

Royal Mail news Endangered Species • Promotional Greetings book • Prize draws • NPM displays • New Archives miniature

Endangered Species Stamps featuring six of Britain's most endangered animals, birds and plants will go on sale at post offices and philatelic outlets on 20 January.

The **20p** stamp (inland 2nd class rate), headed 'Decline in distribution' features the common dormouse (*Muscardinus avellanarius*), made famous in Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*.

The **26p** denomination (1st class inland and EU rate), entitled 'Decline in sites' depicts the lady's slipper orchid (*Cypripedium calceolus*). After many years of successful propagation of thousands of seedlings by the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, the reintroduction of these plants to a number of secret sites in northern England is being co-ordinated by a group of orchid experts and local conservationists supported by English Nature.

The subject for the **31p** value (European, non EU countries, rate) on the theme 'Decline in population' is the song thrush (*Turdus philomelos*). Of our 247 breeding bird species, more than half are in decline owing to agricultural changes. As well as the song thrush, the skylark and tree sparrow have declined in numbers over the past 25 years.

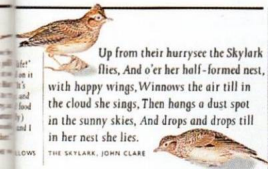
The shining ram's-horn snail (*Segmentina nitida*) is shown on the **37p** value (airmail postcard rate), headed 'Decline in distribution'. The Wildlife Trusts with the Environment Agency are leading the work on this species to understand its ecology which depends on the maintenance of grazing marsh habitat.

The **43p** value (basic airmail letter rate) features the mole cricket (*Gryllotalpa gryllotalpa*) representing 'Decline in sightings'. Most of the studies of this species, co-ordinated by English Nature and the Natural History Museum, is focused on the location and safeguarding of the few surviving colonies. A captive breeding population has been established for possible future reintroductions.

Finally, the **63p** denomination (airmail letters, second rate step), depicts the Devil's bolete (*Boletus satanas*) which, like the 26p stamp, is entitled 'Decline in sites'. This poisonous fungi is one of

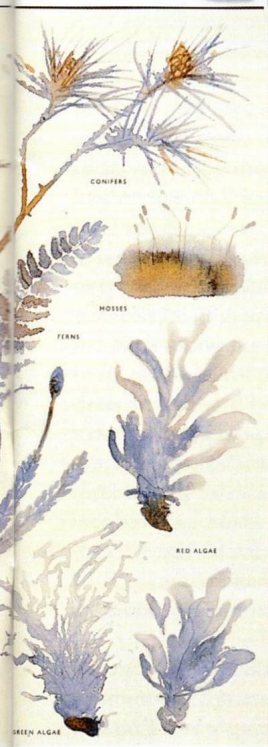
Technical details

- Printers** The House of Questa Ltd
- Process** Offset lithography
- Size** 30 x 41 mm
- Sheets** 100
- Perforation** 14 x 14.5
- Phosphor** One band 20p • two bands others
- Gum** PVA



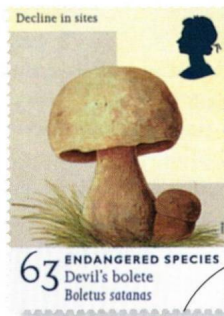
Up from their hurry see the Skylark flits, And o'er her half-formed nest, with happy wings, Winnows the air till in the cloud she sings, Then hangs a dust spot in the sunny skies, And drops and drops till in her nest she lies.

THE SKYLARK, JOHN CLARE



Other species Threatened Nationally scarce Not at risk





The designer The stamps are the work of Robert Maude, designer of this *Bulletin*, using five antique paintings from the Natural History Museum, and one newly-commissioned illustration. He has cleverly included a graph motif behind each of the subjects to show their rate of decline. Mr Maude, who also designed the presentation pack, first day cover and first day postmarks, will be writing about his work on this set next month.

the species benefiting from the 'Action for Plants' campaign run by the conservation charity Plantlife in association with English Nature. Scientific surveys of existing sites are in progress to establish the habitat management needed to restore populations.

The United Nations estimates over 13 million species of lifeforms on the planet, of which an estimated 88,000 species are to be found in the United Kingdom. Some 116 species which are globally threatened and considered the most endangered have been selected for special attention. All six featured on the stamps come into this category. Six stamps were required to do justice to this theme; thereafter issues will revert to the usual four or five stamp sets.

Questa are using a new very fine screen for this – 600 dots per inch, as opposed to the more usual 300; this will yield an improved image on the stamps.

FIRST DAY FACILITIES Unstamped Royal Mail first day cover envelopes will be available from main post offices and philatelic outlets around a week before 20 January, price 25p.

Orders for the Royal Mail cover bearing the stamps, cancelled with a pictorial 'first day of issue' postmark of the Bureau or Selborne, Alton, price £3 UK (including VAT) or £2.56 overseas (no VAT), must reach the Bureau by 20 January. Alternatively, collectors may send stamped covers on the day of issue, to: British Philatelic Bureau, 20 Brandon Street, Edinburgh EH3 5TT, or Special Handstamp Centre, Royal Mail, Wexham Road, Slough SL1 1AA (for Selborne postmark). The outer envelope should be marked 'FD9801' (Bureau), or 'FD9802' (Selborne).

First day posting boxes will be provided at main post offices for collectors to receive local (mostly non-pictorial) 'first day of issue' handstamps. Sponsored special handstamps will be

announced in the *British Postmark Bulletin* – available on subscription from the Bureau (£10 UK/Europe; £21.75 rest of world).

Collectors may submit covers bearing just the 20p Endangered Species stamp for all first day, philatelic and sponsored handstamps in use on 20 January, the 1st class rule for special handstamps being waived on this day ●