HERPETOLOGICAL MATERIAL IN PHILATELY ISSUED FROM MALAYSIA

Indraneil Das¹

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Philatelic and other postal products on herpetological themes from Malaysia are inventoried. These include postage stamps, cancellation marks, stamp booklets, folders, annual stamp albums and aerogram. North Borneo and Labuan, both British colonies that eventually became part of the Federation of Malaysia, can be credited with producing the world’s first stamps showing a recognizable species of reptiles (Crocodylus porosus), in the year 1894, under what is now referred to as the first pictorial definitive series. The independent state of Sarawak, during its time under the British sovereign, too produced a turtle stamp (depicting Chelonia mydas). Modern issues of Malaysia, under Pos Malaysia’s stamp issuing program, continue (since 1972) to issue stamps on a variety of topics, and has, over the years, produced a number of stamps and other postal products, featuring turtles, snakes, lizards and crocodiles that occur in the country.

Keywords: Malaysia; philately; stamps; cancellations; amphibians; reptiles.

INTRODUCTION

Postage stamps have been issued to draw attention to a variety of issues, ranging from national integration, public health (including disease prevention), nature, national or global commemorative events, etc. Within the context of biodiversity or snake-bite treatment, herpetological themes too have appeared on postage stamps of the world (MacDonald, 1973; Balazs et al., 1990; de la Mar, 2000; Böhme, 2007; Anon, 1987; Winchester, 2012). Symbolic elements are also evident, such as the Staff of Aesculapius, the universal medical symbol (Rings, 2005). Conservation and public education is increasingly important for many postal authorities worldwide, as judged from the substantial issues on these themes (Gomez and Balazs, 1983; Balazs et al., 1990). General inventories of herpetological stamps are available in topical stamp catalogs (e.g., Thompson, 1959; Bearse et al., 1977; Domfil, 1992), without scholarly discussion.

Malaysia, a Federation of several political units forming states and territories on mainland Southeast Asia and on northern Borneo, has an active stamp release program, and a member of the Universal Postal Union (since 17 January 1958). Stamps have been used or issued by various states that subsequently became part of the Federation since 1854, when the East India Company Administration at Malacca used Indian stamps, with a special cancellation (Anon, 2010: 27). Nathan (2008) wrote an engaging article on philatelic releases of the recent years, drawing a parallel with the development of the country.

The currency of the country (since August 1975) has been the Malaysian Ringgit (currency code: MYR), and face value of low value stamps is indicated in cents up to the philatelic issue of 29 November 1996, and from December 2, 1992, was indicated in the vernacular “sen.” Face value of high value stamps were indicated with a dollar ($) sign up to December 21, 1992, and since December 7, 1993, it has been replaced with “RM” (= Ringgit Malaysian).

In this essay, I inventory stamps and other postal products in herpetology issued by Pos Malaysia (www.pos.com.my), the national postal authority of Malaysia. Within a Malaysian context, I also discuss subtopics covered and the role stamps can play in public education, from making lay people aware of public health, national heritage, biodiversity and nature conservation. Excluded from discussion is the topic of ethnobiology, and consequently, stamps that feature herpetological motifs, symbols or represent stylized species of herpetofauna that are unrecognizable to species, are unlisted.

This essay provides an inventory of postal/philatelic products from Malaysia, and British Crown colonies that eventually became its part. Included are stamps, stamp

¹ Institute of Biodiversity and Environmental Conservation Universiti Malaysia Sarawak 94300 Kota Samarahan, Sarawak, Malaysia; e-mail: idas@ibec.unimas.my
booklet, aerogram and cancellation marks that bear images of recognizable species of amphibians and reptiles. Images depict mint, unhinged stamps, except representatives of postally used, as well as CTO (cancelled-to-order) examples of the North Borneo and Labuan stamps. “Perfs” represents perforations per 2 cm, measured using an Instanta Stanley Gibbons Perforation Gauge (to nearest 0.5 perforation). Names of series follow Stanley Gibbons catalogs (2013 edition; Anon., 2010). Abbreviations of catalog prefixes include: AL: International Stamp and Coin Sdn Bhd Catalog numbers for other postal products (Tan, 2003); ISC: International Stamp and Coin Sdn Bhd Catalog numbers for stamps (Tan, 2013); SG: Stanley Gibbons Catalog numbers (from the SG catalogs).

