



Philately's Implications in Ecological Education via Romanian Thematic Joint Issues (VI) - Regarding the 4th Collaboration with WWF

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Authors' contributions

This work was carried out in collaboration between both authors. Author BVC designed the study, performed the statistical analysis, and wrote the first draft of the manuscript. Authors ALP and BVC managed the analyses of the study and, where it was necessary, managed the literature searches. Both authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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ABSTRACT

The last philatelic issue made by the Romanian postal administration in collaboration with WWF, published at the end of 2006, is the main subject of this study. As we have become accustomed to, WWF's interests in conserving endangered species are becoming better defined. This time the emphasis is on protecting birds, and among these, we are talking about the Eurasian spoonbill. The species itself is representative of the habitat of the Danube Delta, where it was also immortalized, and where the inspiration for the layout of the philatelic pieces came from. Moreover, through the rich philatelic material identified, analyzed, and presented, one can discuss the other philatelic effects. All these, through the beauty of the exhibition and the contribution brought among the collectors, philatelists, and implicitly of those who love nature, make the issue a successful one. The purpose of this study is to complete, by presenting the philatelic issue from 2006, the series of Romanian philatelic issues dedicated to the protection of various species. In this regard, besides

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the well-defined role in promoting protected species, was also discussed a little about the role of philately in educating the young generation, informing tourists, as well as in documenting habitat conservation policies and strategies.

Keywords: *Biodiversity; endangered; species; protected birds; thematic philately; WWF.*

ABBREVIATIONS

LP : *Romfilatelia philatelic list*
Mi : *Michel Catalog*
Sc or S : *Scott Catalog*
Sg or G : *Stanley Gibbons Catalog*
Yt : *Yvert et Tellier Catalog*

1. INTRODUCTION

The World Wide Fund for Nature is a non-governmental organization for nature conservation and ecological restoration of the natural environment. The organization was formerly known as the World Wildlife Fund (WWF), which remains the official name in the United States and Canada. WWF's global mission is to stop environmental degradation and to build a future where people live in harmony with nature.

WWF's efforts bring together conservation projects with concrete, field-implemented measures, innovative partnerships, high-level lobbying, business collaboration, and information and advocacy campaigns. WWF's activity in Romania, for example, focuses on areas and species considered of critical importance for habitat conservation, but also human well-being [1]. All these steps and engagements come in response to some of the Romanian initiatives to conserve ecosystems, respectively, to promote the ecological services of forest and aquatic habitats [2].

Romania benefits from a rich faunal and floristic biodiversity, immortalized in various forms of presentation [3,4]. The country's natural habitats have reserves recognized in Europe, housing in considerable densities, predatory species, aquatic species, as well as many species of migratory birds, which elsewhere are rare or threatened with extinction. In this context, the conservation of biodiversity and the perpetuation of a healthy balance between different species, as well as between them and the environment, is the object and purpose of many areas of interest, including philately.

The prerogative of philately for the protection and promotion of various species is also noted at the national level, where philatelic issues have paid homage to the endangered species and the protected areas of which they are part. The recent history of Romania, between 1977 and 2006, records the construction of a special philately, in terms of the pieces made, with the otherwise considerable contribution of the WWF [5]. In Romania, thematic philately under the influence of WWF has thus managed to manifest itself as a civilized way of respecting habitats, as well as an activity designed to promote the sustainable balance between the environment and community [6]. This balance must also exist with the various species of birds that populate specific ecosystems, the appearance of the 2006 philatelic issue being an important step in consolidating and appreciating the human-environment relationship.

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

The documentation for the realization of this paper started from our concerns for ecology and the management of protected areas [6-8]. Having at hand a series of relevant studies at the national level [9-11], regarding the management of protected areas, as well as biodiversity, we decided to continue exposing the relationship between Romanian philately and WWF, practically the fourth official collaboration. This ended with the appearance of the philatelic issue "Protected birds - Eurasian Spoonbill (*Platalea leucorodia*)", towards the end of 2006. The collection, analysis, and interpretation of the philatelic material (stamps, first day covers - FDCs, maximum postcards, and other post-philatelic effects) were done, as we have been accustomed repeatedly, by consulting dedicated philatelic catalogs [12-14] and various philatelic trade sites.

The purpose of this study, as mentioned, was to find philatelic pieces that complement the series of Romanian philatelic issues made in collaboration with WWF and dedicated to the protection of various species. In this sense, the philatelic appearances related to the issue in question, from 2006 until the beginning of 2021,

totaling over 400 distinct pieces, were followed. Platforms such as Allnumis, Colnect, Delcampe, eBay, Okazii, PicClick, and StampWorld were used. The information from the platforms was useful in the documentation and presentation of the technical characteristics that the entire philatelic issue includes being made on their account. Where the information proved uncertain or interpretable, we turned to other philatelists and collectors. Their consultation focused mainly on stamps and maxims.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In the following, we continue our extensive project of promoting and analyzing the Romanian postal collaborations with other organizations [15,16], and with WWF, by presenting the philatelic issue "Protected birds - Eurasian spoonbill". We will therefore stop to debate and reflect on it, to argue the valence of this issue in relation to environmental protection policy and strategies, as specific elements of WWF-Romania.

