

Åland Post – Parrot Crossbill

Introduction

On 15 March 2023, Åland Post issued a single stamp featuring a fascinating bird, the Parrot Crossbill (*Loxia pytyopsittacus*) from the family of Finches and Euphonias and allies (Fringillidae), which comprises some 229 species. Having consulted www.birdtheme.org, we find that this is the first time that Parrot Crossbill has appeared on a stamp.

2023 Parrot Crossbill



Image source: <https://www.wopa-plus.com/>

The Parrot Crossbill resides in the countries of Scandinavia and in the three Baltic States. There may also be an outpost of this bird in North Eastern Scotland. It feeds primarily on seeds, buds and shoots of various trees and shrubs, including Scots pine, spruce, larch, alder, crowberry, bilberry. In summer, the Parrot Crossbill also feeds on a variety of insects. One particular characteristic of this bird, which is conveyed in the artwork on the stamp, is the way in which the upper and lower parts of the bill – the mandibles - crossover. This feature of the bill allows the bird to crack open the shells of the pine cones to get to the seeds on which it feeds.

The Stamp Products

Åland Post have issued a variety of products within this stamp issue, including a First Day Cover, a Maximum Card and a Sheetlet of gutter pairs (eight stamps), with additional images of the male Parrot Crossbill in the gutter margin (an eye-watering £17.30).

2023 Parrot Crossbill - Maximum Card showing the female Parrot Crossbill



Image source: <https://www.wopa-plus.com/>

Full-Sheets of 24 stamps, incorporating the gutter pairs, are also available at £51.89.

These are high quality stamps with impressive artwork and high production values, so it is perhaps no surprise that the individual stamps are priced at €2.40, the Lokalpost rate (first class or priority post up to 100g). Cartor Security Printers printed these stamps in four-colour offset. Åland Post have issued 45,000 of this stamp. The stamp artist is Bo Lundwall; and the designer Johanna Finne.

Bo Lundwall is a Swedish born wildlife artist, who works in both watercolours and oils. His previous work for Åland Post includes artwork for a wide variety of wildlife stamps, include some with birds. The bird stamps are: the 2013 issue of four stamps illustrating Loons and Grebes; and the 2019 Postage Labels which illustrate Woodpeckers. His other wildlife stamps are available to view on his website: <https://www.bolundwall.com/page/10183/special-achievements>

What is especially interesting about this stamp is that it is perhaps a rarity – it is one that shows both the male and female birds. That is certainly an interesting sub-theme: how many stamps do illustrate both sexes? Do any of our members focus on collecting stamps which illustrate both sexes of birds?