

# “The Forerunner Stamps” of The World Wide Fund For Nature *(Formerly World Wildlife Fund)*

by John A. Cardona

The World Wildlife Fund was founded jointly in 1961 by HRH Prince Bernhardt of The Netherlands and HRH The Duke of Edinburgh. It was envisaged that the sale of stamps would generate the necessary revenue towards the conservation of wildlife worldwide.

The initial aim was to draw the attention of the world to the decline in the population of wild animals around the world and to work to protect endangered species.

In 1986 when the name was changed to World Wide Fund for Nature the emphasis on the aim was also altered whereby it was now the habitat that had to be protected to ensure the survival of the endangered species.

The Panda was adopted as the official logo and countries which issued stamps authorized officially by the Agency were allowed to have the logo printed on the stamps. So far there have been two ‘panda’ logos used on stamps. The original one, used between 1961 and 1986, the panda had the front legs curving inwards, whereas the one adopted from 1986 onwards had straight front legs and a more upright stance. It is understood that there may be another change in the logo shortly.

The WWF stamps have always been controlled by an agency. Initially, Franklin Mint supported the WWF for their stamp issue programme. It seems that very little work had been done. In fact between 1969, when France issued the first stamp bearing the WWF logo, to 1982 only 40 sets were issued and very few countries participated as shown below. **The stamps issued during this period have become to be known as the “WWF Forerunners”.**

- 1969 – France.
- 1971 – Netherlands.
- 1976 – Gambia and Liechtenstein.
- 1977 – Botswana, Ghana, Kenya, Lesotho, Tanzania and Uganda.
- 1978 – Central African Empire, Congo, Gambia, Grenada Grenadines, Malawi, Mauritania, Mauritius, Niger and Western Samoa.
- 1979 – Chad, Fiji, Gambia, Ivory Coast and Upper Volta.
- 1981 – Gambia and Lesotho.
- 1982 – Chile and Switzerland.

The agency controlling the WWF stamps changed hands in 1983 and the stamps that have been issued since that year represent **the official authorized collection**. The new agency, Groth AG, enacted fresh rules governing a new issuing programme and the principles to be adopted which are observed to the present day. The programme is designed to be clean and unspeculative and has two main objectives:-

- The face value of the stamps should be moderate, so that a lot of collectors would have a chance to buy the stamps, and
- Countries are only able to issue stamps showing wildlife that is endangered in their own country, and only with the definite agreement of WWF International. (All approved stamps are checked for accuracy by WWF scientists).

Since 1983, over one billion stamps and almost 450 issues (approx 1,800 different postally valid stamps) have been printed and sold making it the largest thematic collection in the world. That turnover generated more than 20 million Swiss Francs in royalties which is an important source of funding for the WWF's conservation activities.

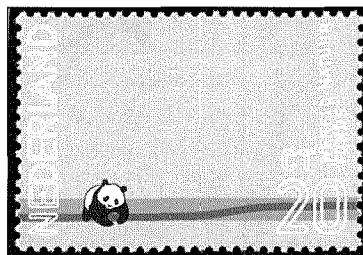


**France**

*France issued the first stamp with the WWF logo on 11 Oct 1969. S.G. 1847, WWW F.1*

**Netherlands**

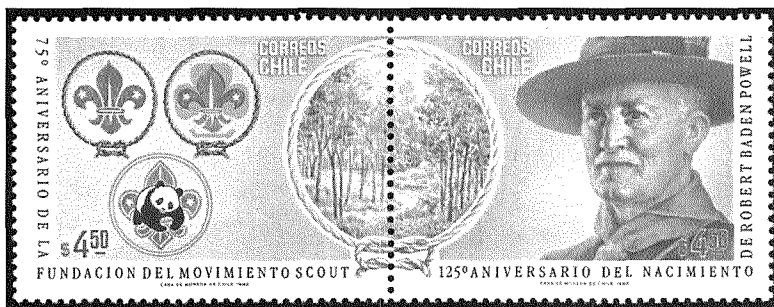
*A very plain stamp with just the WWF logo on was issued by The Netherlands on 29 Jun: 1971. S.G. 1134, WWF F 2. The stamp formed part of a set of four (S.G. 1133/6) to commemorate Prince Bernhardt's 60<sup>th</sup> Birthday.*





### Liechtenstein

The first set of four stamps with the WWF logo was issued by Liechtenstein on 11 Mar 1976. S.G. 630/3, WWF 3.



### Chile

The only 'se-tenant' stamp in the 'Forerunners' Series was issued by Chile on 21 May 1982. The stamp on the right depicted a portrait of Lord Robert Baden Powell the founder of the Boy Scouts Movement and commemorated the 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its birth. The stamp on the left showed the logos of the Boy Scouts Movement and that of the WWF, and commemorated the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the foundation of the Boy Scouts Movement. The island depicted in the centre of the se-tenant is that of Brownsea. S.G. 918/9, WWF F 39.



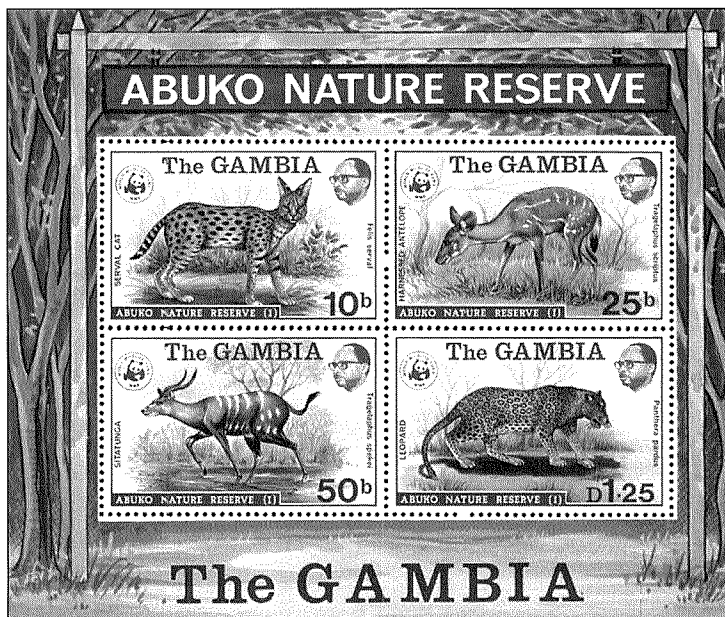
### Swaziland

The last set of this special series was issued by Swaziland on 16 Jun 1982. S.G. 399/403, WWF F 40.



### The Gambia

*On 29th Nov 1976 Gambia issued the first set, in a series of four, each of which had a miniature sheet. The other three sets were issued in 1978, 1980 and 1981. It is to be noted that all the stamps and the miniature sheets were inscribed 'Abuko Nature Reserve'. Additionally, the four sets were numbered I to IV which indicate that they were planned ahead for issue in different periods. S.G. 356/9, WWF F 4.*



*The catalogue number of the Miniature Sheet which forms part of the above set is S.G. 360, WWF F 5.*