THE BIG FIVE

Issued 23rd June, 2009

(Extracted from Philatelic Bureau Bulletin No 3 of 2009)[2]

Originally used only by hunters, the term "Big Five" refers to five of Africa's greatest wild animals - lion, leopard, elephant, buffalo and rhinoceros, legends of the wilderness which have become synonymous with Africa. Africa - as home to the "Big Five" mammals - is also the only place where you can enjoy a Big Five safari. Many reserves have all the big five, but it's not that easy to see them all on your first safari, particularly leopards as they are nocturnal, secretive and well camouflaged. The countries where you have the most chance of seeing the Big Five are South Africa, Botswana, Zimbabwe, Kenya and Tanzania.



Zb: Leopard *(Panthera pardus)*

Leopards are more commonly found along riverine forests and bushes. Although less common, they also can be found along open plains and savanna, mainly in hills and rocky outcrops.

Leopards normally hunt at night and dusk, staying in secluded spots during the day or lying in high branches of bees. They are solitary animals by nature, with males only associating female for mating and stay with her only for a couple of days. Leopards are masters of camouflage and they move silently through the vegetation to attack their prey at very dose quarters. The victim is normally killed with a bite on the back of the neck, and then taken up a tree, where the leopard will feed at leisure, away from scavengers. Leopards are extremely territorial animals. Their life span is about 15 years, and they can attain a mass of about 70-kg.



Zs: Black Rhinoceros *(Diceros bicornis)*

Two types are found, namely Black and White Rhinos. The Black Rhino's head is much smaller, it is a solitary animal, more aggressive and the calf usually follows the mother.

Black rhinos prefer densely wooded areas, with a lot of shrubs and plenty of water.

Black Rhinos are very solitary animals, with bulls associating with females only for mating. Sub adults and youngsters stay with their mother only until the next calf is born, when they are driven off to find their own territories. The rhino bulls mark their territory by dragging their feet through their dung, scattering it all over the place and by urinating on to bushes. They are extremely aggressive animals. A charge by a rhino, with its loud snorts, is a terrifying affair They readily attack predators including humans. They are also short sighted, but their sense of smell and hearing is very acute. Adult males can weigh up to 1200 kg, females being slightly smaller. Their life span is about 40 years.

(The stamp features a Black Rhino, so this description and photo is related to that species)



A: Buffalo *(Syncerus caffer)*

Buffalo are extremely adaptable animals, being able to occupy open grasslands, wooded savanna and thickets. Highly gregarious animals, buffalo associate in herds of up to 1,000 or more individuals. Despite being very aggressive and extremely dangerous animals (more hunters are killed by buffaloes than any other animal), buffaloes are very peaceful amongst themselves. The dominant bull normally is the oldest bull in the herd. Both sexes have horns, but those of males are more robust and heavier. Males can attain a mass of about 800 kg and they have a life span of approximately 20 years.



A: Lion *(Panthera leo)*

Lions are more abundant in open plains where there is permanent water and plenty of grazing, and consequently, plenty of game. Lions are the most social of the cat family. They live in prides consisting of one or two males, up to seven females and 14 or 15 cubs of different ages. Prides occupy territories that they defend against nomadic lions and other prides; this is done by the dominant mate or males, by means of patrolling and scent marking. At about 3 years of age, young lions are evicted from their pride; they normally stay together, always on the move, becoming nomads, until they take over some other pride, whose mate has become too weak or old, sometimes killing all the existing cubs. Lionesses normally do all the hunting, usually at night, late afternoon or early morning.

At a kill, the adults will eat first, with the male sometimes claiming it for himself, and. if anything left, the cubs will then take their turn. In times of scarcity this means very little food available for the cubs, and death by starvation. Adult males can weigh up to 250 kg and females about 150 kg. Their life span is about 15 years.



E: Elephant *(Loxodonta africana)*

Elephants are always associated with permanent water and abundant. Because elephants do not have sweat glands, water plays an important role in helping them cool down.

