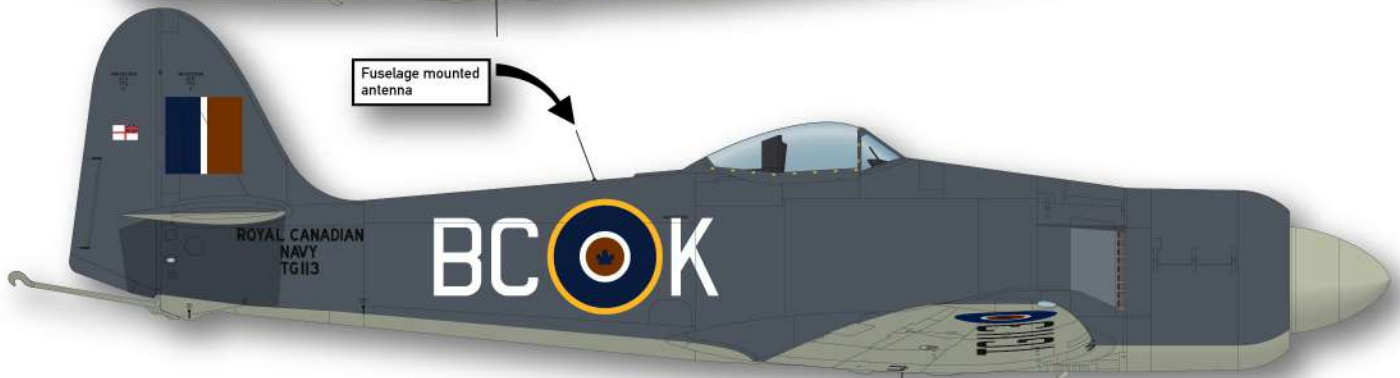


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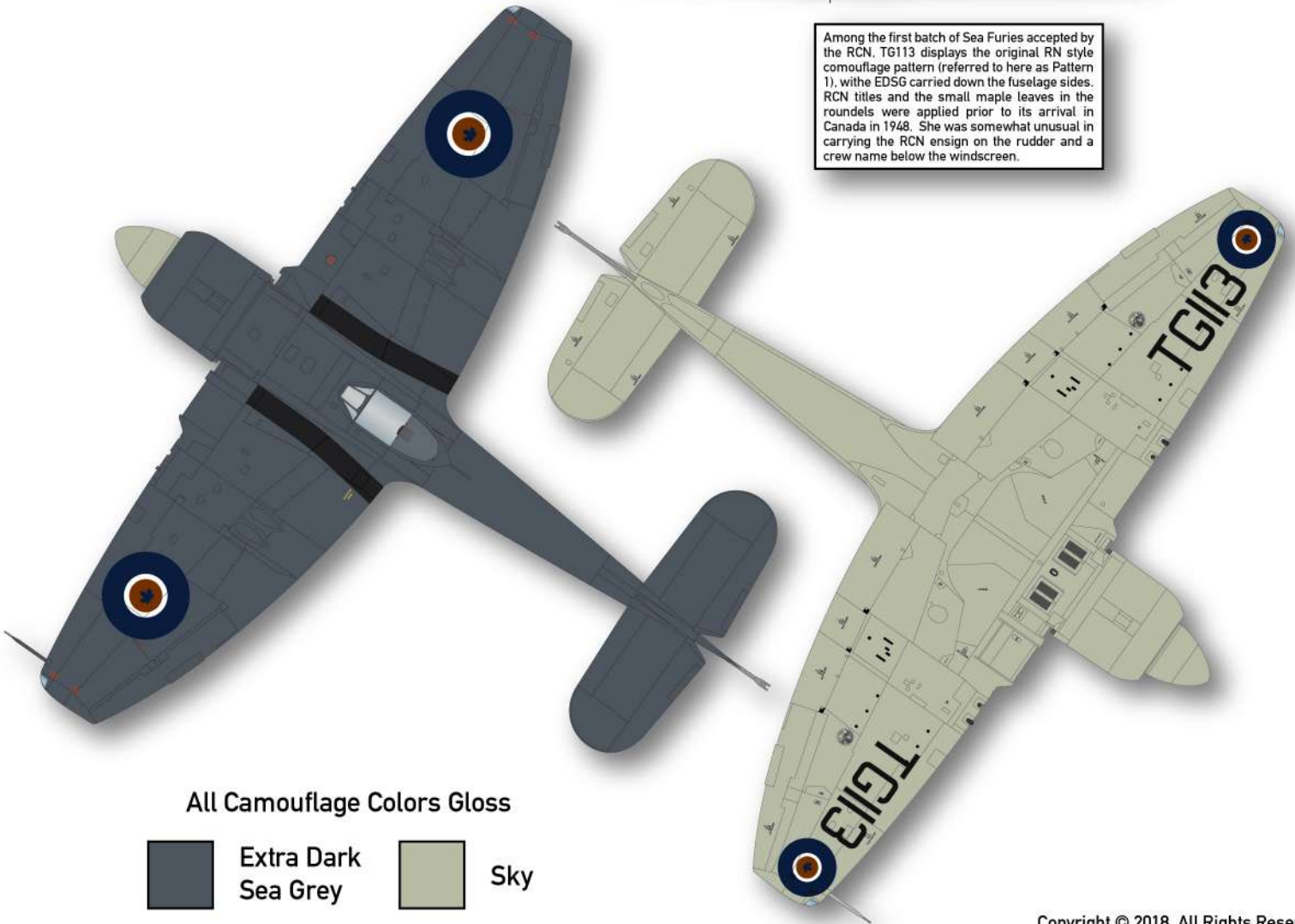


Sea Furies
of the
Royal
Canadian
Navy



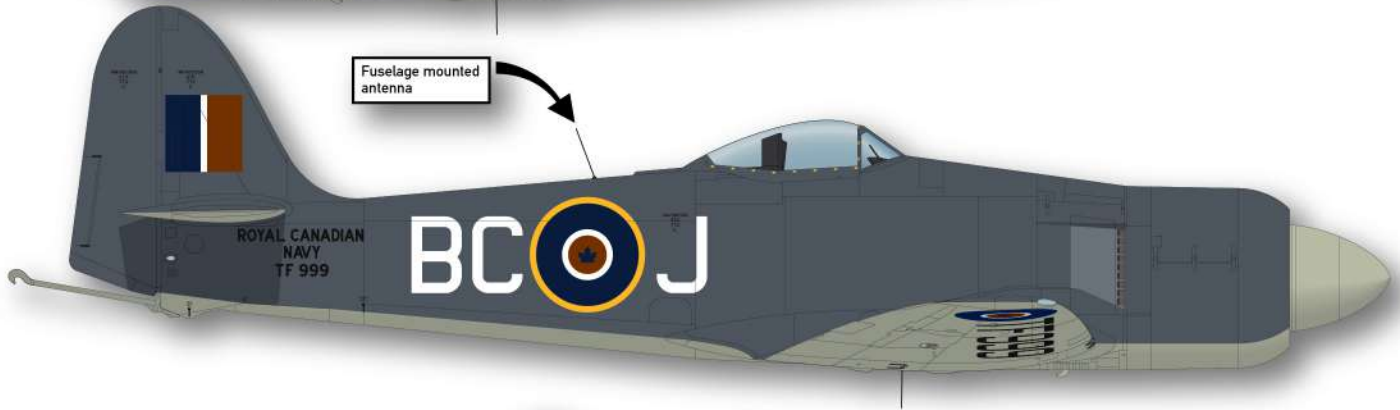
Fuselage mounted antenna

Among the first batch of Sea Furies accepted by the RCN, TG113 displays the original RN style camouflage pattern (referred to here as Pattern 1), with EDSG carried down the fuselage sides. RCN titles and the small maple leaves in the roundels were applied prior to its arrival in Canada in 1948. She was somewhat unusual in carrying the RCN ensign on the rudder and a crew name below the windscreen.



