



# Wildlife at risk

Adrian Keppel explains the background to the forthcoming WWF stamps, issued in the year of the charity's 50th anniversary

UNTIL THE 1960s, A NUMBER OF SEPARATE organisations were active in trying to preserve our natural world but, being small, they each faced financial obstacles. The idea for a fund on behalf of endangered animals was first formally proposed by Victor Stolan to the renowned biologist Sir Julian Huxley in response to articles he published in the *Observer*. Julian Huxley put Stolan in contact with Max Nicholson, an ornithologist with 30 years' experience of linking campaigning intellectuals with big business interests.

Eventually, a small group of scientists, naturalists, influential businessmen and others founded the World Wildlife Fund on 29 April 1961. Its founding document is known as 'Morges Manifesto', as its first office opened in the September in the small town of Morges on the northern shores of Lake Geneva. Thus WWF was registered as a charity and the international fundraising mission could begin in earnest.

Meanwhile, Chi-Chi the Chinese panda had been making himself at home at London Zoo, as the first giant panda to reside in the West, having arrived in London from Beijing zoo via America, where he had been turned away by US customs. Chi-Chi's arrival and charming way with visitors fuelled publicity across Europe, drew attention to the problems of endangered animal

The first ever WWF stamp, issued in 1969



Photograph above: Siberian tiger by Nazzu/ Dreamstime

species and gave the naturalist and painter Sir Peter Scott an idea for the WWF symbol. The first logo was designed by Scott from the preliminary sketches made by a Scottish naturalist, Gerald Watterson, and is based upon the first giant panda to reside in the West (at London Zoo). And so, over the last 50 years, a black and white panda in various renditions has become visually linked with the conservation movement as a whole.

## Reflecting changing needs

Half a century later, WWF is still synonymous with safeguarding the natural world, but now in a broader sense. Today this includes addressing climate change and the way we are using the earth's natural resources, both issues which are inseparable from the plight of endangered animals. WWF aims to help people to strike the right balance between using and protecting the environment. Its projects aim to develop our world in ways that meet the basic needs of human beings without compromising those of future generations.

In accordance with its broad concern with the natural world and the scope of its activities, in 1986, WWF changed its name to World Wide Fund for Nature (though US and Canada have kept the old name) but is now known simply as WWF. In its early days WWF focused mainly on endangered animals, but over time it became clear that all our human actions have consequences in the world of nature, and so the focus is now much more on protecting our natural world and trying to educate people on matters such as climate change and its impact on our wildlife.

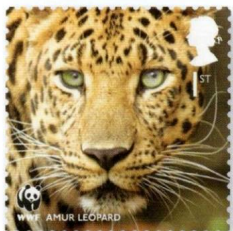
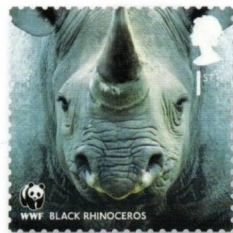
## Fakes and forgeries

It took a good couple of years after the formation of WWF before stamps were embraced as a means for raising awareness among the public. The first official WWF stamp was issued by France on 11 October 1969 and depicts the European Mouflon (as shown far left). It was to be the first of many stamp issues worldwide, making the WWF theme a very popular one among stamp collectors.

Unfortunately, the theme has proved so popular that many unofficial and bogus WWF stamps have also been issued. Only official WWF stamps are allowed to depict the WWF logo, but some of the bogus issues do imitate this logo. Stamp collectors should therefore only buy those issues that are for sale through authorised dealers or at least only buy those sets that have been granted catalogue status by the catalogue producers.

## Striking additions

Fifty years on and the need for the work of WWF is sadly as urgent as ever. It is therefore an anniversary worthy of marking with a stamp issue, which is exactly what is happening on 22 March 2011. As a logical continuation of the annual Action for Species series, introduced in 2007, this issue also consists of ten first class sheet stamps, designed by Rose Design Consultants, each depicting an endangered mammal. Only the heads of the animals have been photographed and are depicted on the stamps to striking effect. The ten animals chosen in collaboration with WWF are detailed on the next page. ▶



Magnificent close-ups of endangered animals feature on the WWF special issue



**Earth Hour 2011** The WWF special issue stamps are released on Tuesday 22 March, just in time for you to pop them on a letter to post as a welcome reminder to friends and relatives that WWF's Earth Hour takes place on the following Saturday. At 8.30pm on 26 March, WWF asks everyone on earth – businesses and households alike – to turn off their non-essential lights for one hour to help raise awareness of the need to take action on climate change. In the four years since the First Earth Hour, conceived by WWF and *The Sydney Morning Herald* in 2007, it has become a global event with billions of people participating. Why not sign up and switch off at [wwf.org.uk/earthhour](http://wwf.org.uk/earthhour).