Elephants are very intelligent and highly social animals. They live in herds, made up of the matriarch (the oldest animal in the group), her female calves and the youngsters. The herd can comprise between 6 and 30 animals, after that they spit to form new herds, always maintaining contact with each other at water holes and feeding spots. At 14 years of age. males leave the heard and associate with other bulls of the same age or older. Within the "bull area' hierarchy is well observed and understood by all bulls; if a group of bulls come across a cow in oestrus, the animal occupying the highest rank is the one to mate. Mates are much larger than females and their tusks are much longer and heavier. Elephants have 6 sets of molar teeth; when the last set is lost, the animal is unable to feed and eventually dies. Their life span is about 50 to 60 years.

R: The Big Five

Five of Africa's greatest wild animals, exotic, majestic and ferocious - the lion, the leopard, the elephant, the buffalo and the rhinoceros.



Postcard of the Big Five
Artwork by Bret Buckley, a Zimbabwean artist based in Harare

The Stamps

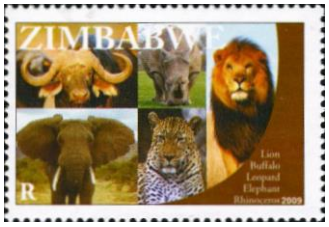


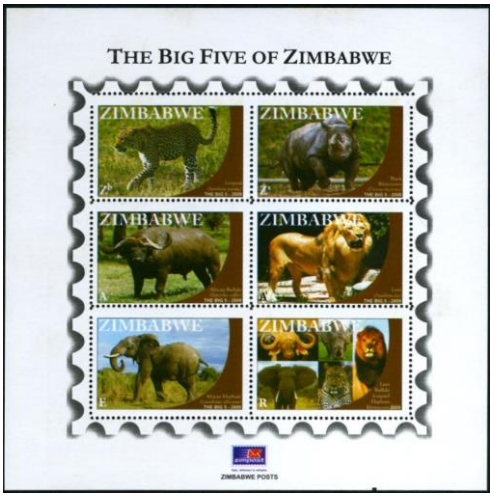












(50% of normal size)

Catalogue listings

SG	ZSC[1]	Value	Description
1277	688	Zb	Leopard *(Panthera pardus)*
1278	689	Zs	Black Rhinoceros *(Diceros bicornis)*
1279	690	A	Buffalo *(Syncerus caffer)*
1280	691	A	Lion *(Panthera leo)*
1281	692	E	Elephant *(Loxodonta africana)*
1282	693	R	The Big Five
MS1283	MS24		Miniature sheet with stamps se-tenant in block

Technical details

Stamp size:	Sheet stamps:	42 x 28 mm
	Miniature sheet:	126 x 127 mm

Sheet Size:	50 stamps (10 rows of 5 stamps), two panes per printed sheet
Artists:	Lucia Marisamhuka – Terrie Lue Graphics
Paper:	ZSC paper type J: paper described by Zimpost as "Chancellor Litho PVA Gummed Postage Stamp Paper". This paper is produced by Tullis Russell Coaters of Glenrothes, Fife, Scotland. Under UV there is no fluorescence either front or back, the stamp appears to be very dark
Print colours:	Cyan, magenta, yellow & black
Perforations:	Sheet stamps: SG 14½, ZSC 14¼ Top margin: Perforated through Other margins: Imperforate Miniature sheets: Imperforate margins
Printer:	NatPrint, Harare, Zimbabwe
Printer's Imprint:	Sheet stamps only: Bottom Margin, below Row 10 Column 3. Imprint printed in black
Cylinder numbers:	Sheet stamps only: Top margin above R1/1. Colours from left – cyan, magenta, yellow, black
Colour register:	Sheet stamps only: Type TL 4– round boxed – left margin opposite R1/1. Colours reading down – cyan, magenta, yellow, black
Sheet Value:	Sheet stamps only: Top margin, above R1/5, printed in black.
Sheet Number:	Type SN 7 with printed 'ZIMPOST' prefix, right margin opposite R1/5, reading down

Print numbers:

Zb	300,000	Zs	300,000
A	20,000	A	20,000
E	20,000	R	20,000
Miniature sheet	5,000		

Issue date: 23rd June 2009

Postal Rates

The postal rates applicable at the date of issue were those effective from 18th February 2009, which are quoted in United States dollars, as follows:

Zb	US$0.20	Zs	US$0.25	E	A	US$0.50
E	US$0.75	R	US$1.00			

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 which are more noticeable with the solid colours.

