

# Bats in the post

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### Abstract

This is a discussion of the ways in which postage stamps might serve to raise awareness and interest, and through associated media and events, to increase understanding.

**Key words:** stamps, bats on stamps, bats and philately

## Introduction

Everyday use of postage stamps may well attract interest and increase awareness. At a further level, stamp collecting remains both a truly major hobby and, today, a major industry. Postal authorities produce a range of associated products, such as special first day postmarks, covers and maximum cards. At still another level, the media and a variety of special events help to broaden the impact of such relating such stamps and other items to the wider public.

Significant publications on this topic include those by Lera (1995), Stepanek and Friedrich (1998), and Friedrich & Stepanek (2002). There are also numerous brief presentations in philatelic and other magazines, both by the above authors and by others, including Aulagnier of France. Information and news about bat-related postal items also appear regularly in the newsletter *Speleophilately International* from the Netherlands.

The photographs that follow depict a small selection from my personal collection.

## Australia

Australia's major venture into bat stamps came in 1992 with a series of threatened species stamps. The series appeared in a great variety of formats, but included the Ghost Bat which is shown here on the official maximum card (Fig. 1). There were also four pre-stamped envelopes, three of which depicted flying foxes (Fig. 2). Then, although the Creatures of the Night series did not show bats on the stamps, they featured on first day covers, some of which were postmarked at Batman (Fig. 3).

## Belarus

Belarus managed to combine particularly beautiful design with each stamp showing aspects of the habitats of the species concerned. These include living in tree hollows in the forest, living in buildings and flying over water in their hunt for food. (Fig. 4)

## Bulgaria

Bulgaria used bats as their theme for a series of stamps to commemorate the work of the Worldwide Fund for Nature (WWF). The launch of these stamps was marked by several special events, and full information package included the set of stamps mounted on the cover of a beautifully illustrated booklet on bats together with full sets of first day covers and maximum cards. (Fig. 5)

## China

In China, the bat is seen as a symbol of good luck and happiness. It is most often seen in the *Wu Fu* (Five Bats), as representing the five great sources of happiness, namely health, wealth, long life, good luck and tranquility. (Fig. 6)

## “Cinderellas”

Stamp collectors use the term Cinderella to describe items that look like postage stamps – but are not. Here are examples from both France and the U.S.A. These are what are commonly called poster stamps – aimed at building awareness and interest, but also raising money. (Fig. 7)

Following on the virtual collapse of the Russian USSR, people resorted to many ways of trying to make at least some money. One of these was to print false stamps, which had no validity for postage but could be marketed to collectors for a good price! The countries named on some of these may not have even known about them. (Fig. 8)

## Cyprus

Again, the bat theme was also used for the WWF series from Cyprus. Australian artist Owen Bell, who now draws directly into the computer using a stylus and tablet, executed the actual design of the stamps. This provides a superior image of the animal's hair and other fine detail. (Fig. 9)

## Germany

Germany issued a particularly attractive stamp in 1999 depicting the Horseshoe Bat. Here is the formal information card for the stamp (Fig. 10) with a diagram on the back to indicate echo-location. (Fig. 11) First-day and other special covers were issued from post offices in many German cities, all bearing special bat postmarks. (Fig. 12)

A new musical comedy was staged in Stuttgart, and many postmarks advertised this.

There was even a further information card depicting other designs that were submitted but not used. (Fig. 13) There were special educational seminars and other programs arranged to build upon the wave of public awareness. The slogan “Bats Need Friends” appeared widely.

