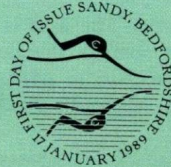
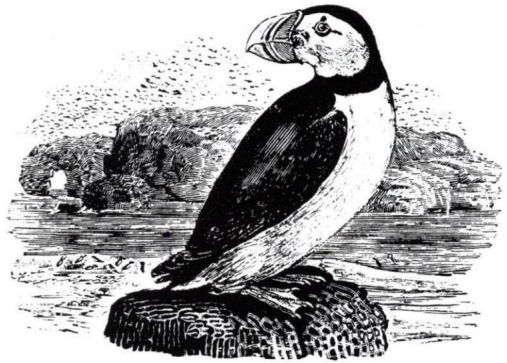


Birds

17 January 1989



Four stamps will be issued on 17 January to commemorate the centenary of the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds. The problems that stimulated the establishment of the RSPB, especially the killing of wild birds for their decorative plumes, have been replaced by ever greater, very real threats: from river pollution and destruction of heathlands, moorlands, hedgerows and estuaries to illegal shooting, trapping and poisoning of wildlife. The Society's officials and members are busy ensuring the protection of birds and their environment. The Society, with a membership of some 380,000, is based at Sandy in Bedfordshire.



The Puffin

The 27p stamp (airmail postcards & aerogrammes) depicts the Avocet (*Recurvirostra avosetta*), the bird used as the RSPB symbol. This is one of Britain's rarest birds, a summer visitor which breeds on Havergate Island near Orford in Suffolk. The bird is a graceful white wader with a thin black, up-curved bill and very long pale bluish legs. A fully-grown avocet measures about 17 inches in length. A group of these beautiful birds is featured on the front of the presentation pack.



The 19p stamp (first class inland letter basic rate) features one of Britain's favourite sea-birds, the puffin (*Fratercula arctica*) sometimes referred to as the sea-parrot. This bird, best-known for its brightly coloured summer bill, is to be found mainly along the west coast; it builds its nest in a burrow or tunnel on islands or cliffs. One egg is usually laid in June. The puffin feeds mostly on fish, for which it dives and swims under water. The puffin is a comic bird and frequently features in nature programmes on television. Large colonies are to be found in the Shetlands and the puffin features on tourist publicity material for the Islands, including, some years ago, a slogan postmark. The bird is indisputably associated with the island of Lundy in the Bristol Channel, the name Lundy deriving from the Norse for puffin island.



The 32p stamp (airmail Zone B), features the Oystercatcher (*Haematopus ostralegus*), another bird in the Plover family (*Charadriidae*). This bird is chiefly to be found along the rocky and sandy shore, more common on the west than the east. Like the puffin and the avocet, the

oystercatcher has a distinctive bill, in this case a long orange-scarlet one. The nest is built of a few pieces of broken shell in shingle or rocks; three or four eggs are laid in May. The bird feeds on sandworms, shellfish, small fish and shrimps.



The 35p stamp (airmail Zone C) features the Gannet (*Sula bassana*), one of the largest seabirds, an adult measuring about 36 inches in length and with a wing-span of about six feet. The bird feeds on fish which it can see swimming in the sea from a great height; gannets drop at great speed to catch their prey. The main haunts of the gannet are the rocky isles and stacks of the north and west; large colonies are to be found on St Kilda – at one time the bird was an important part of the islanders' diet.



Gannets build nests of seaweed and grass on rocky ledges, one egg is laid in March or April.

The RSPB runs a number of bird reserves and works closely with landowners and decision-makers in creating a better countryside for birds, and other wildlife. The Society fights damaging developments. To safeguard eggs of rare breed-

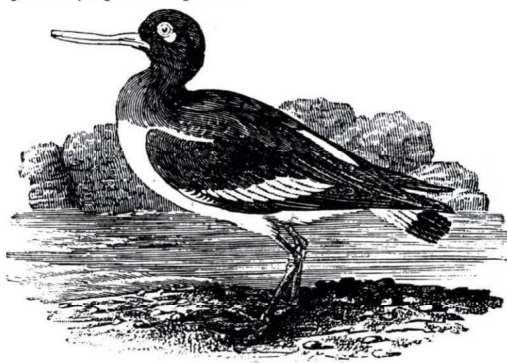
ing birds, such as the osprey, the Society employs wardens to mount round-the-clock guard on individual nests.

Technical Details

The four stamps were designed by Don Cordery, his first set of stamps for the British Post Office and printed in photogravure by Harrison & Sons Limited. They are of vertical format, measuring 30 x 41mm, printed in sheets of 100 on phosphor-coated paper with PVA dextrin gum. Perforation is 14 x 15.

PHQ Cards

PHQ postcards (Nos. 115A-D) featuring each of the four stamps will be available from 2 January, price 16p each.



The Oyster-Catcher

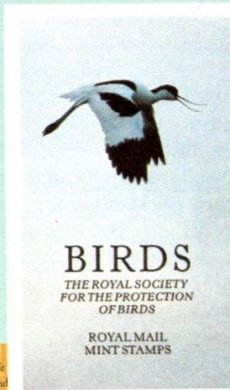
Presentation Pack

The presentation pack (No. 196) will cost £1.35 and was designed by John Gibbs. It gives background information about the work of the Society and includes photographs of cliffs and seashore, ideal habitats respectively for puffins and gannets and avocets and oystercatchers. The pack also includes some fine drawings of the four birds featured on the stamps.

First Day Cover

The FDC envelope will be available approximately two weeks before issue, price 17p. Two pictorial postmarks will be used for the first day cover service, one at the British Philatelic Bureau in Edinburgh and one at Sandy, Bedfordshire (RSPB headquarters).

A first day cover service will be provided by the Bureau with the official Royal Mail cover addressed to the destination required with the four stamps cancelled with either postmark. Application forms, available from the Bureau and main post offices, should be returned not



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Learning about wildlife
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environment. This note