3.1 "Protected Birds - Eurasian Spoonbill (*Platalea leucorodia*)", 2006

The last philatelic issue we stop at is called "Protected Birds - The Eurasian spoonbill" (LP #1744, Mi RO#6134..37, Yv RO#5154..57, S RO#4887..90, G RO#6731..34) and appeared on 20.10.2006 [13]. The stamps of the considered issue (total 664,000 pieces), four in number, representing the Eurasian spoonbill (*Platalea leucorodia*) in various poses - feeding their chicks, fishing, in-flight, or in pairs (all variants with a face value of 80 bani), were modeled by Mihai Vămășescu (as shown in Fig. 1a-d) [17,18].

On chrome paper (England) and in 48x33 mm format, 13¼ lace, they were arranged in a 170x120 mm block, 58,500 print, (see Fig. 2e) [19], but also in finished sheets of 10 postage

stamps + 2 vignettes, in a circulation of 166,000 complete series (Fig. 2a-d) [17,20].

The Eurasian spoonbill (*Platalea leucorodia*) is a stork-sized waterfowl with white plumage, with a long neck and legs. The beak is widened towards the top like a shovel. Both the beak and legs are black, and it has a beak of feathers on its head. During mating, adults have yellow spots on the chest and tip of the beak. They live in colonies, separate from other birds, and make their nests on the ground, in trees or reeds. They feed on small fish and insects. It is the most widespread species, living in some parts of Africa, much of Europe, in Asia, and we even find it in Japan [20].

In Romania, these birds can be admired in summer, when they nest in the Danube Delta. The Eurasian shovel is protected throughout the European continent. An aspect worth mentioning is that for the FDCs, the issue in question has 1150 sets of two pieces each (see Fig. 3) [21-23], completed by another 1100 sets of 8 maximum postcards, made in 4-color offset mode (see Fig. 5) [24-35].

There were of course four FDCs made under the careful coordination of WWF. These present different aspects of the behavior and living environment of the species, being in a deep connection with the message printed on each postage stamp itself, which is the basis for posting the pieces; practically, the theme of the stamps is resumed, Eurasian spoonbill being caught as feeding their chicks, fishing, in-flight, or in pairs (see Fig. 4) [36,37].

The beauty of the latest identified FDCs, as can be seen in Fig. 4, is given by the very well-defined semi-illustrations, which express interesting scenes from the life of birds. The attention to detail, as well as the chromatic that seems to come to life, make these philatelic pieces very well received in the community.



Fig. 1. Stamps of the "Protected birds - Eurasian spoonbill", 20.10.2006, Bucharest

