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Crocodile Postmarks from Around the World

Indraneil Das

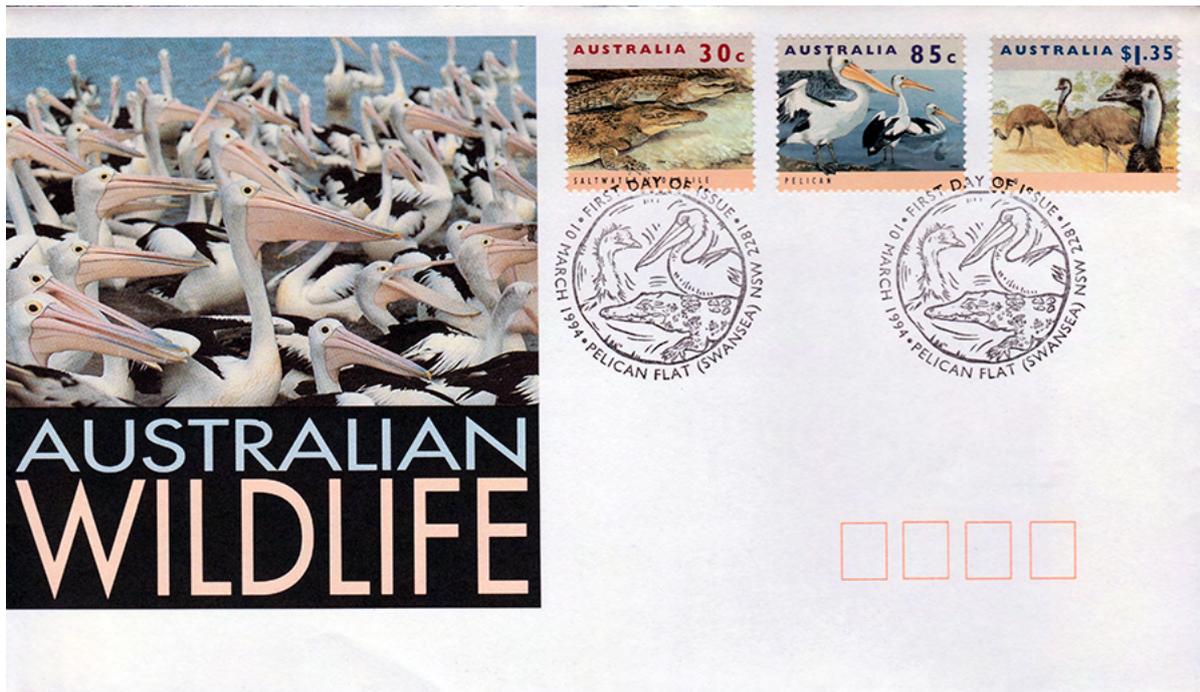
Institute of Biodiversity and Environmental Conservation
Universiti Malaysia Sarawak, 94300, Kota Samarahan, Sarawak, Malaysia
idas@unimas.my

17 June is celebrated as World Crocodile Day, to draw attention to the crocodilians (including crocodiles, alligators, caiman and the gharial) of the world.

The first crocodilians to be featured on stamps (see Lever, 1985; Das, 2014) were the Saltwater Crocodile (*Crocodylus porosus*) from North Borneo (from the British colony corresponding to the modern-day Malaysian state of Sabah), in February 1894 (SG 76), reprinted with a slightly different design, also recess-printed within a blue frame, between March 1897–1902 (SG 106).

The same design, in orange (SG 70) and vermilion (SG 95) was issued by Labuan (a Federal Territory of Malaysia at present), in May 1894 and April 1897, respectively (Melville, 1937). Other famous examples of classic stamps that depict crocodilians include the early Basutoland King George V pictorial definitives of 1933 (SG 1–10) and those of King George VI from 1938 (SG 18–28); see Davenhill (2005). Since then, several dozen nations and postal authorities have issued stamps depicting crocodiles, including one– Lesotho, which has no living populations of these animals (Das and Bauer, 2020).

In this essay, I present postmarks, including pictorial cancellations and other special postmarks depicting crocodilians. For the purpose, the entire item (first day cover or maximum card) is illustrated. Listing is alphabetical, by country. SG refers to Stanley Gibbons catalogue numbers.



Australia. An 11-value set of stamps (SG 1361–1371) were issued by Australia in 1992 (Gibbons catalogue) or on 10 March 1994 (date on cover, see figure), entitled “Australian Wildlife”. Species selected for the series include the Saltwater Crocodile (*Crocodylus porosus*), on a 30 cent stamp (SG 1361). The rounded cancel shows the same, along with a couple of members of the avifauna. Shown here is the first day cover with a Pelican Flat, Swansea, New South Wales cancellation.



