

Birds The first set in Royal Mail's new series



Technical details

Printer De La Rue

Process Litho

Stamp size 35mm square

Sheets 30 and 60

Perforation 14.5 × 14.5

Phosphor Two bands

Gum PVA

Gutter pairs Vertical

ISSUED on 4 September, Birds is the first in our new series entitled 'Action for Species'. As the name implies, this series will focus on rare and endangered species in the UK for which action is being undertaken to conserve them. Each of the birds in the block of ten stamps is enjoying a recovery in numbers, and the captions on the stamps demonstrate this increase.

The birds featured are: White-tailed Eagle, Bearded Tit, Red Kite, Cirl Bunting, Marsh Harrier, Avocet, Bittern, Dartford Warbler, Corncrake, and Peregrine. The stamps were designed by Kate Stephens, who previously designed the popular Woodland Animals set. Photography is by Mark Hamblin, Ernie Janes, Richard Brooks, Mike Lane, Duncan Usher, Erwin van Laar, Alan Williams, Robert Smith and Simon King.

A fully-illustrated presentation pack accompanies the stamp issue. In it, the well-known naturalist and wildlife film maker Tony Soper explains the importance of nature reserves and habitat management in the recovery of many of the species celebrated in the stamps, as well as the RSPB's role in conservation. A particular success of this conservation organisation has been the luring back of the avocet through the creation of ideal wetland habitats for this wader at the RSPB's Minsmere reserve in East Anglia. Having been extinct in the UK for a century, it is now increasing in numbers (and is also the species on the RSPB's logo). Information about each of the ten birds is also featured in the pack. Serviced First Day Covers (Tallents House or Dartford postmark) are also available. Orders must be received by the date of issue. Covers for the first day postmarks must be sent to Royal Mail Tallents House, 21 South Gyle Crescent, Edinburgh EH21 9PB (Tallents House postmark) or your nearest Special Handstamp Centre (Dartford postmark). See *British Postmark Bulletin* for details of sponsored handstamps. A set of stamp cards are also available ●

of stamps on the conservation of UK species



Birds prices

Set of stamps	£3.40
Presentation pack	£3.90
FDC envelope	£0.30
Serviced FDC (UK customers)	£4.47
Serviced FDC (overseas customers)	£3.81
Stamp card set	£3.00



Mrs J Robinson
200 Manorbie Road
Ilkeston
Derbyshire
DE7 4AB

ROYAL MAIL TALLENTS HOUSE 31 SOUTH GILE CRESCENT EDMURGH DNR 9RE

BIRDS DEPEND ON THE EXISTENCE OF THE BRITISH LANDSCAPE IS FARMED FOR BENEFITS FROM THE SYMPATHETIC ATTITUDE AND EVEN OUR HOUSES AS MINI-RESERVE

UK SPECIES IN RECOVERY



SPECIES IN RECOVERY

Nature reserves have great value not only as reservoirs of wildlife but as educational tools, demonstrating the relationship between habitat and its bird community. If the habitat is right, birds will almost inevitably find it and colonize, even if they have been absent for many years. In the case of the avocet, it was the draining of the East Anglian coastal marshes which led to its extinction in the 18th century; the inspired flooding of carefully selected areas created the conditions which saw its return in the mid-20th. Now it flourishes increasingly, even giving Westcountry birdwatchers much pleasure when it winters on the Exe and Tamar estuaries.

The same principle has seen the meadow-loving corncrake begin a slow recovery after a decline of 150 years. Research in RSPB reserves showed that by relatively

minor changes in grassland mowing practices and by leaving 'corridors and corners' providing insect-rich vegetation that they enjoy, corncrakes breed again.

Other species have flourished in Britain in response to unexpected events. The exotic rose-ringed parakeet is now a common bird on the bird tables of suburban London after ill-advised releases by cagebird enthusiasts who had tired of its ways. And over the last few years the Mediterranean little egret has found its way to the coastal estuaries of Southern Britain, a common sight fishing for shrimps under the noses of beer-drinkers at waterside pubs. But the most encouraging signs of renewal are given by the increasing populations of red kites, sea eagles and ospreys, birds which were extremely rare but are now showing signs of real recovery.

**GRAPH 1
BITTERNS (BOOMING MALES)**
Numbers crashed during the late 20th century but, although still vulnerable, bitterns are on the way to recovery. The conservation action has concentrated on wide-ranging work in restoring reedbed habitats.

**GRAPH 2
RED KITE BREEDING PAIRS**
Red kites were almost extinct in the UK by the early 1900s, reduced to very low numbers in Wales. In the last two decades, they have been re-introduced to England and Scotland, with magnificent results.

The first day cover envelope (above) and filler card, and the presentation pack (left) were designed by hat-trick design.