### For collectors

The animals included in this new GB issue have been featured previously on the following sets:

#### African elephant

– Uganda (1983)

#### Mountain gorilla

– Rwanda (1985)

#### Siberian tiger

– Russia (1993)

#### Polar bear – USSR (1987)

#### Amur leopard

– North Korea (1998)

#### Iberian lynx

– Portugal (1988)

#### Red panda

– Bhutan (2010)

#### Black rhinoceros

– Central African Republic (1983)

#### African Wild Dog

– Guinea (1987)

#### Hyacinth Macaw\*

– Brazil (2001)

#### Jaguar\* – Belize (1983)

\*Featured on the *Miniature Sheet*, see page 168

**African elephant** The African elephant is the largest land animal on Earth with a typical height of up to 4m (13ft) and it can weigh as much as 6,000kg. Over the generations, it has been ruthlessly exploited for its ivory, and although illegal killing for its tusks has declined, it remains a widespread problem in west and central Africa.

**Mountain gorilla** The largest of the great apes lead tranquil lives in family groups – but they live in an area of Africa dogged by conflict. Around 700 survive in the border regions of Rwanda, Uganda and the Democratic Republic of Congo. WWF carries out its work to protect the species and its habitat as part of the International Gorilla Conservation Programme alongside the African Wildlife Foundation, Fauna & Flora International and the protected-area authorities of the three countries.

**Amur or Siberian tiger** The Amur tiger is found in the Russian far east and north-east China. In the 1940s it was on the brink of extinction, with just 40 in the wild. Thanks to vigorous conservation work the population recovered and increased to around 450. Even so, recent estimates show that numbers have declined in the past few years. Poaching, logging and infrastructure development are largely to blame.

**Polar bear** The polar bear inhabits the ice fringes of the Arctic. It spends much of its time at or near the edge of the ice, where it's most likely to find prey. But climate change is causing the ice to melt – and what remains is thinner and more treacherous. WWF is working to maintain a healthy Arctic environment by addressing climate change and protecting the polar bear's habitat.

**Amur leopard** With fewer than 40 individuals left in the wild, the Amur leopard is probably the rarest big cat in the world. In the 1970s it lost an astonishing 80% of its territory to logging, forest fires and land conversion. WWF is working to increase the protection of its habitat and prey, and to stop

the illegal traffic in leopard skins and body parts.

**Iberian lynx** The Iberian lynx is found only in two isolated areas of southern Spain. Twice the size of a domestic cat, it has leopard-like spots and a short coat. It's thought that as few as 180 lynx remain in the wild, and there are real fears it may become extinct. Despite the population showing some signs of recovery, the future of this cat is very uncertain.

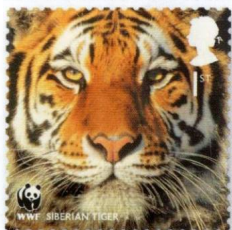
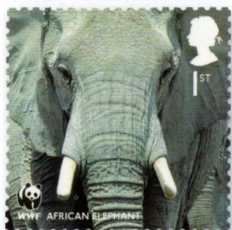
**Red panda** Found only in the temperate forests of the Himalayas, the red panda is more closely related to the raccoon and weasel than to the giant panda. It spends most of its life high in the tree canopy but it comes to the ground at dusk and dawn to feed on bamboo, acorns and fruit. Like so many forest-dwelling animals, the red panda is vulnerable to losing its habitat due to logging and conversion to agriculture.

**Black rhinoceros** Critically endangered because of the demand for rhino horn for traditional Asian medicines, the black rhinoceros has recently enjoyed a gradual increase in its population – to around 15,000 – as a result of conservation work.

**African wild dog** Wild dogs are among Africa's most efficient predators, hunting in packs and often taking prey much larger than themselves. Litters average ten pups, and all pack members of this highly sociable animal care for the young. But due to loss of habitat and persecution by humans, this animal is one of the most endangered carnivores in Africa. Through the African Wild Dog Conservation project, WWF is working to help its populations recover.

**Golden lion tamarin** Forty years ago, the squirrel-sized golden lion tamarin was on the brink of extinction. In 1971, when WWF started working to protect the primate, there were fewer than 200 in the wild. Today, thanks to tireless conservation efforts, there are more than 1,000. A member of the monkey family, the tamarin is found only within a thin strip of coastal forest in Brazil. While there's still more to be done to secure its future, this represents a true conservation success. ●

*Adrian Keppel's blog on all things philatelic can be found at [akphilately.blogspot.com](http://akphilately.blogspot.com)*



### WWF stamps: design and technical details

Number of stamps	Ten
Design	Rose Design Consultants
Acknowledgements	African elephant © Bill Coster/Alamy; mountain gorilla © Steve Bloom/stevebloom.com; Siberian tiger ©Konrad Wothe/Minden Pictures/National Geographic Stock; polar bear © Tom Mangelsen/naturepl.com; Amur leopard © Darren Green Photography/Alamy; Iberian lynx © Jose' B Ruiz/naturepl.com; red panda © Heather Angel/Natural Visions; black rhinoceros © Art Wolfe/Getty Images; African wild dog © The Africa Image Library/Alamy; golden lion tamarin © Eric Gevaert/Alamy
Stamp format	Square
Stamp size	35mm x 35mm
Print process/printer	Lithography/Cartor Security Printing, France
Perforations	14.5 x 14
Phosphor	All over
Gum	PVA