

Israel Post Postage or Franking Labels (2022)

Introduction

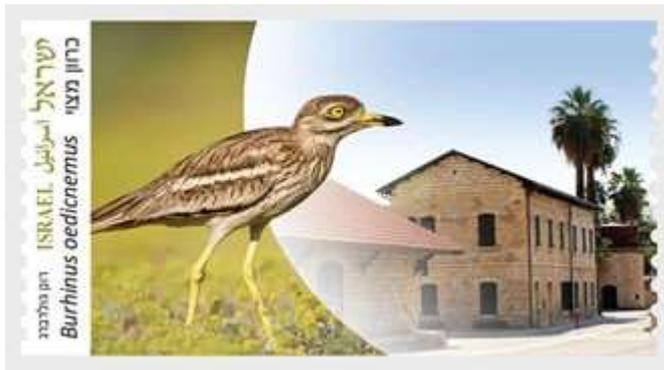
Israel Post has issued postage or franking labels for a substantial number of years: since 1988, when it first issued FRAMA labels. Since then, Israel Post has issued a number of different designs each year, with the number of issues increasing roughly from around seven a year in 2009 to around 10 a year more recently.¹

So far this year, Israel Post has issued four labels which feature birds, which are illustrated below. This is not the first time that the postal authority has included birds amongst its designs for its postage labels. Previous issues were in 2009, 2010 and 2015. I have listed at the end of this piece the birds illustrated in these older issues.

All images of the postage labels (and accompanying covers) shown below are from www.wopa-plus.com

The 2022 Stamps

Eurasian Thick-knee or Stone-curlew (*Burhinus oedicnemus*)



Both WOPA and the Israel Post website² describe the Stone-curlew as the Eurasian Thick-knee; on further enquiry, there does appear to be two competing common names, with the RSPB and eBird using the Stone-curlew title, whereas Birdlife International apply the Israel Post nomenclature. The RSPB very helpfully states that the Stone-curlew is not related to the curlew (of course it isn't, why on earth would I think that?) but gets its name from its curlew like call. I can understand therefore, having read that, why the *Burhinus oedicnemus* is perhaps better referred to as the Eurasian Thick-knee.

¹ Source: https://colnect.com/en/stamps/list/country/105-Israel/emission/4-ATM_Labels/. I am aware that the Colnect listings may not be complete. However, I have also consulted the specialist website: https://www.ateeme.net/angles/welcome_a.html for further, more detailed information on postage label issues.

² <https://services.israelpost.co.il/mall.nsf/prodsbycode/1573?opendocument&L=EN>

Whatever the appropriate name, the eBird website describes the *Burhinus oedicnemus* thus:

*“Large bizarre shorebird of open stony heathland and dry grassland. Active mainly at night and spends the day sitting inconspicuously; thus, overlooked easily. Distinctive appearance with rather large size, streaky brown plumage big yellow eyes and thick yellow legs; black and white wing pattern shows in flight...”*³

eBird also confirms that the *“loud piping calls of the Eurasian Thick-knee given mainly at night may suggest curlew or oystercatcher.”*

This bird can be found in Western Europe and across the North African coastline, and also in the Eastern Mediterranean, including Greece, Turkey and of course, Israel. In Britain, the RSPB says that the Eurasian Thick-knee can be seen in summer in Wiltshire (Salisbury Plain) Norfolk (the Brecks) and in Suffolk (along the coast).

In Britain, the RSPB indicates that the Stone-curlew has an “amber” conservation status, though both eBird and the Birdlife Data Zone indicate a least concern status.



Israel Post has marked the issue with a rather curious design for the First Day Cover (FDC), which shows an outline of the Eurasian Thick-knee in scrubland alongside what looks to be a railway depot or station. This is probably because the overarching theme to the four postage labels illustrating birds is “Animals in an Urban Environment” so perhaps this mix of urban and shoreline is appropriate after all.

The Eurasian Thick-knee also appeared as one of Royal Mail’s migratory birds in the set issued earlier this year (March 2022). The commentary in the presentation pack says of this bird:

“The odd looking “goggle-eyed plover” is a rare bird found in the Brecklands of Norfolk and Suffolk; and around Salisbury Plain. Most active at night, it has large yellow eyes that are adapted for hunting invertebrates at night....”

³ Source: <https://ebird.org/species/eutkne1>

The write-up goes on to say that numbers of the Eurasian Thick-knee have recovered in Britain following preservation efforts by conservation bodies, farmers and landowners.

There are just nine other stamps which feature the Eurasian Thick-knee, ranging from Jordan, Kuwait, United Arab Emirates, and Romania.

