



Buzin Watch

In my last article on Buzins I said that they are continuing to grow in number. Indeed, no sooner had I submitted the article than - on the very same day - a new mini-sheet appeared, and then, earlier this year, another single stamp followed. The numbers to collect have grown further.

What are they?

The mini-sheet reflects fauna and flora of the high fens or Hoge venen. This is an area of bio-diversity, a nature reserve near Liège, in the east of Belgium and adjoining parts of Germany, between the Ardennes and the Eifel highlands. The sheet consists of ten stamps, but only three birds. The other stamps include mammals, insects and flowers. All are at the standard first class rate and in the new format.

Unusually for Buzin, but perhaps reflecting the location, three species previously depicted are used but now completely re-illustrated. They are the Boreal Owl, first issued in July 2007; the Spotted Nutcracker, originally issued in January 2008, and the Black Grouse, issued in January 2013. I suppose that only Buzin could improve on a Buzin and, whilst I still like the original illustrations, these are even better and quite stunning. I have reproduced them below and you can judge for yourself.



The new single stamp was issued at the end of January and this time is a new species for the series, the Red-crested Pochard (*Netta rufina*). At the time of writing I have not been able to find further details or even an image of the new stamp, but as with all recent issues it will probably also be available at a standard rate.

I must confess that I am not very familiar with this species. The birds status here is uncertain because there have been a number of escapes and releases in addition to visitors. It has also interbred with Common Pochard. The species is scarce, but can be found in areas of England such as Northamptonshire, Oxfordshire and Gloucestershire. According to my Collins, unlike common Pochard, it has a coral red bill and the head is described as rusty-orange with a coif appearance, hence the crest reference. So, a little flamboyant? I'll be interested to see what Buzin has done with it, but in the meantime, there is a Polish example below to whet appetites.

