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Where did these ones come from?

Some Lapwings fly out of the wallpaper

I am greatly indebted to member Ton Plug for bringing these small mysteries to my attention as I had never seen them before. And after a few hours of internet excavation, whilst better informed, I am still a little uncertain about them.

The accompanying images show two Guyana stamps - a pair of a \$6 Northern Lapwing (*Vanellus Vanellus*) (a and b), and then a further pair of the same stamps surcharged and overprinted \$20 (c and d). But when were they issued? Which is a pretty a good question, because I am not sure.



Fig. a - Smaller \$6 (square) version



Fig. b - smaller \$6 version found on cover 2015



Fig. c - Surcharged - handstamped version (left)



Fig. d - Surcharged - printed version

You'll probably recognise the design. Guyana produced two mini-sheets entitled "Birds of the World" for "Philakorea 94" and issued them on 16th August 1994. The sheets, each with twelve designs, depicted a variety of species but only two of which could actually be found in Guyana. Needless to say, the Northern Lapwing was not one of the native birds and it is amazing that they didn't use the local sub-species of the Southern Lapwing (*Vanellus c. cayennensis*). The stamps on both sheets included the event logo and had a vertical rectangular format, each with the value of \$35.

On the 8th May of the following year, all the stamps from the first sheet were re-issued in the same format as singles, but this time each with a different value. The Lapwing appeared with a £6 value. For comparison, I have provided illustrations of the two versions below (Figs e & f).



Fig. e - 1994 Version (SG4130)



Fig. f - 1995 Version (SG4330)

As well as the different values, whilst the designs are still rectangular the new lower value issue no longer has the Philakorea logo and “GUYANA” is in a different typeface and lowered to be closer to the Lapwing illustration.

That seemed to be that, until at some point, the smaller format version appeared. As well as being square it is also laid out differently. GUYANA is in smaller type and placed on the upper left. The value is now placed in the bottom right corner instead of the left, and the species name now runs up the right edge instead of in the bottom right (see Fig. b). And then following on its heels the \$20 surcharged version materialised.

There is some commentary on the Commonwealth Stamp Opinion website about these stamps. They refer to a couple of Zirinsky Stamps blogs which indicated that the smaller, square format was issued some time before 2012 and that the surcharged version appeared perhaps a year or two afterwards. So both these issues are “known,” and they certainly appear to have been postally used. There is an image of one on a postal card that shows the un-surcharged version in circulation as late as February 2015 (see Fig. g) and the surcharged versions have been available on the ebay website valued for sale between US\$10 to \$15. They even had a Scott catalogue number - #4020L.



Fig. g - Postal card dated 13th February 2015

More digging reveals that Zirinsky provides a listing of Guyana Provisionals for between 2010-13 and this acknowledges two surcharged versions - one crudely hand stamped and the original value scribbled out (Fig. c), the other with a printed value and the original value properly blocked out (Fig. d). However, they are both given the same Scott number #2942A.

He gives the dates of issue as 17th February 2012 for the crude overprinting but there is no date for the second version.

In *Zirinsky Stamps* Newsletter no. 20, (2012) he says that the \$6 definitive stamp had a wide usage on ordinary mail used by the Guyanese, but then adds that it was, “effectively unknown to collectors and catalogue editors.” Quite! He speculated that used stamps should be common, but that mint/unused stamps were rare. He valued them at US\$175 (about €144 or £131). In his Provisionals listing Zirinsky gives May 2010 as the issue date for this un-surcharged version and that would then make sense, but also gives them the same Scott number #2942A. I don’t possess a Scott catalogue, so this still needs checking out.

It is certainly true that Guyana has a history of stamp shortages for genuine postal usage despite all the ghastly stuff they have churned out over the years. Indeed, one Stamp Chat-board commentator has described Guyana as a “Wallpaper Country,” due to their proliferate issuing of stamps - horrible mini-sheets and garish stamps depicting anything from Edward VIII to Elvis Presley!

Overprinting would almost certainly have been undertaken locally as the crudity of the first surcharged version indicates. A quick check on the Colnect website shows surcharging was prevalent during 2012, but regrettably it is not a complete catalogue and the Lapwing issue is not included, although that date rings true with Zirinsky's piece. The Stampworld catalogue is more complete, but does not show any of these issues and generally seems to ignore surcharges. The Scharning Bird theme catalogue would normally show new versions and overprinted examples but there is nothing for either of these two stamps.

Stanley Gibbons has failed to produce an up to date South American catalogue since 2008, so it is possible that there are not SG catalogue numbers for either. Possible, but I cannot say. Zirinsky certainly doesn’t provide any. There is the thread of authenticity with Scott numbers but they need to be clarified.

I now wonder if there is anything else lurking in the Guyanese wallpaper.