RESULTS

Herpetofauna on Stamps

Depiction of amphibians and reptiles on stamps of the world is widespread, warranting separate catalogs. These have also been the subjects of scholarly and popular discussion (e.g., Riemer, 1993; Das, 1994; Watermelon, 1995). Noteworthy amongst early collectors is John Gray (1800 – 1875), Keeper of Zoology of the British Museum of Natural History, who is arguably the first to recommend the establishment of a common minimum charge, prepaid by postage stamps (Gray 1862: viii), and was an early philatelist and author of one of the earliest books on stamp collecting, entitled “A hand catalogue of postage stamps for the use of collectors” (published by John Hardwicke, London). It has been hypothesized that taxonomists have a natural affinity for collecting postage stamps (Allen, 2008), although in Gray’s case, his stated philosophy in philately and his zoological practice were fundamentally different in their approach (Williams, 2010). The use of the “stamp-collector” metaphor to gather data, especially outside the physical sciences, “unfettered by theory” (Johnson, 2007) has its origins to at least the end of the 19th Century, the comparison attributed to competition within the sciences for resources and prestige.

Pre-Malaysian Era Stamps

The credit for issuing the first postage stamp with a recognizable species of herpetofauna must be given to what erstwhile British colonies in the East that became part of Federation of Malaysia (in 1963). The colony of North Borneo (now Sabah State, East Malaysia), in February 1894 produced, under the North Borneo Chartered Company (also known as the British North Borneo Company; see Cox and Metcalfe, 1998, for a history), what is now referred to as its first pictorial definitive series, an issue (SG 75 – 76) using photogravure technology, showing in vignette a Saltwater Crocodile, *Crocodylus porosus*. Various face values have been achieved through overprinting of this 12 cent stamp. The choice of the species is logical- crocodiles feature prominently in Borneo lore, and beliefs surrounding these frequently encountered, gigantic denizens of the island’s waterways are widespread amongst the indigenous tribes. Varieties that exist include: the regular issue in black and blue (SG 75); perforations 13.5 – 14 (SG 75a); imperforate between horizontal pairs (SG 75b) and perforations 13.5 – 14, compound (perforations) 14.5 – 15 (SG 75c); the regular issue in black and ultramarine (SG 76); perforate 13.5 – 14 (SG 76a) and imperforate between pairs (SG 76b). Winchester (2013) attributes the existence of these (and other) varieties to the erratic behavior of the perforating machinery, also referring darkly to the activities of a certain Mr. Parker (mentioned variously as “Henry Grieve Parker” and “F. R. Parker,” on covers bearing these postal issues and addressed to a Mr. Fred Parker at 35 Linthorpe Road, Stamford Hill, London), reported as a handling agent of the North Borneo Company. The Parker covers from the early 1900s cost a premium in today’s market, and bear printed addresses as well as a ‘Registered’ mark, demonstrating the intention of the sender (and suggestive of bulk mailing, whose purpose is here determined as commercial). Incidentally, Parker himself had testified in June 1909, at a legal hearing at the Old Bailey, London’s Central Criminal Court (established 1674) on criminal charges against two other dealers of stamps of British North Borneo (Old Bailey’s reference number: t9090622 – 40; see Graham-Campbell, 1909). No further details on the gentleman appear to be on record. At these hearings, Parker was described as an independent purchaser of stamps, and not an agent of the Company.

Figure 1 shows a selection of varieties of SG 75 from this series that showcased the sights and species of present day Sabah, including a Dyak chief, Rusa Deer, Sago Palm, Great Argus Pheasant, a Malay Dhow, Gunung Kinabalu and arms of the British North Borneo Company. The series was produced by Waterlow and Sons Ltd. of London, a seller of legal documents (established 1810 and absorbed into De La Rue Security Print Ltd.), and the 12 cent North Borneo crocodile stamp is the first herpetological stamp issued in the world.

The series, including the 12 cent crocodile, was reprinted between March 1897 – 1902, with additional inscriptions on top left of the frame in Jawi (an Arabic script for writing Malay, the lingua franca of modern-day Malaysia, Indonesia, Singapore, and Brunei, and top right of the frame in traditional Mandarin Chinese script, indicating the 12 cent face value). Shortly thereafter, a 4 cent surcharge, set in different font types and sizes, was overprinted. Some of the varieties that resulted are shown
The design, in ultramarine blue, was soon thereafter copied by the offshore Crown Colony of Labuan (at present, Federal Territory of Labuan) that was transferred to the British North Borneo Company for administrative purposes from 1 January 1890.

Labuan’s color varieties of North Borneo’s 12 cent value crocodile stamps, issued in May 1894, originally in orange-vermilion (SG 70), include a total of a dozen designs, all reprinted from the North Borneo 1894 definitive set. ‘Labuan’ was engraved on vignette plate on stamps. A number of varieties exist, such as imperforate between vertical pairs (SG 70a); perforations 13.5 – 14 (SG 70b); perforations 12 – 13 (SG 70c) and perforations 13.5 – 14 compound (perforations) 12 – 13 (SG 70d). Additional inscriptions appear on top left of the frame in Jawi and in traditional Mandarin Chinese in the new

in Fig. 2. The design, in ultramarine blue, was soon thereafter copied by the offshore Crown Colony of Labuan (at present, Federal Territory of Labuan) that was transferred to the British North Borneo Company for administrative purposes from 1 January 1890.