Pygmy Cormorant (*Microcarbo pygmaeus*)

The Pygmy Cormorant is found in Central Europe, the Eastern Mediterranean, the Middle East and South West Asia. eBird says of the Pygmy Cormorant:

*A bird of huge freshwater swamps and deltas, where they build their nests in shrubs or extensive reed beds. Adults are dark with a bronzy green gloss in summer. Winter adults and juveniles have a white throat and paler breast recalling other cormorants but small body size, short bill and stubby neck are distinctive.*⁴



As with the Eurasian Thick-knee, the colourful image on the FDC for the Pygmy Cormorant includes an urban (and coastal) setting. What is also interesting is that for the two FDCs which illustrate each

⁴ Source: <https://ebird.org/species/pygcor2>

bird, Israel Post has commissioned specific postmarks which illustrate each bird – an extra detail which shows the care that Israel Post go to make these issues a bit special.

Israel Post issued both the Eurasian Thick-knee and the Pygmy Cormorant on 26 April 2022.

Rock Dove (*Columba livia*)

The first of the bird postage labels that Israel Post issued in 2022 (2 January) features a pigeon, or Rock Dove. The distinct postmark on the FDC indicates that this is a label in the series “Animals in an Urban Environment”, though to date, of the five labels in this set, four illustrate birds, whilst the fifth features the Sinai Fan-fingered Gecko (*Ptyodactylus guttatus*) which (for obvious reasons) is not illustrated here.

The postage label illustrates the Rock Dove in flight (see below) with a curious street sign, which at first sight encourages people to feed the three urban animals that are depicted (the gecko and a hedgehog perhaps, as well as the pigeon?).



eBird says of the Rock Dove:

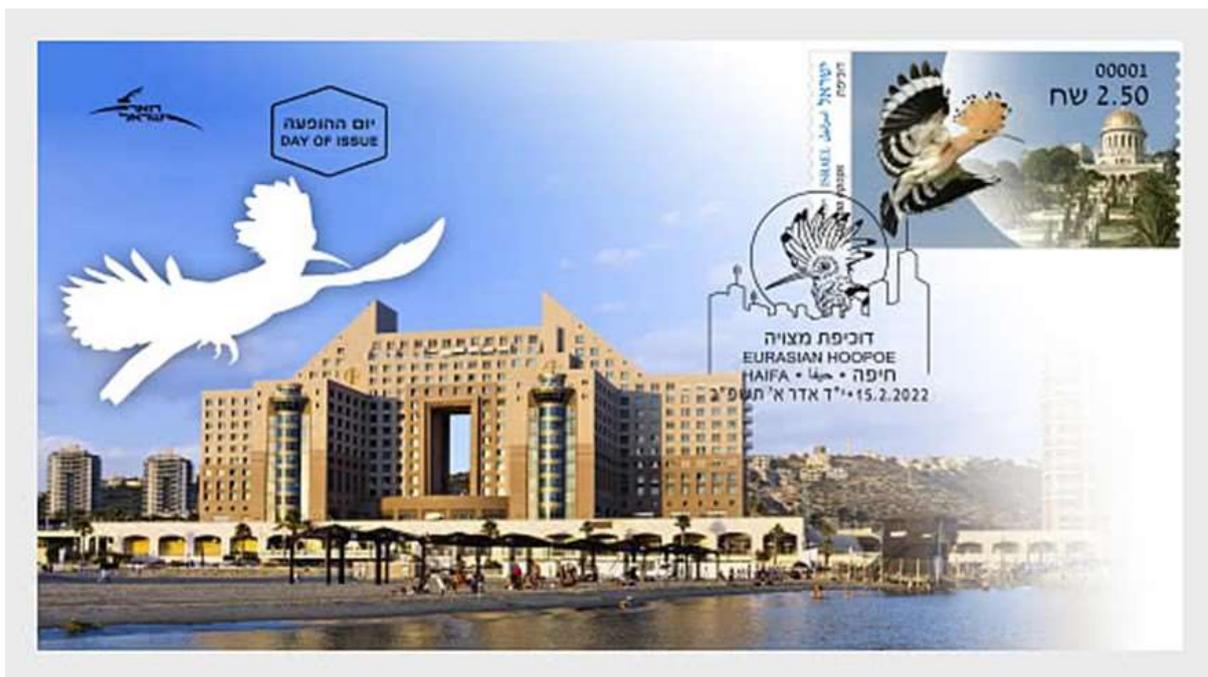
“Fairly large pigeon with wild and feral populations throughout the world. True wild birds nest on cliffs and in caves from western Europe to central Asia. Pale gray overall with two bold black wing-

*bars and iridescent purple and green on neck. Feral varieties are common in cities and farmland, often in large flocks.*⁵

The distinct postmark on the FDC also captures the image of the street sign, the call to feed the birds (tuppence a bag?).