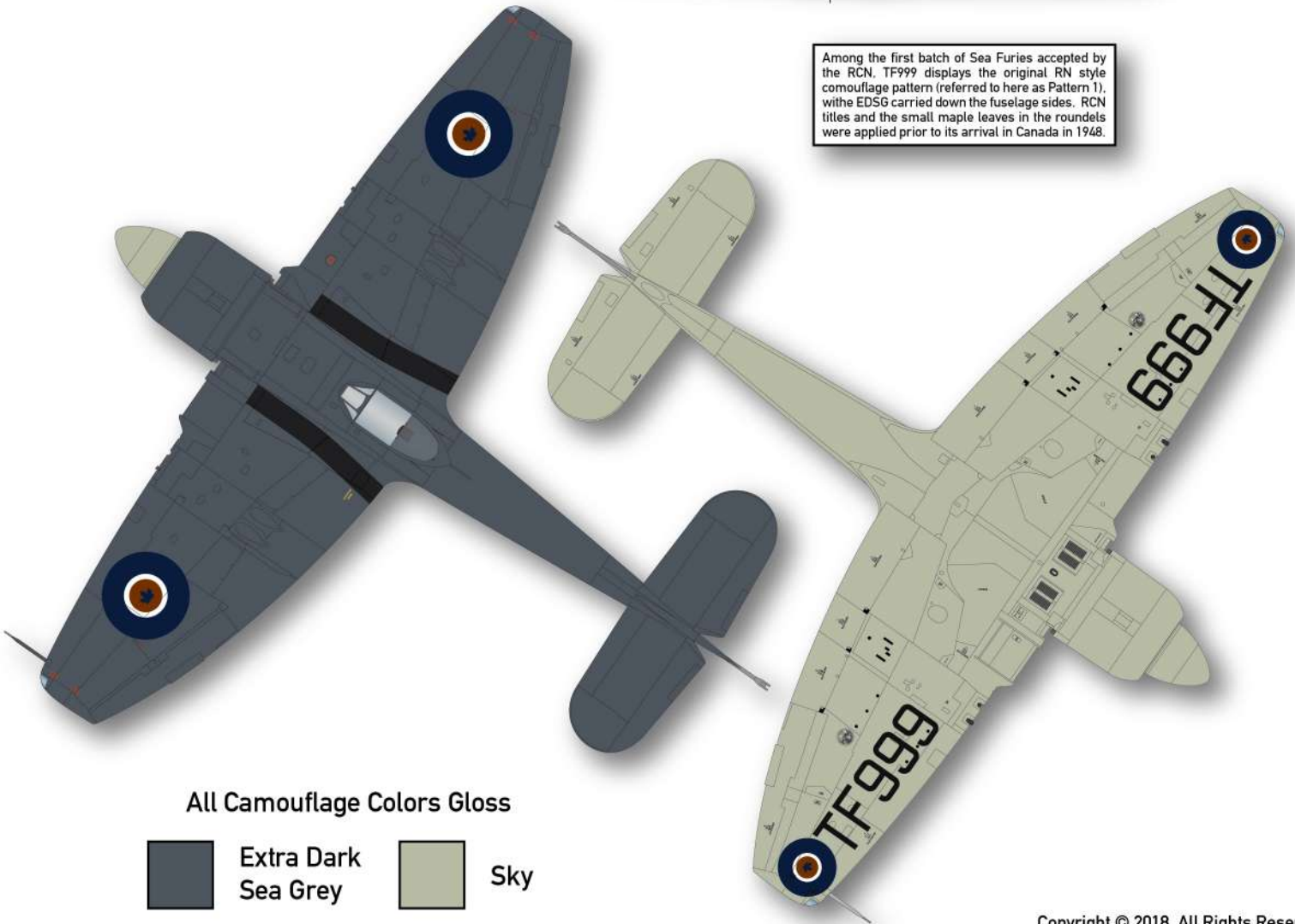
All Camouflage Colors Gloss





Fuselage mounted antenna

Among the first batch of Sea Furies accepted by the RCN, TF999 displays the original RN style camouflage pattern (referred to here as Pattern 1), with ED5G carried down the fuselage sides. RCN titles and the small maple leaves in the roundels were applied prior to its arrival in Canada in 1948.



All Camouflage Colors Gloss



Extra Dark
Sea Grey

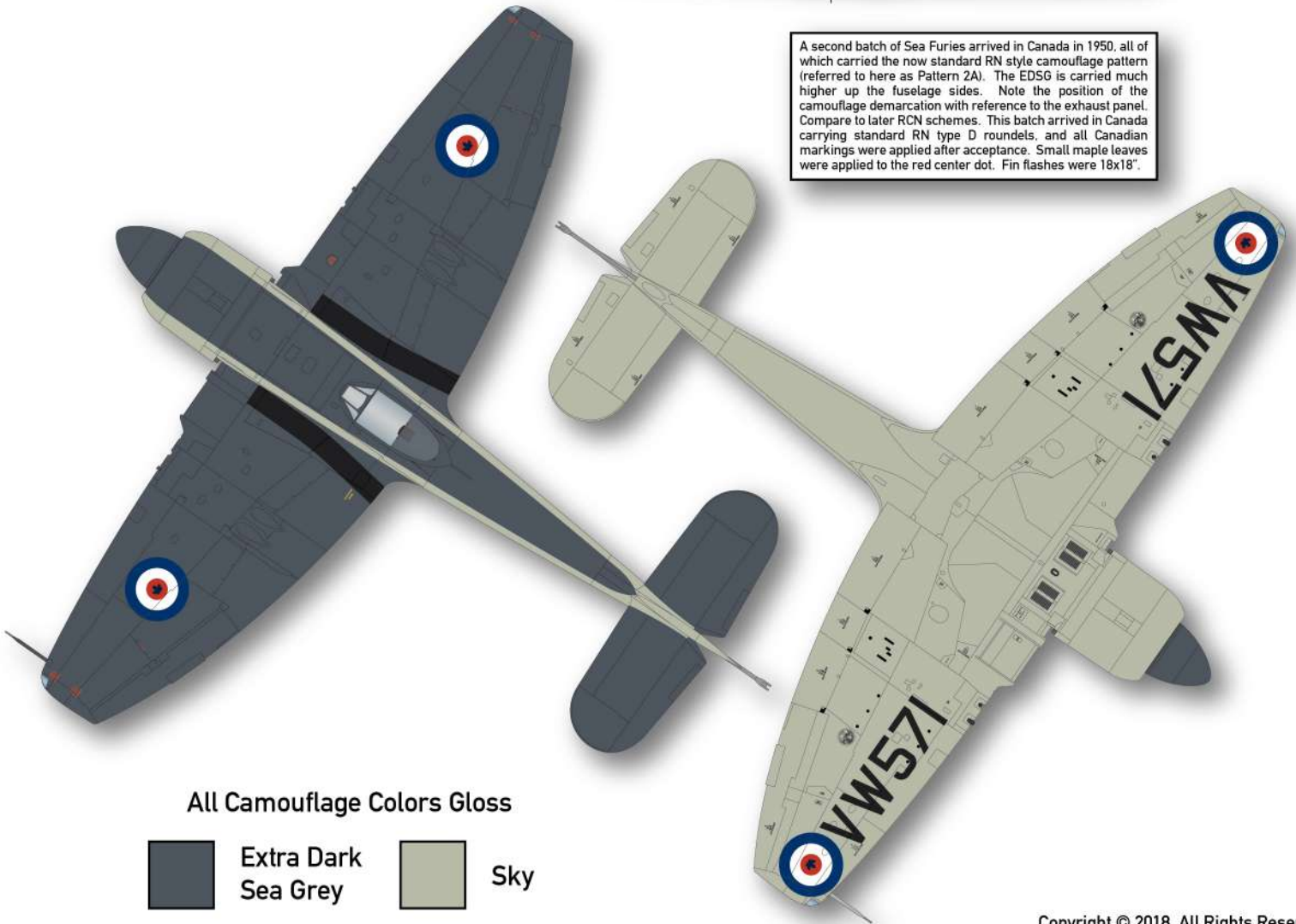


Sky



Fuselage mounted antenna

A second batch of Sea Furies arrived in Canada in 1950, all of which carried the now standard RN style camouflage pattern (referred to here as Pattern 2A). The ED5G is carried much higher up the fuselage sides. Note the position of the camouflage demarcation with reference to the exhaust panel. Compare to later RCN schemes. This batch arrived in Canada carrying standard RN type D roundels, and all Canadian markings were applied after acceptance. Small maple leaves were applied to the red center dot. Fin flashes were 18x18".