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Fig. 1. A selection of variation encountered in North Borneo 1894 (SG 75) and its successor from 1897 (SG 95) (*Crocodile porosus*). First row, from left to right: (a) 1894, SG 76 (12c black and ultramarine, mint), printing shift to right, Perf = 14.5 × 14.5; (b) 1894, SG 76 (12c black and ultramarine, round cancellation, “SAN” [= Sandakan]), Perf = 15.0 × 14.0; (c) 1894, SG 76 (12c black and ultramarine, bar cancellation, Perf = 15.0 × 15.0; (d) 1894, SG 76 (12c black and ultramarine, bar cancellation, “Postage due” horizontal black), Perf = 15.5 × 15.5; second row, from left to right, (a) 1897, SG 106 (12c black and dull blue, 4 [6.5 mm], cents surcharge centered, mint), Perf = 15.0 × 15.0; (b) 1897, SG 106 (12c black and dull blue, mint, “British Protectorate” horizontal red), Perf = 14.0 × 14.0; (c) 1897, SG 106 (12c black and dull blue, 4 [4.9 mm] cents surcharge centered, mint), Perf = 15.0 × 15.5; (d) 1897, SG 106 (12c black and dull blue, mint), Perf = 15.0 × 15.5; third row, from left to right: (a) 1897, SG 106 (12c black and dull blue, round cancellation, “SANDAK” [= Sandakan”], Perf = 14.5 × 15.0; (b) 1897, SG 106 (12c black and dull blue, round cancellation, Perf = 15.0 × 14.5; (c) 1897, SG 106 (12c black and dull blue, round cancellation), Perf = 15.0 × 15.0; (d) 1897, SG 106 (12c black and dull blue, round cancellation, “British Protectorate” horizontal red), Perf = 14.5 × 14.5; (e) 1897, SG 106 (12c black and dull blue, “Postage due” vertical black), Perf = 15.0 × 15.5; fifth row: 1897, SG 106 (12c black and dull blue, “British Protectorate,” bar cancellation), Perf = 15.0 × 13.0.
Labuan definitives that were issued in April 1897, using the same design. Examples showing varieties are depicted in Fig. 2.

**Sarawak Sea Turtle Stamp**

After a hiatus of over half a century, a herpetological stamp was produced by the state of Sarawak, while a Crown Colony. Depicting green turtles (*Chelonia mydas*), this 15 cents face value issue is in ultramarine, from the set entitled “Queen Elizabeth Pictorial Issue” (Fig. 3). Released on 1 October 1957, it is part of a 14 value set (excluding a 30 cent issue of 1955), of the range 1 cent to $5, covering a variety of local themes (from logging, to orangutan and hornbill and local culture and the arms of Sarawak), all with portraits of the then recently crowned Queen Elizabeth II. The designs are attributable to different artists (Shipman, 1978: 128 – 129), the 15 cents value stamp (SG 195) executed by J. M. Browning, the series...
recess-printed on white wove paper, watermarked multiple script C. A. (= Crown Agent), by Bradbury Wilkinson & Co. Ltd., noted English engraver and printer of stamps since 1856 (and absorbed into De La Rue Security Print Ltd. in 1990). A last day cover, showing postal cancellation of this particular issue (as well as a block of four stamps from the same series, depicting an Orangutan) is shown in Fig. 4.

Stamps of Malaysia

The early stamps of pre-Federation of Malaysia period just covered were definitives, meant for general postal use over an extended or indefinite period. A definitive (Fig. 5) appears in the first National Animal Series (SG 194 “Wildlife”), first issued on 4 January 1979, featuring Malaysia’s iconic wildlife species, and depicting a Dermochelys coriacea.

All subsequent stamps featuring frogs and reptiles in Malaysia have been part of commemorative series, that are designed to mark historic or current events, topics or personalities, and are for sale for a limited period. Commemorative stamps are issued according to the typically monthly (as of the late 1990s) schedule of release by Pos Malaysia, and are geared towards collectors and investors, rather than for postal use. Over 30 herpetological issues have been produced by states pre-dating Federation of Malaysia, or by Pos Malaysia, the postal authority of modern day Malaysia (Table 1).

