

A perforation difference to watch out for

South African series that can be easily confused

Here is a well-known series that might just catch you out.

The South African 2000 Flora & Fauna set, issued in November of that year is large - twenty seven issues, but only five of which are birds. The bulk of the stamps are fish and flowers. To add to the mix, many of the flowers were also repeated as self-adhesive stamps with standardised values, but smaller in size (20x25mm). There were ten for this special rate format, so a complete set is 37 stamps.

The whole set, including fish and flowers are pretty colourful, but I am tempted to say, almost garish. If you find one of the flowers or fishes on cover, you'll know what I mean. The bird element seems relatively sober in design and takes up most of the higher values. They consist of the following species:-

Value	Species	SG No.
2r	Lilac-breasted Roller	1224
3r	Woodland Kingfisher	1226
5r	White-fronted Bee-eater	1227
10r	African Green Pigeon	1229
20r	Violet-crested Turaco	1231

They are not unattractive, easy to find, and seem to appear with great frequency in packets and dealers lists. To remind you of their appearance see the illustrations below:-



Ah, now you remember! You must have seen these issues countless times. If you are unable to find all the birds together, the trickier stamp is usually the middle one for some reason, the five Rand White-fronted Bee-eater, although it is not particularly scarce. Indeed, they are all catalogued at very modest values and the larger challenge for completists like me might be to seek the whole set - fishes, flowers and birds as well as the standardised value self-adhesives. Good luck with that one.

Okay, so where's the catch?

Well, the series was re-issued through 2001 and 2002. The birds appeared in three phases. The highest values (10r and 20r) appeared first in October 2001. The next highest values (3r and 5r) came along in late June 2002, followed by the two Rand in August of that year. Stanley Gibbons handily distinguishes between the issuances as the first and second issues. Mind boggling nomenclature.

The catch though is that the two issues are different. For a start, some additional - usually repeated - values were added, but only to fish and flower designs. This brings the basic set

up to 32 stamps. There are then the ten self-adhesive standard postage values, again at the smaller size, so the whole 2nd issue series consists of 42 stamps. The bird designs are unchanged and all five values are still included. But the catch? The perforation is different for the second issuance.

Measuring from my own collection, the first issue stamps appear to be perforated at 14.5x15. The second issue versions though are 13.25. That is not a huge difference, but if you place stamps from the two series together, then that difference is nevertheless appreciable. I have enlarged a couple of examples below in an attempt to show that variance. The perforation spacing difference is small but still distinctive.



1st Series - Perf: 14.5x15

2nd Series - Perf: 13.25

Stanley Gibbons give the second series issues different catalogue numbers as the table below shows:-

Value	Species	SG No.
2r	Lilac-breasted Roller	1286
3r	Woodland Kingfisher	1289
5r	White-fronted Bee-eater	1290
10r	African Green Pigeon	1292
20r	Violet-crested Turaco	1294

From my own experience, the second series issues tend to be the ones you most often find, so it is worth watching out for these differences. Indeed, I have seen examples from both series mixed together and then described as “sets” while they are clearly not. Look out for the perf differences!