

INSECTS OF ZIMBABWE Series 1

Issued 12th January 1988

Note: this was the first set of stamps printed under the name “National Printing & Publishing”

(Extract from Philatelic Bureau Bulletin No 1 of 1988)²

“The history of insects goes back more than 300 million years. The species is estimated at more than four million and is regarded as the largest of all the animal kingdom. They belong to the Phylum Arthropoda, meaning "joint footed". Their main features are the three parts to their body — head, thorax and abdomen; three pairs of legs joined to the thorax and usually two pairs of wings.

The four types of insects depicted on the stamps are found in certain areas of Zimbabwe. The Short-horned Grasshopper is probably the largest of the four.



Wahlberg's Praying Mantis,
Pseudocreobotra wahlbergi.

This species belongs to the Mantidae, order Mantodea family. It is one of the most colourful species of Praying Mantis commonly found in low-lying parts of Zimbabwe. The *Pseudocreobotra wahlbergi* has spectacular eye-shaped markings on the forewing which apparently, startle or even scare off a would-be predator when suddenly exposed. In a breeding season the female lays 60 or more eggs in a frothy liquid which hardens into a protective case from which the young emerge after about a month. The Mantids are carnivores, feeding on other insects. Females are commonly known to devour the males after mating.

Scarab Beetle

Dicranorrhina derbyana

Common. throughout Zimbabwe, this brightly coloured species belongs to the sub-family Cetoniines of the family Scarabaeidae, in the order Coleoptera. Like other Cetoniines, *Dicranorrhina derbyana* is a day-flying species much attracted to fermented fruit or gum exudations on trees. The females lay their eggs in rotting wood or decaying vegetation on which the larvae will then feed.



Short-horned Grasshopper

Dictyophorus spumans



Found in most parts of Zimbabwe, this species is a member of the family Pyrgomorphidae, order Orthoptera. As in all members of its family the Short-horned Grasshopper has poisonous and repugnant substances in its body which it emits for defence purposes. These substances are obtained from its main food plant, the milkweed (Asclepiadaceae). In a breeding season the females lay 50 or more large yellow eggs in a hole dug in the ground. The eggs are protected by frothy fluid which form into a case until they hatch during Spring or early Summer.

Giant Shield Bug

Chalcocoris rutilus.

This species belongs to Tessaratomidae family, in the order Hemiptera. It is one of the largest and most attractive African species. In Zimbabwe the insect is common in the Honde Valley of the Nyanga District. Like other members of its order *Chalcocoris rutilus* feeds on plant sap. This species reproduces by laying small eggs under the leaves of the food plant. The young emerge after about 10 to 14 days.



The Stamps



Catalogue listings

SG	ZSC ¹	Value	Description
724	151	15c	Wahlberg's Praying Mantis
725	152	23c	Scarab Beetle
726	153	35c	Short-horned Grasshopper
727	154	45c	Giant Shield Bug

Technical details

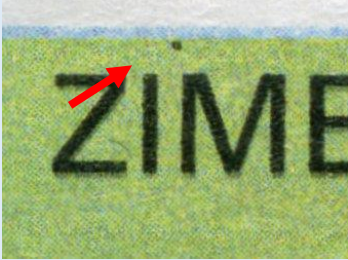
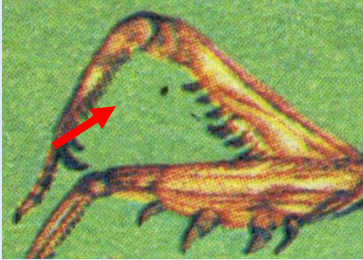
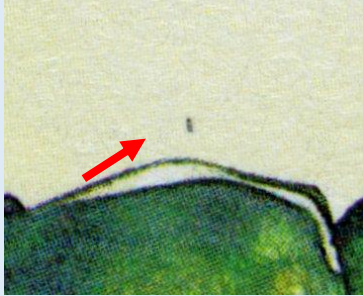
Stamp size:	All values	42 x 28 mm		
Sheet Size:	50 stamps (10 rows of 5 stamps), two panes per printed sheet			
Artist:	Janet Duff			
Paper:	ZSC paper type D – HS8, fluorescent front and back, with cream PVA gum.			
Print colours:	All values - Black, magenta, cyan, yellow			
Perforations:	SG 14½, ZSC 14¼ Top margin: Perforated through. Other margins: Imperforate			
Printer:	National Printing & Packaging, 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 – cyan, magenta, yellow, black			
Colour register:	Type TL 4– round boxed – right margin opposite R1/5. Colours reading down – cyan, magenta, yellow, 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:	15c	750,000	23c	500,000
	35c	320,000	45c	320,000
Issue date:	12 th January, 1988			
Withdrawal from sale:				
Demonetarisatation:	31 st January, 1994			