Pos Malaysia released two non-herpetological stamp series on the theme “Marine Life” (17 December 1988; SG 401 – 405; MS406 and 29 June 1989; SG 410 – 413), and on 17 November 1991, issued a four-value stamp set (SG 450 – 453) under this theme, in the third series (Fig. 6). Four marine turtles were illustrated (Dermochelys coriacea).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl</th>
<th>SG</th>
<th>ISC</th>
<th>Series Name</th>
<th>Face value</th>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Date of issue</th>
<th>Species</th>
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<td>67</td>
<td>First Pictorial Definitive, North Borneo</td>
<td>12c</td>
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<td>58</td>
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<td>76</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>Second Pictorial Definitive, North Borneo</td>
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<td>1897 – 1902</td>
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<td>105</td>
<td>93</td>
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<td>b</td>
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<td>123</td>
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<td>12.1904</td>
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<td>207</td>
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<td>451</td>
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<td>20c</td>
<td>30c</td>
<td>a</td>
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<td>441</td>
<td>40c</td>
<td>40c</td>
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<td>MC-214M</td>
<td>“International Year of the Coral Reefs”</td>
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<td>c</td>
<td>2.12.1996</td>
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<td>831</td>
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<td>MC-270M</td>
<td>“Quails and Partridges”</td>
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<td>c</td>
<td>22.1.2001</td>
<td>Polypleatedus leucostomys</td>
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<td>1057</td>
<td>901</td>
<td>“Malaysian Snakes”</td>
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<td>a</td>
<td>9.3.2002</td>
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<td>“Malaysian Snakes”</td>
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<td>28.9.2005</td>
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<td>1159</td>
<td>“Visit Malaysia Year”</td>
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<td>1165</td>
<td>“Frogs and Toads of Malaysia”</td>
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<td>MC-442M</td>
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<td>1885 – 1892</td>
<td>MC-448SH</td>
<td>“Malaysian Currency (2nd series)”</td>
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<td>a</td>
<td>5.2.2013</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

* Codes on the importance of the herpetological image include: (a) primary (when the image is central to the theme, such as of direct relevance to the title of the issue); (b) secondary (when the image is indirectly related to the issue); (c) tertiary (when the herpetological object is incidental, and sometimes, a space-filler). Species names in parentheses appear in miniature sheet edges, outside of the stamp. Other abbreviations include: ISC, International Stamp and Coin Agency catalog number; SG, Stanley Gibbons catalog number.
lys coriacea, Chelonia mydas, Lepidochelys olivacea, and Eretmochelys imbricata).

The next two releases also feature a marine turtle, Chelonia mydas, originally in the series “Visit Malaysia Year” on January 1994 (SG 522) and overprinted for ASEANPEX Stamp Exhibition, Penang, on 8 December 1994 (Fig. 7), showing a color shift to a more olive tone. Malaysia’s affection with marine turtles continued, with a stamp booklet (Fig. 8), bearing two marine turtle stamps (Dermochelys coriacea and Chelonia mydas) issued on 26 September 1995 (SG 577 – 578, stamps; SB3, booklet). Each of these is of 30 cent face value, suitable for letters within Malaysia, and 10 such stamps were printed in a booklet pane. The back cover shows an advertisement by “Hongkong Bank,” under its “Caring for Our Environment” campaign.

On 2 December 1996, Malaysia issued a miniature sheet of dimensions 165 × 75 mm (SG 626) entitled “Wildlife,” whose focus was primarily on megafauna. Nonetheless, a small image of a tree frog, identifiable as Nyctixalus pictus is visible in one of the RM 2 stamps. This beautiful sheet was overprinted for release in “Hong Kong 97” (the 11th Asian International Stamp Exhibition), on 12 February 1997 (Fig. 9).

On 23 August 1997, to commemorate the International Year of the Coral Reef, Pos Malaysia issued a miniature sheet of dimensions 70 × 100 mm (SG MS662) showing a Chelonia mydas in a coral reef habitat (Fig. 10).
National Stamp Week is celebrated globally, and Australia, Japan and Malaysia, especially commemorate the period with a special issue. In 1997, a miniature sheet measuring 165 × 75 mm, showing major wildlife species was issued (SG MS672), including a first for Malaysia — *Tomistoma schlegelii* (Fig. 11). Also occupying the minisheet are the Western Tarsier, Rusa Deer, Crested Partridge, and Arowana.

A series of stamps were brought out to celebrate the start of the 21st century. Among the early ones, “New Millennium (1st issue),” from 31 December 1999, shows several icons linked to cultural and natural heritage of Malaysia. The single herpetological species here is the frog, *Hylarana erythraea* (SG 831; Fig. 12).

For an ambitious series issued on 7 August 2000, entitled “International Union of Forestry Research Organisations Conference, Kuala Lumpur” (alternate title locally, “Forests and Society”), Pos Malaysia issued four sheetlets of dimensions 92 × 71 mm, each bearing four miniature sheets (in both perforate and imperforate versions). One of these (SG MS918[d]; dimensions 93 × 71 mm) contain a small (25 × 21 mm) stamp, showing two herpetological species — a *Rhacophorus nigropalmatus* and a *Tropidolaemus wagleri* (Fig. 13).