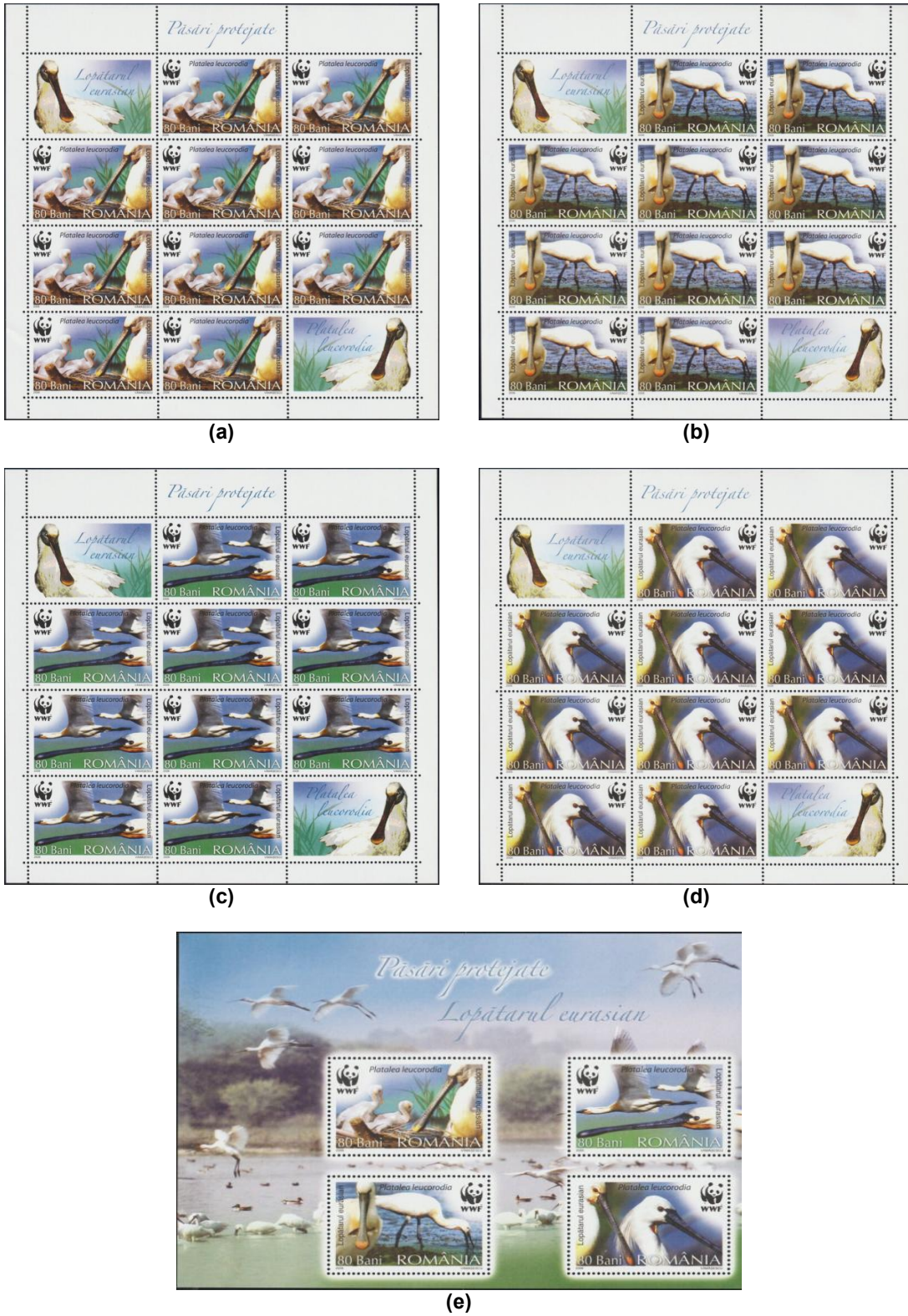


Fig. 2. Various pagination forms for the "Protected birds - Eurasian spoonbill", 20.10.2006, Bucharest

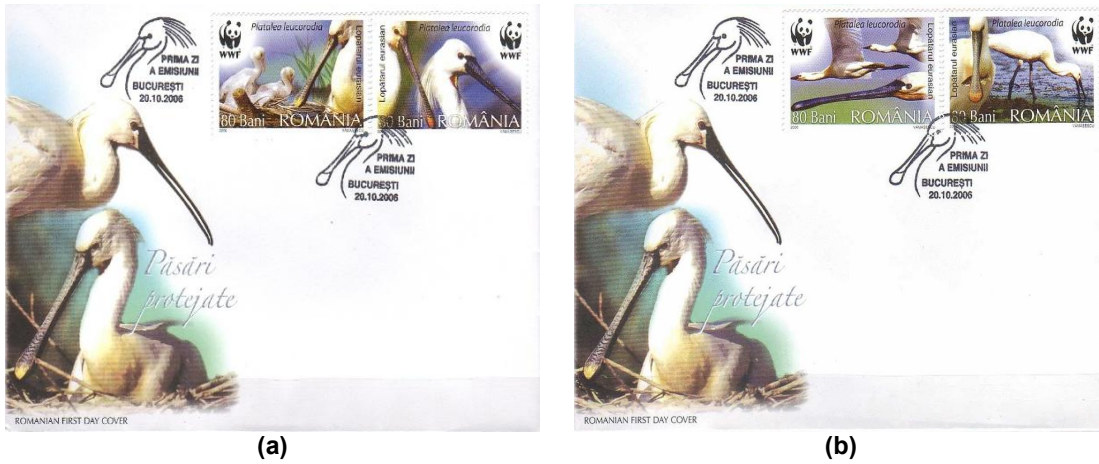


Fig. 3. Official FDCs, made by the Romanian postal administration (Romfilatelia), for the "Protected birds - Eurasian spoonbill", 20.10.2006, Bucharest

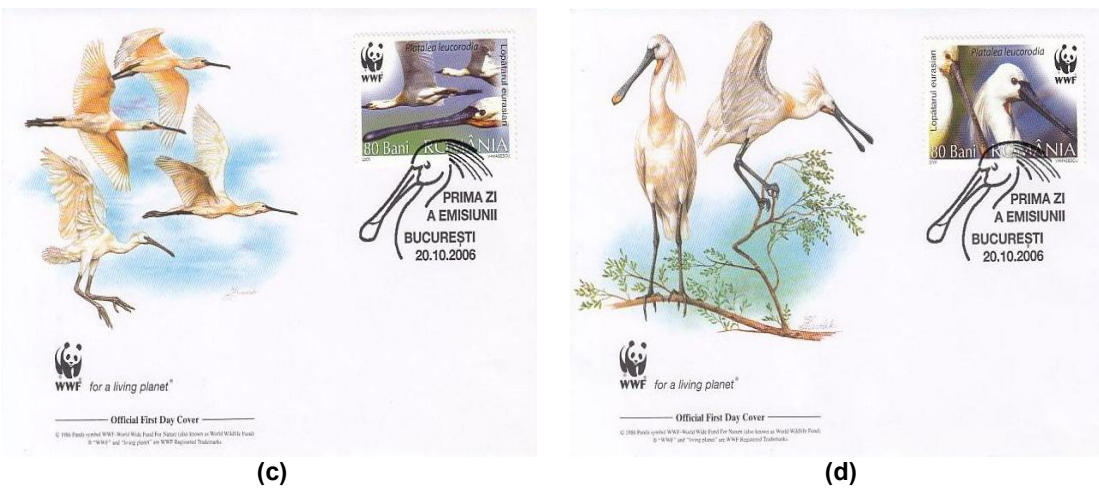
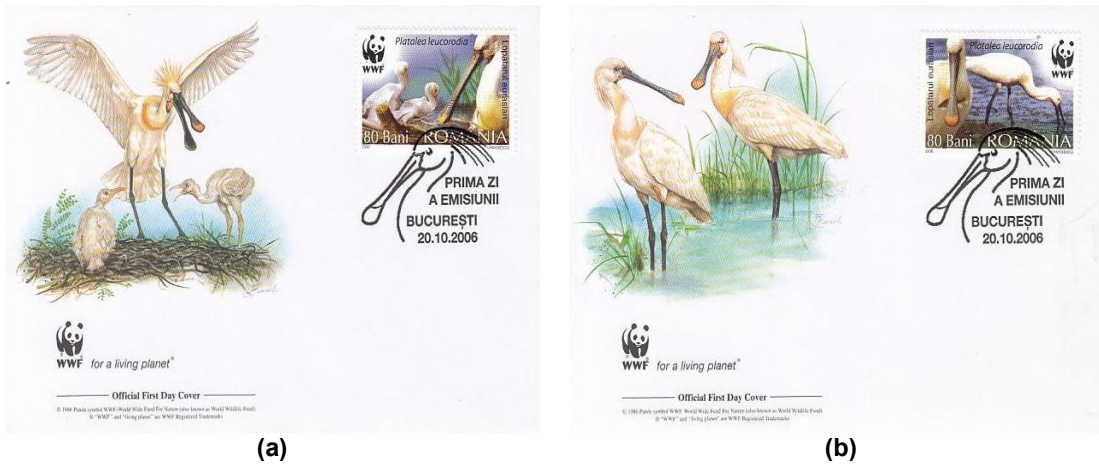


