

their presence may reflect natural southward movement due to warmer climatic conditions.

Acknowledgements: I would like to thank John Moss for commenting on the manuscript.

Photos Wesley Jenkinson

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Invertebrates and Philately – Alan Hyman

The instinct to collect seems to be encoded within our genetic makeup. Few of us would not have made a collection of some kind – however briefly or haphazardly – at some point in our lives. Coins, cereal cards, antiques, rare maps, sporting memorabilia – all have their individual fascination. Stamps of course have been an all-time favourite and those interested in nature perhaps made an accumulation of shells or butterflies. Except for educational purposes, research or scientific purposes, ethical considerations now temper the taking of natural history specimens in the wild purely as an acquisitive hobby – but there are viable alternatives. Photography is one obvious solution. Another is ‘Thematic Philately’, the collecting of specific subject matter as depicted on postage stamps and related material. This can be quite a flexible process, allowing the individual to collect broad categories or to focus on a restricted field. If one chose ‘invertebrates’ as the subject matter, this could be for example, ‘insects of the world’ on one hand or ‘butterflies of the South Pacific’ on the other.

British stamps invariably exhibit a high degree of design elegance and on the 11th July 2013, the Royal Mail issued a set of ten British butterfly stamps, painted by well-known wildlife artist Richard Lewington. (Royal Mail) Head of Stamp Strategy, Philip Parker said: “Every year Royal Mail issues stamps on a wildlife theme and often highlights the plights of threatened species. British butterflies were therefore a natural subject and, unusually for stamps, not much larger than a postage stamp itself”. Many smaller nations have relied on attractive philatelic designs on many subjects for sale to collectors as a source of revenue – and insects, particularly butterflies, have often featured prominently as a theme. Australia has also issued a surprising number of stamps depicting invertebrates, the most recent being in 2016 with a set of four butterflies (Lepidoptera) in May followed by a set of four Jewel



Beetles (Coleoptera – Buprestidae) in September. The following paragraphs highlight a definitive set issued more than thirty years ago.

The first major Australian invertebrate issue was the 1983 set of ten butterfly stamps (as Australian Animals Series III). They were illustrated by Gippsland artist, naturalist and explorer Charles McCubbin, grandson of the famous Heidelberg School impressionist artist Frederick McCubbin, (whose paintings incidentally, ‘On the Wallaby Track’ and ‘Petit Dejeuner’, themselves appeared on stamps in 1981 and 1989 respectively). Anyone fortunate enough to own a copy of Charles McCubbin’s 1971 large format book ‘Australian Butterflies’ will know and appreciate the superb watercolour illustrations (accompanied by his own text) of 330 and 357 then known Australian species as living insects, generally depicted with their native food plants or within the context of their natural or man-made environment. Occasionally a further touch of realism was added by taking the odd chip out of a wing! The eloquent foreword was written by none other than Sir Robert Menzies. (In my view, the closest 21st century equivalent book in style to McCubbin’s is the excellent 2010 Orr and Kitching publication, ‘The Butterflies of Australia’.)

The commissioning of McCubbin ensured a high illustrative quality and technical accuracy. All five Australian butterfly families were represented on the stamps although unequally – four Papilionidae, two Nymphalidae, two Lycaenidae and one each of Pieridae and Hesperiidae. The species illustrated appear to have been carefully selected, given the limited number of stamps in the set and their dual purpose as universal postal products and the desire to produce colourful and attractive collectors’ items for the philatelic market. ‘Maxicards’ (postcards) featuring enlarged images of butterflies, first day (of issue) covers and a stamp pack were also produced. The stamps (with one exception) were issued on the 15th June 1983 and are reproduced below. They are listed in ascending order of value with the common names as they appear on the stamps. (The Linnean names were given on the maxicards.)

- 4 cents Regent Skipper (*Euschemon rafflesia*)
- 10 cents Cairns Birdwing (*Ornithoptera euphorion*)
- 20 cents Macleay’s Swallowtail (*Graphium macleayanus*)
- 27 cents Ulysses Swallowtail (*Papilio ulysses*)
- 30 cents Chlorinda Hairstreak (*Pseudalmenus chlorinda*)*
- 35 cents Blue Tiger (*Tirumala hamata*)
- 45 cents Big Greasy (*Cressida cressida*)
- 60 cents Wood White (*Delias aganippe*)
- 80 cents Amaryllis Azure (*Ogyris amaryllis*)
- 1 dollar Sword-grass Brown (*Tisiphone abeona*)





Designer: Charles McCubbin;
© Australian Postal Corporation 1983



Comments on the stamp issue:

*The 30 cent value (*P. chlorinda*)* replaced the 27 cent value (*P. ulysses*) on the 24th October following a price increase of the standard letter rate.

*The Ulysses has been depicted on three other Australian stamps as part of sets released in 1998, 2003 and 2004.

*The 60 cent Wood White image was adopted as the logo for the South Australian Butterfly Conservation organization.

*Interestingly, the Sword-grass Brown variety chosen for the one dollar stamps appears to be *morrissi* rather than the typical *abeona* subspecies.

This is an ideal set with which to commence an ‘Australian’ butterfly collection. It should be noted however, that, wherever their origin most stamps would tend to depict the more attractive or spectacular species of a country to catch the eye of the philatelist and maximize sales.

Stamps, like butterflies, are unfortunately also under threat although from quite a different quarter. As email and texts have become the standard means of communication, so personal letter writing has declined and consequently the use of postage stamps. It would be a sad day if stamps ceased to be issued as they are often exquisite examples of miniature art, as well as being ambassadors for a country, portraying images of a nation’s history, industry, politics, wildlife and many aspects of its culture. Perhaps aesthetic designs could be applied to those style-lacking postage labels now in common use, giving philately a new impetus – maybe even including images of ***butterflies and other invertebrates!***

Opinions expressed in this article are those of the author.

We are grateful to the Philatelic Archives, Collector Services, Australia Post for providing us with high resolution images of the stamps depicted.

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Personal Stamp Collection

New Distribution Records for Polyommatine Butterflies (Lepidoptera: Lycaenidae) in Australia, including biological notes. Part I – *Zizeeria* and *Famegana* – Kelvyn L. Dunn

Summary

This paper lists 17 new locations in northeastern Australia for *Zizeeria karsandra* (Moore 1865) and *Famegana alsulus* (Herrich-Schäffer, 1869), two species from the subfamily Polyommatinae. Notes associated with particular records provide insight into the behaviour and biology of each species.