![Fig. 9. “Wildlife” 1996 (SG 626) (top), also overprinted for “Hong Kong 97” 1997 (bottom) (Nyctixalus pictus).](image-url)
Fig. 10. “International Year of the Coral Reef” 1997 (SG MS662) (Chelonia mydas).

Fig. 11. “Stamp Week” 1997 (SG MS672) (Tomistoma schlegelii).

Fig. 12. “New Millennium (1st issue),” 1999 (SG 831) (Hylarana erythraea).

Fig. 13. “Forests and Society” 2000 (SG MS918[d]) (Rhacophorus nigropalmatus and Tropidolaemus wagleri).
Pos Malaysia continued to produce thematic issues, covering biodiversity in the subsequent years. On 22 January 2001, under the series “Quails and Partridges,” sharp-eyed observers will notice a *Polypedates leucomystax* at the edge of the miniature sheet of dimensions 100 × 170 mm (Fig. 14) otherwise devoted to an ornithological topic (SG MS998).

One series (SG 1057 – 1060; MS1061), issued on 9 March 2002, cover representative families of snakes (illustrating only species from Peninsular Malaysia — those endemic to Sabah or Sarawak not dealt with, nor are lesser known species from the former area mentioned), including *Broghammerus reticulatus*, *Gonyosoma margaritatus*, *Bungarus candidus*, and *Calliophis bivirgatus*. To its credit, the miniature sheet depicts both an adult and its distinctive juvenile, of the king cobra, *Ophiophagus hannah*, and the series, in general, is of use to educate the public on diversity seen within the local snake species (Fig. 15), and was issued in perforate and imperforate varieties, each measuring 108 × 78 mm.

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**Fig. 14.** “Quails and Partridges” 2001 (SG MS998) (*Polypedates leucomystax*).

**Fig. 15.** “Snakes” 2002 (a) stamps (SG 1057 – 1060) (*Broghammerus reticulatus*, *Gonyosoma margaritatus*, *Bungarus candidus*, *Calliophis bivirgatus*); (b) perforate (top) and imperforate (bottom) varieties of the miniature sheet (SG MS1061), 2002 (*Ophiophagus hannah*).

**Fig. 16.** “Stamp Week. Wild and Domesticated Animals,” 2002 (SG MS1112), perforate (top) and imperforate (bottom) pair (*Gonocephalus bellii*).
An agamid lizard, *Gonocephalus bellii*, appears in the miniature sheet of dimensions 105 \( \times \) 76 mm (MS1112) on 17 December 2002 for the “Stamp Week” release, entitled “Wild and Domesticated Animals.” The central images are of a Malayan Giant Squirrel and a domestic rabbit, the posterior of the aforementioned lizard’s body just about entering one of two RM 1 stamps in the sheetlet (Fig. 16).

“Endangered Reptiles” form the theme of the philatelic release from Pos Malaysia on 28 September 2005. The four value set of stamps and miniature sheet (SG 1295 – 1298; MS1299; Fig. 17) show five species of locally-occurring species of reptiles (including *Varanus rudicollis*, *V. dumerili*, *Gonocephalus grandis*, *Crocodylus porosus*, and *Draco quinquefasciatus*).

A turtle (*Cuora amboinensis*) has also appeared in a stamp in a series on semi-aquatic animals (SG 1357; MS1358; Fig. 18a). Incidentally, the generic name of this species is derived from the Malay vernacular (*Kura ku-ra*). The 119 \( \times \) 69 mm miniature sheet (Fig. 18b) is perhaps more interesting, depicting three additional herpetological species — *Varanus salvator*, *Polypedates leucomystax*, and *Xenochrophis trianguligerus*. 

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**Fig. 17.** “Endangered Reptiles,” 2005 (SG 1295 – 1298; MS1299) (*Varanus rudicollis, V. dumerili, Gonocephalus grandis, Crocodylus porosus, and Draco quinquefasciatus*).

**Fig. 18.** “Semi Aquatic Animals,” 2006 (a) Stamp sheet (SG 1357) (*Cuora amboinensis*); (b) Miniature Sheet (MS1358) (*Varanus salvator, Polypedates leucomystax, and Xenochrophis trianguligerus*).
To usher in “Visit Malaysia Year,” on 19 March 2007, Pos Malaysia issued a series of stamps, one (SG 1379) showing *Eretmochelys imbricata* prominently (Fig. 19).

A special series (SG 1396 – 1398; MS1399) on amphibians covers the more familiar species from lowland areas of Peninsular and East Malaysia (Fig. 20). The three value stamp set was issued in two perforation varieties (perf 12 and perf 13.5, Fig. 21). One identified as *Pedostibes hosii* is a misidentification of *Phrynoidis aspera*. Unlike the snakes, the amphibians were less than ‘true to life’, the stiffness of the postures of the frogs portrayed suggestive of their being sketched from, perhaps preserved specimens. The coloration of species on the 100 × 70 mm miniature sheet is also off, and the post struck by the frogs somewhat stiff.