Fig. 4. Official FDCs, made under the world wide fund Romania administration, for the "Protected birds - Eurasian spoonbill", 20.10.2006, Bucharest

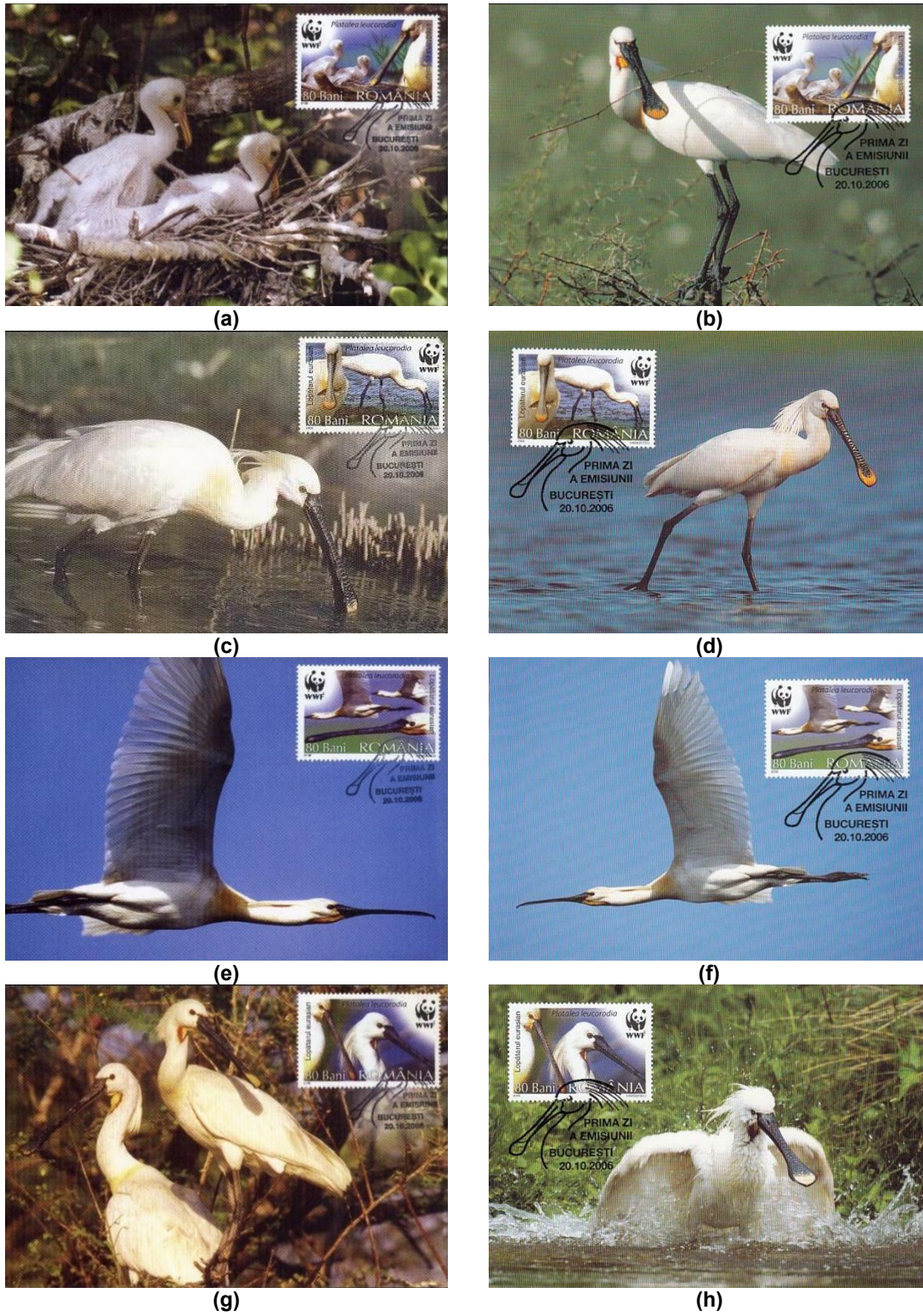


Fig. 5. Maximum postcards of the "Protected birds - Eurasian spoonbill", 20.10.2006, Bucharest

3.2 Errors and Philatelic Varieties

In terms of errors and philatelic varieties, so far we have not been able to identify either. Philatelic errors were not recorded in the various specialized catalogs, recognized and frequently used at the national level, in the form of deviations from the standard postage stamp (official model).