All Camouflage Colors Gloss

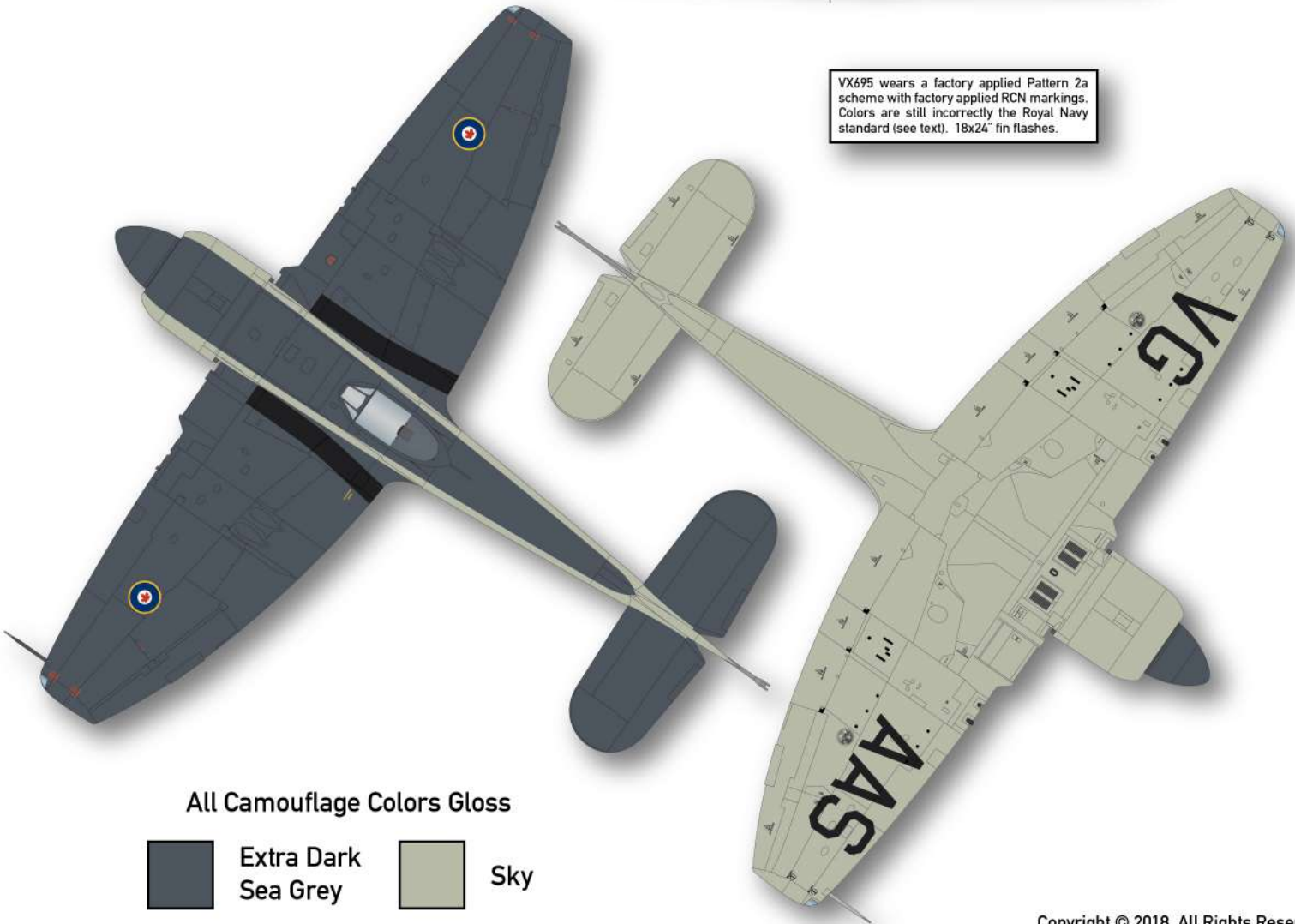




Fuselage mounted antenna



VX695 wears a factory applied Pattern 2a scheme with factory applied RCN markings. Colors are still incorrectly the Royal Navy standard (see text). 18x24" fin flashes.



All Camouflage Colors Gloss



Extra Dark
Sea Grey

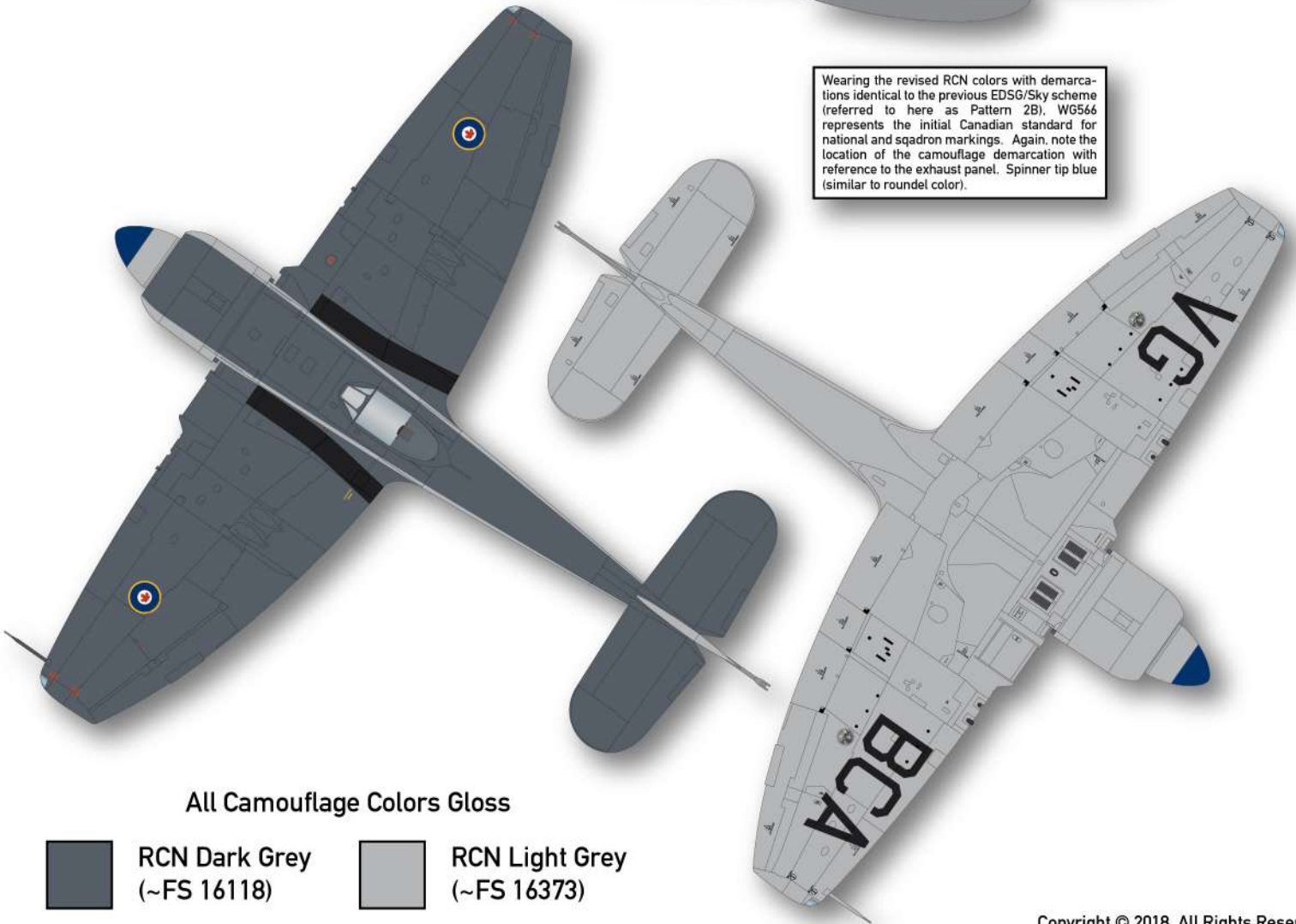


Sky



Fin mounted antenna

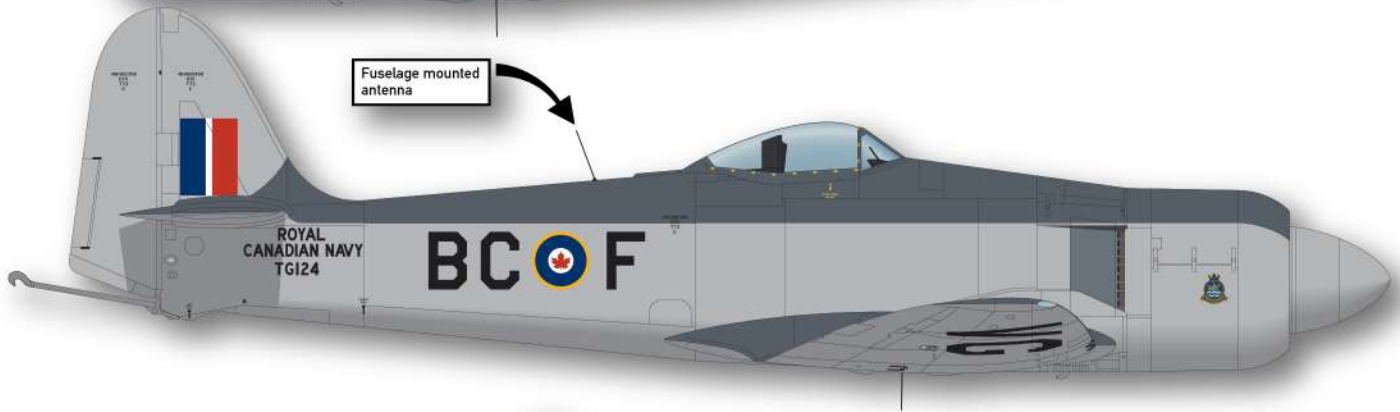
Wearing the revised RCN colors with demarcations identical to the previous ED5G/Sky scheme (referred to here as Pattern 2B). WG566 represents the initial Canadian standard for national and squadron markings. Again, note the location of the camouflage demarcation with reference to the exhaust panel. Spinner tip blue (similar to roundel color).



