



Education & Stamps



Subject:
Domestic Songbirds

Published and distributed by
BDPh Bundesstelle für Jugend, Familie und Bildung
Lehmbank 32, D-29693 Eickeloh. (Please send € 1,45 postage in stamps)



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The accompanying workbook was created by Siegfried Dombrowsky



A review of more booklets in this series and more material to work with, you can find on our homepage www.bdph.de / [Schule und Philatelie - Broschüren](#)



This booklet was enabled by financial promotion of
Stiftung zur Förderung der Philatelie und Postgeschichte e.V. and
Stiftung Deutsche Jugendmarke e.V.



We would like to thank Schwaneberger Verlag, München, for free usage of their “Michel-Nummern“ (Michel catalogue numbers)

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Layout and printing by Stepwork UG, D-29693 Böhme

2015

Contents

Foreword: Kristina Schröder	4
Federal Minister for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth	
Thoughts on didactics and methods (Why and How)	5
Portraits: Youth Stamps of 2013	
Blue Tit, Goldfinch, Bullfinch	7
Genesis of the birds	8
What makes birds differ from other creatures?	9
Construction and function: beaks and wings	
Flight of birds	10
... like the beak has grown	11
Ways of living: Nesting and bird migration	
Nesting and chick rearing	17
Bird migration	22
Behavior of birds: Singing for territorial marking	26
The “Bird Clock“	27
Courtship	32
Global threat: Danger and protection	33
Biodiversity	33
Red List (of endangered species)	35
Tips for reading	35



Bundesministerium
für Familie, Senioren, Frauen
und Jugend



Foreword

Dr. Kristina Schröder

Federal Minister for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth
to booklet “Songbirds” of “Bund Deutscher Philatelisten”
at the emission of stamp series “Für die Jugend” (For Our Youth) in 2013

Education can be conveyed in many ways. Lots of children as well as adults love the novel of writer Selma Lagerlöf in which little Nils Holgersson – turned into a goblin – flies across Sweden and picks up knowledge and experiences this way. The story of Nils Holgersson once was written to teach pupils on Swedish Geography and History. Likewise the booklets of the association of German philatelists (Bund Deutscher Philatelisten) carry us off into the world of our native songbirds.

Native songbirds are not only theme of the series Stamp + Education (Briefmarke + Bildung) and the workbook that goes with it. Surcharge stamps “For Our Youth” (Für die Jugend) focus on this topic, too. These surcharge stamps are not only plain postage stamps and providers of education. Exemplary actions, projects and educational institutions are promoted with the proceeds from the sale of these stamps. I would be happy, if the booklets of the series Stamp + Education plus the new Youth Stamps could reach and inspire children and adolescents for our native birds.

Sincerely yours

(Signature) Kristina Schröder

Federal Minister for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth.
Chairwoman of “Stiftung Deutsche Jugendmarke e.V.”

Translation by Helmut Hauer

Photo credits: Bundesministerium für Familie, Senioren, Frauen und Jugend/L. Chaperon

Thoughts on didactics and methods

“According to a survey pupils // in Germany // only know 4 out of 12 of the most frequent birds in our gardens. More than 7 % of our children do not know any of our bird species“ (Christa Widmeyer-Falconi, LBV press-notice of May 5th, 2008). This is thought-provoking and makes you ask whether competences asked for in school are sufficient for bridging those gaps – for only those who know nature and its correlations can protect our environment.

Native songbirds inhabit nearly all habitats in Germany. Some species are even found frequently in big cities and can be watched throughout the year. So ecological interactions between man and animal – here our native song- birds – can be studied and explained – even in Elementary School. Those contents may be furthered in Secondary School.

Content-related competencies (Songbirds) related to core-curricula:

Structure and function in the anatomy of creatures

- Adjustment of birds to a life in the air

Diversity and adjustment in nature

- Concept of species
- Diversity of species

Phylogeny of the birds

- Order of songbirds
- Native songbird species
- Archaeopteryx as a transitional form

Controlling and regulating

- Raptor and prey
- Consequences of human interference on ecosystems

Conversion of substance and energy

- Chick rearing
- Differing seasonal nutrition
- Relations in nutrition in an habitat
- Importance of seasons on creatures

Reproduction

- Individual development
- Incessores and autophagy
- The egg – shelter and development space
- Sexual reproduction

How-to remarks

Native songbirds are subject in education – to experience with all our senses all over the year. So there should be observation of bird life as much as possible – in nature, in parks or in school yards, preferably with field glasses. It is the only way for students to find access to nature and to know and appreciate the diversity of our local species.