The decade from the 2010s marked a return to the marine theme, for herpetological stamps. Within the topic of “Threatened Habitats,” issued on 15 July 2010, was *Eretmochelys imbricata* (SG 1680; Fig. 22). Other habitats recognized as threatened include forests (and symbolized by the Malayan Tapir) and rivers (whose animal denizen is represented by an otter). On 21 March 2012, under the theme “Underwater Life,” Pos Malaysia’s stamps depicted a crab, a star fish and two fish species, but its miniature sheet, that measure 115 × 71 mm,
showing a *Chelonia mydas* (SG MS1862; Fig. 23) in a busy scene that also include squids, a sea horse, sea weeds, and much else. Marine turtles also make it to the philatelic release of 16 July 2012, commemorating the 2nd Series of Malaysian Currency. In the aforementioned series, the RM 20 bank notes features two species of turtles — *Chelonia mydas* and *Dermochelys coriacea*, in a miniature sheet (SG uncataloged, and issued along with SG 1885 – 1892). Most unusually, two large (270 × 180 mm) sheets were issued, each with three miniature sheets of dimensions, the right side of the gutter of which shows the two sea turtles (Fig. 24).

The last philatelic issue to be discussed was released on 5 February 2013, coinciding with the Chinese Lunar Year of the Snake. Under the theme “Exotic Pets,” the series of three stamps include an *Iguana iguana*, SG1938 (the others are hedgehog and sugar glider), while the 73 × 100 mm miniature sheets, issued in a regular and gold foil versions, show a *Python regius*, SG MS1940 and 1941, respectively (Fig. 25).

**Herpetological Motifs on Philatelic Sheets**

Designs incorporating recognizable species of herpetofauna also adorn philatelic sheets in two instances. A sheet issued under “International Union of Forestry Research Organisations Conference. Kuala Lumpur” on 7 August 2000 (SG MS918), in both perforate and imperforate versions, feature on the lower right hand margin, an image of *Chelonia mydas*, and on the bottom right hand margin, an image of *Ovophis convictus* (Fig. 26).

*Chelonia mydas* appears again on the top left corner of the four-value stamp sheet from the series “Islands and Beaches of Malaysia” (SG 1149 – 1152), issued on 28 June 2003 (Fig. 27). The four value stamps in the series themselves show maps of islands, all used for nesting by marine turtles in the state of Sabah.

![Fig. 21. Examples of perforation types in stamps from “Frogs and Toads of Malaysia” 2007 (SG 1396 – 1398), showing perf. 12 (top) and perf. 13.5 (bottom).](image)

![Fig. 23. “Underwater Life,” 2012 (SG MS1862) (Chelonia mydas).](image)
Fig. 22. “Threatened Habitats,” 2010, (SG 1680) *(Eretmochelys imbricata)*.
Fig. 24. “2nd Series of Malaysian Currency.” 2012 (SG uncataloged, accompanying SG 1885 – 1892) (Chelonia mydas and tail tip of Dermochelys coriacea; margins of sheet show additional images Dermochelys coriacea and Eretmochelys imbricata).
Postmarks of Malaysia

Postmarks are applied in connection with postal service (Mackay, 2003: 113), and include cancellations, a defacement of stamps or other postal stationary, to avoid their reuse (Mackay, 2003: 20). A total of 10 cancellations associated with the release of commemorative stamp series show herpetofaunal species in Malaysia (Fig. 28a–g). The earliest cancellation was designed for the 17 November 1990 release of “Marine Life (3rd series) Turtles” series (SG 450 – 453), showing a hatchling turtle. Turtles on cancellation marks have appeared twice more, on a 2-value stamp within a booklet pane, released on 26 September 1995 (“Turtles”; SG 577 – 578), as well as four cancellations for the 9 October 2006 release (“Semi Aquatic Animals”; SG 1357), under Stamp Week stamp issue. Two Malaysian cancellations show frogs—one for the miniature sheet with the “Semi Aquatic Animals” series; SG MS1358), the other for the 4-value stamp and miniature sheet released on 3 May 2007 (“Frogs and Toads of Malaysia,” SG 1396 – 1398; MS 1399). The cancellation mark for the series “Endangered Reptiles,” comprising four stamps and a miniature sheet (SG 1295 – 1298; MS1299) dated 28 September 2005, depicted a monitor lizard. The last taxonomic category to be discussed, snakes, have been portrayed three times on cancellation marks in Malaysia- with the aforementioned Semi Aquatic Animals, besides the release “Malaysian Snakes,” comprising 4 stamps and a perforate and imperforate miniature sheet (SG 1057 – 1060; MS1061), on 9 March 2002, and most recently, a 4-value sheet in the series “Exotic Pets,” on 5 February 2013 (SG 1937 – 1939).