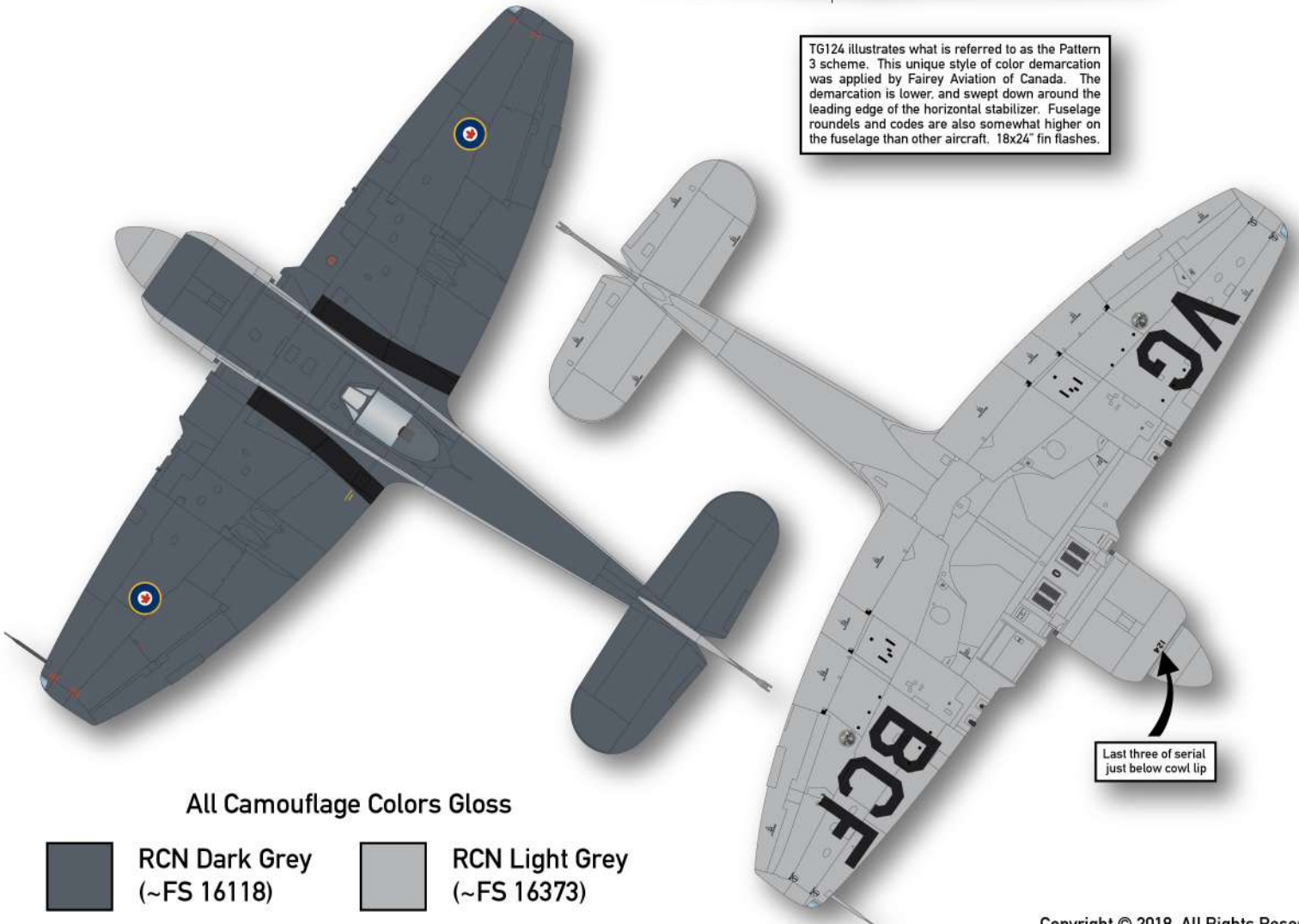
All Camouflage Colors Gloss

 RCN Dark Grey (~FS 16118)

 RCN Light Grey (~FS 16373)



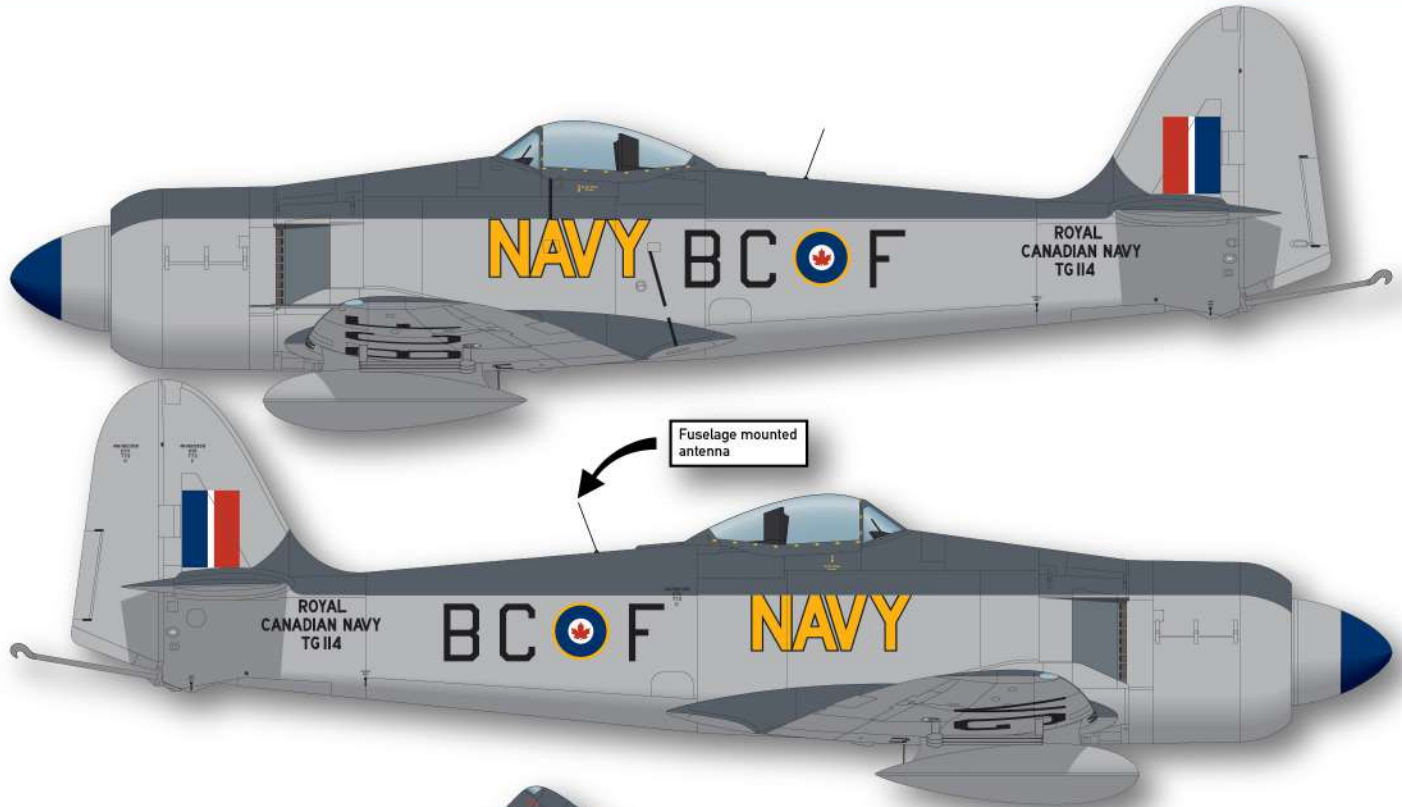
TG124 illustrates what is referred to as the Pattern 3 scheme. This unique style of color demarcation was applied by Fairey Aviation of Canada. The demarcation is lower, and swept down around the leading edge of the horizontal stabilizer. Fuselage roundels and codes are also somewhat higher on the fuselage than other aircraft. 18x24" fin flashes.



