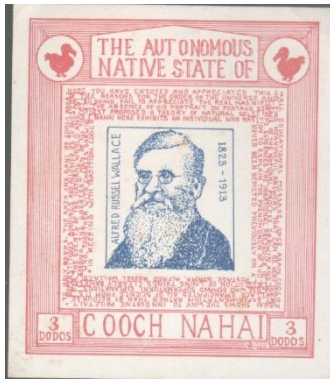


## ALFRED RUSSEL WALLACE, EVOLUTIONIST, ON POSTAGE STAMPS

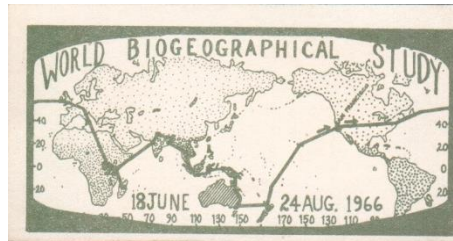
Indraneil Das, BU1857, and Pui Yong Min

Alfred Russel Wallace (1823–1913) has been described as an explorer, biologist, geographer, and anthropologist. A leading evolutionary thinker of his time, as well as pioneering biogeographer, Wallace is famously associated with Darwin for the theory of evolution through natural selection.



Alfred Russel Wallace  
(cinderella stamp)

The first stamp showing Wallace was privately issued around 1978 by the Rajah of the Autonomous Native State of Cooch Nahai, an imaginary country set in Redwood, California, and “ruled” by the eccentric Dr. Lawrence Wesley Swan (1922–1999), a professor of Zoology at California State University in San Francisco.



In philatelic lexicon, this as well as others in the series, including one without a face value showing a map of the earth and its biogeographical regions, are known as “cinderellas.” The face value is in “dodos,” the official currency of Cooch Nahai.

On 1 July 2009, miniature sheet of four stamps was issued, purportedly from the West African island nation of São Tomé and Príncipe.

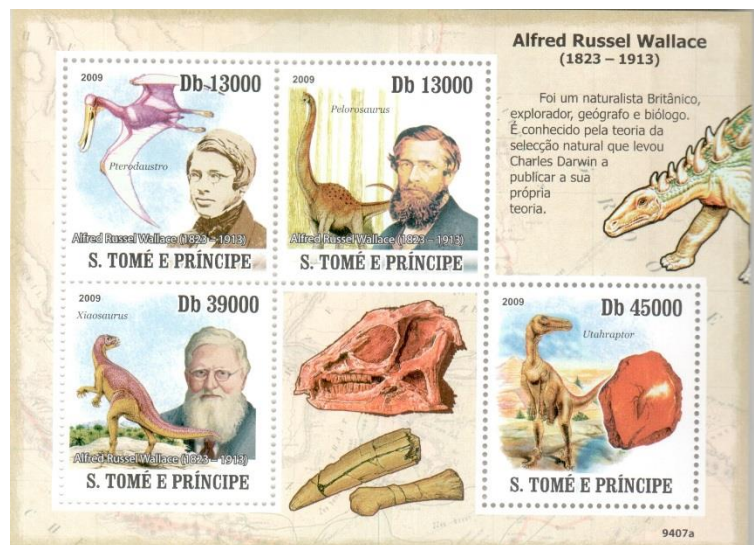
The postal material of this tiny island state (including stamp design, production, and distribution) for a long time was under the control of a large philatelic company in Argentina. This company has similar agreements with other developing nations in Africa, the West Indies, and Oceania. One is unlikely to see valid postal usage of such products.

The sheet shows three images of Wallace: One in his late youth from the year 1847 as he would have appeared before his arrival in Sarawak (Sc#2139a), a middle-aged Wallace in 1869 (Sc#2139b), and in his later years from the portrait by Roger Remington in the Meeting Room of the Linnean Society of London (Sc#2139c).

Each of the three stamps show Wallace with a dinosaur in the background, a group of animals on which he did not publish.

Matters were set right on 3 March 2010, by the Royal Mail, the postal authority of Great Britain, when it issued a set of ten stamps, commemorating the 350th anniversary of the Royal Society. Arguably the world’s oldest scientific society, this issue chose carefully amongst the many luminaries that are counted among its members.

The set included Wallace for his contributions to the development of the theory of evolution through natural selection. Wallace’s portrait here was the same 1869 image used in the miniature sheet. All ten values are for 1st class postage within the country.



Alfred Russel Wallace (1823–1913)  
St. Thomas & Prince, 2009, Sc#2139



Alfred Russel Wallace  
GB, 2010, Sc#2752

To commemorate Wallace, a century after his passing the Universiti Malaysia Sarawak organized an international conference held at Kuching, Sarawak, Malaysia on 7–8 November 2013. Through Pos Malaysia's SetemKu program, a 30 sen stamp was issued with a label added showing Alfred Russel Wallace.

The label is se-tenant with a stamp that shows a bunga raya, or Chinese hibiscus (*Hibiscus rosa-sinensis*), Malaysia's national flower, and the "Jalur Gemilang," Malaysia's national flag, set over the Songket (a pattern of traditional woven fabric).



*Hibiscus rosa-sinensis*  
Malaysia, 2013, not listed



*Rhacophorus nigropalmatus*  
(with) Malaysia, 2012, Sc#1434a

Also released at the event was a 60 sen stamp se-tenant with a label showing Wallace's Flying Frog (*Rhacophorus nigropalmatus*). This image is from a woodcut that appears on page 60 of Wallace's popular travelogue, *The Malay Archipelago*, first published in 1869, and described as "one of the finest of travel books."

Wallace is far less often honored philatelically than Darwin, his great friend and colleague, and only in the last few decades have such accolades been given to this early explorer of Southeast Asia.

### WALLACE'S GOLDEN BIRDWING

On 30 November 1991, Romania issued two MS of 12 stamps depicting butterflies. One sheet included a 3-lei stamp showing a butterfly originally described by Alfred Russel Wallace in 1859 and named Wallace's Golden Birdwing in his honor.

*Ornithoptera croesus* is found only east of the Wallace Line, a faunal boundary established by Wallace in 1859 that separates the ecozones of Asia and Australia.

The subject on the stamp is actually a subspecies described by C. & R. Felder in 1865, and found only on four islands in Malaysia.

Wallace described his capture of the butterfly in his book, *The Malay Archipelago*:

"The beauty and brilliancy of this insect are indescribable, and none but a naturalist can understand the intense excitement I experienced when I at length captured it. On taking it out of my net and opening the glorious wings, my heart began to beat violently, the blood rushed to my head, and I felt much more like fainting than I have done when in apprehension of immediate death. I had a headache the rest of the day, so great was the excitement produced by what will appear to most people a very inadequate cause."

This species is sexually dimorphic. The females are larger than males (shown on the stamps) and have brown wings marked with lines of yellow chevrons.



*Ornithoptera croesus lydius*  
Romania, 1991, Sc#3696d

*Ornithoptera croesus*  
Indonesia, 2007,  
Sc#2125b