MOTHS OF ZIMBABWE

Issued 18th June 1986

(Extract from PTC bulletin No 3 of 1986)[2]

Although the diversity of moths is normal for a country of its size and geographical location, Zimbabwe shares with the rest of Southern Africa approximately 10 000 species.

The largest species in Zimbabwe are probably the Frosted Emperors *(Athletes semialba Sonthonnax* and *Athletes gigas Sonthonnax,* family Saturniidae), which can attain a wing span of some 20cm.

The four stamps are all from photographs by John Akester, a Zimbabwean Commercial and Industrial photographer.

12c: Jackson's Emperor Moth,
Bunaeopsis jacksoni (Jordan).

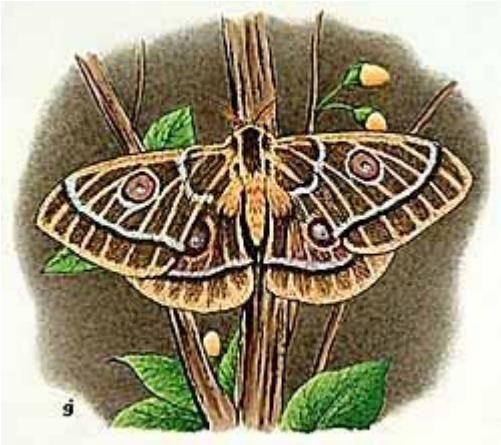
A large sized, beautifully coloured Emperor Moth common in Mashonaland, Zimbabwe and in Angola, Zambia and Malawi and northwards to Kenya. The caterpillar, which feeds on grasses, is yellow in colour banded by broad black bands which are broken by a yellow line below black spines. It is a night flying moth easily attracted to light. Most of the Emperor Moths are attracted by bright lights but not to flowers, as in many of them the proboscis or 'tongue' is rudimentary or even absent so that they cannot feed. If disturbed when at rest many Emperor Moths throw their forewings forward to expose the large eye-spots on the hindwings in an attempt to startle or even scare off a would-be predator.

18c: Oleander Hawk Moth,
Deilephila nerii (Linn)

This beautiful moth is very common throughout Africa and is known, on occasion, to visit Europe as a very rare and highly prized migrant. The caterpillar feeds on many plants including oleander, jasmine, gardinia, and periwinkle. The body colour of the caterpillar is green with a pink eye-spot at each side of the front part. At the end of the body is a short, rough, yellow drooping tail. The caterpillar turns brown when fully grown and wanders off the food-plant. It spins leaves and other debris together with silk and eventually turn into a brown chrysalis. The moth emerges from the chrysalis in about three weeks to begin the life cycle again.

26c: Zaddach's Emperor Moth,
Bunaeopsis zaddachi (Dewitz).

This is one of the many Emperor Moths to be found throughout Zimbabwe together with the adjacent countries of Angola, Zambia and Mozambique, through to Uganda. The flight of this moth, like most of the large Emperors, is rather slow and ponderous. As it flies by night and is readily attracted to bright lights, it can often be found resting on. or near, shop windows during the day. The caterpillar, which feeds on grasses, has black thorns with red bases placed in orange spots. The background colour is greenish yellow. The enemies of the moth are owls, bats and nocturnal mammals, while the caterpillars are eaten by lizards, birds and small mammals.



35c: Southern Marbled Emperor Moth,
Heniocha apollonia (Cramer)

This fairly small Emperor Moth is found in i Zimbabwe, Zambia and parts of South Africa. The caterpillar feeds on acacia and is green in colour with white tubercles. Male Emperor moths 'assemble' to newly emerged females being attracted by strongly attractive odours emitted by the females. The scent particles are detected by the feather-like antennae of the males which will travel over considerable distances to the location of the female. Many female Emperor Moths will readily deposit their eggs in a shoe-box and the caterpillars are usually easy to rear providing that the correct food-plant is offered. The caterpillars of most Emperor moths are silk producing, but are not suitable for commercial silk production.

