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1183748**Wader Quest Objectives:**

To raise public awareness about, and to promote an understanding and appreciation of, waders or shorebirds (birds of the sub order Charadrii and to include the family Turnicidae, as defined by the Handbook of Birds of the World Volume 3 del Hoyo, Elliott and Sargatal eds 1996).

To raise funds, which, at the discretion of the Board of Trustees, is to be used to make small grants or carry out appeals for wader conservation projects worldwide.

To promote for the benefit of the public the conservation and protection of waders or shorebirds and improvements of their physical and natural habitats.

To advance the education of the public regarding the conservation and protection of waders or shorebirds and their natural habitats.

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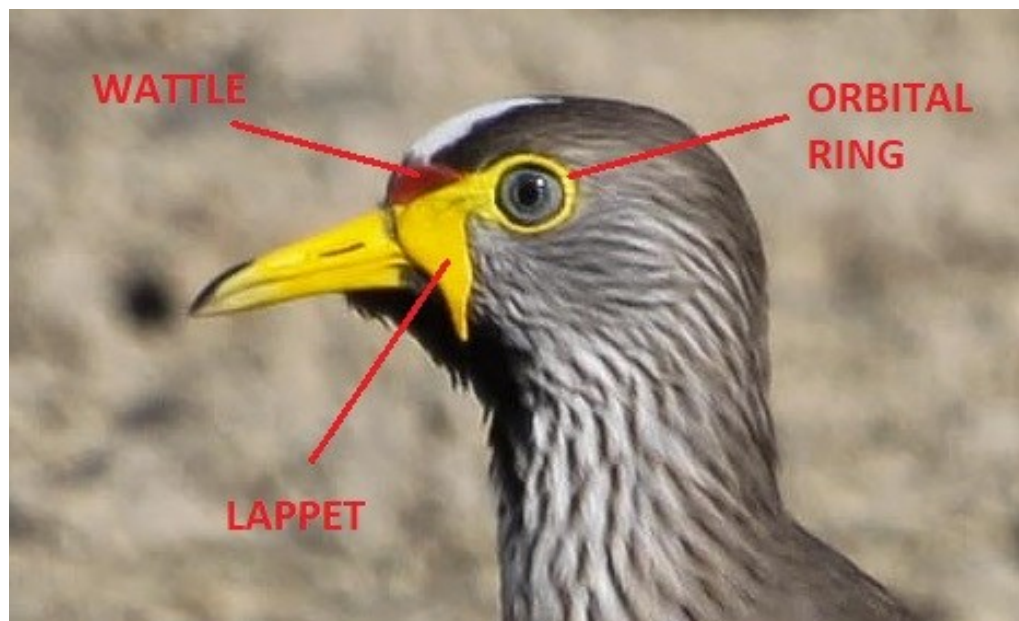


Wader Quest Articles

The World's Wattled Waders - Rick and Elis Simpson

A number of waders have evolved to display spectacular caruncles to adorn their heads. Principle among these birds are the lapwings ([Vanellidae](#)) but a couple of jacanas ([Jacanidae](#)) show flamboyant face furniture too.

A caruncle is a small, fleshy protuberance displayed by an bird or animal. It is not an abnormality but part of their normal physical make up. In birds they take many forms such as wattles, lappets, combs and snoods. The word derives from the Latin word *caruncula* which is the diminutive of the word *caro* which means, flesh.



African Wattled Lapwing *Vanellus senegallus senegallus* - Elis Simpson

The Lapwing family comprises 27 species, of those 12 have wattles or lappets. To distinguish between the two, we here refer to wattles as being the smaller fleshy growths in front of the eyes and lappets as the longer pendulous parts. These growths are often connected to the orbital ring, the orbital ring being the visible flesh surrounding the eye (as distinct from an eye ring which is the small feathers surrounding the orbital ring and often coloured differently to the remainder of the face).

They are largely decorative, but in some cases they have a sexual function becoming brighter or bigger when the bird reaches sexual maturity and can become engorged during the breeding season. They can be used to attract a mate, when a good prominent wattle can indicate health and vitality. In warmer climates, where most wattled birds occur, they can also be a useful aid in controlling body temperature as blood can be cooled faster when flowing through them.



Red-wattled Lapwing adult *Vanellus indicus aigneri* - Elis Simpson



Red-wattled Lapwing juvenile *Vanellus indicus aigneri* - Elis Simpson

The World's Wattled Waders - Rick and Elis Simpson



Masked Lapwing - Elis Simpson



Black-shouldered Lapwing - Elis Simpson

Certainly the most extensive wattles belong to the [Masked Lapwing](#) *Vanellus miles* of Australia (above left). The large wattles extend over and behind the eye and merge with the yellow orbital ring while the long lappets hang down over the side of the face.

Until recently the other large black, grey and white lapwing with wattles in Australia was considered to be a subspecies of Masked Lapwing. However, it has been promoted to full species and has the name [Black-shouldered Lapwing](#) *Vanellus novaehollandiae* (above right). It has also relatively recently colonised New Zealand (first record 1932) where its range and population has spread rapidly to become widespread and common, even reaching the Chatham Islands. Its facial ornamentation is less extensive than that of the Masked Lapwing but it is nevertheless a striking looking bird. The top edge of the wattles becomes the upper half of the orbital ring over the eye instead of swallowing it up as it does in Masked Lapwing and the lappets are much smaller.



Javan Lapwing - BNHM

Moving slightly north to Java, a now extinct lapwing called the [Javan Lapwing](#) *Vanellus macropterus* also displayed prominent wattles and lappets. This bird has not been reported since 1939 and has probably disappeared entirely now. The most likely cause of its demise is thought to be habitat loss due to human expansion, hunting and changes to land use. The caruncles on this specimen in the British Natural History Museum (BNHM Tring bird collection) are somewhat faded, but were probably bright yellow, or possibly creamy coloured in life. This specimen appears to show that there was no orbital ring but it has probably faded with time.