Listed varieties

No listed varieties have been noted

Unlisted Varieties

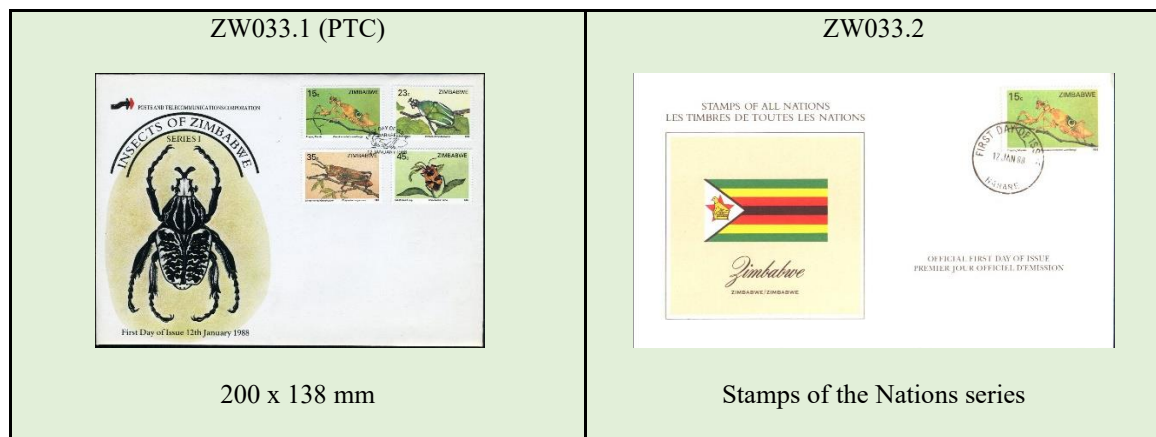
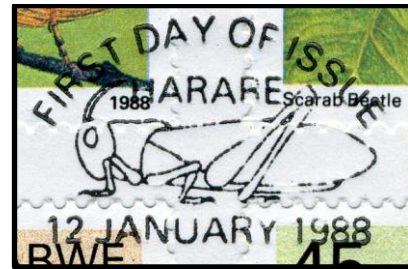
There are numerous small dots and specks in the printing of these stamps, particularly in the backgrounds. Some dots and specks shown below are a bit more distinctive, some may be constant.

 15c: Dot above 'M' of Zimbabwe	 15c: Black dot between insect's legs. Possibly constant Column 3	 15c: Yellow spot below lower front leg. Possibly constant R2/2
 23c: Cyan curl under beetle, possibly constant Column 5	 23c: Dash above thorax, R1/1	
	35c: Imperforate proof stamps (Source eBay June 2025)	

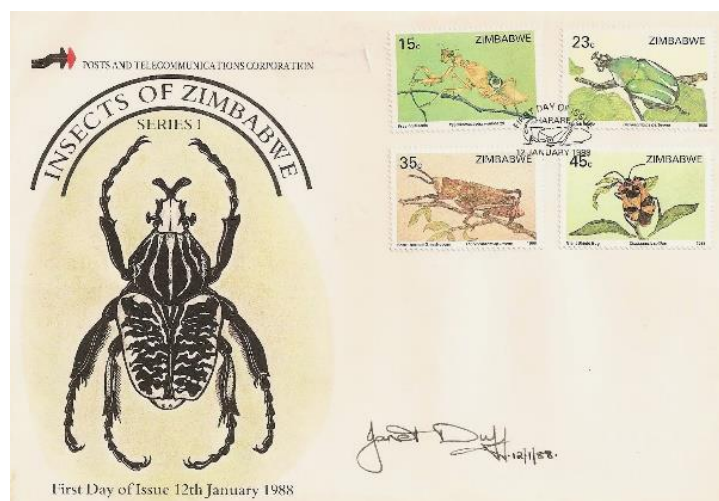
First Day Covers

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.



Related Material



First day cover signed by artist, Janet Duff
(Courtesy Narendhra Morar)

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 1 of 1988.

Additions/Changes since December 2020	
8/2024	35c imperforate proof stamps
8/2025	35c imperforate proof cylinder 1A