The Stamps

Catalogue listings

SG	ZSC[1]	Value	Description
694	121	12c	Jackson's Emperor Moth
695	122	18c	Oleander Hawk Moth
696	123	26c	Zaddach's Emperor Moth
697	124	35c	Southern Marbled Emperor Moth

Technical details

Stamp size: All values 35 x 30 mm

Sheet Size: 50 stamps (10 rows of 5 stamps), two panes per printed sheet

Artist: Photographs by John Akester

Paper: ZSC paper type B – HS6, fluorescent coated paper with PVA gum with a blueish/greenish tinge.

Print colours: All values - Black, magenta, cyan, yellow

Perforations: SG 14½ x 14, ZSC 14¼ x 14
Top margin: Perforated through.
Other margins: Imperforate

Printer: Mardon Printers (Pvt) Ltd., Harare, Zimbabwe

Printer's Imprint: Bottom Margin, below Row 10 Columns 2 to 4. Imprint printed in black

Cylinder numbers: Top margin above column 5. Colours reading from left
Other values – black, magenta yellow, cyan

Colour register: Type TL 4– round boxed – right margin opposite R1/5. Colours reading down. Other values – cyan, yellow, magenta, black

Sheet Value: Top margin, above R1/1, printed in black.

Sheet Number: Type SN 4a with 'PTC' prefix, left margin, opposite R1/1, reading down.

Print numbers:

12c	500,000	18c	320,000
26c	320,000	35c	320,000

Issue date: 18th June, 1986

Withdrawal from sale:
Demonetarisation: 31st January, 1994

Listed varieties

No listed varieties have been noted

Unlisted Varieties

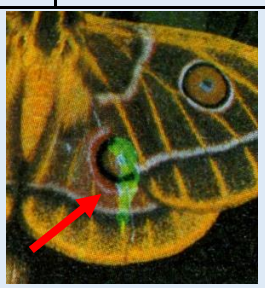
There are numerous small dots and specks in the printing of these stamps, particularly in the backgrounds. Some dots and specks shown below are a bit more distinctive, some may be constant.

12c: Lack white line along top right of stamp (Cyl 1A R1/5)
(Courtesy Narendhra Morar)

18c: Red dot on left wing (appears to be constant)

18c: Green ‘caterpillar’ on leaf stem left of moth

26c: Green spot on left wing



26c: Green splash on right wing

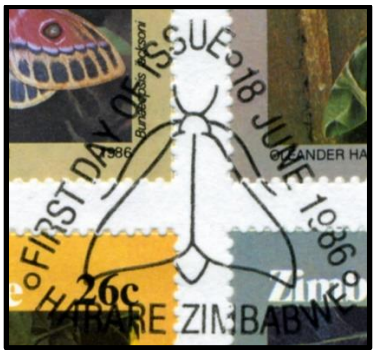
35c: Blocks of 4 from top right corner. The block on the left should have the printed cylinder numbers and traffic lights. Block on right is the correct cylinder block. The stamps do not appear to be missing any of the printing colours
Mystery as to how this was printed as the cylinder numbers and traffic lights for each colour should be on the printing plate

35c: Another extraordinary block. The printer's imprint appears in its usual position, but with a second lighter printer at an angle above. There is a further printing of the imprint, which is very light and is at a greater angle sloping upwards from left to right (difficult to see above (follow the arrows).
The printing of the stamps themselves show no additional doubling of the black printing.
Another mystery as to how this was printed.

First Day Covers

The cover numbering comes from the catalogue produced by Geoff Brakspear.

A pictorial first day of issue canceller was produced for this issued and was used by the Philatelic Bureau. Other first day cover cancellers continued to be used at main post offices.



ZW26-1 (PTC)

176 x 125mm

ZW25.2.1

Cover produced by Fleetwood, USA
for National Audubon Society

ZW25.2.2

Cover produced by Fleetwood, USA
for National Audubon Society

Related Material

PTC Publicity folder

A clear plastic folder containing the Bulletin (without order forms) and a set of stamps in a blue stock card.

With compliments slip from the PTC.

Bibliography:

1. "The Zimbabwean Concise Postage Stamp Catalogue", published by Harare Stamp Company, edited by Ken Allanson, Mike Amos and Geoff Brakspear. The catalogue continues to be updated and expanded by Geoff Brakspear
2. PTC Philatelic Bureau Bulletin No 3 of 1986.