The concept of this booklet and the workbook that comes with it, is to be a supplement in regular education, for replacement, or as info in working groups.

Portraits: Blue Tit, Goldfinch, Bullfinch

Blue Tit

The Blue Tit belongs to the family of Tits and is a very common breeding bird in Europe. It lives in woods, gardens, parks, and breeds in tree hollows and nesting boxes. Blue Tits eat insects but seeds are not despised either. They are skillful climbers and even find their seeds hanging head-down at outer branches of trees. The male is a bit bigger and heavier than the female but normally you cannot differ between them.



Blue Tit
Mi 3024

Goldfinch

The goldfinch is a diversity of the finches' family. It is a common breeding bird in Europe as well, though it only lives in the North-east of Europe in summer as it is too cold there in winter. Its German name „Stieglitz“ stems from its twittering song going like “sti-glitt, sti-glitt“. Its also called „Diestelfink“, as it likes very much to feed on thistle seeds. You just cannot mistake it – seeing its red face and its bright red wing tie. The male's red facemask is a bit larger and the beak a bit longer than the female's. But besides that, male and female goldfinch are very much alike. They prefer open, structured landscapes e.g. forest edges, orchards, field groves and hedge landscapes.



Goldfinch
Mi 3022

Bullfinch

The bullfinch, too, belongs to the family of the finches, as the goldfinch does. The spectacular feathers of the male with its black cap and its bright red belly was earlier linked to the garb of priests who often wore red cassocks and black berets. The females with brown belly are less conspicuous than the males. The area of distribution stretches from Europe to Asia. Bullfinches live in forests and parks with a share of softwood. They feed on buds, berries and seeds. In winter you can easily see bullfinches as well as Blue Tits at the bird feeder.



Bullfinch
Mi 3023

Genesis of birds

Birds are animals of the vertebrate class. There are more than 10.000 species of birds. They are the only living direct descendants of the dinosaurs. This was proved in 1861 with the discovery of the oldest imprint of an animal's carcass in a quarry at Solnhofen in Bavaria. That "early" bird was named archaeopteryx, which in the Greek language *mutatis mutandis* (about) is "old wing" or "old feather".

Archaeopteryx lived about 150 million years ago and was about as big as a raven. With teeth in its beak, the long tail, and claws at its wings it still resembled a dinosaur in many ways. Up to now 11

imprints of archaeopteryx have been found. They can be seen in museums in Berlin, Munich, Solnhofen and Eichstätt as well as in London. Fossils of birds of a younger period have been found in "Grube Messel" (Messel pit) near the city of Darmstadt and may be looked at there.



Jewel envelope especially stamped. Stamp Mi 2887

How do birds differ from other creatures?

The most significant feature of birds is their “arms”: forelimbs converted into wings.

The bones of birds are hollow as an adaptation to flying. With flying as a very effective way of locomotion, birds have populated all continents on earth. Distinctive for birds is also their beak serving for the ingestion of food and for defence purposes. They have two legs covered with skin scales and their feet are often provided with sharp claws (Mi 693).



Barn Swallow
Mi 693

The body of all birds is covered with feathers, likely converted scales of their dinosaur-forefathers. Feathers serve many purposes: They are for isolation of warmth, wing surface and steering surface in flight and have an important meaning at mating procedures. Feathers only used while courting and mating, are called “Schmuckfedern” (ornamental plumes).

The plumage of many male birds is by far more conspicuously colored than that of the female. It is depending on the species' mode of life. Birds lay eggs, which are incubated by their parents until they hatch. Almost always it is the female who takes the larger part in the incubation process. As long as the species is not nesting and breeding in caves the female thus has to be camouflaged as well as possible.



Bird of Paradise
Mi 635

Structure and function: wing and beak

Flight of birds

In flight air pressure conditions differ above and below the wings which give birds the necessary buoyancy. Most of the birds move forward actively by flapping their wings – ruddering, so to say. Some birds, like albatrosses or big birds of prey, can stay in the air for hours without a single flap of their wings, just gliding.