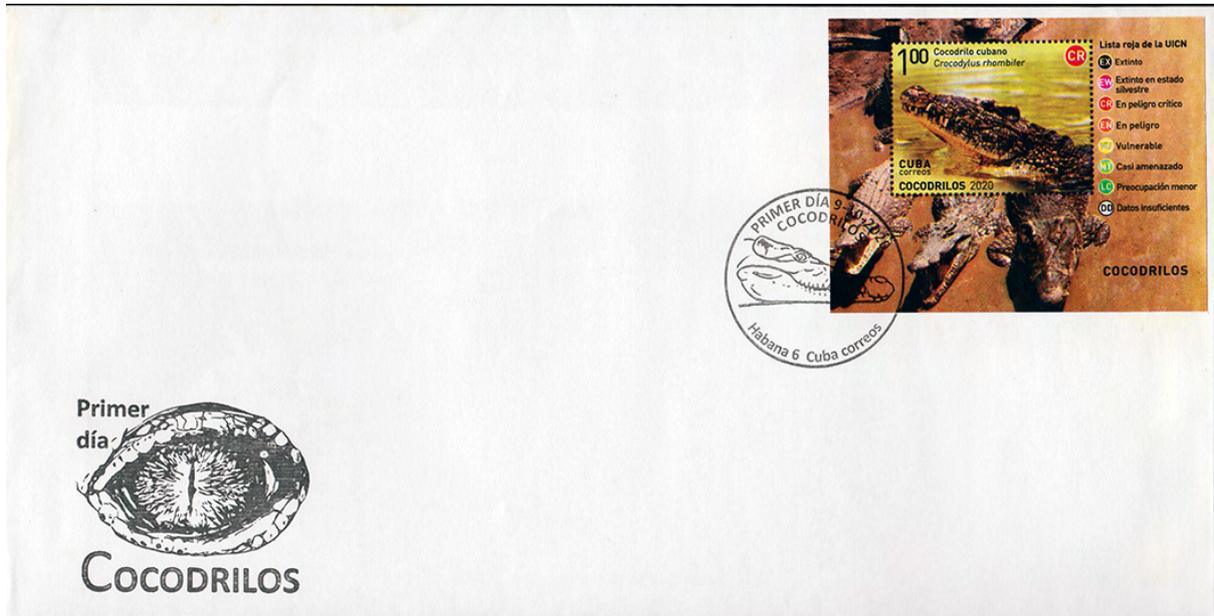
Bangladesh. Although Bangladesh has a special issue (SG 340–343) on the endangered Gharial (*Gavialis gangeticus*), issued on 31 June 1990 under the World Wide Fund for Nature Stamp Release Program, there were no pictorial cancellations. At the Rajshahi Regional Philatelic Exhibition, the Rajshahi GPO issued a special cachet showing the species in its circular cancel, delivered with blue ink. The cover illustrated is dated 23 May 1995.



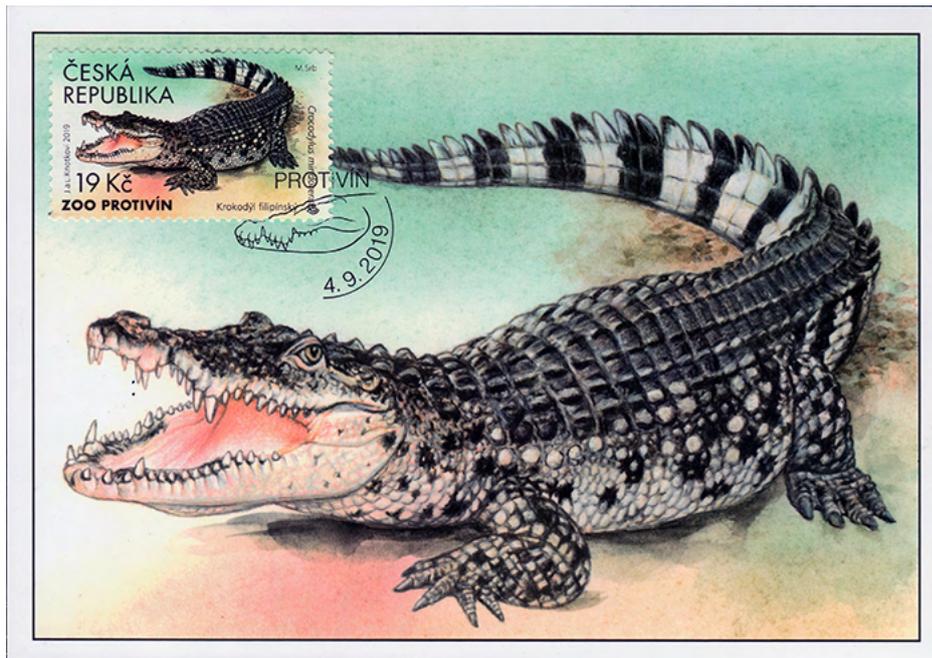
Brazil. The Mato Grosso area and the Brazilian Pantanal are some of the largest wetlands on earth and a major ecotourism attraction. On 5 June 1984, Brazil issued a three value set of stamps (SG 2083–2085), showing the biodiversity of the region, including a Pantanal Caiman (*Caiman yakare*). The circular cancellation from Campo Grande shows a couple of elements of the same including the Caiman, as depicted in the first day cover here.



