

The Whales Issue

▼ CHARLES J.G. VERGE

Canada's contribution to Stamp Collecting Month 2000 is a series of four attractive whale stamps issued October 2. Thirty-five species of whales are recorded in Canada; 21 are regular inhabitants of our waters and the other 14 are occasional visitors to our shores. Two baleen whales, blue and bowhead, and two toothed whales, beluga and narwhal, are featured on the stamps. All but the blue whale have been seen on Canadian stamps before.

Canada previously issued five stamps for the world's largest mammal and its cetacean family. The first was in 1968 when 24,150,000 copies of a five-cent domestic letter stamp showing a narwhal (Scott 480) in the Arctic Ocean were printed in panes of 50 (Figure 1). The background color of this stamp is sea green. Blue background stamps exist but are caused by exposure to light and are not legitimate color varieties.

The second whale stamp (Scott 814) was produced in 1979, again in panes of 50, and showed the bowhead whale. Sixteen million of the 35 cent airmail-rate stamps were issued.

Three definitives in the 1987-91 mammals series showed whales. A killer whale is found on the 57 cent (Scott 1173), the harbor porpoise on the 63 cent (Scott 1176) and the beluga whale on the 78 cent (Scott 1179).

The first two stamps paid the second weight rate for domestic mail when they were issued and the third paid the airmail rate from January to December 1990. The killer whale was first issued on Rolland paper stock on Jan. 18, 1988, and then again on Harrison paper on September 26 of that year.

The harbor porpoise was printed on Peterborough paper only but comes with two perforations (13 x 13 and 14 x 14) both of which were issued on Dec. 28, 1990. The beluga whale stamp also had two perfs with

the perf 14 x 14 issued on Jan. 12, 1990, and the 13 x 13 version sometime in April 1990. Because these are definitives, Canada Post does not release the numbers printed or sold.

In addition, there are two other whale-related stamps. A nonidentified whale is found on the lower right corner of the stamp honoring the St. Lawrence River in the third set of Heritage Rivers issued Aug. 10, 1993 (Scott 1488), and the tail of another is on the Newfoundland stamp in the third series of the Scenic Highways issued March 31, 1999 (Scott 1783).

This year's four 46-cent stamps will be issued in panes of 16. There will be 500,000 panes for a total of eight million stamps. The stamps are horizontal in format, are perforated 13+ and have general tagging on four sides (Figure 2).

They are printed on Tullis Russell coated paper with PVA gum in an eight-color lithography process. This large number of colors required two passes through the press (Figure 3). A second pass is normally required to print the tagging on the stamps as this printing cannot be done on wet inks. The second pass allowed a second yellow to be added to soften the denominations and an additional black ink pass was used to increase the intensity of the whales' coloring.

Originally, the design manager, Bill Danard, looked at having realistic photographs of whales but he discarded this idea quickly because it was very difficult to get existing photos that showed the whales



Figure 1: Canadian stamps issued prior to this year showing members of the cetacean family.

in the positions required for stamp production and the commissioning of specialized photographers to take the required pictures would have proven too expensive. His choice then fell on the digitalized manipulation of existing photographs.

At least 10 different designs were produced for consideration before the final selection was made. Keith Martin of two (2) cats. Working inc. of Vancouver, British Columbia, designed the stamps. He says that his main concern was scale. "How does one portray the majesty of the largest living mammal ever on a stamp?"

He also wanted to show the range of sizes and characteristics of the chosen whales in relation to each other. He says that the solution "was provided by the development of a

pattern that arranged the different species into a single scene over the whole stamp pane. Separately each stamp focuses on one whale but also carries a fragment of the blue whale."

Looking at the design, it is only when the four stamps are together that the blue whale is depicted whole. Martin uses the reflective qualities of metallic inks in the stamp background to mimic "the play of light and the movement of currents underwater."

In the selva, he has added a person kayaking on the surface because he wanted to "share my life-long experience on the ocean with small craft and my belief in a respectful co-existence."

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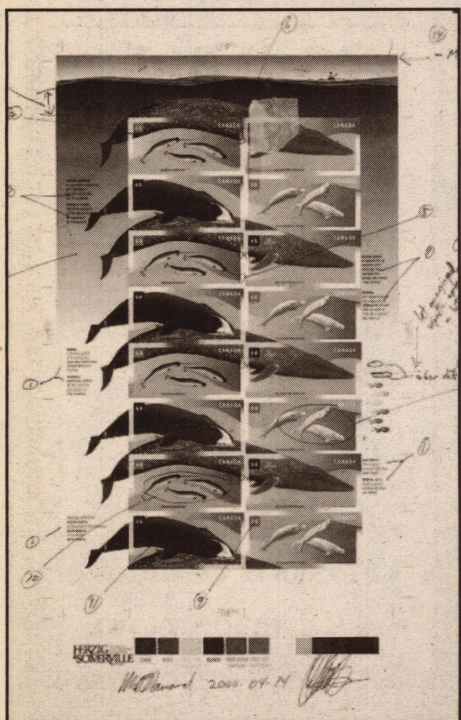
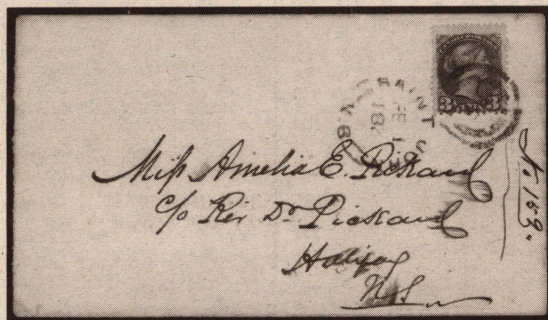


Figure 2: From the first proving of the whales sheet. The numbers represent changes requested by the design manager, Bill Danard, prior to the next proving.

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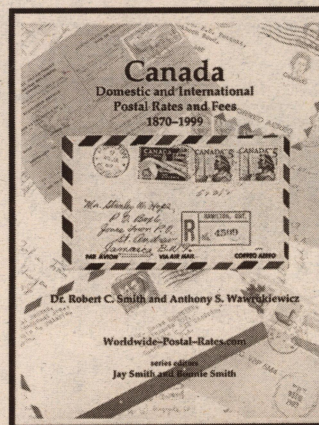
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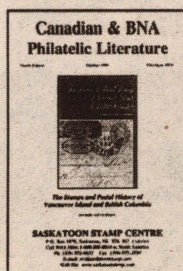
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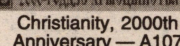
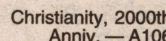
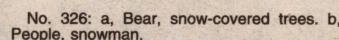
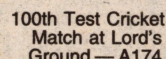
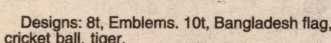
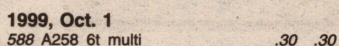
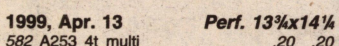
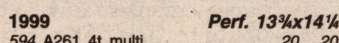
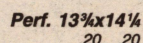
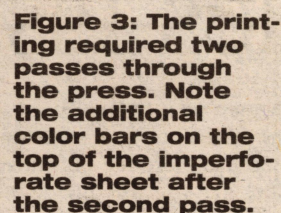
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Scale was also an issue throughout the design process and many of the preliminary designs for the stamps show this. ▼



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