Stamp Booklet

Stamp booklets, pioneered by Luxembourg in 1895, comprises panes of stamps inside card covers (Mackay, 2003: 16). On 26 June 1995, a booklet (SB3) bearing 10 stamps of 30 cent value was issued by Pos Malaysia (Fig. 29). Two species appear in the stamps — *Chelonia mydas* and *Dermochelys coriacea*.

Air Letters

Air letter sheets, also known as Aerograms, were first issued in 1923 by Colombia and Germany (Mackay, 2003: 4). Used for the most economical transmission of letter by air, they typically have a printed stamp or other indication that postage has been prepaid. A colored printed stamp of 50 cent value appears in an air letter (AL20; Fig 30) issued by Pos Malaysia, featuring *Bronchocela cristatella*, on 12 October 1996 (Tan, 2003: 49). Officially named “Wildflowers,” it commemorates the expedition made at the time of release to Endau-Rompin, now a National Park via gazettment in 1993. This is the only herpetological species thus honored in a series of air letters issued by Pos Malaysia (other themes being birds, butterflies, tiger, colugo, fish, flowers, besides images pertaining to tourism) between the years 1966 – 2000.
Fig. 27. “Islands and Beaches of Malaysia” 2003. (SG 1149 – 1152) (*Chelonia mydas*).
Stamp Folders

Cardboard stamp folders have been issued for stamp sheets. Several of these from Pos Malaysia feature herpetological topics, although only one has these animals as the primary topic. “Frogs and Toads of Malaysia” (SG 1396 – 1398; MS1399) was issued inside a folder (Fig. 31a), containing additional images as well as production specifications and cancellation. Folders carrying herpetological images were also issued for other themes (Fig. 31b – d), including “Semi Aquatic Animals” (SG 2005), “Endangered Reptiles” (SG 2006), and “Exotic Pets” (SG 2007).

### TABLE 2. Cancellations Bearing Herpetological Motif from Pos Malaysia

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl</th>
<th>SG</th>
<th>ISC</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Cancellation and Issue Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>450 – 453</td>
<td>438-441</td>
<td>Marine Life (3rd series)</td>
<td>Turtles</td>
<td>4-value stamps, issued in sheets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>577 – 578</td>
<td>SB86</td>
<td>Turtles</td>
<td></td>
<td>2-value stamp issued in a booklet pane</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>1057 – 1060; MS1061</td>
<td>901-904; MC-285M; MC-286Mi</td>
<td>Malaysian Snakes</td>
<td></td>
<td>4-value stamps, issued in sheets; one miniature sheet (in perforate and imperforate varieties)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>1295 – 1298; MS1299</td>
<td>1088-1091; MC-339M</td>
<td>Endangered Reptiles</td>
<td></td>
<td>4-value stamps, issued in sheets; one miniature sheet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>1357; MS1358</td>
<td>1140; MC-354M</td>
<td>Stamp Week. Semi Aquatic Animals</td>
<td></td>
<td>4-value stamps, issued in sheets; one miniature sheet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>1396 – 1398; MS1399</td>
<td>1165-1167; MC-363M</td>
<td>Frogs and Toads of Malaysia</td>
<td></td>
<td>4-value stamps, issued in sheets; one miniature sheet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>1937 – 1939; MS 1940, 1941</td>
<td>1574; MC-460M</td>
<td>Exotic Pets</td>
<td></td>
<td>4-value stamps, issued in sheets; two miniature sheets (in regular and gold foil versions)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

See Table 1 for abbreviations.

Annual Stamp Albums

Malaysia’s annual stamp albums, produced around the middle of the following year, feature all the stamps and miniature sheets produced, along with a general write-up of the theme for a lay audience, cancellation marks associated with the first day covers and production.
specifications. Figure 32 show relevant pages for the herpetological issues, including “Snakes” (SG 1057 – 1060; MS1061); “Endangered Reptiles” (SG 1295 – 1298; MS1299); “Semi Aquatic Animals” (SG 1357; MS1358) and “Frogs and Toads of Malaysia” (SG 1386 – 1398; MS1399).

