

Southern African Bird Philately

By Otto Pectoom

Introduction

At Philatelic weekends the displays are often on some sort of theme such as Union SG 1, Labels, Airmails, Booklets, Railways, Maritime, 1910 Cape Town Pageant, Meter Mail etc.

A recent sideline interest started purely by chance. From an estate I acquired a collection of bird stamps, laid out by species, thus all the various sets are split up and scattered through the collection. I decided to count them and reached 8000 in total.

Towards the end of 2017 I decided to do 'something' with the accumulation of birds on stamps and I separated them into three groups. **Group I - Commonwealth Bird Stamps**
Collated by country into their respective sets.

Group II - Foreign Bird Stamps

I assembled a reference collection by species, but only picking attractive stamps.

Group III - South and Central Africa Bird Stamps

Includes countries from the Cape to the Congo, not all the Congo, but sort of to its Southern end. This cumulated into a webpage on the SACS website.

Articles and a display on Bird Stamps

This was a natural progression given that I am the Editor of three Philatelic journals.

I also decided to put together a display of Southern Africa bird stamps which includes Republic of South Africa (RSA), South West Africa (SWA), Namibia and the TBVC countries e.g. Transkei, Bophuthatswana, Venda and Ciskei.

Essentially I know very little about birds, however a friend of mine gave me a 1992 Stanley Gibbons Bird Catalogue. It includes a listing by species based on Howard & Moore 1st Edition (1991) with a total of 175 species, although not all the species are represented on stamps.

Subsequently I secured a 2003 SG 'Collect Birds on Stamps' (5th Edition) which includes numerous changes as it now uses Howard & Moore 2nd Edition (2000). Another set of authors split the birds into 240 separate species and I am informed that it is somewhat academic as to how one approaches this rather confusing sub-division of birds.

Howard & Moore's second edition is numbered from 1 to 173 and No 155 split into A to E sections, with a bit of juggling I have established 170 bird species on stamps. Southern Africa offers 243 different birds that belong to 66 species. Extinct birds are prefixed by '0'.

Birds on Stamps - Certain Exclusions

This includes birds that form part of a Coat-of-Arms, symbolic birds, poultry and 'Peace Doves'.

The Earliest Bird Stamps

Some say it is the 1843 'Basle Dove' but as it is regarded as symbolic...it doesn't count. Thus it has to be Western Australia's 1854 Black Swan (SG 1). The Americans always wish to join in by claiming the 1869 Eagle is their first...not so...being part of their Coat-of-Arms it does not qualify as a 'bird stamp'.

Nineteen Century Bird Stamps

Only fifteen designs appeared between 1854 and 1899, issued by eleven countries being *Western Australia*, 1854 Black Swan.

Nineteen Century Birds continued

Japan, 1875 Bean Goose, *Columbia*, 1876 Andean Condor, *Guatemala*, 1879 Resplendent Quetzal, *New South Wales*, 1888 Emu and Superb Lyrebird, *Cook Islands*, 1893 White Tern, *North Borneo*, 1894 Great Argus Pheasant. Three countries in 1897, *China*, Bean Goose, *Tonga*, Red Shining Parrot and *Newfoundland*, Willow Red Grouse plus *New Zealand* in 1899 with a Hula, Kiwi, Kaka and Kea.



Red Shining Parrot

Southern African Bird Stamps

The collectors ought to have a field day with this particular theme as the Southern continent abounds with bird life...there is however a slight problem...the Union of South Africa during fifty one years of stamp production did not issue a single stamp which depicts a bird!

In neighbouring **South West Africa** they came up with one value being the 1931 ½d definitive depicting a Kori Bustard.



Between 1931 and 1952 the same stamp is overprinted with three types of 'OFFICIAL/OFFISIEEL'.

Belgian Congo - One of the earliest Central African countries to show 'birds on stamps' is the 1939 Leopoldville Zoological Gardens 1Fr being the lowest value in the set of 5, SG 226 depicting Marabou Storks and white-backed vultures.



Hornbill



1939 B. Congo



Whydah

Angola - In 1951 this Portuguese Colony set an example on how to do justice to Southern Africa's bird life by issuing a set of 24 values. In my opinion this set is definitely an African 'Classic bird issue' and I usually have a set or more in stock.

Extinct Birds on Stamps Follow a listing by James Greenway *Extinct and Vanishing Birds of the World* (2nd Edition, Dover, 1967). Extinct birds are prefixed by a zero '0'.

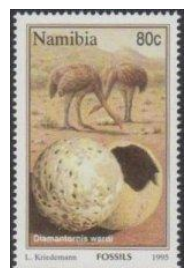
Ward's Diamond bird (extinct) depicted on a stamp

On 24 May 1995 Namibia issued a set of four values, designed by L. Kriedemann, with different fossils and their extinct counterparts.

