

# WHAT'S NEWS?

The South African Post Office Philatelic e-mail newsletter • It's all about stamps!

New commemorative stamp issue...

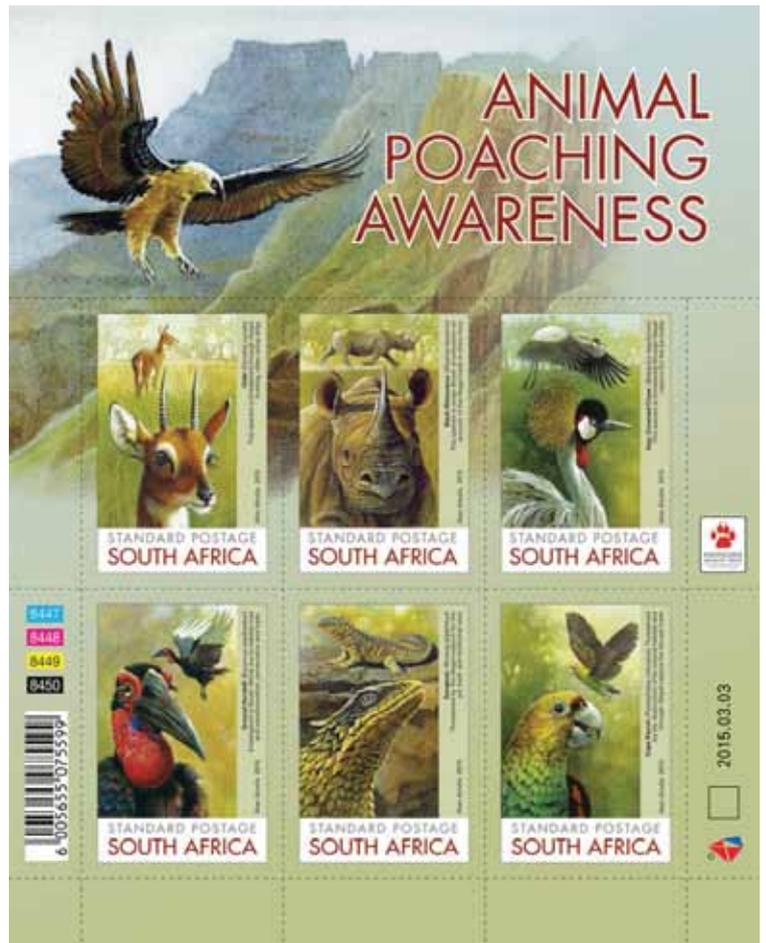
## RAISING AWARENESS OF THE POACHING PLIGHT

Text by Louise van Niekerk



Animal poaching is an increasing global phenomenon. In Southern Africa, poaching has increased at an alarming rate. The situation has become so bad that local newspapers have labelled our national wildlife parks "killing fields". To help raise awareness of this threat to our wildlife, the South African Post Office will issue a set of six stamps and a commemorative envelope featuring some of the animals that have come under threat as a result of illegal hunting, capturing and trade, as well as destruction of natural habitats. Estimated to be the third largest illegal industry worldwide after drugs and human trafficking, poaching often has its roots in organised, trans-boundary crime and is among the most serious threats to the survival of plant and animal populations.

Poaching has a detrimental effect on biodiversity both within and outside protected areas. As wildlife populations decline,



Stamp sheet

species are depleted locally, and the functionality of ecosystems is disturbed.

According to SA National Parks CEO, Mavuso Msimang, poachers are stealing millions of South African rand in animal, plant and marine life from our "national treasury" of reserves. "These unscrupulous people are attacking the economic fabric of our national tourism industry," he says. Most of the poaching inside the Kruger National Park is under control, but "highly organised syndicates" are operating just outside its border with Limpopo.

It is believed that sophisticated rhino and other wildlife theft networks are in operation, using helicopters and trucks to “strip South Africa of its wildlife”. Wildlife organisations in the country are therefore forced to continually increase security measures to protect our conservation areas and their wildlife.

