

Jacamars on stamps

This is the second in a series of articles (number unknown) about families of birds that only appear rarely on stamps. Last time I used the Hammerkop as my subject and this time I have chosen the Jacamars. Why – well obviously not a bird family that many people / members will have seen and secondly they meet my criteria that there are less than twenty stamps illustrating some of the species. So, what are they?



Netherlands Antilles

Great Jacamar
2002 SG 1509



Suriname

Green-tailed Jacamar
2004 SG 2074



Suriname

Yellow-billed Jacamar
2010 SG 2857

Those collectors that have seen Jacamars on (bird) stamps may think they are rather like Bee-eaters or possibly kingfishers. Early observers in the 18th century did indeed think that they were species of kingfishers or at least closely related to them. Their current official classification places them between Trogons and Kingfishers so the historians were not far from the truth. There are 5 genera and 18 species that inhabit the Neotropics, namely the northern half of South America from southern Mexico to southern Brazil. Most are not globally threatened but one (the Three-toed Jacamar) is endangered and another (the Coppery-chested Jacamar) is vulnerable. Both these species inhabit restricted ranges subject to habitat destruction- the Three-toed is confined to the Atlantic seaboard of southern Brazil while the Coppery-chested inhabits a small area on the Ecuador / Peru border.



Tanzania
Three-toed Jacamar
1999 SG appendix



St Maarten
Brown Jacamar
2015 SG n/a

Species are small to medium ranging in tip of bill to tip of tail length from 14cm to 34cm (this about 6 to 14 inches). Most have small feet and rounded wings with long bills used to catch insects in flight – their primary food source. Most have plumages with upper-parts iridescent/metallic green, blue or bronzy coloured and under-parts typically rufous or chestnut. They inhabit lightly wooded areas or woodland edges in lowland environments and like kingfishers, nest in burrows typically excavated by them.



St. Maarten
Paradise Jacamar
2015 SG n/a



Guyana
Paradise Jacamar
1993 SG3488

About ten years ago there were less than ten stamps illustrating Jacamars but currently that number is 19 as far as I know which depict 8 of the species. The most popular is the Rufous-tailed Jacamar that appears on the stamps of seven different postal authorities. Three of these are typically not within the species habitat range as they are displayed on stamps from Sao Tome and Principe off the African coast or Bhutan in Asia. Another miscast item is a stamp depicting the endangered Three-toed Jacamar but on a stamp from Tanzania.



Antigua & Barbuda
Rufous-tailed Jacamar
2000 SG2973



Bhutan
Rufous-tailed Jacamar
1999 SG1424



Guyana
Rufous-tailed Jacamar
1990 SG2991

I hope this has given readers some useful information about Jacamars but please let me know if there is anything else you would like to know about these attractive species. I am also happy to have suggestions for other species in this series.