Examples for ruddering: Barn Owl and Kestrel
MI. 2070 - 2079



Bam owl
Mi 5326

The kestrel is not only the fastest bird, it is the fastest living thing on earth. When hunting for songbirds it reaches 200 km/h in its nosedive from great heights.

lower left:
Kestrel
Mi 1942 - 1945



Like the beak has grown

There is a great variety of beak forms as a tool perfectly fitting the specific nature of each group of birds. Some examples may show the abundant variety:

Fish-eating species of birds usually have a pointed slim beak for to strike e.g. Crested Grebe and Kingfisher (Mi 404).



Kingfisher
Mi. 404



Crested Grebe
Fantasy stamp. No Mi number.
From Burjatia

Some fish-eating species have a big beak with a sac-like extension used as a fine fishing net.



Pelican
Max card with
Mi 1402

Other birds can filter small fish and molluscs from the water, using their rather wide flattened beak to sieve the water. The spoon-like beak gave the (German) name for birds like Spoonbill or Shoveler (Löffler, Löffelente).



Aerogram with added imprint.
Black-faced Spoonbill Mi 598



Pink Flamingo
Mi 2692



Shoveler
Mi 3453A



Cuba flamingo
Mi 545

Flamingoes with their highly specialized beaks can filter out very small crabs and algae. (Mi 2692 und Mi 545)

Long, slim beaks are perfectly fit for poking soft subsoil for food. Some are bent upwards, as with the Avocet/Avocget – others are bent downwards as with the Curlew.

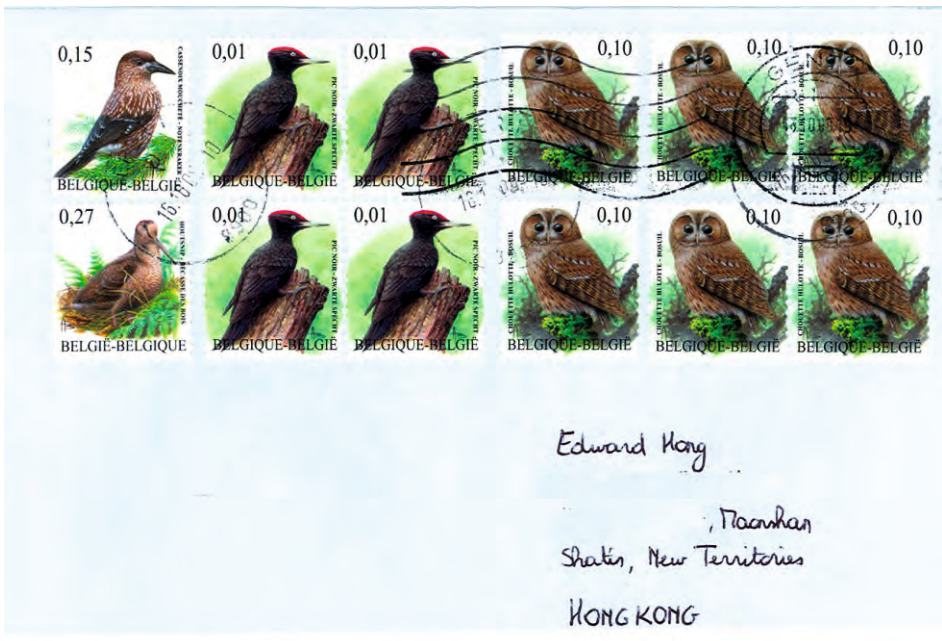
Birds with such long beaks often have long legs for to wade into deep water.



Avocet/Avocget
Mi 1318



Curlew
Mi 2011



Multiple franking with woodcock Mi 3944 (lower left)

Further more there are the two groups of owls and raptors whose beaks have sharp edges and a hooked tip, very useful for break down the prey.(Mi 4796 - 4800).



Hawk, Peregrine Falcon, Golden Eagle, Osprey and Harrier
Mi 4796 - 4800

Woodpeckers own very strong beaks. They chop into bark and deadwood trees where they can find many insects that have started to decompose the tree.
(Mi 909 und 1212 - 1214)



White-backed
Woodpecker
Mi 909



Woodpeckers
Stamp booklet with Mi 1212 – 1214

Birds like Redstart and Black Redstart, Blackbird, Spotted Flycatcher, Stilts and Larks have finely pointed beaks. They serve well for catching snails and insects as well as reaping berries off shrubs.