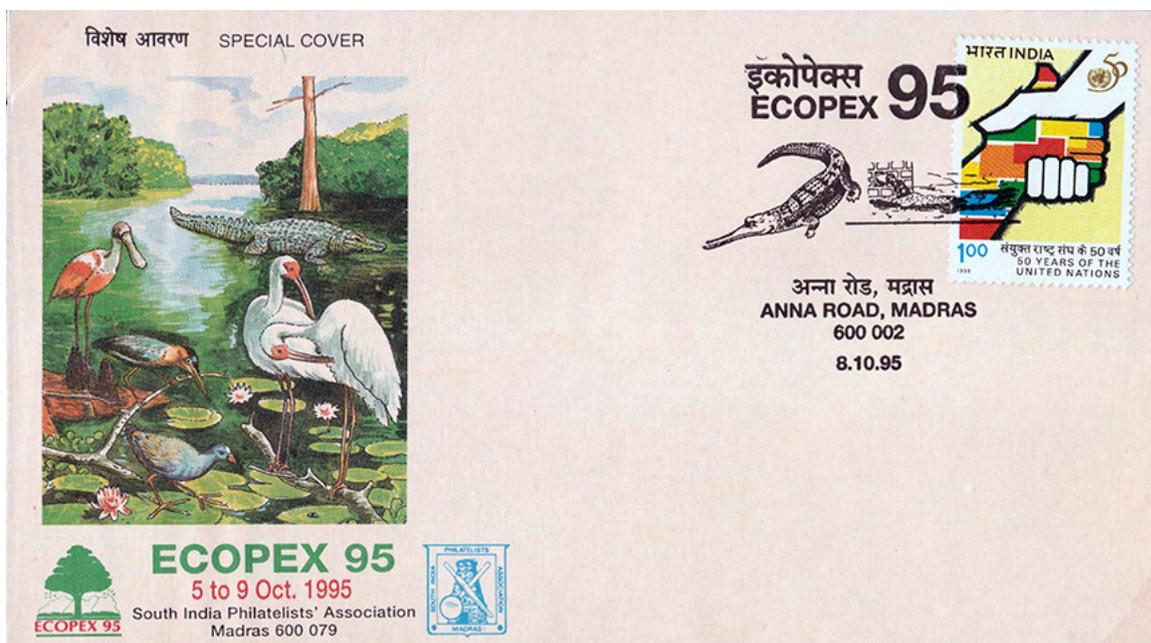
China. People's Republic of China issued a two-value (SG 3248–3249) set of stamps on one of its protected species, the Chinese Alligator (*Alligator sinensis*). These were issued on 24 May 1983 and my cover bears a Beijing cancel. The circular cancellation shows the species in a dorsal view, as shown in the first day cover.



Cuba. Six stamps (SG uncatalogued) and a miniature sheet (SG MS uncatalogued) on the theme “Cocodrilos” were issued by Cuba on 9 October 2020. Species depicted were species from around the world, the miniature sheet showing a Cuban Crocodile (*Crocodylus rhombifer*). The circular cancellation depicts the snout in lateral view of an unspecified species. Shown here are first day covers with the stamp set and the miniature sheet, and a Havana cancellation.