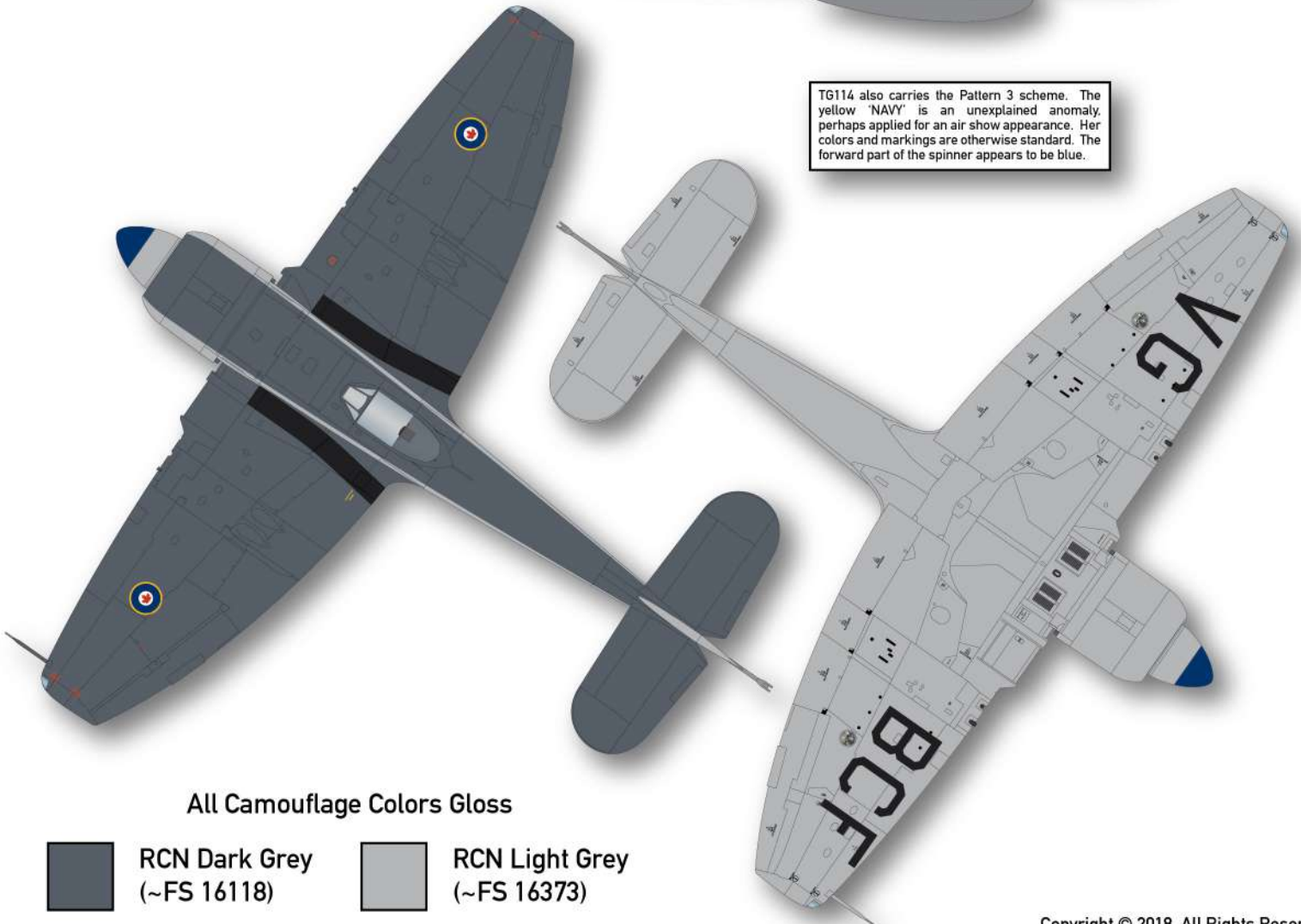
All Camouflage Colors Gloss

 RCN Dark Grey (~FS 16118)

 RCN Light Grey (~FS 16373)



TG114 also carries the Pattern 3 scheme. The yellow 'NAVY' is an unexplained anomaly, perhaps applied for an air show appearance. Her colors and markings are otherwise standard. The forward part of the spinner appears to be blue.



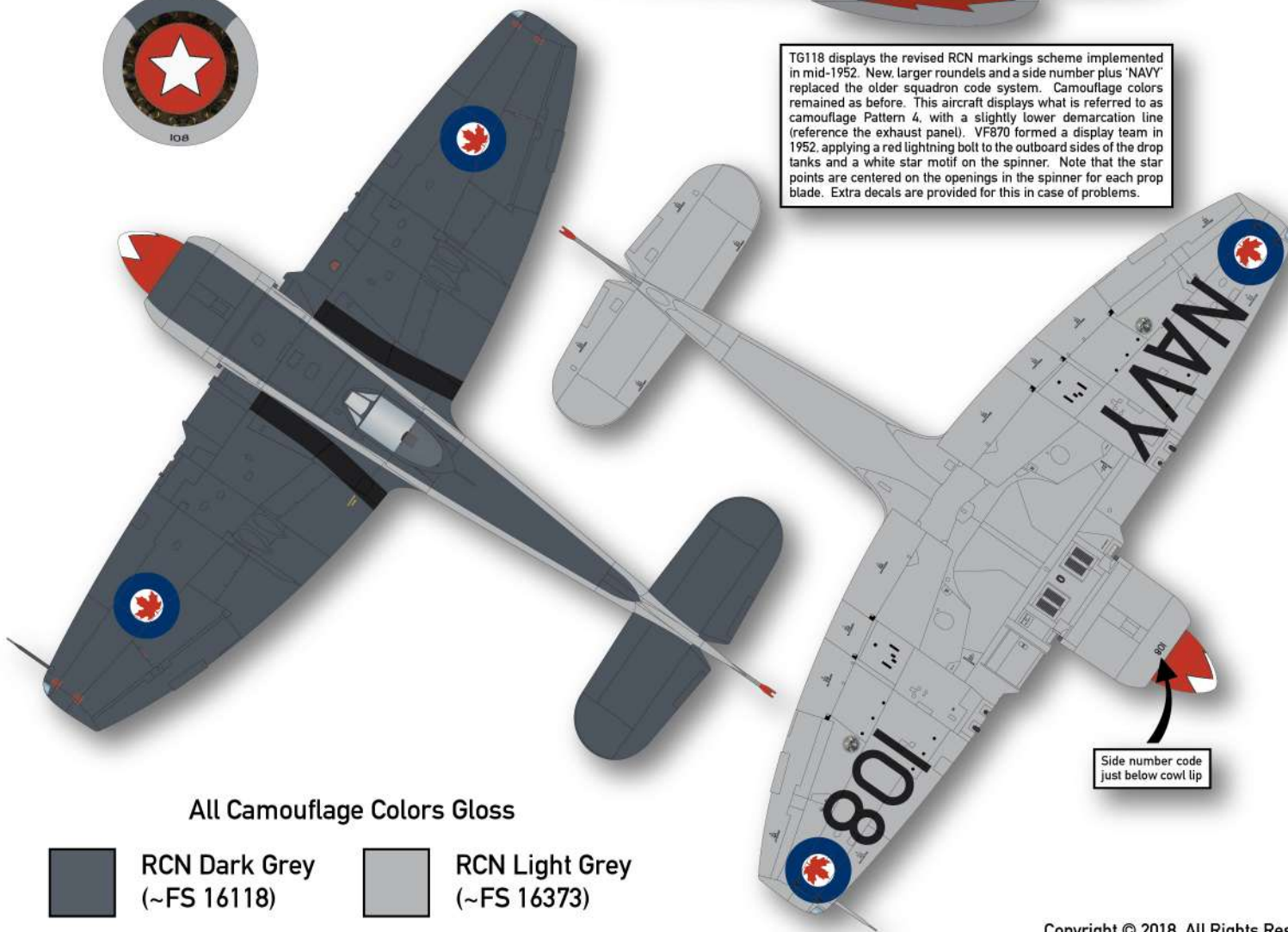
All Camouflage Colors Gloss

 RCN Dark Grey
(~FS 16118)

 RCN Light Grey
(~FS 16373)



TG118 displays the revised RCN markings scheme implemented in mid-1952. New, larger roundels and a side number plus 'NAVY' replaced the older squadron code system. Camouflage colors remained as before. This aircraft displays what is referred to as camouflage Pattern 4, with a slightly lower demarcation line (reference the exhaust panel). VF870 formed a display team in 1952, applying a red lightning bolt to the outboard sides of the drop tanks and a white star motif on the spinner. Note that the star points are centered on the openings in the spinner for each prop blade. Extra decals are provided for this in case of problems.