This set of six stamps, is the South African Post Office’s contribution towards raising awareness of the poaching plight. Designed by Alan Ainslie, the stamps feature the following animals:

**Oribi** (*Ourebia ourebi*). The Oribi (a small antelope) is recognised as endangered in South Africa and its numbers are declining rapidly. Trapping with snares and illegal hunting with dogs, as well as habitat destruction due to commercial forestry and farming, grassland degradation and mining, pose a severe threat to the Oribi. In South Africa they occur along the eastern parts of Mpumalanga, KwaZulu-Natal and the Eastern Cape, with a small population extending into the Free State.

**Black Rhinoceros** (*Diceros bicornis*). The poaching of rhinos for their horns has reached unprecedented levels, which has led to the black rhinoceros being listed as critically endangered. A shocking number of 1215 black and white rhinos have been poached in South Africa since the beginning of 2014 (3993 since 2000) and 386 people were arrested in 2014. The black rhinoceros, also known as the hook-lipped rhinoceros, is native to eastern, central and southern Africa, but the largest populations are found in South African nature reserves.

**Grey Crowned Crane** (*Balearica regulorum*). Standing at over a metre tall, the elegant Grey Crowned Crane graces many of Africa’s wetlands. This species has been uplisted to endangered because of rapid declines in numbers during the past years. Threats to their populations include illegal capture for the pet trade and the loss or degradation of suitable wetland habitat, due to an increasing human population and the demand for agricultural land and freshwater sources.

**Ground Hornbill** (*Bucorvus leadbeateri*). This imposing bird with its powerful black beak, and distinctive red patches of bare skin on the face and throat, is listed as vulnerable. It is under threat through illegal hunting for traditional medicine, the bush-meat trade and habitat destruction due to human development. In South Africa, they are mainly found in nature reserves in the eastern parts of the country in savanna habitats with large trees for nesting and dense but short grass for foraging.

**Cape Parrot** (*Poicephalus robustus*). This brightly coloured parrot, an endangered species and South Africa’s only endemic parrot, is one of the most endangered parrots on earth. Over the last 150 years, a combination of the degradation of our remaining Afromontane forest patches, disease outbreaks, direct persecution such as shooting by farmers, and illegal capture for the wild-caught bird trade, has reduced the numbers of the global wild population to less than 1 000 individuals.

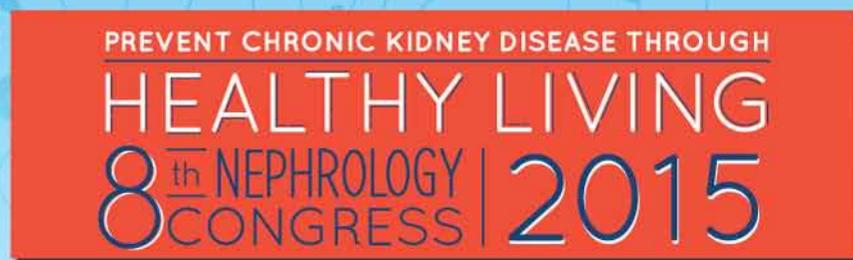
**Sungazer** (*Smaug giganteus*). The Sungazer, also known as the Giant Girdled Lizard, is the largest of the girdled lizards. They are endemic to South Africa and are registered as a threatened or protected species, in addition to being a CITES registered species. This means that collecting, possessing or trading these animals requires a permit. Threats include illegal capture for the pet trade and for traditional medicines, as well as habitat destruction and disturbance.

The stamp sheet background features a **Bearded Vulture** (*Gypaetus barbatus*). Listed as near threatened owing to rapid population decline over the past three generations, there is estimated to be only 100 breeding pairs and a total population of about 300 birds left in the wild.

Acknowledgement:  
Endangered Wildlife Trust

References:  
[www.ewt.org.za](http://www.ewt.org.za) ; National Wildlife Crime Reaction Unit (NWCURU)  
<http://www.birdlife.org/> ; <http://www.safricavoyage.com/poachers.htm>  
<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Poaching> ; <http://www.africanraptor.co.za/>  
<http://www.arkive.org/> ; <http://www.wildbirdtrust.com/>

## Sneak peek....



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