Blackbird
Smug telegram Great Britain



Maxi card with
Mi 1586



Redstart
Mi 1723

If the prey is bigger, the beak is stronger and sturdier as with Bee-eater and Blue Roller.



Blue Roller
Mi 2871

To the right: Bee-eaters
Stamp Mi 2567 (lower left)



Granivores (seed eaters) like finches need hard, pointed beaks for reaping seeds from fruit stands, flowers and ears of corn (Darwin Finch Mi 2709 and Mi 908, Grosbeak Mi 3570, Chaffinch Mi 1835). Harvesting spruce cones or pine cones is extremely difficult, so the birds, specialized on that diet, have a very sturdy beak crossed over at the tip (see Bind Crossbill Mi 1835).



Row above, from left: chick of Cross Bill Mi 3570, Bind Crossbill Mi 1835, Chaffinch Mi 2388
Lower row: Darwin Finches Mi 2709 and Mi 908

Sunbirds and hummingbirds have specialized on drinking nectar as their source of nourishment. They live in the tropics where there is an abundance of flowering plants. In adaption to different calyx forms they have developed different forms of beaks (see Hummingbird on stamp block Mi 158).



Hummingbird
Mi block 158 with Mi 3898 – Mi 3899

Way of living: Nesting and bird migration

Nesting

Birds breed on/in self made nests made of moss, grass, cob webs, and branches, small and not so small. They put their nests into trees (Woodpeckers Mi 1568), on the ground Snipe Mi 834), floating on water or only loosely fastened in the shoreline vegetation (Little Grebe Mi 655),

in rock crevices, into already existing or self made tree cavities or ground burrows (Magellan penguin Mi 685). Some birds make a mere hollow in sand or pebbles for a nest (Plover Mi 952) other birds form a nest with a kind of mortar from dust and mud.



Little Grebe
Mi 655



Magellan Penguin
Mi 685



Mi 1568 – 1573 Upper left to lower right: Lesser Spotted Woodpecker, Three-toed Woodpecker, White-backed Woodpecker, Great Spotted Woodpecker, Grey-headed Woodpecker, Black Woodpecker



Snipe
Mi 834



(Yellow foot) Plover
Mi 952



Nest of Barn Swallow, Maxi card
Mi. 839

But not all birds build nests. Cuckoos lay their eggs into nests of other species and leave the rearing of their young entirely to the strange “parents” (Mi 2110 and Mi block 190).



Cuckoo
left: Mi 2110



right: Mi block 190 with
Mi 1322

Most of the birds warm their eggs with their own body heat. Some species develop spots without feathers at breast or belly. Those spots are called brood patches. Here the warmth of skin can be transferred to the eggs without isolating feathers. Many species hatch alternating, with some species it is just one parent. Cuckoo's egg is hatched by the host parents.

Three varying stages of chick development

Chicks that are naked and blind when hatched are called altricials. They need the care of their parents to spend them warmth and bring them food. Many altricials leave the nest short before fledging. Young owls and raptors are then called

fledglings. Their parents feed them until they can fly and search for food on their own. That is true with storks (Mi 486), raptors (Mi 2082), owls (Mi 1655), pigeons, sailing birds, woodpeckers and all songbirds.



Fox Hawk
Mi 2082



Egret
Mi 2727



Screech Owl
Mi 1655



White Storks
Mi 486



Chick of the Golden Plover
Mi 430

Chicks that are very independent after hatching are called autophagous. Their body is covered with downs all over and they possess fully developed eyes and ears. Autophagy – depending on species – can run, swim, dive at once and look for food on their own. As soon as on the first or second day of their life they leave the nest, guided by their parents. But they still slip under the feathers of their parents regularly for warmth. The family communicates with soft calls of contact until the young ones are independent.

Ducks (see max card below with automate stamp 23), geese, cranes and plovers are autophagy (Mi 430).



Eider duck family (Åland) Maxi card with automatic stamp 23

Nestlings are completely feathered when hatching with fully developed eyes and ears. But unlike the autophagy they are dependent on the closeness of parents and nest in all aspects of their first part of life. They cannot regulate their body temperature and they only learn slowly to care for themselves. As with incessors, the adult birds – some times just one of them – feed the offspring until they have grown up. Nearly all species of gulls and the penguins belong to this group (Mi 196).



