Yangjiang and Zhanjiang)	Orange	Australia, South Australia
Green			Yellow		Yellow	
Pale blue (band)	Green	USA, Northern Alaska (Ikpihpuk & Prudhoe Bay) [on Dunlin, with colour bands]	Black	Thailand (Inner Gulf of Thailand and Andaman Coast of the Thai Peninsula)	Orange	Australia, Tasmania
Green			Green		Blue	
Black		USA, Alaska [on Bar-tailed Godwit]	Green	Cambodia	Yellow	Australia, South-west Western Australia
			Black		Orange	
Blue	Green	Mongolia (various sites)	Yellow	Malaysia (East and West Malaysia)	Yellow	Australia, North Western Australia [some Great and Red Knots, Bar-tailed and Black-tailed Godwits are marked with 1 plain flag + 4 colour bands]
Green			Black			
Orange	White	Democratic People's Republic of Korea	Green	Singapore (Sungei Buloh and Pulau Ubin)	White	New Zealand, North and South Island [some Red Knots, Bar-tailed Godwits and Ruddy Turnstone are marked with 1 plain flag + 4 colour bands]
White			White			
White	Orange	Republic of Korea	Black	Philippines [with colour bands]	Red	New Zealand, South Island [on Bar-tailed Godwit, with 1 plain flag + 4 colour bands]
Orange			Blue			