

Australian Fisheries



Australian Fisheries

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Front cover



Commercial fish and fishing have been the central themes of many special stamp issues throughout the world. This month's front cover displays a page from the collection of Peter Davis, a DPI Fisheries Division officer and keen 'thematic' stamp collector. Peter's theme, not surprisingly, is commercial fishing. On page 34, he discusses this educational hobby in the first of a series of occasional articles on the subject.

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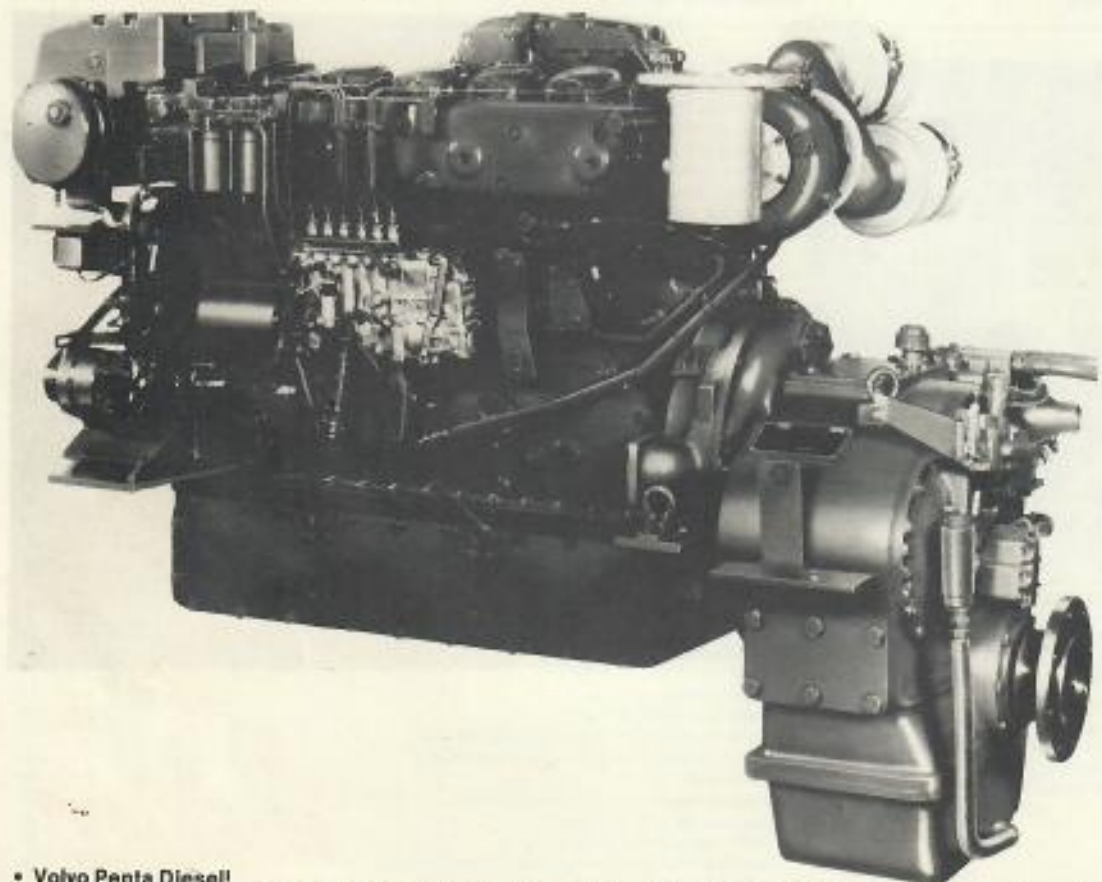
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Thematic stamp collecting an educational hobby

by Peter Davis*

Stamp collecting might seem a dry hobby favoured by kids and accountants, but in fact it can be absorbing and educational. It can even teach collectors something about the fishing industry.

SINCE the issue of the famous 'Penny Black' in 1840, the collection and study of postage stamps (philately) has boomed to become a hobby of universal appeal. This hobby is now the foundation of a multi-million dollar business, in which the apparently insatiable appetite of collectors is fuelled by more than 6 000 new stamp issues every year.

In recent years the demand for stamps has been accentuated by the entry of the investor on the scene, pushing up the market values of some stamps at amazing rates. The 'thematic' collector, with his specialized interests in particular themes, and thus selective buying, is hardly likely to see financial profit figuring in his motives.

Thematic stamp collecting

General catalogues list some 200 000 stamps, the vast majority of these issued after World War II. By contrast to the sombre and austere appearance of the original 'Penny Black', more recent issues tend to be colorful and pictorial. It is from these that the thematic collector will find most of the material for his collection.

The stamps on the front cover of this journal illustrate the diversity of issues featuring the theme of commercial fish and fishing.

*Peter Davis, as well as being a Fish Exports Standards Officer with the Fisheries Division of the Department of Primary Industry, is a keen collector of stamps portraying commercial fish and fishing. This is the first article in an occasional series on the subject. Anyone interested in further advice should write to *Australian Fisheries*.

There are many themes but of course certain popular themes occur time and time again — sport, paintings, space, animals etcetera. Themes range from these generally recognised subjects to others which are narrow, obscure and esoteric. Also the logical evolution of a thematic collection is from the more general towards the more particular, as a collector's time, money and album space impose their natural constraints.

A thematic collector, in the pursuit of his hobby, will tend to cut across two natural 'boundaries' of philately, and this explains in part why some thematic collecting lacks investment appeal.