Emperor Penguins
Mi 196

Bird migration

At change of seasons' food supply changes drastically in many regions on earth. That is why millions of birds commute between their breeding habitats and their wintering areas (MI 2888 – 2891 and Mi 1567 – 1569).



Cranes
Mi 2888 - 2891

The longest migration path of all bird is that of Arctic Tern (Mi 168). Terns are elegant flyers and resemble gulls. They live at the coast of oceans and other waters. Arctic Tern breeds high up in the north up to the Arctic Circle and hibernates at the rim of the Antarctic pack ice zone down South. That makes about 30.000 km per year, almost once around the globe. Birds orientate themselves at the position of the sun at day – and at the starry sky by night (Mi 2886). Furthermore they can feel the earth's magnetic field thanks to an “inner compass” and thus find out where they are and in what direction they have to fly.



right: MI 1567 – 1569
Summer guests in Great Britain:
Swifts (above, left), Whitethroat (lower, left),
Linnet (lower, right)



Arctic Tern
Mi 168



Pleiades
Mi 2886

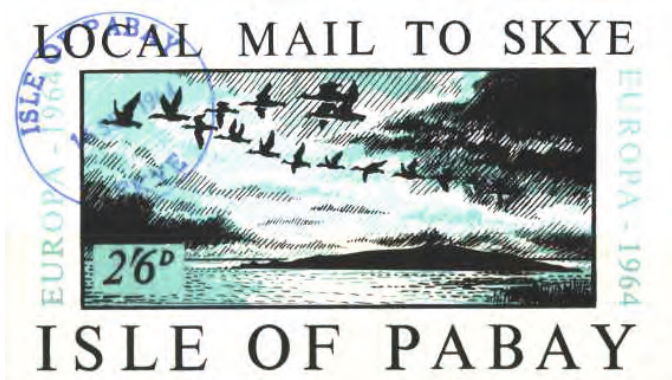
Big birds like cranes, storks, and geese form a V-shaped flight formation (Mi 2792 and a local stamp from Scotland). At the forefront fly experienced birds and so show the way for the younger ones. V-formation has another advantage yet: the following birds profit from flying at the leeward side and so they can save energy. The front position is changed regularly so that expenditure of force is distributed fairly.



Mi 2792

The following birds profit from flying at the leeward side and so they can save energy. The front position is changed regularly so that expenditure of force is distributed fairly.

In some regions on earth bird migration is so concentrated that one can call it “main path of flight“. At such points one can watch bird migration at its best. Most birds breeding in Europe cross the Mediterranean Sea on their way to Africa at its most narrow spots that is Gibraltar in Spain or the Bosphorus in Turkey, because they have to land and feed frequently several times a day and because they use the power-saving updrafts over land. At these spots – on a few days of the year – you might see several ten thousand birds flying by.



Wild geese
Local stamp
Pabay Island,
Scotland

Migrating birds, native in Germany, are Crane, White Stork, many species of Duck and Goose, songbirds like Wagtail, Reed Warbler, Spotted Flycatcher, Black Redstart, Common Redstart, Swift, Bunting, Barn Swallow, Warbler, and Chiffchaff.



White Stork
Mi 2393



Barn Swallow
Jewel envelope with Mi 836

Behavior of birds: Singing for territorial marking – the “Bird Clock”



Men have always been fascinated of bird songs. People thought that singing birds just rejoiced and wanted to please us. The biologic significance of the singing of course is clear nowadays: the cock sings to lure a hen and marks his territory meanwhile. Places fit for nesting are sought-after – and when the male has found one it must make clear that this spot is taken and, if necessary, will be defended.

The “Bird Clock“

In the course of time evolution has established a certain rhythm as to avoid a chaotic cacophonous mingle of voices. Different species sing at different times. At what time the males of a certain species begin to sing is dependent on time of sunrise and dawning.

On a spring morning in mid May (sunrise at 5.30) the birds' concert goes like this:



04:00 am Black Redstart is the first of them. It begins its song when it is still dark, from roofs of houses where it has found a hollow or recess somewhere.

Black Redstart
Mi 397



04:10 am Robin starts singing. It nests on the ground in little hollows under tussocks or roots covered with leaves.

