

To George H. Beale with compliments of the author, Yehonah Ames, Sept 9, 1973

Zoo Island scientist seeks sea turtle stamp info

By Yehonah Ames

How's your geography? Do you know which French islands are not French, but American? Need a clue? They are situated 500 miles from a capital city and yet are included within its city limits! Only a foot or so above sea level and practically uninhabited by humans, they are the fascinating French Frigate Shoals of Hawaii.

Several of these fit our definition of "zoo" islands and it has been my privilege to receive interesting letters from a number of individuals there. My first came from a Coastguardman stationed on Tern Island, who was about to return to the continental US after his year's service on Tern. According to him, Tern Is.

is approx. 3,100 feet long and 450 feet wide.

"Tern Island doesn't have its own postmark," he told me. "We have a mail run once a week by FAA. The mail is handled by Navy and Coast Guard and we wonder sometimes how the mail works."

"Everyone has to do a year. I did a lot of skin diving to pass the time away. Took a lot of underwater pictures of fishes, sharks, rays and eels. Most unusual experience was being in the water with sharks. They breed out here. Tern Island is a refuge and there's no fishing, etc. allowed. Turtles up to 365 pounds were around the islands, also a lot of seals."

Early this year, I received another letter from Tern Island, this one written by the commanding officer. The cover was rubber-stamped "Tern Island, French Frigate Shoals" and die-stamped with the seal of the "U.S. Coast Guard, LORSTA, French Frigate Shoals" and postmarked "U.S. Postal Service, HI 987."

In his letter, the CO mentioned that "Tern Island was so named for the various species of terns which inhabit the island." One species of tern has been termed the world's "champion migrator." This is the Arctic tern which flies a greater distance than any other migrating bird. Every year, it makes a round trip of about 22,000 miles from the northernmost islands of the Arctic to the Ant-

arctic and back again. Without man's complex navigational equipment, it travels that great distance with pinpoint accuracy. These relatives of gulls are so graceful in flight that some people call them sea swallows.

According to the CO, "The station is presently undergoing a 1 1/2 million dollar rehabilitation project and we are busy supervising 20 Coastguardsmen and 20 civilian contractors on board working on the project."

"I must regret," he continued, "that we are unable to postmark your envelopes at Tern Island; the station is too small to warrant a military post office. Our mail is flown to Honolulu by a log (logistical) flight where it is postmarked. I have stamped the envelopes and signed them to indicate that they were actually on Tern Island."

"There are several other islands in French Frigate Shoals which bear animal names such as Shark Is., Whale Is., Mullet Is. and Skate; these islands are uninhabited and are part of the Hawaii Islands National Wildlife Refuge. A complete history of French Frigate Shoals is contained in Atoll Research Bulletin No. 150, 'The Natural History of French Frigate Shoals, Northwestern Hawaiian Islands' by A. Binton Amerson, Jr., issued by The Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C."

Western Stamp Collector
25 August 1973

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I wrote to the manager of the wildlife refuge and asked him if he would give my letter to any scientist who might be visiting any of these other "zoo" islands.

How delighted I was this summer to see in my mail an autographed cover with the curious return address of "WHALES-SKATE ISLAND." It proved to be from a marine biologist who wrote as follows:

"I am presently conducting a turtle-tagging project at French Frigate Shoals. Part of our work is on Whales-Skate. You may be interested to know that Whale and Skate Island were joined some years ago by shifting sand bars, thus the present name, Whales-Skate.

"If you have any information relating to sea turtles on postage stamps, I would appreciate hearing about them."

If any WSC reader would like to share any such information about sea turtles on stamps with this scientist, I would be happy to forward your letters to him at his more permanent address on Coconut Island, away out there in the Pacific. You may address your letter to Zoo Island Scientist, % my address as given at end of this article.

SQUIRREL ISLAND

The postmaster of Squirrel Island, Maine 04570, has told me many fascinating things about his island which I will share with you. He writes:

"I would be happy to tell you a little bit about our island. Squirrel Island didn't get its name because of its shape. Once long ago, an old sailing vessel was shipwrecked along our southern shore. The ship's name was the "Squirrel", and hence our island got its name.

"The island is 130 acres in size with about 105 summer cottages on it. It was established in 1871 as a small summer colony. There are no cars or bicycles allowed on Squirrel. Everybody has to walk. We do have a few trucks to haul the groceries and luggage. There are cement sidewalks which wind almost entirely around and through the island to make travel a little easier. On Squirrel, we have a town hall, library, post office, chapel and tea room. None of the homes have telephones, but there are five pay stations scattered around the island. Nobody lives out here during the winter

except for a caretaker, his wife and a couple of workmen. Our transportation to and from the harbor is provided by two ferry boats which leave the island every day on the hour and on the half hour, beginning at 7:30 a.m. and ending at 5:30 p.m. All of our water and electricity is piped from the mainland which is about a mile away."