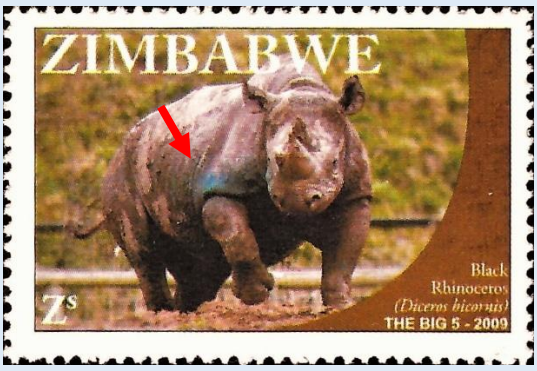
There is some significant colour variation in the printing of most of these stamps. With slight movements of the plates the wording in the bottom right corner, value and the country's name can be somewhat fizzy and difficult to read.



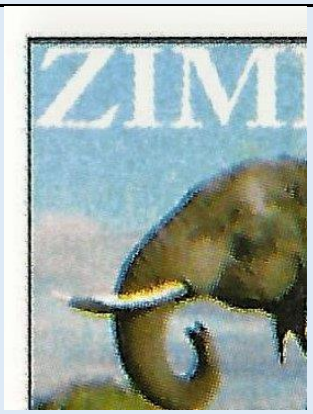
Zs value: Dark shade



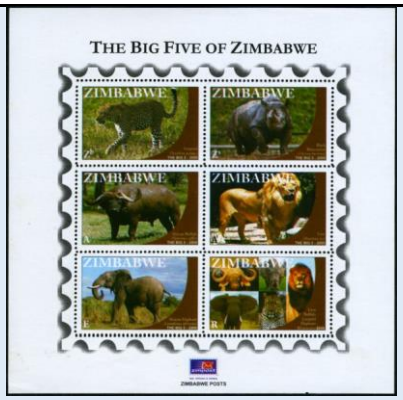
Zs value: Light shade



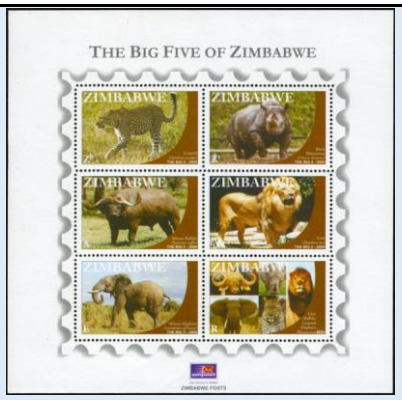
Zs value: Probable water on plate resulting in cyan coloured area at top of right foreleg
(Courtsey of Narendhra Morar)



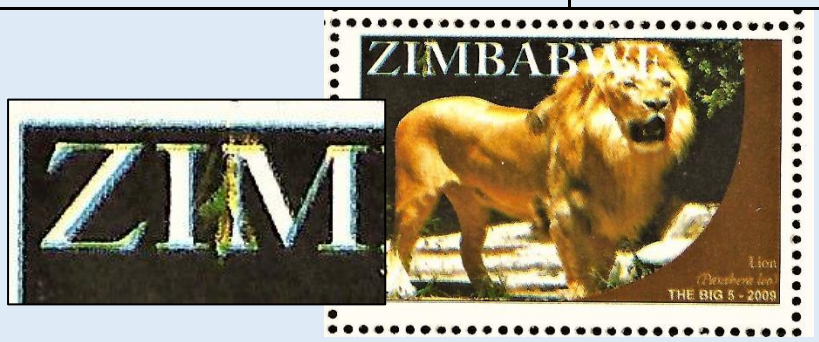
E value: Plate shift resulting inblurred outline of elephant and double line to topp frame.
(Courtesy of Narendhra Morar)



Miniature sheet: Very dark shade



Miniature sheet: Very light shade



Miniatire sheet: A value - Smudge to 'IM' of Zimbabwe, togther with cyan plate shift left.
(Courtesy of Narendhra Morar)

First Day Cover

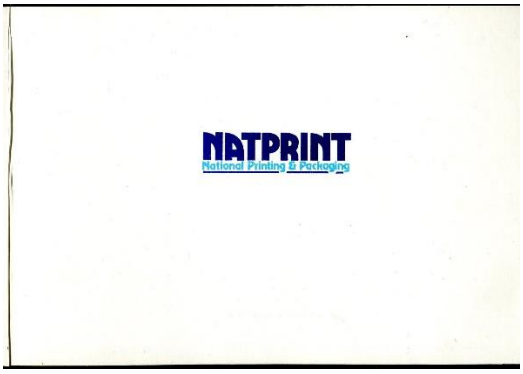
No first day covers were made available by the Philatelic Bureau, covers can, however be found with the Harare First Day of Issue canceller on plain covers and Bureau manila stationery.

Related Material

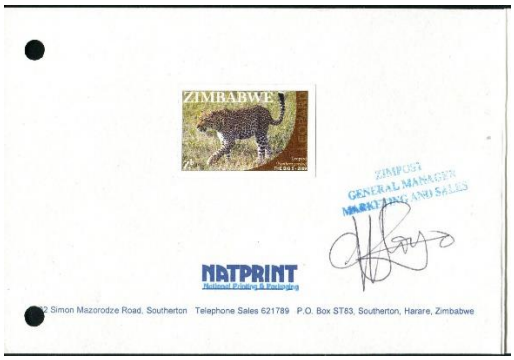
Natprint Proof Presentation Cards

Presentation cards produced by Natprint with imperforate proofs of the stamps to be issued. The presentation cards were forwarded to the PTC for approval of the final product. The proof stamps for this issue were placed on the inside cover of the presentation card. All cards were signed by the Zimpost General Manager for Marketing and Sales (think is a Mr Moyo)

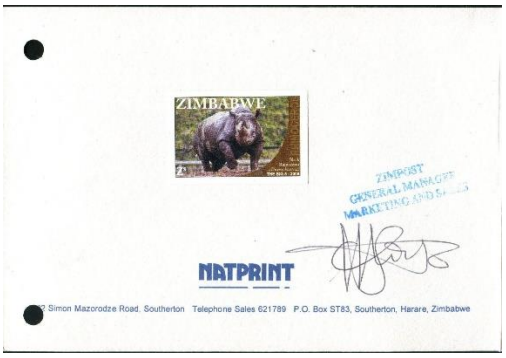
(Courtesy of Jefferson Ritson)



Front cover



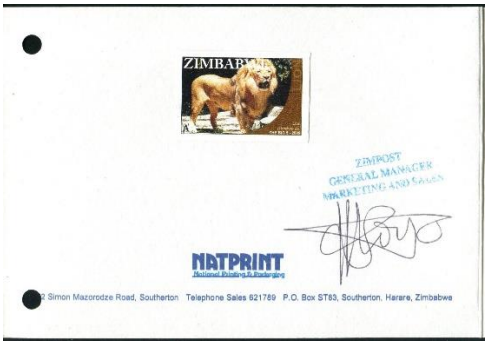
Zb value stamp



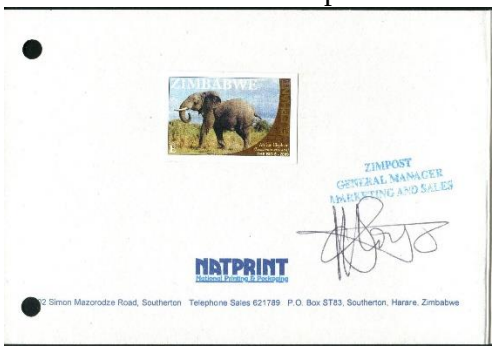
Zs value stamp



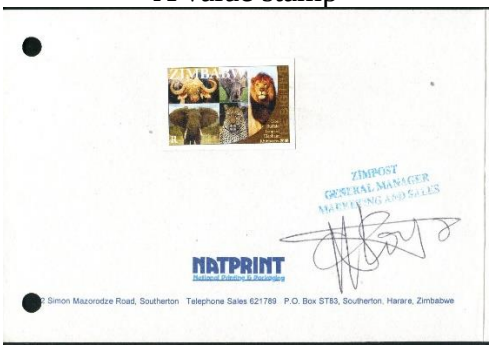
A value stamp



A value stamp



E value stamp



R value stamp

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. Zimbabwe Post, Philatelic Bureau Bulletin No 3 of 2009

Additions/Changes since December 2020	
3/2023	Postcard of big five by Bret Buckley
4-2024	Zs value – light and dark shades