

COLOUR RINGING: OYSTERCATCHERS: EXE ESTUARY - REQUEST FOR INFORMATION

Colour ringing of Oystercatchers on the Exe Estuary, S. Devon began in November 1976 and, to date, 200 birds have been marked.

The aim is to follow the feeding activities of individuals within the Exe and to discover the movements of birds elsewhere. It would be very useful if the date and place where birds have been seen could be sent to me. The distinctive colour scheme, devised by Chris Mead, consists of only two rings placed below the intertarsal joint on one leg. One is a tall (22 mm) ring, the other a much smaller ring (9 mm). The small ring may be above or below the large ring and is a uniform single colour (mainly red or blue at present). The large ring (all yellow at the moment but other colours are planned) may have bands of black engraved on it. These are either thin (1-1.5 mm) or thick (4-5 mm) and occur in one of three positions (top, middle or bottom) on the ring. Positions on the ring may also be left blank without a band. So a large ring could read, for example, thin over blank over thick, or any combination thereof. (Note that occasionally the end of the large ring, usually at the junction with the small ring, looks like a thin black band because the inside layer of the large ring is black). The colour of the small ring and whether it is above or below the large ring is needed as well as the leg on which both rings are placed. A complete record would read, for example, left leg, small red ring below large yellow ring; thin over thick over blank. A few birds are also ringed above the intertarsal joint on the other leg but this is unimportant. Thirty-five birds also have single-colour wing tags (either white, pale green or yellow). One needs to be fairly close (<100 m) with a good telescope to see the thin band, but even records of birds with a tall (yellow at the moment) and short ring next to each other on one leg would be well worth having.

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