3.3 Maximum Postcards

As mentioned, there are several maxims, some even circulated. These are particularly well and clearly outlined illustrations, practically speaking for itself. All 8 support postcards used were carefully selected, just to capture the specifics of each behavior of birds.

The postcards identified by us were analyzed somehow in parallel, as can be easily seen, for each postage stamp we found two maxims. Although not similar in terms of illustrated postcards, the 8 pieces still reflect the same particular element - a stage in the life of birds.

3.4 Occasional Envelopes and Other Philatelic Effects

The postage stamps in question had a special impact even at the international level. Because these were very well perceived and accepted by the community, they were reproduced under a new pagination by the Liberian postal administration (Fig. 6) [38-40]. As you can easily see, along with other stamps specific to Romania-WWF collaborative issues, some that have appeared in other countries are included. All keep their original layout form intact, the only visible change being at the level of the nominal value. The latter is cut with a simple line and replaced accordingly with an equivalent value for Liberia.

As we have become accustomed to in the case of other philatelic issues made under the auspices of WWF, these have been faithfully reproduced. At least, until now, one stamp from the series, respectively the first to appear or with the lowest face value. Along with the pieces made in Romania, as always, there are also exhibits made in other countries. These are species of interest to the communities they come from, especially mammal species.

3.5 The Postal Role of the "Protected Birds - Eurasian Spoonbill"

Postage stamps, as expected, were introduced in both domestic and international postal circuits. As can be seen in Fig. 7, we are dealing with various pieces circulating in Hungary [41], Belgium [42] or even Singapore [43]. From the rich philatelic material (stamps, blocks, FDCs, maxima, and postal covers) that was, in turn, identified, reproduced, and analyzed, we managed to highlight the 4th existing collaboration between WWF and the Romanian postal administration. Moreover, it could be shown that such collaboration is a beneficial one, because the issue itself has become visible internationally, more efficient than if there was no collaboration with WWF.

As expected, the circulated pieces show almost exclusively postage based only on the show's postage stamps. These proving to be sufficient for the postage of correspondence to the countries already mentioned.

3.6 About the Romanian Philatelic Issues with Appearance Abroad - Perceptions and Observations of the Community

Starting with 2016, the late philatelic researcher Max Peter states that the community of Romanian collectors is strongly affected by the various activities carried out in the postal and philatelic field, both in the country and especially abroad. He noted that in Romania over the last thirty years there have been several attempts to clarify the status of "First Day Covers", which were found on the philatelic market and about which Romanian collectors without contacts abroad no longer knew nothing. The truth is that it has been suspected for many years that certain stamp issues "benefited" from FDCs printed and made abroad and which were sold exclusively by foreign merchants, reaching the country to Romanian collectors only accidentally [44]. Before 1990, those who had the opportunity to take possession of such "pieces" preferred not to make "waves" because a potential reaction from the authorities was unpredictable, and people did not intend to have problems.

The practice of printing envelopes abroad did not end in 1990, and continued thereafter. Returning to FDCs for certain issues or themes (which had a greater "outlet" in the West), the envelopes were printed abroad, using models made by

foreign graphic designers [44]. For older envelopes, it is not known how they were made. Theoretically, there are two alternatives: the envelopes were printed abroad, being later sent to the country for equipping with stamps and for stamping, or the envelopes were made entirely abroad by the wholesalers mentioned above, they were received together with the brands exported from Romania, including a number of "first day" stamps.

Next, we decided to present a series of such practices, taking as example the materials that formed the basis of the various philatelic effects made under the coordination of WWF. As can be

seen, the model what underlies the philatelic numismatic envelope is described as follows: «1984, an original hand-painted work of art "Dalmatian Pelican" in color by the official WWF Numiscover "Dalmatian Pelican" from Romania on cardboard with a total size of 242x177 mm by the artist Gordon Drummond/Great Britain.»

There are, of course, a series of models for the other philatelic issues reviewed in the series, which we decided to expose in Fig. 9 - "World Wide Fund for Nature - Sturgeons", 28.10.1994, Bucharest, and respectively in Fig. 10 - "Protected birds - Eurasian spoonbill", 20.10.2006, Bucharest [44].