Robin
Mi 1598



04:15 am A little later Blackbird starts its melancholic song. It breeds in trees and shrubs as well as at or in buildings, and often sings on very lofty places. The male is black with an orange beak, the female is dark brown.

Blackbird
Mi 1051



05:00 am The Chaffinch is the most common bird in Germany. It has a pointed song which goes (in German) like "Ich, ich, ich, ich schimpf auf die Regierung" (vernacular) ≈ I scold my government.

Chaffinch
Mi 2026



05:20 am Wren's song unmistakably is heard from the bushes. It breeds in forests in thick undergrowth where its nest is put between roots or twining plants. The cock makes several nests for the hen to choose the best one.

Wren
Mi 2502



House Sparrows
Multiple franking Mi 430

05:30 am House Sparrows breed in hollows or crevices of buildings. Usually they live in large colonies, their chirping can be heard from afar. House Sparrows are close relatives of Field Sparrows.



Great Tit
Mi 350

05:40 am Next are the Tits. Great Tit and Blue Tit are cavity nesters. They lay many eggs per nest, up to 15 in the extreme.



05:50 am Its everlasting “zilp zalp, zilp zalp” gave the (German) name. It breeds in herbaceous vegetation near the ground. It almost looks like a Willow Warbler but you know it by its song for sure

Willow Warbler
Mi 1475



06:00 am As the name tells us, the Field Lark lives in open landscapes. Its nest on the ground under a tussock is well hidden. The males fly high up in the air, to sing and sink down slowly with whirring wings. Unfortunately Field Larks have become very rare these last years.

Field Lark
Mi 2757



08:00 am When sunshine has warmed the air it does not take long to hear loud bangs in the woods. That's how woodpeckers mark their territories. With preference they beat on dead wood as you can hear those bangs better. Female woodpeckers of many species drum, too, e.g. the female of the Spotted Woodpecker.

Spotted Woodpecker
Mi 2401



08:00 pm In the twilight when night is falling and most of the birds end their singing Nightingale starts its song. It is very complex, with many verses. Nightingale breeds in the vicinity of wood-rich forests, especially in shore woods with lots of nettles and entwining plants. You can hear the Nightingale from afar but to spot it between the dense boughs is almost impossible.

Nightingale
Mi 1713

10:00 pm Evening and night are the times when owls are busy. The biggest of them is the Eagle Owl. From sunset to about three hours later you can hear its call. The monotonous “uhu, uhu” gave the bird its (German) name. Eagle Owls have large territories for to hunt enough prey to feed and to feed their chicks, too. Their hatchery is put in a hollow or crevice at rocks and at cliffs with lots of pebbles.



Eagle Owl
Mi 1234

Courting/Mating

Many birds not only sing to get the attention of a partner. They show off their colorful feathers and show a conspicuous mating behavior. Grebes swim in pairs up and down the waters with identical head movements – and Lapwing males show daredevil maneuvers in flight, while shouting loudly (Mi 1490).



Grebes
Mi 1490

Ruffs (Mi 15239) and Grouses (Mi 252) offer a spectacular sight. In spring the cocks gather on traditional mating grounds to fight mock battles with mounted feathers for to show their strength to the hens watching.

Ruff Maxi card with
Mi 1539



Grouse
Mi 252

Many mated birds hand over food as a “wedding present” and express their affection by rubbing their partner's beak.