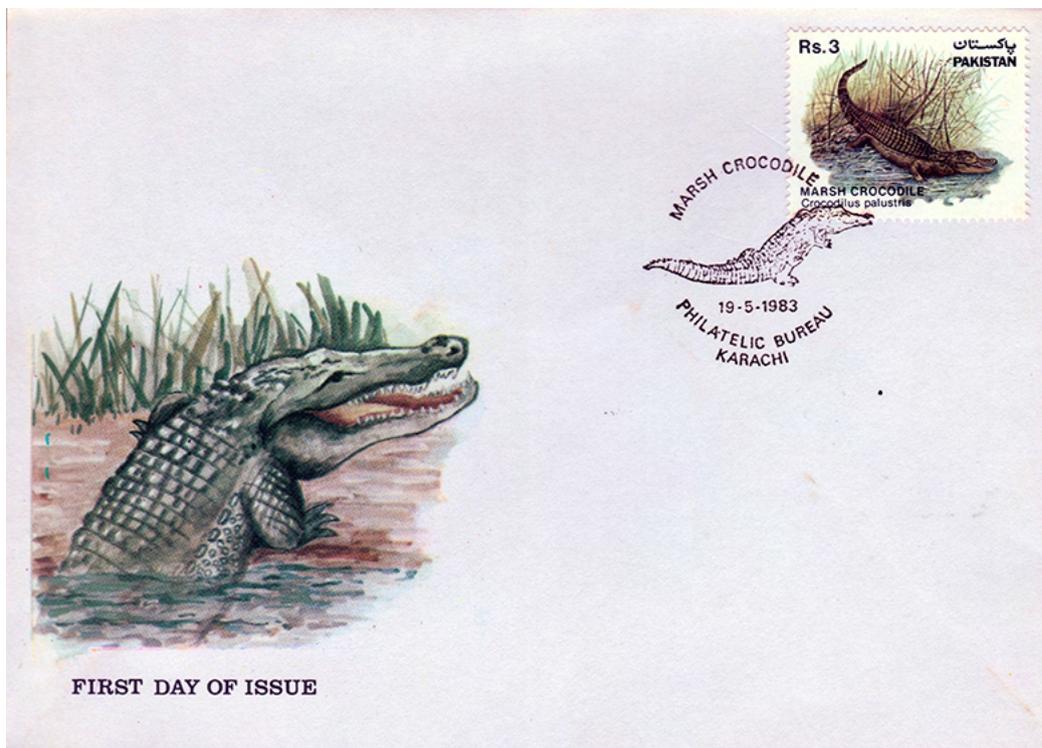
Czech Republic. On 4 September 2019, Czech Republic issued a sheetlet of four stamps (SG MS 934), on its zoological gardens. A semicircular cancel shows a stylised crocodilian head. A maximum card bearing the cancel shown here bears the 19 kc stamp and matching postcard image of the Philippine Crocodile (*Crocodylus mindorensis*), cancelled in Protivin, home to Krokodýlí Zoo.



India. A special cachet was issued by Ecopex 95, organised by the South India Philatelic Association, at Madras (now Chennai), between 5–9 October 1995. The cancellation shows the Gharial (*Gavialis gangeticus*). Illustrated here is the cover, showing the cancellation.



Israel. A Nile Crocodile (*Crocodylus niloticus*) appears in a miniature sheet (SG MS1729), comprising four se-tenant stamps from Israel, entitled “Animals of the Bible”, issued on 22 February 2005. The circular cancellation shows the faunal elements from the sheetlet, including the crocodylian. A maximum card bearing the cancel from the first day of issue from Jerusalem Post Office is illustrated.



Pakistan. A single stamp was issued on 19 May 1983 by Pakistan (SG 599), depicting the Muggier or Marsh Crocodile (*Crocodylus palustris*). It was under an ongoing series (Part VI) on the local fauna. The cancellation is a near circular one, depicting the species in a dorso-lateral perspective). The first day cover illustrated here is from the Karachi post office.



Romania. On 19 November 2020, Romania issued a set of four stamps on the world's crocodilian species (SG uncatologued). The rectangular, upright cancellation shows a stylised crocodilian. Reproduced here is a first day cover with a Bucharest cancellation.



Suriname. A four stamp set (SG 1358–1361) on world's crocodilians were issued by Suriname on 20 January 1988, under the theme "Fauna 1988". The concordant cancellation was rounded, showing the head of an unidentifiable crocodilian species. Shown here is the first day cover with the stamp set and the cancellation from Paramaribo.



Uruguay. On 10 April 2003, Uruguay issued a single stamp (SG 2823) on the theme “Endangered Species. Cerros Azules. Caiman Breeding Farm”, showing the Broad-snouted Caiman (*Caiman latirostris*). The rectangular cancel shows the species in outline. Illustrated here is the first day cover with a Maldonado cancellation, on a s12 stamp depicting the species.



Venda. The native homeland of Venda, situated in northern South Africa, is well-known for its interesting philatelic release, featuring the nature and culture of Venda. One such issue, from 15 October 1992, featured the biology of the Nile Crocodile (*Crocodylus niloticus*), under the theme ‘Crocodile Farming’ (SG 243–246). The cancellation shows the anterior of the crocodilian, in a rectangular format. The first day cover bears the cancel from Lwamondo, a village currently in the Vhembe District Municipality, of Limpopo Province, South Africa.

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