All Camouflage Colors Gloss



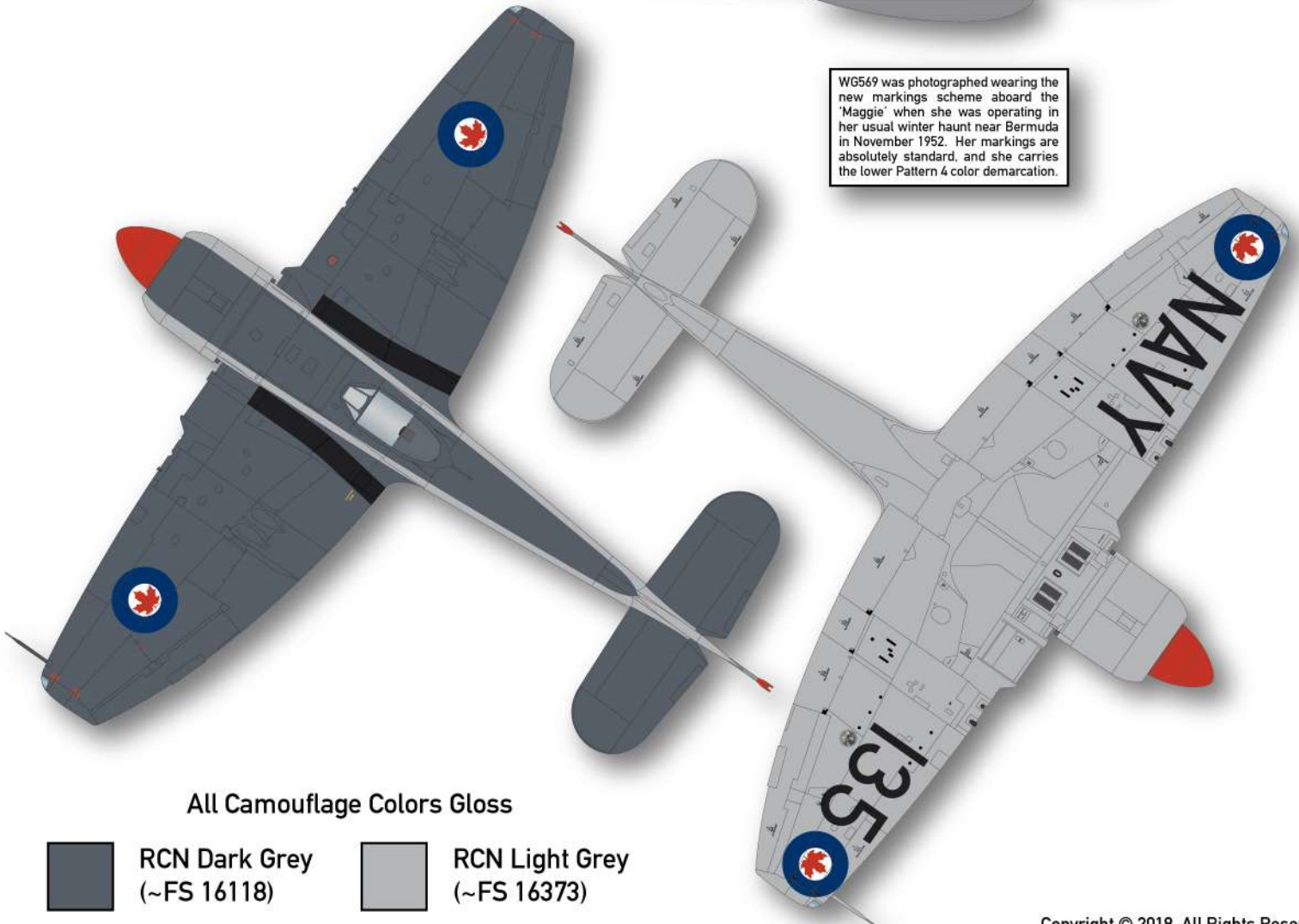
RCN Dark Grey
(~FS 16118)



RCN Light Grey
(~FS 16373)



WG569 was photographed wearing the new markings scheme aboard the 'Maggie' when she was operating in her usual winter haunt near Bermuda in November 1952. Her markings are absolutely standard, and she carries the lower Pattern 4 color demarcation.



All Camouflage Colors Gloss

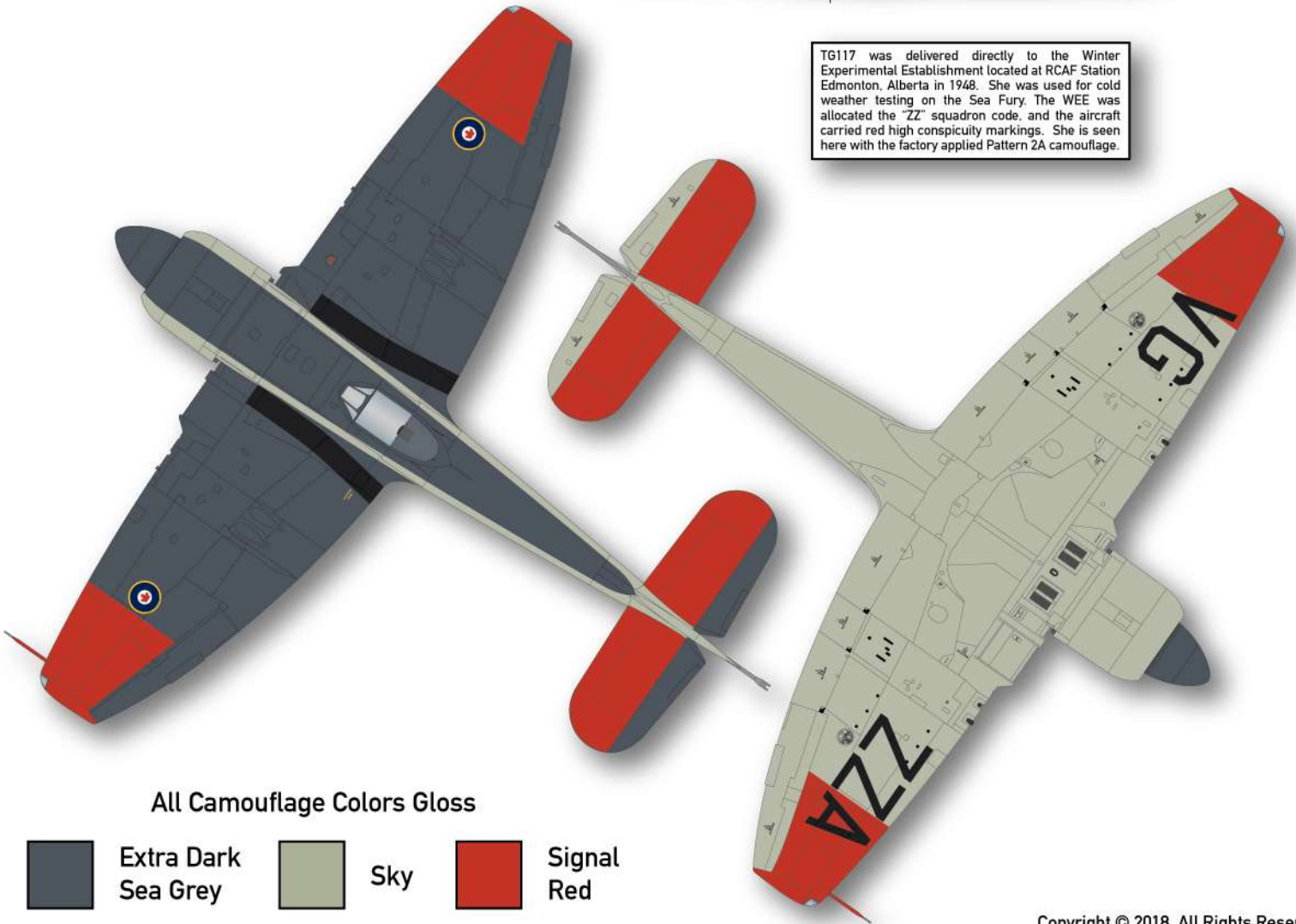
 RCN Dark Grey
(~FS 16118)

 RCN Light Grey
(~FS 16373)



