

Canada's high-value definitives go wild

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Figure 1. (Above) Canada's four current high value definitive stamps show animals found in the Canadian wilderness.

Figure 2. (Right) A pane of the \$8 Grizzly Bear stamp missing some perforations was offered at auction in June 2004 by Eastern Auctions Ltd. of Halifax, Nova Scotia.

Canada Post launched a striking new series of high-value stamps in 1997, depicting animals found in the Canadian wilderness. Four large definitives have been issued. Pictured in Figure 1, they feature a loon, a polar bear, a moose and a grizzly bear, with beautiful line-engraved elements and subtle background colors in each design.

These perforated stamps with moisture-activated adhesive combine modern and traditional elements with attractive vignettes to create appealing stamps that reflect the natural beauty of Canada.

In the nearly eight years since the debut of the \$8 Grizzly Stamp — the first in the series and the highest denomination Canadian postage stamp ever — collectors have encountered some intriguing varieties and a few startling production errors.

In last month's O Canada article (*Scott Stamp Monthly*, April 2005) I described the discovery of the partially imperforate Grizzly Bear issue (Figure 2) and the \$5 "Moose in a Snowstorm" error (Figure 3). The Moose error is spectacular, with the steel-engraved design of the moose and vegetation entirely absent.

In the meantime, another dramatic variety has been discovered, as well as a subtler feature, the existence of guidelines on some panes of the \$5 Moose.

Canada's current high-value value definitives are listed in the *Scott Standard Postage Stamp Catalogue* as Scott 1697 (\$1 Loon), 1698 (\$2 Polar Bear), 1700 (\$8 Grizzly Bear) and 2007 (\$5 Moose).

The Grizzly was the first to be issued, on Oct. 15, 1997. The Loon and Polar Bear both appeared Oct. 27, 1998, and the Moose followed more than five years later on Dec. 19, 2003.

It is apparent that the Scott catalog editors originally reserved the number 1699 for the \$5 stamp. When the series was first announced, Canada Post indicated its intention to eventually replace its then-current high value stamps, including the \$5 Victoria Public Library stamp issued Feb. 29, 1996 (Scott 1378).

I contacted Scott catalog editor James E. Kloetzel recently with questions about the numbering for this series. During the course of our discussion he agreed it would be best to renumber the \$5 Moose stamp as Scott 1699 so that it would appear in sequence with the other three issues from the series. It will be so identified in the 2006 Scott standard catalog, Kloetzel stated.

The design and engraving for the \$5 Moose stamp was initially completed in 1999. A proof of the issue was printed and approved that year.

With magnification, it is possible to locate "© 1999" printed on each stamp,



reading up among the tall grasses in the lower left corner (Figure 4).

The final wet trap proof was not approved until August 2003, a few weeks before the stamps were printed.

Three reasons led to the four-year delay in issuing the \$5 Moose stamp.

The first was that there was sufficient stock of the \$5 Victoria Public Library stamp available, as the stamp had been sent back to press. The second was that the 1999 and 2000 stamp programs were extensive, as they contained some 68 additional Millennium-related stamps. The third was that Canada's Stamp Advisory Committee (SAC) was interested in keeping the total face value of the 2001 and 2002 stamp programs down after two years that produced a large number of issues.

It was not until 2003 that Canada Post had to make a decision either to reprint the \$5 Victoria Public Library or to issue the new stamp. The SAC felt that with the design already produced, the series should be completed.

At the same time there was a rumor that the Royal Canadian Mint (RCM)

would issue a \$5 coin featuring the moose to replace the \$5 bill. This did not come to pass.

This collaboration with the mint is not as farfetched as it might seem. Canada Post has made some substantial profits selling RCM products, particularly when a coin and a stamp are linked. The \$1 Loon and the \$2 Polar Bear are paralleled with matching coins issued by the RCM and currently in circulation in Canada (Figure 5).

There are no \$5 and \$8 regularly issued coins in Canada. Canada Post and the RCM agreed when the \$5 Moose was issued to sell individual special souvenirs for each stamp that would include newly minted collector coins for each value.

Four wooden boxed sets were prepared and sold out very quickly (Figure 6). Each box contains a proof coin and a pair of stamps, one of which bears a printed cancel. Originally, when the \$1 and \$2 stamps were issued in 1998, Canada Post and the RCM made up

the right stamp overprinted (Figure 7).