The 80 cent value shows eggs in the foreground plus two large, 'ostrich type' birds bending over a clutch of eggs.

SG 664 Listed as '0 - 15'

This value was also incorporated in a Foundation miniature sheet.



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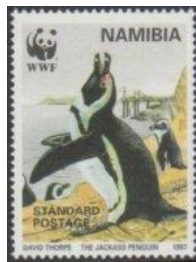
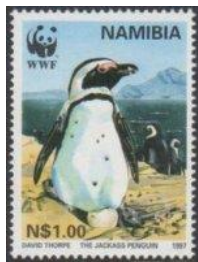
Flightless birds - Howard & Moore commence their listing starting with '1' The Ostrich, '2' Rhea (South America) '3' Cassowaries (Papua New Guinea) '4' Emu (Australian) '5' Kiwi (New Zealand) and '7' Penguins. No '6' Tinamou, a poor flyer, when threatened, prefers to hide rather than fly.

1-The Ostrich - Depicted on SWA SG 315 and 439 - 442 plus RSA SG 1086, 1637 & 1666.



The 1954 SWA 6d Aerogramme depicts two Ostriches in full flight; the artwork may also be viewed on the SACS website.

7-Penguins Whilst there are several different birds, only the Jackass Penguin '7 - 15' occur in Namibia and South Africa. The bird is regarded as being an endangered species. RSA 90c definitive SG 816, also contained in a booklet SB 34. Namibia 1997 set of four plus MS (SG 713 - 717)



Other Penguins on RSA stamps

1991 Antarctic Treaty SG 740 Adelie Penguins '7 - 4' in the foreground of the research ship 'RSA'. A King Penguin '7 - 1' on Marion Island 1997 RSA SG 998.

9-Grebes

On 2011 Namibia SG 1172 - 1174

Three types of Grebe

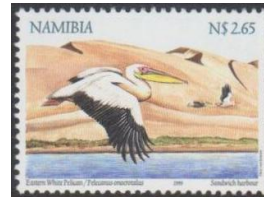


Albatrosses Species '10' Included in a RSA 1999 Migratory bird sheetlet of ten (SG 1162)

Once a ship is in the Southern Atlantic, it will 'pick up' several albatrosses that follow the ship for days on end. With the appearance of the bird, crewmen will say 'The Pilot is here'. Scraps of food thrown overboard are soon consumed by these birds.



12-12 Since 1995 Leach's storm petrel has bred at Dyer Island (off Gansbay) The South African offshore islands on which Leach's storm petrel almost certainly breeds are Jutten (Saldana bay), Dassen, Dyer and St Croix (Off Coega) - RSA SG 2136. The South African population is probably only 25 pairs.



Pelicans - '15 - 1'

The Eastern White Pelican A small image on RSA SG 1091, also on SWA SG 333 and Namibia SG 843.

16-2 Cape Gannet RSA SG 352, 372 and 1730

17 Cormorants (Two types) on RSA SG 977 & 1731.

18 Anhingas '18-1' African Darter

20 Herons (Nine types) On Namibia, RSA and Venda

21-1 Hammerkop on RSA SG 978



Hammerkop



Cormorant



Darter



Heron

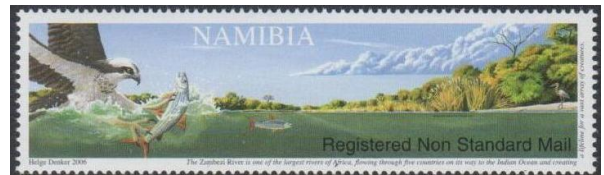
23 Storks (Five types) On Namibia, RSA and Venda

24 Ibis One stamp only Ciskei (SG 12) '24-12' Hadada Ibis

25 Flamingoes On Namibia, RSA and SWA

27 Ducks, Geese, Swans This is a very large listing in the bird catalogue (Some 3+ pages) Twelve different ducks and geese on Namibia, Transkei and Venda stamps.

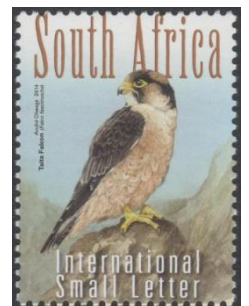
29 Western Osprey on Namibia SG 1048. The SG catalogue incorrectly identifies this bird as a African Fish Eagle.



30 Hawks, Eagles Birds of prey, a large section of 21 different birds on Southern African stamps.

31-1 Secretary Bird The only design being the 1961 RSA 20c definitive.

32 Falcons Seven different and includes the well known Peregrine Falcon, the National bird of Angola '32-60'. RSA SG 2135 depicts the very rare Taita Falcon (32-59), a critically endangered bird with an estimated world population of less than 500 pairs. It feeds exclusively on small birds taken in flight - Illustrated at right.