Eurasian Hoopoe (*Upupa epops*)

The 15 February issue features the Eurasian Hoopoe, which is the national bird of Israel.⁶



When I first saw this label what struck me first of all was how pale the orange-pink plumage was on the stamp. However, when I looked at the photos of various Hoopoes on eBird, the pale pink breast of the bird drawn on the label is faithful to reality. Interestingly, the image on the RSPB A-Z also shows the Hoopoe as having pale, pinkish plumage. The description there refers to a “pinkish-brown body”; whereas the eBird description refers to an “Utterly unmistakable orange bird with zebra striped wings...”.

⁵ Source: <https://ebird.org/species/rocpig/>

⁶ Source: see the central stamps from the three-stamp bird issue from 27 January 2010.

There are plenty of stamps from many different countries which illustrate the Hoopoe, both with the paler pinkish plumage; and some with a deeper orange-pink body. I did wonder whether the plumage might change with the seasons. More obviously, it may just be that the shade of plumage is simply distinct to each individual bird.

Once again, the FDC for this issue includes an urban (coastal) backdrop and a postmark specific to this one stamp issue. The building illustrated is ostensibly an apartment block on Carmel Beach Front in Haifa, though a quick look on the internet indicates that some of the apartments in this building are available for holiday bookings. Not that I am looking to visit.

Further research also indicates that the label was also available on a maximum card, the main image of which is the Bahá'í Gardens of Haifa and 'Akko. The golden-domed Shrine of the Báb, the resting place of the Prophet-Herald of the Bahá'í Faith, stands on the central terrace of the gardens, looking across the bay towards 'Akko.⁷ The Shrine and the gardens also appear in the background on the right-hand side of the Hoopoe postage label.

Earlier Postage Label Issues Featuring Birds

Introduction

Listed at the end of this article are the other bird franking labels that I believe that Israel Post has issued. It provides a credible starting point for a restricted country and theme-based mini-collection, viz: birds on postage labels. As with most of these franking labels, they should be available with different values, as is illustrated by this FDC featuring the Eurasian Hoopoe label:



Image source: www.ebay.co.uk

⁷ Source: <https://www.ganbahai.org.il/>

The specialist website www.ateeme.net also indicates that there are, in Israel, at least eleven different machines which dispense the postage labels, so the range of varieties is quite wide. The machine number appears above the price: the machine 00001 is most likely to be the Israel Post Philatelic Bureau.

The List of Labels Featuring Birds

The earlier postage label issues from Israel Post which featured birds include:

- 2009 (1 January): Pigeons (Rock Doves) in Flight;
- 2009 (12 February) Griffon Vulture (*Gyps fulvus*);
- 2009 (22 April) Lesser Kestrel (*Falco naumanni*);
- 2009 (30 June) Short-toed Snake Eagle (*Circaetus gallicus*);
- 2009 (8 September) Bonelli's Eagle (*Hieraetus fasciatus*);
- 2010 (27 January) Common Tern (*Sterna hirundo*);
- 2010 (14 April) Greater Flamingo (*Pheonicopterus roseus*);
- 2010 (14 June) Palla's Gull (*Larus ichthyaetus*);
- 2010 (25 August) Common Kingfisher (*Alcedo atthis*);
- 2015 (11 February) Common Quail (*Coturnix coturnix*) and Black Francolin (*Francolinus francolinus*);
- 2015 (14 April) Chukar (*Alectoris chukar*) and Sand Partridge (*Ammoperdix heyi*);
- 2015 (16 June) Sand Partridge (*Ammoperdix heyi*);
- 2015 (2 September) Black Francolin (*Francolinus francolinus*);
- 2015 (8 December) Common Quail (*Coturnix coturnix*).

Acknowledgements

I am grateful to the websites of both Israel Post and WOPA for basic information on the Israeli postage label issues. I have also used the collector website <https://colnect.com> and the specialist franking label website <http://www.ateeme.net> to provide background information. As referenced in the footnotes, I have also extracted information from ebird and birdlife international about the birds that feature on these labels.

Finally, I am also grateful to Kjell Scharning and his website www.birdtheme.org for background information on stamp issues featuring the birds mentioned in this article.

Other sources are referenced by footnotes.