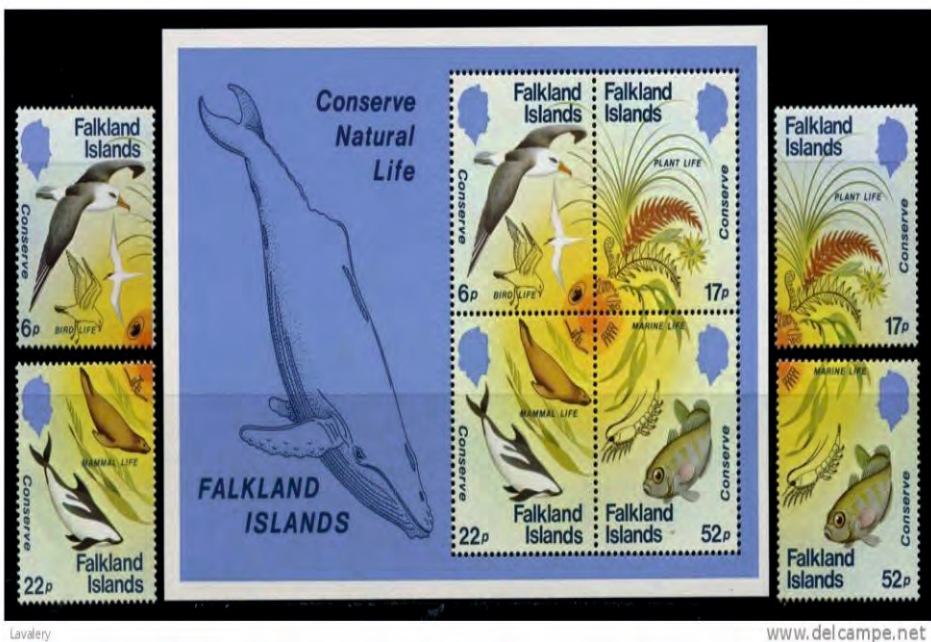
Wandering albatrosses, cooing
Max card with Mi 538

Endangered worldwide: Hazards and Protection

Biodiversity

Bio means life and **diversity** is manifoldness. **Biodiversity** therefore is manifoldness of life on earth. This includes all species of animals and plants, with all their subspecies and the diversity of habitats. But little differences in the genes of creatures of one species (genetic diversity) also count. Thanks to these differences in their genes animal and plant species can adopt to changing living conditions and can survive permanently.

But biodiversity on earth is endangered very much by man. One assumes that 150 animal and plant species become extinct every day. Only 9.934 out of the more than 10.000 bird species known still exist today, BirdLife International – worldwide federation for bird protection – tells us.



Mi 415 - 418 Falklands: block of stamps Mi 4 at species protection

Main reasons for the decline of species are loss of habitats, overfishing the oceans, hunting in general, intensive agricultural use, and the change of the climate. Scientists estimate that those factors contribute a 1000 times more than normal conditions to the extinction of species. Only 1,8 million species out of the existing 14 million species on earth have yet been described by scientists. Mainly in the tropic rain forests there are still lots of species to be discovered.

Red List

The so called Red List by BirdLife, a survey of the most endangered bird species, is published in regular intervals. This report serves as reliable tool to assess the situation of hazard concerning particular bird species. With 7 different categories birds are assigned to hazard levels from "extinct" to „small risk“ (early warning).The most recent Red List of 2012 of endangered birds records 2193 species, 1313 of them on the brink of extinction.

All these endangered species urgently need protection measures.

Tips for reading on “Native songbirds“(in German)

Mullarney, K. & D. Zetterström, L. McQueen, L. Svensson, P. J. Grant (2011):
Der Kosmos Vogelführer. Alle Arten Europas, Nordafrikas und Vorderasiens.
Kosmos Verlag

Singer, D. (2011): Was fliegt denn da? Der Fotoband. 346 Vogelarten Europas.
Kosmos Verlag

Schäffer, A. & N. Schäffer (2006): Gartenvögel. Naturbeobachtungen vor der
eigenen Haustüre. Aula Verlag

Würmli, M. & B. Bampton (2010): Vögel entdecken und bestimmen. Kinder
entdecken die Natur. Verlag Schwager und Steinlein

Burnie J. & J. Bailey (2009): Naturführer für Kinder. Vögel. Verlag Dorling
Kindersley

Was ist Was. Vögel (2010): Tessloff Verlag Nürnberg, Band 40

Space for your notes:

Youth Stamps of 2013

Since 1965 the "Jugendmarke e.V." - Foundation promotes projects in children and youth assistance with the help of supplements on Special Postage Stamps. By these means especially the Free Youth Services can manage many necessary projects, thus helping our children and adolescents and giving them better chances for development and living in general.

**A big
„Thanks“**
to all the
collectors
and buyers
for their
support



Always
ask for

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at the post office counter



STIFTUNG DEUTSCHE
JUGENDMARKE e.V.

Youth Stamps are on sale from Aug. 8th, to the end of Oct. 2013 at all post office counters and later on at "Deutsche Post AG, Niederlassung Philatelie, 92628 Weiden".

More information and philatelic offers at:
www.jugendmarke.de

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