35 Pheasants, Grouse The only birds in this section are on Namibia, Hartlaub's Spurfowl plus the Helmeted Guineafowl '35-208' on Stamps, a miniature sheet plus a 1997 Booklet.

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39 Cranes Three types on Ciskei, Namibia, RSA and Transkei. The Stanley or 'Blue' Crane ('39-13') is the National bird of South Africa.

47 Bustards Named *Korhaan* in Afrikaans

Ten different types and the Kori Bustard ('40-8') is the first bird to feature on a Southern African stamp SWA 1931 ½d definitive (SG 74) Bophuthatswana issued a set of four in 1983 and in 2010 Namibia feature a sheetlet with six birds.



48-2 Africa Jacana The only example of this species is included in a 1998 Namibia sheetlet (SG 813)

51 Black Oystercatcher Features on RSA SG 1729.



54 Stone Curlews

54-4 Cape Dikkop
Ciskei SG 17

54-3 Water Dikkop
RSA SG 986



55 Coursers, Pratincoles Five different birds, 2015 Namibia features four Coursers and SG 842 depicts a *White-collared Pratincole* '55-15'.

56 Plovers Three different birds on Namibia SG 926 & 1055 plus SWA SG 332 '56-46' Chestnut-banded Sand Plover.

57 Sandpipers, Snipes Three types on Namibia, RSA & Venda

60-4 Antarctic Skua Although seen feeding in the oceans around South Africa, it breeds in the Antarctic and associate Islands e.g. *Gough Island*. On RSA SG 997.

61 Gulls, Terns Minor images of the Kelp Gull are included on RSA & SWA stamps and a good example features on RSA SG 1732. Namibia issued a set of 4 Gulls in 2006.



The only Tern is on Namibia SG 1194 and RSA SG 2134 being the **Damara Tern**, an elusive and rare bird confined to the coasts of SWA and the Cape and leaves the shores in July.

64 Sandgrouse In 1990 Bophuthatswana issued a set of four taken from paintings in the Transvaal museum by Claude Gibney Finch-Davies (1875-1920). He was a British soldier who came to South Africa in 1893 and became fascinated by the bird life around him. He served in SWA during WWI. He published papers on birds and developed a strong bond with the Transvaal museum. The RSA 1990 bird issue (SG 705-709) is also by Finch-Davies. Other stamps depicting Sandgrouse are Namibia SG 841 & 926 plus RSA SG 1813.

65 Pigeons, Doves Seven different types found on Ciskei, Namibia, RSA plus 1993 Transkei, set of four plus a MS.

67 Cockatoos One only Cockatiel '67-19' on Ciskei SG 230.

68 Parrots Five different birds and includes a Budgerigar, Cape Parrot, Brown Parrot, Ruppell's Parrot and a Peach-faced Lovebird. On stamps from Bophuthatswana, Ciskei, Namibia and RSA.

69 Turacos Two different birds, Violet-crested Turaco '69-7' and the National bird for Swaziland. Green Turaco or *Knysna Loerie* '69-11'.

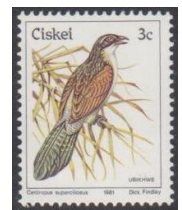
71 Cuckoos Three birds '71-11' Red-chested Cuckoo on Transkei SG 75. Black Cuckoo '71-12' - Ciskei SG 13 plus White-browed Coucal '71-136' on Ciskei SG 7.



Knysna Loerie



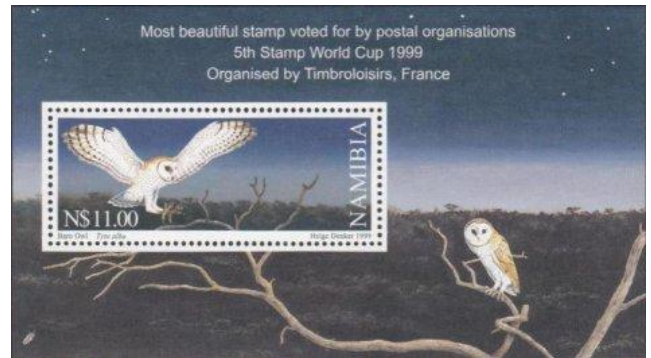
Black Cuckoo



White-browed Coucal

72-2 Barn Owl On Ciskei, Namibia booklet and RSA.

The N\$11 design was voted 'Most beautiful stamp' in 1999.