I really appreciate the kind gestures and fine letters I have received from so many "zoo" islanders, and from the comments I have had from WSC readers. I know you too have been enjoying this series.

Until my next visit, I send my warm greetings to you all.

Nehemiah Ames,
PO Box 274,
Gibraltar (Europe).



N. Ames
P.O. Box 274
Gibraltar

February 6, 1974



Dear Marine Biologist -

Your request for information on sea turtles on postage stamps as advertised in Mr. Nchemiah Jones' article in the "Western Stamp Collector" on 8/25/73 just came to my attention today.

I am a topical stamp collector, and turtle stamps is one of my interests, developed simply from my love of little turtles as a child. Along with some "comrades" in turtle stamp collecting (all in U.S. but I have never met them), I have drawn up the enclosed "Turtle Stamp Check List" with Scott catalog numbers.

We do not distinguish sea turtles from land turtles in our list, but I have noted data relevant to this in cases where the type of turtle can be positively identified. Some of the stamps listed on our Check List are merely allegorical, or turtle shell only, and so on.

I hope that this will be of assistance

to you, and I'd like to hear from
you if possible. Since you sought
this information so long ago, perhaps
you have acquired by now some
information that you could pass
along to me, e.g. additions to my
list or names of turtle type where I am
lacking, etc.

Sincerely,

Judy Hermadeg

25261 Gussion Road

California, Laguna Hills

USA 92653

May 3, 1974

Dear Mr. Balazs,

I was so pleased to hear from you this week. I had decided that my letter must have gone astray. It was very considerate of you to enclose copies of the other 2 letters that you received, and I am delighted with the literature included. Some day when I have more time (I have two little boys - 10 months and 3 1/2 yrs.) I plan to exhibit both my turtle stamps of which I now have over 100 different issues and my Stamps on Stamps of which I have over 1000. The turtle literature which you have sent me should be extremely useful in providing scientific data for an exhibit.

The letter to you from Miss Demand mentioned two turtle stamps not on my list so I was

delighted to add them to my list. (the ones that are not Scott-listed (the definitive catalog) are difficult to discover).

Regarding my source of supply, I recommend: ^{return} ~~not delivered~~

Charles Schwartz, P.O. Box 522, Braham, Mn. 55006

for older, single issue stamps (like Cayman Is. and Seychelles) for newer sets (late Cayman Is, Dominica, Brit. Ind. Ocean Terr. etc.) I suggest (Atlas Stamp Co. P.O. Box 920; Terminal "A", Toronto, Canada M5W 1G5.)

I deal primarily with these two dealers because of their reasonable prices. The Scott catalog (available in most libraries) lists the value of all stamps recognized by them to be valid - one can usually obtain the stamps for about 1/2 Scott cat. value from competitive dealers like those above whereas the typical, local stamp store sells the stamps for almost full catalog price. Most of the turtle stamps are not too expensive (with the exception of

(over)

- 3 -

Cayman Is. #78 - 11.50 / #79 - 46 / #80 - #150
Honduras C181-6 (CV 43.80) - many are only
3 to 5¢, but there are a few that catalog from
#10 - 15 (Cay. Is. 95, 149, Seychelles 142). The
majority of these stamps (as with all foreign issues)
are in sets, however, so often it becomes necessary to
buy the complete set to obtain the one turtle.
Sometimes the single stamp can easily be obtained in
used condition, but the mint only with difficulty -
even though the cat. value is probably the same. I
have some used duplicates, but only two mint
duplicates. Senseless Cayman Is. #69 free for you
(you can see how small the two pictured turtles are -
the remainder of the set # 71-80 are all the same
design - only the value and color changes). I have #74
for 60¢ should you want to obtain it too.

Since you are not a stamp collector, I
thought that some of these comments might -

smooth your way to obtaining all the sea turtles.
Please write to me again if I can be of
further assistance.

Recent new issues to add to your
list are → New Hebrides (English) # 185 (set 183-6)
CV 1.93
✓ ✓ (French) # 204 (set 202-5)
CV 1.93

The individual turtle stamps here catalog for 50¢
each, but as brand new issues will be virtually
impossible to obtain singly in mint condition.
A single Green Sea Turtle is pictured on these two
new stamps.

Good luck in your turtle hunt. Should
you discover a competitive source let me
know. Or, if you want further recommendations,
I can suggest some when you have exhausted
Schwartz and Atlas' stock.

Sincerely,
Judy Hornaday