Printed Covers

Printed envelopes issued on first day of release, over which the new stamps are affixed (First Day Covers, typically abbreviated as FDCs), offer additional revenues to postal authorities worldwide. Nearly all herpetological
Fig. 31. Stamp folders issued with the philatelic releases. (a) “Semi Aquatic Animals” 2006 (SG 1355 – 1357; MS1358) (Homalopsis buccata, Varanus dumerilii, Fejervarya limnocharis, and Malayemys macrocephala); (b) “Frogs and Toads of Malaysia” 2007 (SG 1396 – 1398; MS1399) (Hylarana signata and other unrecognizable species); (c) “Exotic Pets” 2013 (SG uncataloged) (Geochelone sulcata, Iguana iguana, and Python regius); and (d) “Wonders of Malaysian Forests” 2013 (SG 1937 – 1939; MS 1940, 1941) (Broghammerus reticulatus).
Fig. 33. Printed covers for First Day Covers, showing herpetofaunal species. (a) “Turtles” 1995 (SG 577 – 578), erroneous printed “presentation pack”; (b) “Snakes” 2002 (SG 1057 – 1060); (c) “Islands and Beaches of Malaysia” 2003 (SG 1149 – 1152); (d) “Endangered Reptiles,” 2005 (SG 1295 – 1298); (e) “Semi Aquatic Animals” 2006 (SG 1357); and (f) “Frogs and Toads of Malaysia” 2007 (SG 1396 – 1398).
stamps issued have had specific printed covers (Fig. 33), including “Turtles” (SG 577 – 578); “Snakes” (SG 1057 – 1060); “Islands and Beaches of Malaysia” (SG 1149 – 1152); “Endangered Reptiles” (SG 1295 – 1298), and “Semi Aquatic Animals” (SG 1357).

**Presentation Packs**

Postal administration see additional revenue from presentation packs, comprising stamps placed in printed cardboard holders, bearing descriptive text. Such packs were first produced by the British Post Office in 1964 (Mackay, 2003: 115). Several older issues of stamps from Malaysia have appeared in such packs, targeting collectors (Fig. 34), including “Marine Life” (SG 450 – 453); “Snakes” (SG 1057 – 1060); “Endangered Reptiles” (SG 1295 – 1298); “Semi Aquatic Animals” (SG 1355 – 1357) and “Frogs and Toads of Malaysia” (SG 1396 – 1398).
Personalized Stamps

The final category to be discussed is stamps designed by consumers, widely known as personalized stamps. Pioneered by Australia at the Melbourne International Stamp Exhibition in 1999 (Mackay, 2003: 102), Pos Malaysia’s personalized stamp program (SetemKu) has been operational since 2007. No inventory of issues under SetemKu is available, but we are aware of two issues that were prepared to commemorate the first and second Bornean Frog Race, held in April 2012 and 2013, respectively (Das et al., 2014). These events intend to draw public attention to the issue of declining amphibian popu-
DISCUSSION

Apart from the outputs from nations that produce stamps for revenue from collectors (rather than for postal use locally), Malaysia appears to have produced a significant number of stamps and other philatelic products featuring indigenous biodiversity. This includes the long-running series of definitives depicting flowers, fruits and bird. Within the field of herpetology, species chosen have been those found within the boundaries of the country, the only exotic ones being Iguana iguana and Python regius, issued under the series “Exotic Pets,” and although unspecified as such, coincides with the Chinese Lunar Year of the Snake (10 February 2013). Marine turtles appear overrepresented on stamps from Malaysia, occurring in nearly half of the local release (Table 1). For its regional diversity, frogs, lizards and snakes are rather poorly represented, and tend to cover the more familiar ones, even in series depicted to these groups, such as “Endangered Reptiles” (SG 1295 – 1298; MS1299) and “Frogs and Toads of Malaysia” (SG 1396 – 1398; MS1399). These may be a combination of lack of knowledge of the local herpetofauna, of the local and international wildlife protection laws and international threatened species lists that, till recently, was biased towards larger, more conspicuous elements of the fauna. Indeed, a recent examination of species coverage on the world’s postage stamps reveal that herpetofaunal groups, for the known diversity, are significantly underrepresented, compared to faunal groups such as larger mammals and birds (Nemésio et al., 2013).

While only one of the stamps that depict amphibians and reptiles is a definitive, Crown Colonies of Labuan and North Borneo, as well as Sarawak, have issued definitives showing reptiles (crocodiles in the first two instances, sea turtles in the third). These appear to represent the perception of association of these animals to the respective political units (others in the respective series show megafauna of the region, ranging from orangutans to hornbills, cultural artifacts or landscapes associated with these countries).

Modern day (since 1972) issues have dwelt on the more distinctive, rather than rare, species of herpetofauna, notable in the National Animal series of 1979, that depicts the larger mammals and one reptile (Dermochelys coriacea), at the time, an icon for ecotourism on the east coast of Peninsular Malaysia.

Herpetologists will hope to see a continuation of these biodiversity issues from Pos Malaysia, and perhaps the inclusion of rare and endemic species of Malaysia’s rainforests and other threatened habitats, many of which are spectacular, vividly colored and poorly known. Fortuitously, with the wide use of digital images and more urban Malaysians and others taking to the outdoors, images of these species are available for use on postage stamps and other products. These would, then, lead to wider dissemination of knowledge, ultimately contributing to their conservation.

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