Bats in the post



Figure 1

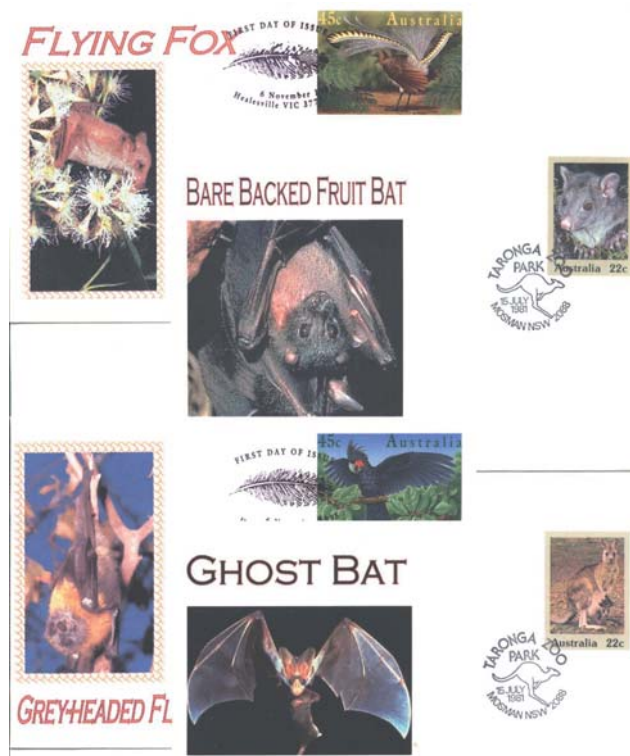


Figure 2



Figure 3

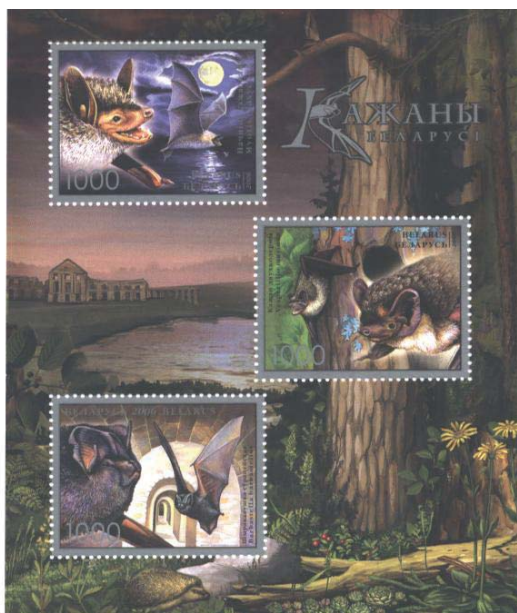


Figure 4



Figure 5





Figure 6

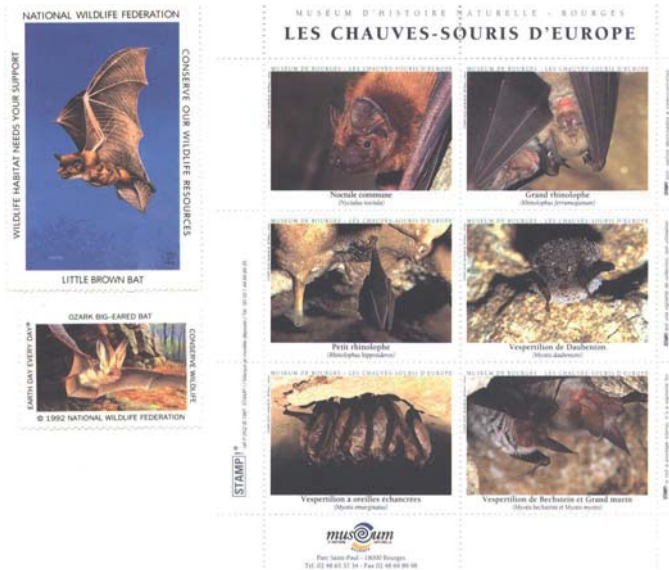


Figure 7

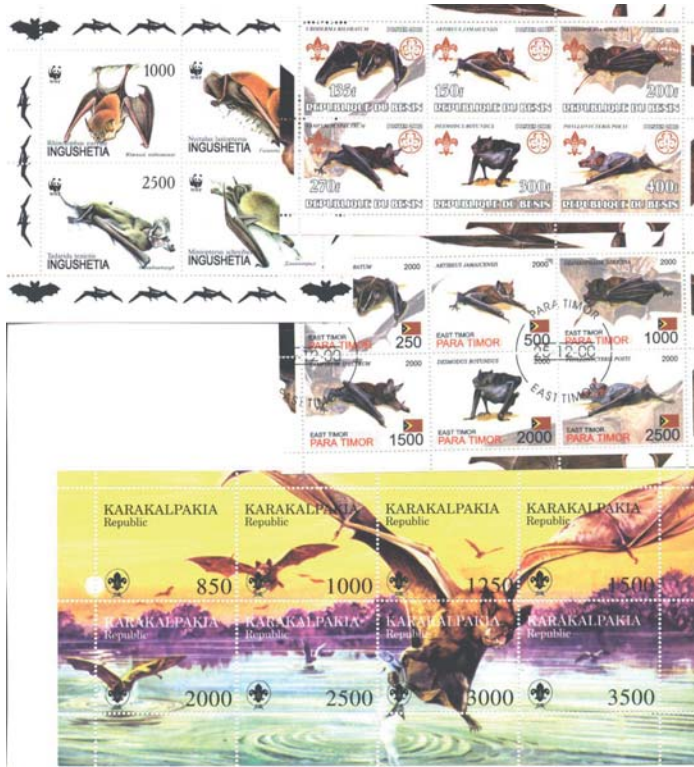


Figure 8



Figure 9



Figure 10



Figure 11

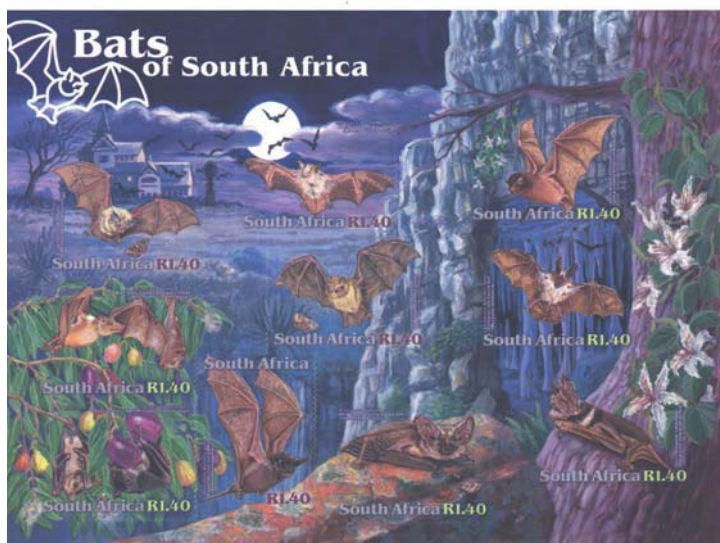


Figure 14

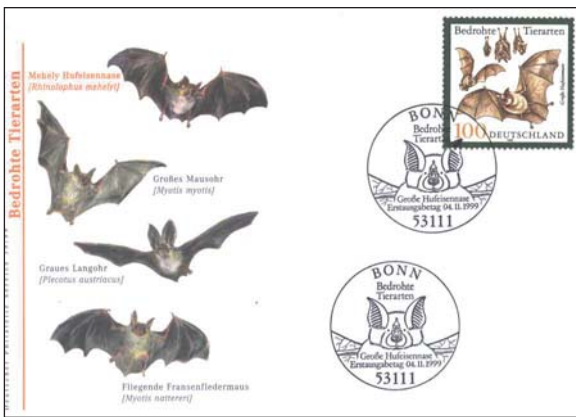


Figure 12



Figure 13



Figure 15





Figure 16

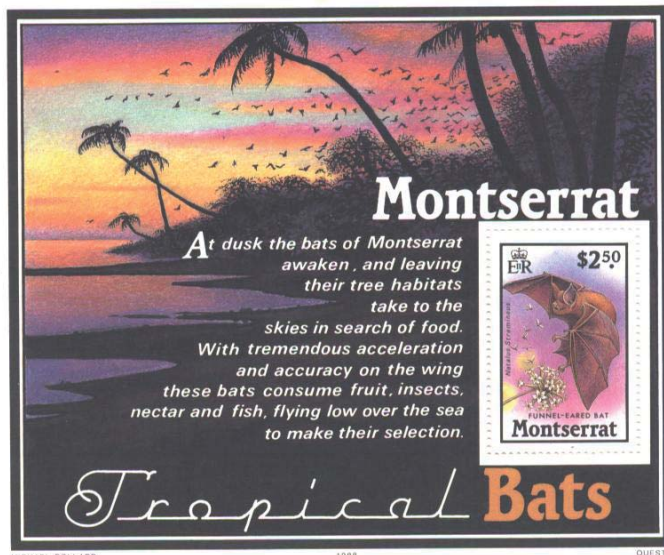


Figure 17



Figure 18



Figure 19

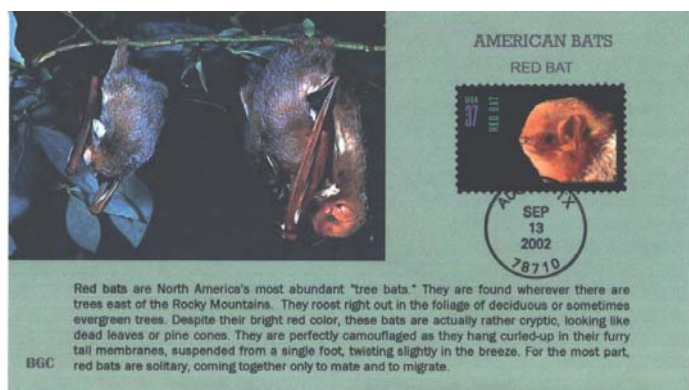


Figure 20

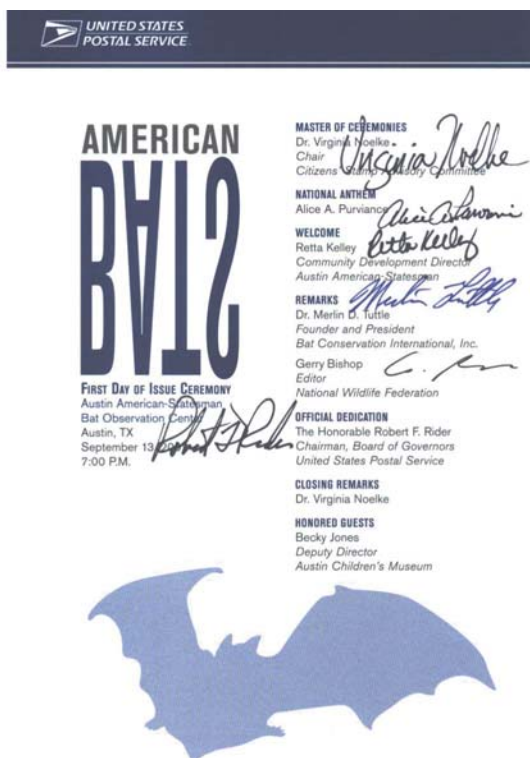


Figure 21



Figure 23



Figure 22

## South Africa

Here a single sheet includes a cross-section of the diversity of South African bats. In order to dramatise the nocturnal character of bats, each of the animal images is printed in luminescent ink. (Fig. 14) The stamps were printed in the now familiar peel-and-stick format, and so the back of the card provided space for an excellent text presentation.

## South America and the Caribbean

This region has not only a great diversity of bats, but also many species that are spectacular in either appearance or behaviour. Many countries have produced appropriately spectacular stamps. (Figs. 15–17)

## United States

The United States is particularly fortunate in having Bat Conservation International based in Austin, Texas. Merlin Tuttle is a truly charismatic leader for bat conservation and has moved on from “Bats need Friends” to “Bats are our Friends”. Four bats appear in this series (Fig. 18), and there are a number of truly informative panels (e.g., Figs. 19–20). The launch of the series was clearly a very major event. (Fig. 21) Many magnificent first day covers can be found. (e.g., Figs. 22–23)

## References

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