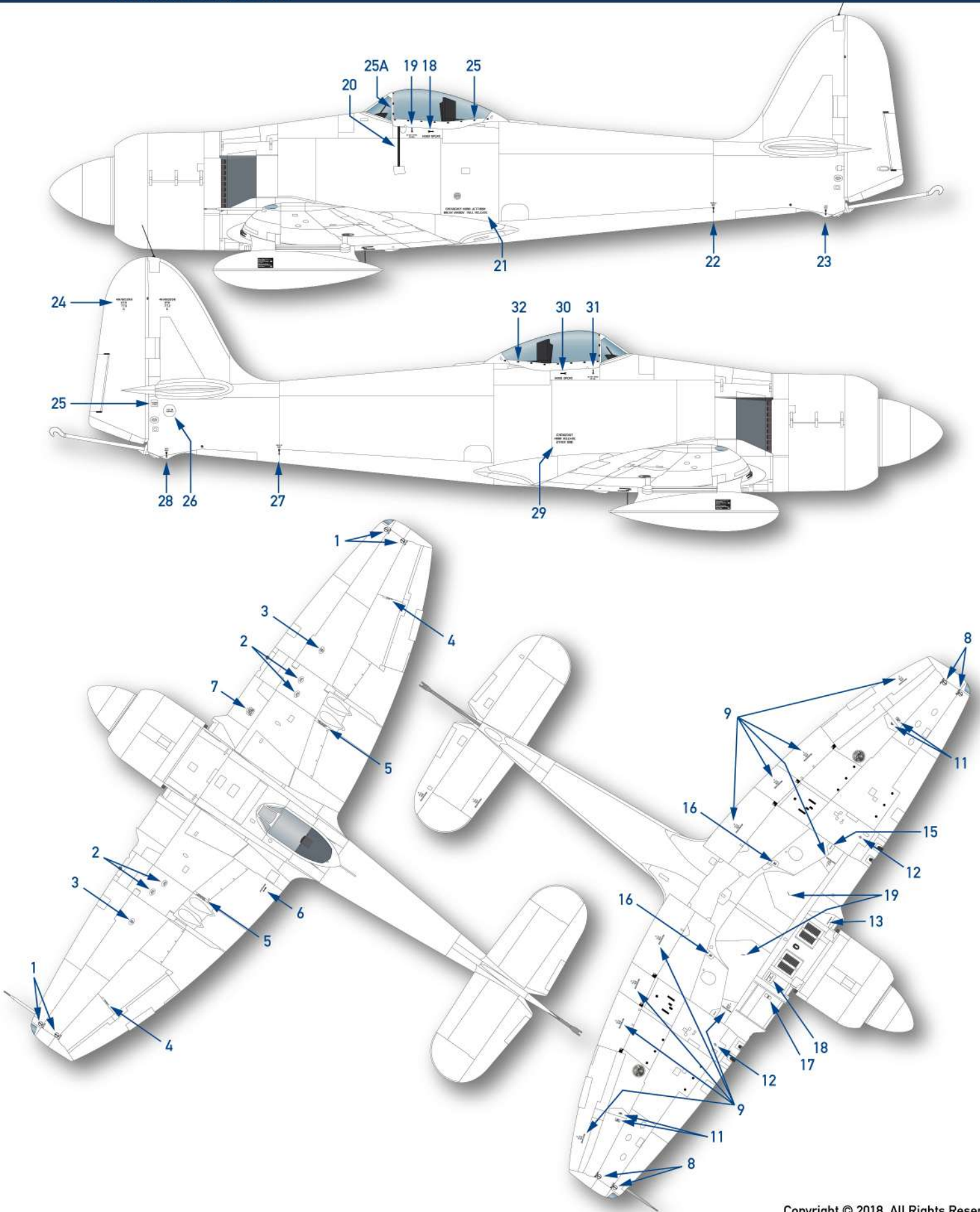
Fuselage mounted antenna

TG117 was delivered directly to the Winter Experimental Establishment located at RCAF Station Edmonton, Alberta in 1948. She was used for cold weather testing on the Sea Fury. The WEE was allocated the "ZZ" squadron code, and the aircraft carried red high conspicuity markings. She is seen here with the factory applied Pattern 2A camouflage.



All Camouflage Colors Gloss

- Extra Dark Sea Grey
- Sky
- Signal Red



Colors & Markings of the Hawker Sea Fury In Royal Canadian Navy Service 1948-1956

From the first deliveries in 1948 through the end of its service life with the Royal Canadian Navy in 1956, the Hawker Sea Fury formed the backbone of Canada's naval fighter strength. The Sea Fury's main role in the RCN was fleet/convoy defense, with secondary missions of anti-submarine/anti-ship strike and close air support of the Army. While the RCN never used its Sea Furies in anger, when the Korean armistice was signed in July 1953, VF871 was already preparing for service in the Far East. Had the conflict continued, VF 871 would have gone to war with the Royal Navy aboard HMS Warrior.

A total of 74 Sea Furies served in three different RCN units: numbers 803 and 883 Squadron (renumbered 870 and 871 Squadron respectively from May of 1951), and the RCN's fixed-wing training unit, VT40. The two operational squadrons were redesignated VF870 and VF871 in November 1952 to conform to the USN style of squadron identification.

There has been much confusion, and not a little misinformation published about the colors and markings worn by the Sea Furies of the Royal Canadian Navy. Thanks to the tireless efforts of Leo Pettipas (doyen of all things related to RCN aviation), most of the mystery is now solved, although there are some nagging holes in our knowledge simply due to a lack of photographic evidence.

This article will attempt to explain and illustrate the history of the camouflage colors and markings applied to the RCN Sea Fury fleet and to provide some interesting historical background for the modeler. Much of the information contained herein is extracted from two works by Leo Pettipas. The first is his self-published "The Hawker Sea Fury in the Royal Canadian Navy" that appeared in 1989, and the second is "Early Aircraft Paint Schemes in the RCN, 1946-1952" published by the Shearwater Aviation Museum in 2004 (<http://www.shearwateraviationmuseum.ns.ca>). For anyone interested in RCN Sea Furies, both of these volumes are indispensable.

First deliveries

The Royal Canadian Navy had formed its own air branch at the end of the Second World War, and it was initially equipped with the Supermarine Seafire Mk.XV. Since the Seafire XV was inadequate for the RCN's needs to begin with, the Hawker Sea Fury, then coming into frontline service with the Royal Navy, was chosen in 1947 to be the new fighter-bomber aircraft for the fledgling RCN as well. Interestingly, there was a faction within the RCN that lobbied hard for the acquisition of an American type - namely the Grumman F6F Hellcat - to replace the Seafire. This was because of Sea Fury deliveries having fallen behind due to labor troubles in Britain, and because it was thought that interoperability with Canada's closest neighbor would be made easier by such a move. But in the end, the RCN's traditional ties with Britannia prevailed, and the Sea Fury won out.

In August of 1947, thirteen Royal Navy Sea Fury Mk.Xs were loaned to the RCN's 803 Squadron at RNAS Eglinton in Northern Ireland, where conversion training for air and ground crews began in earnest. Two other Mk.Xs were sent onward to Canada, one to be used for cold weather testing and one for evaluation trials by the RCN. These aircraft were never used in active squadron service with the RCN and in fact, one of them was never even officially taken on charge. None of the Mk.Xs carried RCN markings, and they were only used for working up and trials.

The RCN finally got its own airplanes starting on 24 May 1948, when a batch of 27 Sea Fury FB.11s drawn from Royal Navy stocks was handed over to the Canadians at Eglinton. The aircraft and crews were quickly prepared for their inaugural journey to Canada aboard the RCN's newly commissioned fleet carrier, HMS Magnificent (universally known as the Maggie). The proud contingent arrived home on 1 June 1948.

Subsequent batches of newly produced Sea Furies came each year through 1953, for a total of 74 aircraft delivered. Serial numbers for the RCN Sea Fury FB.11s included: TF985, TF992/999 (9); TG113/129 (17); VR918/919 (2); VW225, VW227, VW230/231, VW239 (5); VV552, VV563, VV571, VV584 (4); VX675, VX682, VX686, VX688, VX690, VX692, VX695 (7); WG564/575 (12); WJ300/301 (2); WM472/478 (7); WZ633/641 (9). As a note of historical interest, WZ641 was the last Sea Fury produced by Hawker.

Color Confusion

The problem with understanding the colors applied to RCN Sea Furies stems from the issuance of a Naval General Order (NGO) entitled "I 20 - Canadian Naval Aircraft - Colour Schemes and Markings" by the Canadian government in

1947. This document was intended to provide information for civilian contractors repainting RCN aircraft after overhaul and/or major repair. The document was based on an earlier and very similar Royal Navy document, "Admiralty Fleet Order 5286/46". The problem with both documents was that they provided only written descriptions of the camouflage colors to be used, and did not give any sort of visual standard (ie. color sample cards) for matching them. Aircraft upper surfaces were to be gloss Extra Dark Sea Grey and lower surfaces were to be gloss Sky in both documents.

This seems simple enough upon first read; however the RCN never intended for the lower surfaces of its aircraft to be painted the same pale grey-green Sky color as the RN's. From the outset, the RCN intended its aircraft to receive a scheme of gloss Extra Dark Sea Grey above with a gloss pale neutral grey below, confusingly called "Sky" as well. In the RCN's primary operational area in the North Atlantic, it was felt that a two-tone grey scheme would be more effective camouflage than the RN's grey and green scheme. Despite published claims to the contrary, it is a virtual certainty that no RCN aircraft produced or repainted in Canada ever received the RN's color scheme of Sky (grey-green) and Extra Dark Sea Grey. All such aircraft were finished in the Canadian two-tone grey scheme, with Seafires and Fireflies having been correctly painted at Canadian facilities from as far back as 1947. Not until 1955 did the RCN revise its color specifications to "Dark Grey" and "Light Grey", reflecting at last the actual colors it desired from the beginning.

The actual RCN colors can be found in the Canadian 509-102 paint standard, and can be approximated to U.S. Federal Standard 595b, FS 36118 for Extra Dark Sea Grey, and FS 16373 (a gloss version of FS 36373) for the light grey. These approximations are open to interpretation, as are all matters concerning color matching, but appear very close to surviving examples of both colors.

Since none of the RCN's Sea Furies were produced in Canada, finish and markings specifications had to be transmitted to the Hawker factory in England. On the other side of the Atlantic, the Hawker paint shop dutifully complied with the requirements of NGO I 20, painting aircraft destined for Canada in "Sky" and "Extra Dark Sea Grey" exactly as specified - or so they thought. Back in Canada, the RCN was getting green and grey aircraft when it wanted two-tone grey aircraft and were none too happy about the continuing mixup. The RCN was getting airplanes painted in a color scheme it did not want, but since the it saw no immediate need to repaint brand new, perfectly good airplanes, Sea Furies delivered from Hawker in the RN colors were flown in squadron service until such time as they were due for overhaul/repair and respray in Canada.

Tired of receiving green and grey airplanes, the RCN sent a technical delegation, color chips in hand, to England in 1951 to resolve the situation. At last the Hawker factory had color samples to work from, and all subsequent deliveries were made in correct RCN two-tone grey colors.

Camouflage Color Patterns & Markings

The standard Royal Navy camouflage pattern in force when the first RCN-owned Sea Furies were delivered at Eglinton in 1948 comprised overall gloss Extra Dark Sea Grey (EDSG) on the upper surfaces and fuselage sides, with lower surfaces and spinners in gloss Sky. The demarcation between the upper and lower surface colors was hard-edged (as it was on all paint schemes discussed herein) and located very low on the side of the fuselage.