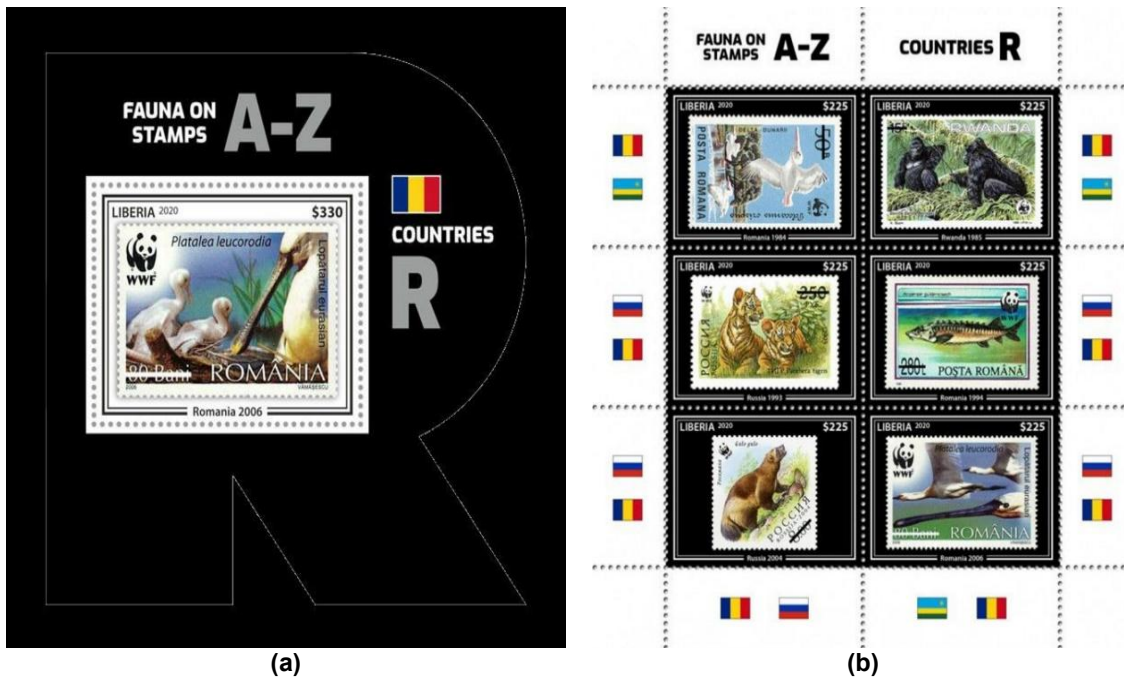


Fig. 6. Philatelic effects achieved as a result of the reissue of the philatelic issue "protected birds - Eurasian spoonbill", 20.10.2006, Bucharest

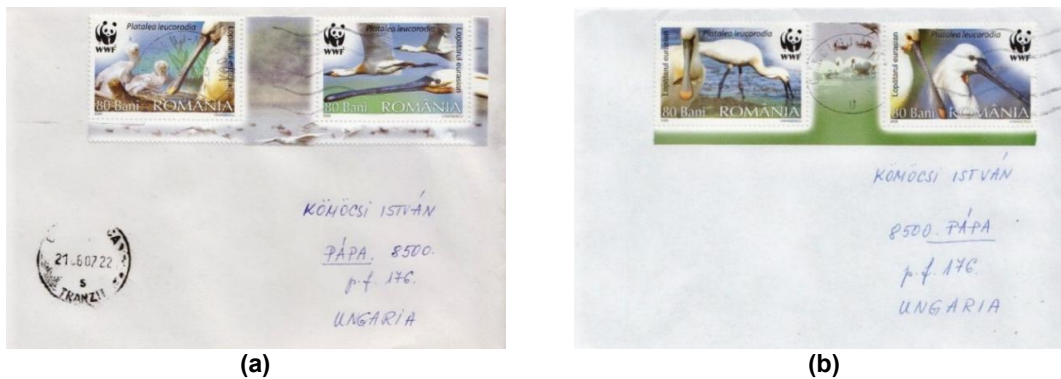




Fig. 7. Different circulated pieces with the postage stamps of the philatelic issue "Protected birds - Eurasian spoonbill", 20.10.2006, Bucharest



Fig. 8. The model after which the philatelic-numismatic envelope for the "Animals protected in the reservations from Romania" was made, 15.12.1984, Bucharest

