

Noticeable Colors

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Below is "Bob's study". I simply obtained flagging tapes and ball caps in the below colors and went into the woods in each of the four seasons and this is what I found. (I am not color blind, nor did I recruit a color-blind person to participate in the study. Might be interesting to see their results in same environment.) -Bob Wiseman

There are pros and cons to most every color. What is important to do is find one that works in the environment in which the majority of your operations occur.

Here are some observations I have made in my own research in WOODED/FOREST environments done in each of the four seasons (mid-Atlantic U.S. region). This was all done utilizing flagging tape with minimum 12" tails and baseball style hats. The colors (shades) were the same for flagging tape and hats. Flagging tape colors are the "typical" ones found at hardware stores. I know you can get a million different shades of various colors from specialty vendors, however, I did not believe that to be realistic. equipment used needs to be easily and quickly obtainable, thereby being my reason for selecting the basic colors readily available in the consumer market (hardware store, Walmart, etc.).

BLUE

...PRO: does not naturally occur, contrasts with environment

...CON: not very bright, low distance visibility, lost early when daylight decreases

YELLOW

...PRO: relatively bright

...CON: blends in with environment significantly in fall and winter

RED

...PRO: can be bright (depending on shade of red), contrasts with some environments

...CON: loses visibility quickly as light decreases, blends with environment in fall due to changing color of leaves, typical shade of red available at hardware stores is fairly dark

FLUORESCENT GREEN (lime yellow)

...PRO: very bright

...CON: blends into environment significantly around any green foliage, too common in wooded environment to catch eye when not specifically looking for it

WHITE

...PRO: can be considered to be bright, contrasts fairly well

...CON: no good around snow, dangerous color during deer hunting season (FYI for non-hunters, never utilize white clothing, handkerchiefs, etc., when in woods during deer season, as you may be mistaken for a white tail deer)

ORANGE (BASIC)

...PRO: contrasts fairly well

...CON: turns black at dusk, nowhere near as bright or "eye catching" as international orange

ORANGE (INTERNATIONAL/BLAZE)

...PRO: High visibility, extremely bright, retains visibility in dark environments, catches attention in daylight or if illuminated by a passing flashlight, helicopter and fixed wing aircraft observers advised was easily/quickly noticed from above

...CON: none

PINK

...PRO: High visibility, very bright, retains visibility in dark environments

...CON: international orange was a little brighter

As a result of this "independent research", The HCFR Team has adopted the use of *international orange* and *pink* for *flagging tape* and *international orange for hats* (which all are required to wear when on task regardless of their personal fashion preferences). **ORANGE** is used for *marking borders, routes, etc.*, and **PINK** is used for *flagging clues/evidence*. The reason for this is both are the brightest and most "eye catching" in the woods (from our experience) and the use of the pink for clues alerts teams to use caution around that taped area. With all the flagging tape that ends up in trees during a search, it is nice to be able to readily pick out clue locations.

HCFR Special Ops SAR Flagging Procedure is available on the Crockett SAR web site www.crockettsar.com for anyone who is interested. It also identifies the use of **cyalume (chemical) light sticks** for night ops. Some will notice in our procedure that **the color light stick for clues is Blue**. The reason for this is that at night, from a distance, differentiating between a red, orange, or pink light stick is difficult. Since we use orange/red light sticks for route, etc., marking, we wanted a contrasting color – Blue rhymes with clue so it is easy to remember. As well, Blue, in the form of a light stick, is quite visible from a distance in the woods.

As a note regarding "leave no trace", the unwritten law of the forest is "any flagging tape that is not written on indicating its purpose for being there, is trash". With this in mind, when you are out hiking recreationally, help keep our forests and parks "natural" by taking down any flagging tape you come across.