Firstly, he usually cuts across national boundaries; his collection could feature stamps from almost every country of the world. This, in itself, need not always be a drawback, particularly in the modern era of frequent 'universal' issues on a particular international theme such as the Olympics and Year of the Child. But collectors of such material might tend to let their themes be dominated by the stamps available.

However, the second 'boundary' which is cut, that of the 'set', is a very costly one and is the hallmark (or bane) of a dedicated thematic collector.

Most new issues of stamps appear as sets, usually of differing denominations. Often all the stamps in such sets feature one obvious theme, but sometimes numerous themes appear in one set, so that a determined thematic collector may need to break a set; that is, pick out particular stamps and ignore the rest. Since trade in stamps relies heavily on buying

and selling complete sets, this can prove a costly exercise for the thematic collector.

Commercial fish

In general, stamps featuring commercial fish and fishing are not common but, as the front cover shows, there is sufficient scope to keep interest alive, both in terms of existing issues and, of course, the unknown factor of future issues.

The earliest, rarest and most expensive pictorial stamps featuring commercial fish are those in a set of six issued by the Canadian province of Newfoundland in 1866, which included a 2c codfish and a 5c fur seal.

Since then stamps featuring aspects of this theme have come from most countries of the world, though obviously the majority are from those countries where fishing is commercially most important, such as Iceland, Japan, the Soviet Union and Scandinavia.

Most are issued as straight sets with a common theme and new issues are relatively inexpensive. As a theme, aspects include not only the fish themselves, but fishing vessels, fishing gear, fishing treaties, fish farming and fisheries research.

How to start

Stamp Dealers

Perhaps the first point of contact for anyone wishing to start a thematic collection would be through a local stamp dealer; they are usually listed in the telephone 'yellow pages'. Stamp dealers will do business either over the counter, by auction or by post. There are many hundreds of them throughout Australia and many of these belong to the Australasian Stamp

Australian Fisheries, April, 1980

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Australian abalone V Chilean loco: in Japan it's no contest

by Lynda Cowan*

CHILEAN loco is not competing with Australian abalone on the Japanese market, according to a spokesman for the major seafood importers Tokyo Maruichi Shoji.

The spokesman said Australian abalone had a reputation for quality and commanded a high price. The loco was comparatively tough and tasteless. The Australian abalone was destined for the sashimi trade, or direct sales to large supermarket chains and the Tokyo Central Fish Market (where the December wholesale price for Australian abalone was Y3000 a kg). Loco sold for about Y800 and 80 per cent of imports were processed before being resold at the market.

There are now three main forms of processed loco in retail outlets:

- chimi — a mixture of sliced raw loco with various fish or sea urchin roe, seaweed and

seasonings, eaten as an hors-d'oeuvre (December retail price Y285/100g);

- mushiawabi — boiled in soy sauce with mirin (cooking sake) and sugar (Y278/pack of two about 100g). Serving suggestions for mushiawabi include cold, as hors-d'oeuvre, sushi (a slice on top of a handful of vinegared rice), in salads, or after heating, as a steak; and

- canned boiled loco (Y600/can containing 120g of meat).

Although the country of origin is usually recorded on the labels, undoubtedly use of the name 'awabi' considerably helps sales of what would otherwise be just another processed shellfish amongst dozens already available.

The remaining 20 per cent of imports is sold through the Central Fish Market to small processors and retailers, especially 'fast-food' sushi restaurants. This is a long way from being 'indistinguishable from the Australian product' (*Australian Fisheries*, April, 1978) as far as the true awabi gourmet is concerned. Meanwhile fresh in-shell

Japanese awabi continue to fetch up to Y10 000/kg in high class restaurants.

Demand for abalone fluctuates widely but some changes are predictable; for example, all types sell well during New Year, when many speciality festive foods are consumed, but mid-year sales are slow.

Imports of loco are once again soaring. From January to September 1979 they totalled 2 592 tonnes compared with 821 tonnes for the same period in the previous year. (Australian awabi figures were 835 t and 689 t respectively).

The Chilean resource appears to be declining. A few years ago a kilo of imported frozen loco contained five or six pieces, whereas now 10 to 13 pieces are required. Divers have to search further offshore and the government has implemented size limits and closed areas. Management measures have also restricted the export of Canadian abalone to Japan in 1979.

It would seem that the changeable Japanese market is likely to remain that way for some time.

* Lynda Cowan is an Australian student in the Department of Aquaculture at the Tokyo University of Fisheries.

Dealers Association based in Melbourne. Dealers can supply stamps, albums, catalogues and accessories.

Clubs

Throughout Australia philatelic clubs and societies are organised on a local basis, meeting usually monthly. Often the easiest way to find information about clubs is through a local stamp dealer.

There is a Thematic Society of Australia, PO Box C384, Clarence Street, Sydney, NSW 2000 and on the international scene the American Topical Association, 2206 N 50th Street, Milwaukee, WIS 53216, USA

lists 10 000 members under some 700 topics and 200 countries collected.

Journals

There are two Australia-wide journals — *Stamp News* and *Australian Stamp Monthly* — both available through stamp dealers or newsagents. They carry news of new issues from around the world and *Stamp News* includes the comprehensive 'Scott's Chronicle of New Issues', a supplement to Scott's catalogues.

Catalogues

Scott's catalogues from the USA and Stanley Gibbons from

the UK are world-wide in scope. More specialized catalogues are printed by countries and even societies throughout the world; further details would be available through local dealers.

Exhibitions

Philatelic exhibitions on a local, national and international level are regular events. The next major exhibition in Australia is 'Sydpex 80', Sydney Town Hall, September 29-October 6 1980. Most exhibitions feature displays of thematic collections.