Further north still in India, another bird with yellow wattles and lappets can be found, the imaginatively named, [Yellow-wattled Lapwing](#) *Vanellus malabaricus*. It is similar in many ways to the Masked Lapwing but the wattles are much diminished in comparison and it has a brown face and neck not white as in the Masked. The small wattle and lappet are connected to the yellow orbital ring at the front.



Red-wattled Lapwing *V. i. atronuchalis*- Elis Simpson

In the same region the [Red-wattled Lapwing](#) (see previous page for more photos) can be found. However, its range extends beyond India to the west as far as the Middle-East and to the east as far as Vietnam and Malaysia. The wattle on this bird is obviously red, as the name implies, small and looks like a red finger poking forward from the red orbital ring.

On the subject of diminished red wattles, the [Banded Lapwing](#) *Vanellus tricolor* of Australia as a very small bump as a wattle that connects to a yellow orbital ring a very pleasing effect, and one of only two species which sport bi-coloured caruncles.



Yellow-wattled Lapwing - Elis Simpson



Banded Lapwing - Elis Simpson

The World's Wattled Waders - Rick and Elis Simpson



Spot-breasted Lapwing
- Kris Maes

Three African lapwings with small wattles exist, the first being the [Spot-breasted Lapwing](#) *Vanellus melanocephalus* (left) which is restricted to the Ethiopian Highlands. This species has a small yellow wattle in front of the eye. The second species is [Brown-chested Lapwing](#) *Vanellus superciliosus* (right) with a slightly more impressive wattle that breeds in West Africa and winters in East Africa, but has very restricted ranges in both regions. The last of these is the [Black-headed Lapwing](#) *Vanellus tectus* which has small red wattled behind the bill and is resident in a band across sub-Saharan Africa from Senegal to Somalia.



Brown-chested Lapwing
- Francesco Verenesi



Black-headed Lapwing
- Steve Garvie

Asia too has a lapwing with a very limited wattle. The [Grey-headed Lapwing](#) *Vanellus cinereus* possesses a small yellow wattle at the base of the bill.

The [African Wattled Lapwing](#) used at the head of this article, is of the nominate race, the second species with bi-coloured caruncles. The wattle is red and the lappets and orbital ring are yellow. The bird in this photo (below left) is of the race *lateralis* which can be determined by the all black tip to the otherwise yellow bill.



Grey-headed Lapwing
- Peter Ericsson



African Wattled Lapwing *Vanellus senegallus lateralis* - Elis Simpson



White-crowned Lapwing - Elis Simpson

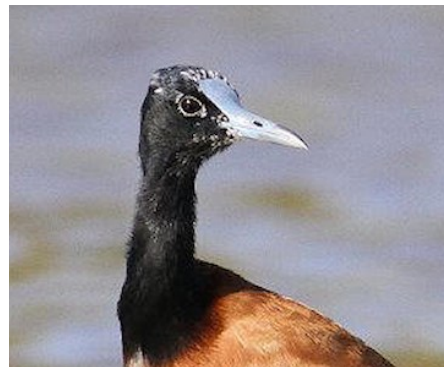
Still in Africa, we also find a lapwing with very significant lappets. The [White-crowned Lapwing](#) *Vanellus albiceps*, which has a patchy distribution from sub-Saharan west Africa to southern Africa, is a truly spectacular looking bird with its pendulous lappets and narrow wattles linked to a yellow orbital ring.

That brings us to the end of the *Vanellus* lapwings, leaving us with just the jacanas to look at.

Whilst some jacanas have a frontal shield, namely [African](#) *Actophilornis africanus*, [Madagascan](#) *Actophilornis albinucha* and [Bronze-winged](#) *Metopidius indicus*, they do not possess true wattles or lappets, there are however, two South and Central American species that do.



African Jacana - Derek Keats



Madagascan Jacana - Laval Roy



Bronze-winged Jacana - Koshy Koshy

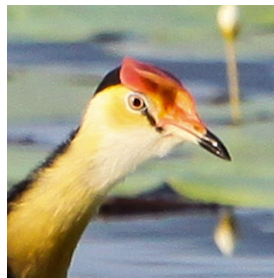
The World's Wattled Waders - Rick and Elis Simpson

I suppose the first we should consider ought to be, because of its name, the [Wattled Jacana](#) *Jacana jacana* of South America. This is a widespread bird with a variable plumage. Some in the north of their range are almost entirely black apart from the bright greenish-yellow, dark-tipped flight feathers which are common to all subspecies. The main bulk of Wattled Jacanas however have chestnut backs. All of them display red wattles in front of, and over the eyes and small lappets at the base of the bill, which are also red.

In Panama the Wattled and [Northern Jacanas](#) *Jacana spinosa* meet, if sparingly so. The Northern Jacana resembles the chestnut backed Wattled Jacana except that its frontal wattled are not red, but bright yellow. In addition it is not adorned with the short lappets of the previous species but it does possess a blue shield over the base of the upper mandible and shares the striking yellow bill and bright flight feathers of the Wattled Jacana.



Excited (left) and not-so-excited Comb-crested Jacana - Elis Simpson



The last in this series of wattled birds is the [Comb-crested Jacana](#) *Irediparra gallinacea* from Australia, and what a wattle it has. In truth it is more a chicken like comb as the name suggests, pretty impressive.

The comb becomes engorged when the bird is excited or displaying and can be deflated and less bright when the bird is relaxed and going about its everyday business.



Wattled Jacana - Elis Simpson



Northern Jacana Juan Jose - Montero Rodriguez



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