CATS OF ZIMBABWE
Issued 16th March, 1999

(Extracted from Philatelic Bureau Bulletin No 2 of 1999)²

A set of four stamps illustrating cats commonly resident in Zimbabwe

$1.20: Serval
*Felis serval*

It is distributed throughout Zimbabwe. A long legged, spotted cat with a short tail and large rounded ears. Body colour is variable but usually yellowish-fawn with scattered black spots and bars. Underparts are paler but usually also spotted. Its tail is banded with black with a black tip. The serval is usually nocturnal but sometimes active in early morning and late afternoon.

Habitat is usually around environments with water, adjacent to tall grasslands, reed-beds or rank vegetation fringing forest. Their prey usually consists of small mammals, particularly vlei rats, but they will also prey on hares and cane-rats, also birds, reptiles and sometimes young of smaller antelope species. Most young are born in the summer months usually about 1 - 5 kittens which are born in burrows dug by other species or in dense vegetation.

$5.40: Cheetah
*Acinonyx jubatus*

Distributed throughout most of Zimbabwe. The cheetah is the most elegant of the cat family and the fastest land mammal with bursts of speed up to 75km/h. It is tall and slender with long legs and a short muzzle. The body colour is off-white to pale fawn liberally dotted with black rounded spots more or less of uniform size.

It has a clear black line (tear-mark) which runs from below each eye to the corner of the mouth. It is the only cat to not have fully retractile claws. Its habitat is open savanna and light woodland, but also hilly country on occasion. Its prey consists of medium size mammals but when two or more cheetahs hunt together they will often take much larger prey. Impala are a favourite food and birds up to the size of an ostrich are often taken. It usually gives birth to 1 - 5 young at any time of the year. They are usually born in dense plant cover, thereafter following the mother.
$7.40: Caracal  
*Felis caracal*

Distributed well throughout Zimbabwe. The caracal is a robustly built cat with hindquarters slightly higher than its shoulders. Its face is prominently marked with black and white patches. Colour varies from pale reddish fawn to a rich brick red. It has pointed ears with a tuft of longish black hair.

It has a short reddish tail. The caracal's habitat varies from semi-desert to savanna woodlands and hilly country to forests. Their prey consists of mainly small to medium size mammals, ranging from mice to antelope. It also catches birds and reptiles. In some small-stock farming areas it is considered to be a problem because of its depredations on sheep and goats. Young are born at any time of year although there is a summer peak, 1 -3 kittens may be born in burrows of other species or in rock crevices or dense vegetation.

$9.90: Leopard  
*Panthera pardus*

Distributed throughout Zimbabwe. The leopard is an elegant and powerfully built cat with a beautifully spotted coat. Basic body colour is from almost white to orange russet. Its habitat is extremely wide from high mountains to lowveld plains. Good cover is an essential requirement. It has a very broad diet, ranging from insects to rodents and birds to medium and sometimes large antelopes.

In some rocky and mountainous areas dassie make up an important part of the diet. It will often kill more than its immediate needs, the surplus being stored for later use. Kills may be dragged under dense bush, amongst rocks, or in some areas into trees out of reach of other predators. Leopards readily feed from rotten carcasses. Litter of 2-3 cubs are born in dense cover, rock crevices or caves. The is not a fixed breeding season. Trapped, wounded or threatened the leopard can be extremely dangerous but is normally shy and withdraws from disturbance.
The Stamps

Catalogue listings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SG</th>
<th>ZSC¹</th>
<th>Value</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>984</td>
<td>412</td>
<td>$1.20</td>
<td>Serval</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>985</td>
<td>413</td>
<td>$5.60</td>
<td>Cheetah</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>986</td>
<td>414</td>
<td>$7.40</td>
<td>Caracal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>987</td>
<td>415</td>
<td>$9.90</td>
<td>Leopard</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Technical details

Stamp size: All values 30 x 35 mm

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

Artist: Darren Herbert

Paper: ZSC paper type F - Although still officially described as HS8, the paper properties changed in 1996. This is fluorescent front but non-fluorescent back and the gum is whitish PVA.

Print colours: Cyan, magenta, yellow & black

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

Printer: NatPrint, Harare, Zimbabwe

Printer’s Imprint: Bottom Margin, below Row 5 Columns 5 & 6. Imprint printed in black

Cylinder numbers: Bottom margin below R5/1. Colours from left – cyan, magenta, yellow, black

Colour register: Type TL 4– round boxed – left margin opposite R5/1. Colours reading down – cyan, magenta, yellow, black
Sheet Value: Bottom margin, above R5/10, printed in black.

Sheet Number: Type SN 4a with ‘PTC’ prefix, right margin opposite R5/10, reading down

Print numbers: $1.20 2,500,000 $5.60 190,000
$7.40 190,000 $9.90 190,000

Issue date: 16\textsuperscript{th} March, 1999

Withdrawal from sale:

Demonetarisation:

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.

$7.40: Imperforate proof

(\textit{Courtesy Jetherson Ritson})

$7.40: Black mark below first ‘a’ of “caracal”, Cyl 1B R5/2

(\textit{Courtesy Narendhra Morar})
First Day Cover

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.

ZW079.1 (PTC)

220 x 110 mm

Related Material

First Day Cover signed by D Herbert, artist

Bibliography: