

UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA
GAINESVILLE, 32611

DEPARTMENT OF ZOOLOGY
223 BARTRAM HALL
904-392-1107

February 13, 1980

Mr. William Bolger
Postmaster General
Washington, D.C. 20260

Dear Mr. Bolger:

I am writing to ask your committee to consider four species of marine turtles that occur in the United States as themes for a commemorative stamp issue. All of these unique reptiles are experiencing serious survival problems and are all protected under the United States Endangered Species Act.

Under the auspices of the United States State Department and a large number of conservation organizations, the United States was recently host to an International Symposium on Sea Turtle Conservation, attended by delegates from over 40 countries. One of the goals defined by the Scientific Committee of that conference was to increase public awareness of the survival status of, and principal threats to, existing populations of marine turtles. A commemorative stamp issue would contribute significantly to this end.

The names of species nominated, along with brief descriptions, are listed as follows:

1. Green Turtle (*Chelonia mydas*) - Once called the most valuable reptile in the world and formerly abundant in Florida and Texas, green turtle populations have drastically declined there and elsewhere in the world. Very recently the small Florida nesting colony, the only one in mainland U.S., appears to have increased slightly.

2. Loggerhead (*Caretta caretta*) - The loggerhead breeds farther north than any other sea turtle. In the U.S. its nesting shores extend from Florida to North Carolina, and those in Florida, from Jupiter Island to Cape Canaveral, are the most populous in the world.

3. Hawksbill (*Eretmochelys imbricata*) - This is the most tropical of the sea turtles. It nests singly or in little groups over an extensive tropical range. It is fairly numerous in reefs off southeastern Florida and the Keys. The price to which tortoiseshell has risen--up to \$80 a pound or more--threatens the species with extinction.

4. Kemp's Ridley (*Lepidochelys kempi*) - One of the most clearly endangered vertebrate animals still alive. Its breeding colony in Mexico, once numbering up to 40,000, has dwindled to only a few hundred. It was until lately quite abundant in waters of the southern United States. During the past two years, a number of U.S. and Mexican agencies have been engaged in an emergency program to save the ridley.

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During previous years several foreign countries have issued stamps portraying marine turtles. I enclose examples of several of these, and believe you'll agree that attractive artistry can be achieved with such subject matter.

I would be pleased to provide you with any additional information that might be needed in making an evaluation of this for a commemorative stamp featuring sea turtles.

Sincerely yours,

Archie Carr

Archie Carr
Graduate Research Professor
Chairman, IUCN/SSC Marine Turtle
Specialist Group

AC:ljw

Enclosures

NOTE:



LETTER SENT TO NUMEROUS SEA TURTLE RESEARCHERS AND CONSERVATIONIST IN FOREIGN COUNTRIES IN ORDER TO PROMOTE THE ISSUANCE OF STAMPS FEATURING SEA TURTLES. AS THE RESULT, STAMPS WERE ISSUED BY PAKISTAN, PAPUA NUGINI, MAUNTANE, PITCAIRN, FILIPINES, TOKELAU, AND PROBABLY ALSO COSTA RICA.

University of Hawaii at Manoa

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1980

Dear

One of the small conservation projects that we have undertaken here in the United States involves a letter writing campaign aimed at persuading our postal service to issue commemorative stamps displaying sea turtles. A copy of the original proposal, as well as a few representative letters of endorsement, have been attached to illustrate how we have thus far proceeded in this matter.

The portrayal of sea turtles on postage stamps provides an excellent means for creating public awareness of the need for both conservation and research. As you are probably aware, the subject material used on postage stamps usually relates to aspects of national heritage. Sea turtles would therefore be well suited as a stamp topic in the case of your own country. I do not know what procedures are followed by your postal service in adopting subject material, but I would like to suggest that you make the appropriate inquiries and give serious consideration to submitting a proposal for sea turtles. Postage stamps constitute important sources of revenue for most countries due to international sales to collectors. Government authorities are consequently continually searching for new and exciting topics. The suggestion of a sea turtle issue could very well be readily received and placed into action.

Sea turtles have already appeared on stamps issued by a number of countries. I have enclosed copies of several of these stamps for reference purposes. If you decide to pursue this matter further, as I hope you will, please do not hesitate to contact me if you think I can somehow be of assistance.

Best regards and Aloha,

George H. Balazs
Assistant Marine Biologist

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enclosures