73 Owls Nine Owls feature on a Ciskei R2 definitive plus a 1991 set of 4, 2007 RSA issue and in a Namibia 1998 booklet.

The Best of the Rest – No of different birds in brackets

83 Trogons (2) **84** Kingfishers (7) **87** Bee Eaters (6) **88** Rollers (5) **91** Hoopoes (1) **92** Wood Hoopoes (1) **93** Hornbills (4) **96** Barbets (3) **116** Larks (4) **117** Swallows & Martins (5) **118** Wagtails & Pipits (3) **120** Bulbuls (1) **122** Shrikes (4) **130** Thrushes & Chats (5) **132** Babbblers (2) **136** Old World Wabblers (1) **138** Flycatchers (1) **141** Fantails (1) **146** Tits (1) **152** Sunbirds (11) **161** Finches (2) **162** Waxbills (4) **163** Weavers (12) **164** Starlings (5) and **166** Orioles (1) Not numbered (New birds on stamps) Flufftails and Cape Sugarbird.

Power Point Presentation

This begins with a brief introduction followed by selected stamps of 66 Species including SWA hand painted Essays. There are a few pages with write-ups to demonstrate what can be achieved with a 'bird thematic'.

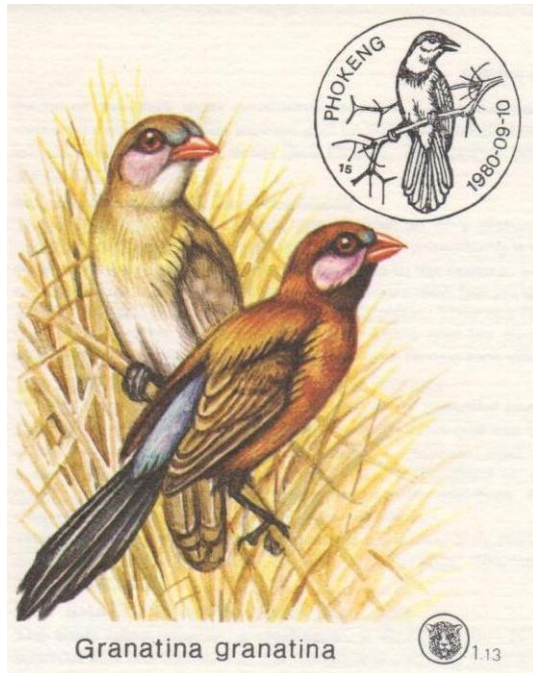
Birds in Booklets - Namibia (5) RSA (6)

Birds on FDC's, Collectors' sheets and Maximum Cards Includes SWA hand painted Essays.

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Birds on FDC's continued

Many of the commemorative envelopes used in the Homelands depict a bird that is not included in the issued set of stamps. An example is illustrated below.



Bophuthatswana 1980 FDC
Violet-eared Waxbill

There are numerous sets of bird stamps on Maxicards, these are shown on the Power Point Presentation, but only a selection of them are included in the display.

Birds on Postal Stationery

Starts with the artwork and essays for the SWA 1954 Aerogramme plus other issued SWA and RSA Air Letters. There are birds on Postal Stationery postcards and Registered envelopes. RSA produced a set of five Raptors on Postcards which can best be described as 'stunning'.



African Fish Eagle



Bateleur

Each Postcard has the same bird imprinted on the reverse of each card paying 'Standard Postage'.

Postal Stationery Postcards in Booklets

The 1998 Raptors and 1999 Migratory Species each include two Postcards with an imprinted 'Standard Postage' bird stamp. One of the 1999 cards with a Lesser Kestrel imprint, in addition features Lilac-breasted Rollers on the reverse - See below.



Lilac-breasted Roller

Southern African Bird Stamps - An Inventory

I collated four pages in three columns which is a systematic listing by species providing the SG No's of each stamp. This was a time consuming task as I had to cross reference all entries to check for mistakes and omissions. A sample is included below.

Based on Howard & Moore (2nd Edition) - No's are from Stanley Gibbons (SG)

0 EXTINCT BIRDS

0-15 Ward's Diamond Bird

Diamanornis wardi

Namibia 664

1 OSTRICHES

1-1 Ostrich *Struthio camelus*

RSA 1086, 1637, 1666

SWA 315, 439-442

7 PENGUINS

7-1 King Penguin (*Marion Island*)

RSA 998, MS 1638

7-4 Adelie Penguin

RSA 740, MS 1638

7-15 Jackass Penguin

Namibia 713-716, MS 717, MS 1167a

RSA 816, 816a, 816c, 1021, 1483, 1728

9 GREBES

9-1 Little Grebe

Namibia 1173

9-14 Great Crested Grebe

Namibia 1172

9-16 Black-necked Grebe

Namibia 1174

This display and Power Point Presentation has been assembled from scratch and took the best part of six weeks to assemble. I hope the audience enjoys it.

Thank you,

Otto Peetoom