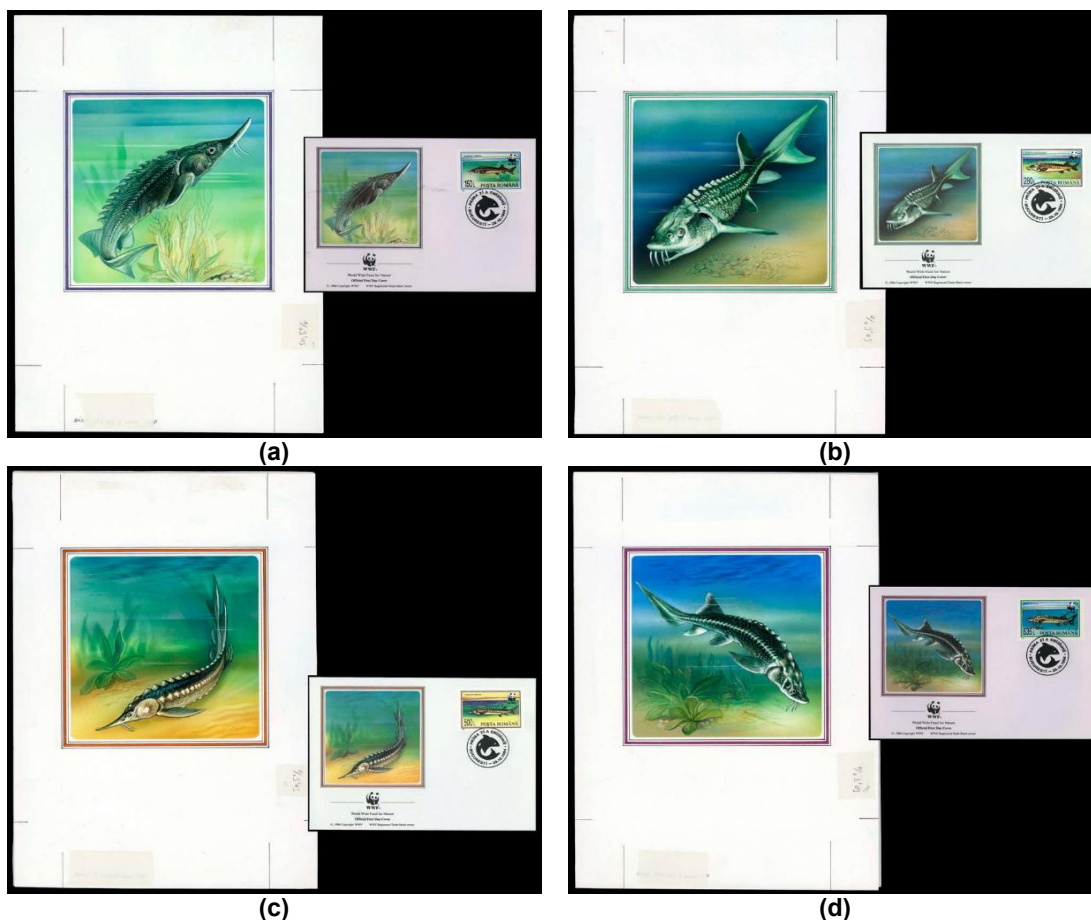


Fig. 9. Models after which the FDCs for the "World Wide Fund for Nature - Sturgeons" were made, 28.10.1994, Bucharest

These four models were intended for the FDCs of the "Sturioni" philatelic issue, as seen in the four pairs of illustrations above. Again, this is a topic with a bigger profile, the brands being issued under the auspices of WWF. The four models are offered in separate lots, their description being as follows:

- «1994, an original hand-painted work of art "Sterlet" in color for the official WWF first day cover "Sterlet" (*Acipenser ruthenus*) from Romania with a value of 150 L. on cardboard paper with a total size of 216x310 mm by the artist Gyula Laszlo Vasarhelyi / Hungary who also designed the original stamps for the WWF issue!»;
- «1994, an original hand-painted work of art "Waxdick" in color for the official WWF first day cover "Waxdick" (*Acipenser gueldenstaedti*) from Romania with a value of 280 L. on cardboard paper with a total size of 216x310 mm by the artist Gyula Laszlo Vasarhelyi / Hungary who also designed the original stamps for the WWF issue!»;
- «1994, an original hand-painted work of art "Sternhausen" in color for the official WWF first day cover "Sternhausen" (*Acipenser stellatus*) from Romania with a value of 500 L. on cardboard paper with a total size of 216x311 mm by the artist Gyula Laszlo Vasarhelyi / Hungary who also designed the original stamps for the WWF issue!»;
- «1994, an original hand-painted work of art "Baltic Sturgeon" in color for the official WWF first day cover "Baltic Sturgeon" (*Acipenser sturio*) from Romania with a value of 635 L. on cardboard paper with a total size of 216x314 mm by the artist Gyula Laszlo Vasarhelyi / Hungary, who also designed the original stamps for the WWF issue!».

This is another philatelic issue also made under the auspices of WWF, whose models are made by artists from abroad. The descriptions of the four lots are as follows:

- «2006, original hand-painted work of art "Eurasischer Löffler" in color for the official WWF first day cover "Eurasischer Löffler" (*Platalea leucorodia*) from Romania with a value of 80 Bani on cardboard paper with a total size of 325x270 mm by the artists Jaromír and Libuše Knotek /Czech Republic.»;
- «2006, original hand-painted work of art "Eurasischer Löffler" in color for the official WWF first day cover "Eurasischer Löffler" (*Platalea leucorodia*) from Romania with a value of 80 Bani on cardboard paper with a total size of 325x269 mm by the artists Jaromír and Libuše Knotek /Czech Republic.»;
- «2006, original hand-painted work of art "Eurasischer Löffler" in color for the official WWF first day cover "Eurasischer Löffler" (*Platalea leucorodia*) from Romania with a value of 80 Bani on cardboard paper with a total size of 325x270 mm by the artists Jaromír and Libuše Knotek /Czech Republic.»;
- «2006, original hand-painted work of art "Eurasischer Löffler" in color for the official WWF first day cover "Eurasischer Löffler" (*Platalea leucorodia*) from Romania with a value of 80 Bani on cardboard paper with a total size of 325x270 mm by the artists Jaromír and Libuše Knotek /Czech Republic.».