Roundels were Type C (wings, 48" diameter upper surface and 32" diameter lower surface) and C1 (fuselage, 36" diameter). A Type C fin flash (24x24") was also carried. On the aft fuselage the service identifier "ROYAL NAVY" appeared in black 4" high letters, along with a 4" high black serial number. The full serial in 24" high black numbers was carried on the lower surfaces of the wings, with the base of the letters toward the leading edge on the left wing and toward the trailing edge on the right wing. This scheme is identified as Pattern 1.

The entire first batch of aircraft delivered to the RCN, save one (serial number TG117) had this scheme applied at the Hawker factory. Photos indicate that RCN markings were applied before the aircraft left for Canada. These included the RCN service identifier (split on two lines of text) and the serial number in what was to become the standard RCN style, squadron codes, and blue maple leaves in the red center spots of the roundels.

The RCN received its second batch of Sea Furies in 1949, and a number of these also displayed the Pattern 1 paint scheme. What little information we have about them, however, suggests that they retained their full RN appearance upon delivery; they did not carry any fuselage squadron codes; the service identifier on the aft fuselage read "ROYAL NAVY"; and there were no maple leaves in the roundels. The Canadians, like Queen Victoria, were not amused, and in due course, Canadian codes and the service identifier "ROYAL CANADIAN NAVY" were superimposed upon this basic RN layout. The entire matter was put to rest when the aircraft were later refinished to full RCN standards during overhaul in Canada.

One aircraft of the 1948 batch (TG117), as well as several of the 1949 batch (VW serials) and all of the 1950 batch (VX serials) wore the revised RN scheme most

commonly associated with the Sea Fury. The colors remained EDSG/Sky, but the demarcation line on the fuselage was moved much higher, and the vertical fin was now Sky as well. Roundels were now post-war Type D (32" fuselage & lower wing, 36" upper wing), and the full serial (24" high) was retained below the wings. Fin flashes were deleted, and the spinner color was changed from Sky to EDSG. This scheme is labeled Pattern 2a. A number of Sea Furies served with the RCN for some time in this paint scheme and markings, some with no indication whatsoever of their Canadian ownership, while others had varying types of RCN markings added, including the addition of blue maple leaves in the center spots of the Type D roundels on some aircraft.

There is reason to believe that the entire 1950 batch, all in the VX serial range, carried Pattern 2a, but with a full suite of factory-applied RCN markings over the British colors. Photos exist of aircraft with the single-line service identifier on this basic color scheme, indicating the application of RCN markings at the factory.

Official RCN markings of the 1948-1952 period included yellow-bordered 18" diameter roundels on the fuselage and upper wings and RCN style 18x24" fin flashes, along with the identification scheme mandated by the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO). This consisted of a two-letter squadron code, a single letter individual aircraft code, and the letter group "VG" signifying the Royal Canadian Navy. The squadron and individual aircraft codes were carried on the fuselage sides, usually split by the roundel. Typically, the squadron code was on the left and the aircraft identifier on the right of the roundel on both sides of the fuselage (such that the code read XY•Z on both sides). Fuselage codes were typically 18" high black letters, although the exact size and style varied. On the lower wing surfaces, large (usually 36" high) letters were carried. The "VG" code for the RCN was carried on the lower right wing, and the complete squadron/aircraft identifier on the lower left wing. No lower wing roundels were carried with this scheme.

Contract Overhaul

For a period of approximately one year (through mid-1950), the contract for repair and overhaul of RCN Sea Furies belonged to Avro Canada, Ltd. at Malton, Ontario. Being a Canadian company operating on Canadian soil, and with easy access to RCN personnel and specifications, aircraft painted by Avro were finished in the correct light and dark grey scheme. With a limited number of aircraft passing through Malton during that year, and with the difficulty of interpreting black & white photos, we are left to make educated guesses as to exact details of their finishes. It appears, however, that Avro basically used the RN paint pattern as used by Hawker, but with the correct RCN greys substituted for EDSG/Sky. Full RCN markings were applied, including the correct RCN style roundels on the fuselage and upper wings, RCN fin flashes, and two-line service designator on the aft fuselage. This scheme is labeled Pattern 2b, and is identical to Pattern 2a except for the camouflage colors.

In mid-1950 the contract for overhaul of RCN Sea Furies went to Fairey Aviation of Canada, Ltd. Fairey also utilized the correct RCN light and dark grey camouflage colors, but with a very different paint pattern, identified here as Pattern 3. The demarcation line between the upper and lower surface colors on the fuselage sides was several inches lower than on Pattern 2. This is most visible just above the exhaust panel, where a very narrow stripe of light grey is visible compared to a wider one on the previous schemes.

A more important identification feature of the Fairey Aviation repaints is the unique paint demarcation pattern around the tail. Whereas on previous schemes the dark grey followed a gentle curve up to intersect the leading edge of the vertical fin, the Fairey scheme continued it along the side of the fin in a sweeping line down and aft, connecting with the dark grey upper surface of the horizontal stabilizer.

After the RCN technical delegation's visit to the UK in 1951, and effective that year, Hawker began to deliver new aircraft to the RCN in the proper light and dark grey colors with full RCN markings applied at the factory. However, Hawker used the same paint pattern for the RCN machines as it was using for the Royal Navy's, resulting in Pattern 2b. For reasons unknown (perhaps because it was just how the RN did things), Hawker insisted on putting the entire "ROYAL CANADIAN NAVY" identifier on a single line on the aft fuselage. In most cases this was eventually changed in Canada to one of the two common styles seen in most photos.

Big Changes

In the summer of 1952 the RCN instituted a wholesale change in its aircraft marking scheme. Camouflage colors remained unchanged, but the unique Pattern 3 paintline was eliminated in favor of a pattern more like the British one. The Canadian interpretation of this is labeled Pattern 4. At first glance it appears identical to Pattern 2b, but upon closer examination, the demarcation line between the upper and lower fuselage colors is somewhat lower (as with Pattern 3), and is also most visible just above the exhaust panel. With older aircraft being repainted in Canada, and new aircraft being delivered in the correct Canadian colors direct from Hawker, both Pattern 2b and Pattern 4 camouflage could be seen right

through to the end of the Sea Fury's tenure with the RCN. As an aside, during 1949-1950 Avro Canada actually initiated Pattern 4. Not all aircraft painted by them carried this pattern however, and it did not become the standard at that time.

With the implementation of the new marking scheme, squadron codes, ICAO identifiers, and the yellow ring around the roundels all disappeared. The previous markings were replaced by much larger roundels, now once more in six positions, and the word "NAVY" plus a three-digit code on the fuselage and lower wing surfaces. Upper and lower wing roundels were now 36" diameter, while fuselage roundels were 24" diameter. Fuselage side numbers and "NAVY" were 24" high black letters, while those on the lower wings were 36" high. On the vertical fin the 18x24" fin flash remained unchanged. The RCN service identifier and serial number remained on the aft fuselage, although the exact size, style, and location of the latter two items varied widely, and were often quite different from the style seen earlier.

A note on spinner colors is in order. Given that the vast majority of RCN Sea Fury photos are in black & white, especially those from the early years of their service, making a positive determination of spinner colors is virtually impossible. In photos, spinners of various shades are quite noticeable, especially when there is a group of aircraft together in the same photo. Some spinners are obviously Sky, some are obviously Light Grey, and some are obviously Extra Dark Sea Grey. But then there are the others. In some photos there are aircraft with spinners of a very dark tone, a very light tone (both different from the local camouflage colors), and some are likely white.

It is clear from existing color photos that in later years VF 871 used both red (and occasionally white) spinners. Most references indicate that 870 Squadron used blue spinners and spinner tips at some point, but it is clear that VF 870 later used the red and white star motif. It would be logical to assume that each squadron used its own unique color, but this is apparently not the case. Unless color photos can be found then, spinner colors will have to remain open to interpretation.

Conclusion

The Hawker Sea Fury is a perennial favorite of aircraft enthusiasts and modelers across the world. It is virtually synonymous with Royal Canadian Navy aviation from the late 1940s through the mid-1950s, and its powerful, graceful shape and the power of its Bristol Centaurus are sadly missed in Canadian skies. I hope this article has dispelled some myths and misconceptions, and has provided the modeler with inspiration and guidance. It is by no means exhaustive, and it could easily have been much longer. I regret that there appears to be so little photographic evidence linking the nose art applied to RCN Sea Furies with their serials and codes; otherwise they would also have been included here. Any mistakes herein are entirely my own, and I wholeheartedly encourage anyone with further information or corrections to contact me.

This piece would not have been possible without major assistance. My sincere thanks to Jim Bates for his help and encouragement. I am deeply indebted to Mike Belcher for his advice on RCN paint colors (your note is dated July 1988!), and to Leo Pettipas for all of his kind assistance above and beyond the call of duty. Leo patiently put up with my myriad questions, expertly edited my copy (over and over), and happily shared his encyclopedic knowledge with me on a subject near to both of our hearts. Thanks guys!

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