Steven Slipp of Halifax — now a member of SAC — designed the \$1 and \$5 stamps. Alain Leduc, then of Montreal and now a Canada Post design manager, designed the \$2 and \$8 stamps.

Robert Ralph Carmichael, the artist responsible for the \$1 "Loonie" coin, created the illustration for the loon on the \$1 stamp. Similarly, Brent Townsend, who worked on the \$2 Polar Bear coin — known popularly as the "Twonie" — created the illustration for the \$2 stamp.

A drawing by wildlife artist David Preston-Smith is the basis for the \$5 Moose stamp.

Jorge Peral, art director at the Canadian Bank Note Co., Ltd., engraved the \$1, \$5 and \$8 stamps, while Swedish-born stamp engraver Martin Mörck engraved the \$2.

The stamps combine modern and traditional printing techniques. Intaglio printing of line-engraved designs was used for the animal portraits, while offset



Figure 3. The "Moose in a Snow-storm" variety is a spectacular color-missing error.

Courtesy of D. Robin Harris.

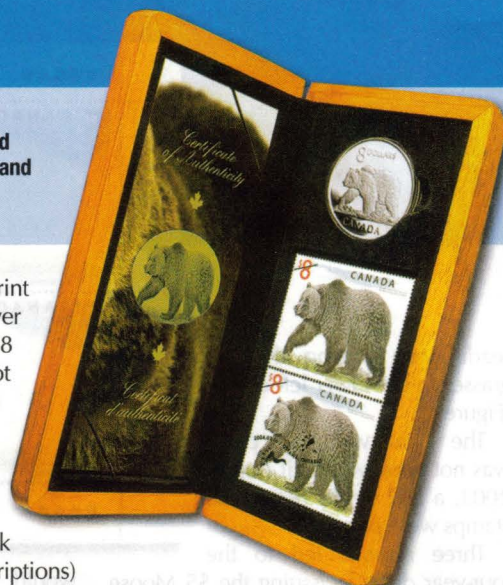


Figure 4. A tiny copyright notice appears near the lower left corner of each of the four stamps. This example from the 2003 Moose stamp is dated 1999.



Figure 5. Canada's \$1 and \$2 coins feature the same creatures as the \$1 and \$2 stamps.

Figure 6. The Royal Canadian Mint and Canada Post offered a boxed \$8 coin and stamp set in Spring 2004.



lithography was used to produce the additional background colors.

The four stamps are similar in design and include a number of security features. On the \$5 stamp, for example, small hoof prints are repeated in horizontal rows to make up the blue sky and the water of the marsh. The scientific name for the moose, *Alces alces*, is engraved 10 times in miniature below the denomination, in alternating standard and italicized block letters.

The \$8 Grizzly Bear stamp shares similar features, along with the numeral "8" discretely engraved in horizontal strokes on the inside of the bear's right rear leg (Figure 8).

The \$1 and \$2 stamps measure approximately 48mm by 40mm (1¹⁵/₁₆ inches by 1⁵/₈ inches). The \$5 and \$8 stamps are larger, measuring 63mm by 48mm (2⁹/₁₆ inches by 1¹⁵/₁₆ inches).

Each stamp includes the inscription "CANADA" and the name of the featured animal in both English and French.

The \$1 and \$2 stamp were issued in panes of 16, while the \$5 and \$8 come in panes of four.

The \$1 and \$2 stamps were both reprinted, and the new printings were

released Feb. 4, 2003. All reprint panes have a barcode in the lower right plate block. The \$5 and \$8 have no bar codes and have not been reprinted since they were first issued. The \$5 has inscriptions in the margin paper adjoining each stamp.

The \$8 was issued in both philatelic (lower right plate block only) and nonphilatelic (no inscriptions) stock.

There are no recorded major varieties for the \$1 and \$2 stamps. The \$1 Loon reprint has a constant variety on some plates: a brown spot of color in the water in the left edge of the design on the stamp in position 9.

With the exception of the misperforated variety shown in Figure 2, there are no other known varieties for the \$8 Grizzly Bear issue.

