



# *The Intersection of Philately and Entomology: Insect Stamps as Educational Tools*

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## **ABSTRACT**

Insects, often celebrated for their beauty, serve as compelling subjects in the world of philately-the collection and study of stamps. This article explores the significance of insect-themed stamps, highlighting their role in promoting awareness of biodiversity and entomology. Philately, a hobby enjoyed by millions globally, provides a unique medium for countries to showcase cultural and scientific achievements through postage stamps. Insect stamps, in particular, offer a vibrant and lasting representation of various species, enhancing public engagement with entomology. The first insect stamp was issued in Nicaragua in 1890, followed by significant contributions from countries like India, where the first stamp depicting a mosquito was released in 1955. Despite India's limited output in this realm, stamps featuring butterflies and ladybird beetles underscore the nation's rich biodiversity. This paper advocates for the use of insect stamps as effective educational resources, fostering interest in entomology among students and the general public. By promoting the collection of insect stamps, we can cultivate a deeper appreciation for insect diversity and conservation while serving as accessible teaching tools across various educational settings.

## INTRODUCTION

Insects are beautiful creatures on earth. Philately the term first coined by a Greek naturalist Georges Herpin, 1864, Philately refers to collection, and research activities on stamps and other philatelic products. One of the most popular hobbies in the world. Collection of postage stamps and related items such as envelopes, postmarks and first day covers are called 'Philatelists'. Most philatelists are thematic stamp collectors specializing only on particular topics.

### Philately and Entomology

Both are multifaceted fields of study. Bright colors of dead specimens fade quickly if not preserved properly. Collecting stamps on insects is a treat as the charm and color are everlasting.

Collecting entomologically related stamps may be thematic in many educational and environmental issues in spite of a hobby.

The first insect stamp was issued in 1890 by Nicaragua and consisted of a bee hive along with Goddess of plenty. First taxonomically identifiable butterfly on a stamp from Sarawak in 1950.



Raja Brooke's bird wing, *Trogonoptera brookiana* (Papilionidae) alongside King George VI's portrait

The butterfly was named by naturalist Alfred Russel Wallace in 1885 after James Brooke, The Raja of Sarawak. It is the natural butterfly of Malaysia and a protected species.

➤ **Importance:** Postage stamps are unique outlets for countries to showcase important

issues, raise public awareness, and commemorate persons or events of national significance.

- Stamps are windows into the art and culture of nations, and they document the spirit of time when they were designed and published.
- Subjects represented on stamps are by nature wide and varied. (Nazari, 2021).

### Insect orders and stamps issued

Insect order	No. of Stamps
Coleoptera	1787
Hymenoptera	1882
Lepidoptera	14103
Diptera	430
Odonata	542
Orthoptera	343
Neuroptera	37
Mantodea	123
Phasmatodea	18
Dermaptera	15
Plecoptera	3
Psocoptera	1
Trichoptera	3
Siphonoptera	4

(Ramani, 2022)

### Insect stamps as an educational resource

- Unique and valuable resource for educators.
- Unique means of communication of science with the public.
- Can be used as effective teaching tools in primary and secondary education.

The diversity of other themes represented on stamps provide an excellent revenue to

familiarize students with aspects of entomology in art, culture, science and everyday life around the world. (Patrice bonafonte).

### Insect stamps in India

- India is far behind and have produced very few stamps on insects as compared to rest of the world.
- First insect stamp in India was released in 1955 depicting mosquito.
- India has a mega biodiversity and huge insect fauna offers a home to several species of insects but mostly butterflies have been featured in Indian stamps.
- The most notable ones are the four commemorative postage stamps on butterflies released in 1981.
- Another four commemorative postage stamps on endemic butterflies of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands were released in 2008.
- Set of four stamps on ladybird beetles released by India post on February 23, 2017.



India, 1981



Top: *Papilio mayo* (Male & Female)  
 Bottom: *Pachliopta rhodifer* (Female & Male)  
 India, 2008



Ladybird beetle  
 India, 2017

### CONCLUSION

Entomophilately fosters interest in entomology among students and the general public, raising awareness about biodiversity and conservation efforts. Collecting insect stamps can serve as a rewarding hobby, allowing enthusiasts to appreciate the beauty of insects without the challenges of preserving live specimens. These stamps also commemorate notable scientists and personalities, further enriching the educational experience. As inexpensive and effective teaching tools, insect stamps can enhance the understanding of insect phylogenies and their ecological significance. By integrating insect stamps into educational curricula, we can inspire curiosity about the natural world, encourage conservation efforts, and promote a deeper appreciation for the diversity of life on our planet. Ultimately, entomophilately provides an engaging avenue for learning that combines art, science, and culture, making it an invaluable resource for educators and students alike.

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