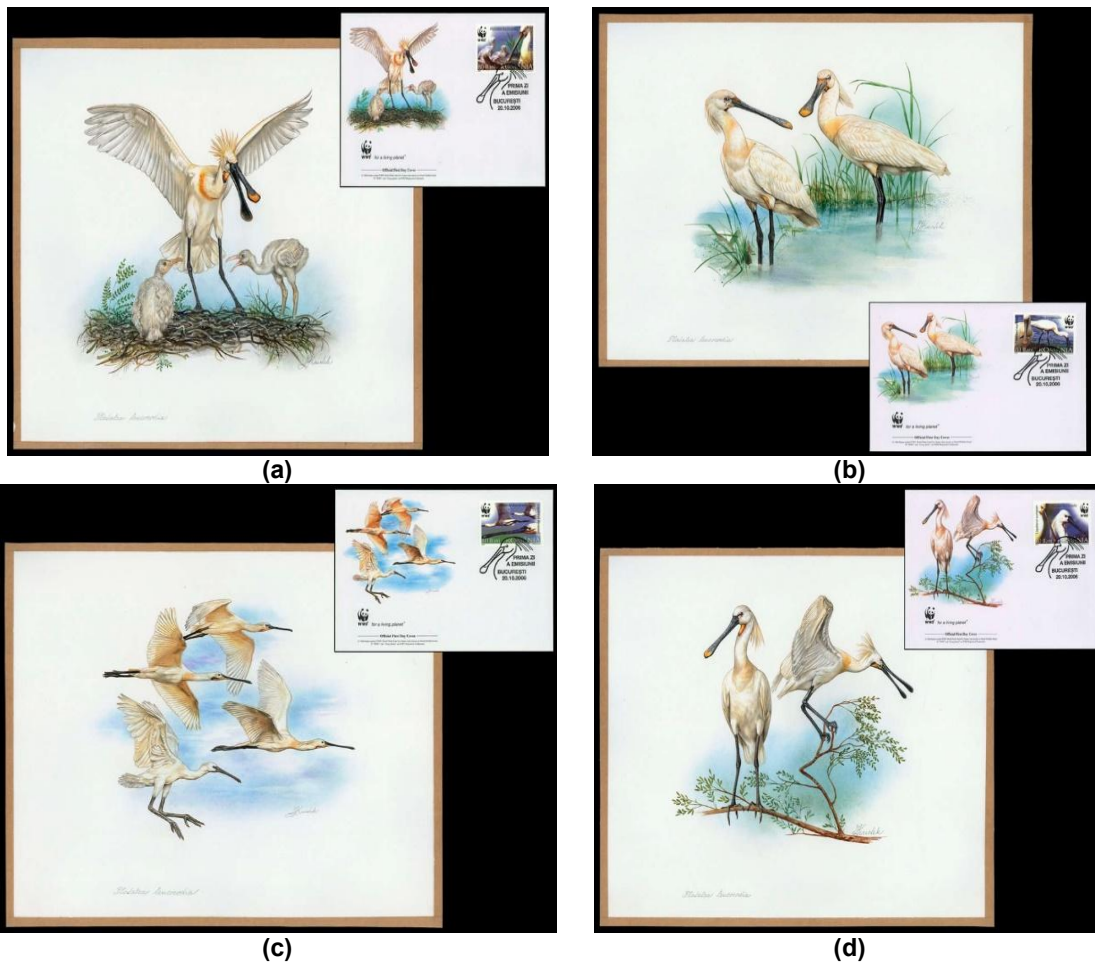


Fig. 10. Models after which the FDCs for the "Protected birds - Eurasian spoonbill" were made, 20.10.2006, Bucharest

This is a newer issue from 14 years ago. It is possible that only the envelopes were printed abroad, and their equipment and stamping were done by Romfilatelia. As a miscellaneous fact, each of the models presented above has a call price at an auction of 200 euros [44]. Of the total circulation of the philatelic issue, about 80% were precanceled issues and sold in bulk (at a ridiculous price per piece) to a single merchant! For example, we talk about just 10,000 complete series available to the general public out of a total of 166,000 complete series in total. Of course, he could, but he also had the interest to manipulate the price of the series on the market, thus affecting the other collectors.

With over one billion stamps printed and close to 400 issues by the end of October 2006, the sale of stamps from the WWF conservation stamp collection has raised over 20 million Swiss Francs in royalties and has become an important source of funding for WWF's conservation activities. The WWF stamp collection is the largest thematic collection in the world. Since 1983, some 1,500 different stamps - all produced by Groth AG of Unteraegeri - have been issued in 211 countries [45]. Proceeds from the sale of the stamps have helped fund a range of activities - from the conservation of endangered species to helping forest and coastal-dwelling communities improve their standards of living through sustainable use of their natural resources.

4. CONCLUSION

The work, as it could be observed, comes as a completion of the Romanian philately, and as a continuation of the collaboration with WWF. The community policy and strategy promoted by WWF, in full agreement with the protection of habitats and the conservation of various endangered species, are also found in this case. Moreover, as we pointed out at the beginning, illegal activities are more than visible in terms of the impact produced. As such, we consider this study as a good example of the application of species conservation policies that closely targeted being in the first phase locals, and only then the visitors/tourists interested in the picturesque habitats.

In this study, there are conclusive observations on the philatelic implications of promotion through the circulation of philatelic pieces, but there are no other details related to the local policy of action for the environment from the perspective of using philately. We have not even

been able to identify details regarding the programs for educating young people in the sense of nature protection. We believe, however, that more attention should be paid to thematic philately at the local and regional level. It should be included as an information resource in promoting local species and habitat conservation policies and strategies. Moreover, it would be good to incorporate it for further awareness and information actions, in terms of organizing exhibition events.

Our recommendations come in the context in which not all those who come in contact with the habitat have the necessary information, and as such cannot relate correctly and balanced to the interaction with protected biodiversity and its environment. We need effective policies and strategies for promotion, information and conservation, and thematic philately can be a well-intentioned resource in this regard.

COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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