The same cannot be said for the \$5 Moose. In the 14 months since it was issued, there have been a number of striking varieties on the market. The first was the "Moose in a Snowstorm" color-missing error described and illustrated previously. The intaglio or engraved printing is totally missing from this variety, and

therefore, so is the moose.

The lithographic printing was done first on this issue, followed by the intaglio. The variety is likely the result of two lithographed sheets being fed into the intaglio press together.

Ian Kimmerly, an Ottawa dealer who first made public this variety, explains it this way: "During the intaglio printing process, two sheets became temporarily stuck together, with the result that the top sheet was printed normally and the bottom sheet received a faint impression but no ink. The two sheets then went through the perforating and guillotining process, and it is obvious why this dramatic error was not caught by postal inspectors."

How many panes are there with the



Figure 7. Canada Post produced first-day covers for the \$1 Loon and \$2 Polar Bear stamps, and also prepared pairs of the same stamps with similar first-day cancels, printed on one stamp only. This special overprint is found only in coin and stamp sets issued in 1997.

Figure 8. The engraving for the \$8 Grizzly Bear design includes the numeral "8" carefully placed on the inside of the bear's right rear leg.



variety? It is believed that there are at least six panes, since this is the number laid down on the printing plate. Five have been accounted for: three in the hands of one dealer, plus the Kimmerly pane and one that was returned to the post office.

The second major variety of the \$5 issue is the so-called "Displaced Moose" shown in Figure 9. The engraved portions of the design are misaligned on this variety: tilted up by about 3½ degrees, and at its extreme, positioned as high as 20mm (¾ inch) out of place.

This variety was discovered in Ottawa in January of this year. The only explanation I can come up with is that the sheet went into the intaglio press out of sync, resulting in the moose being printed at a slight tilt and higher up in the pane. As with the "Moose in a Snowstorm" variety,

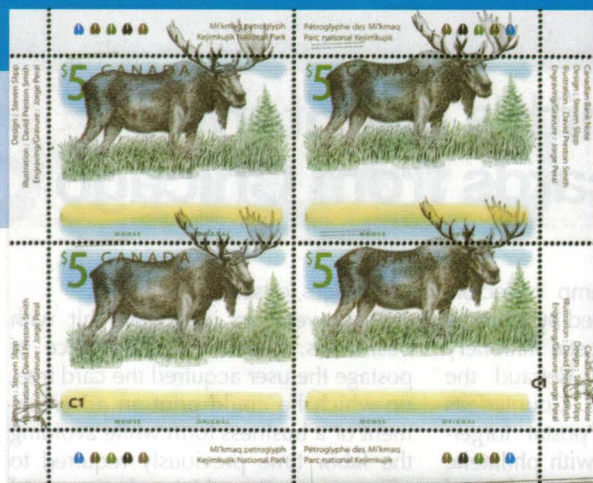


Figure 9. A newly discovered variety of the \$5 stamp shows the moose far out of position within the design. Only one pane of four has been recorded so far.

there should be a least six panes of the "Displaced Moose" variety. Only one is recorded so far.

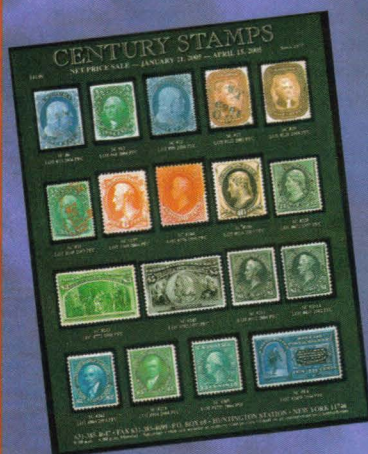
The third variety is not constant. It is a guideline in the middle between the two upper stamps of the pane. Rick Penko from Winnipeg, who discovered the variety, originally thought it was an engraver's slip. I believed it to be a perforation guideline. Steven Slipp feels that it is "unlikely the engraver's fault as he does one-up artwork. (It) may have been in the 'stepping up' process where several panes are duplicated on a sheet; perhaps a printer's mark was left in error."

If we follow this reasoning, the printer would have laid out these lines to duplicate the original engraving by Jorge Peral and simply missed one when he burnished the others off at the end of the process.

Will there be more varieties discovered? If you know of any, please write with details, and I'll report them in a future O Canada column.

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