

RHINOCEROSES

Mary Lou Vignola

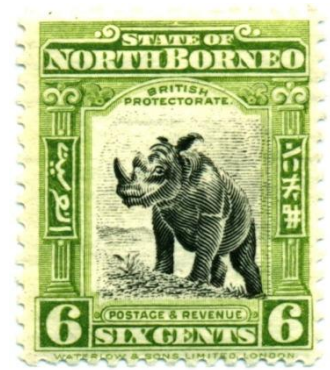
[Ed. Note: This article is from a prospective new Unit member, whom I met at PIPEX in Portland this year. I wish all of our members would consider submitting similar items to help promote the Unit goal of the “cooperative study of biological philately.”]

As a new member of a life-long stamp collecting family, I was asked “What do you collect?” not “Do you collect?”, so I felt it necessary to make my choice. My response was based on the premise that whatever I chose should have little chance of successful searching, since one serious collector in the family seemed quite enough. The other reason for my topical selection was the efforts we were making to save the endangered rhinos. Thus, I became a topical collector and set out on a search whenever we attended a stamp show.

With my husband’s guidance, and sharp eye, we have found many wonderful stamps, covers, and lots of other interesting philatelic material featuring the eons-old Rhinoceros. I am continually amazed at the number of items we are able to find, in addition to the history and geography that intertwine with their discovery.

There are five species of Rhinoceroses, inhabiting Africa and Asia. African Rhinos include both the Black and White Rhinoceroses. Asian Rhinos included the Javan, Sumatran, and the Indian (Greater One-Horned) Rhino.

Rhinos are known to sleep both standing and lying on the ground, and are fond of standing in muddy pools and sandy riverbeds. Egrets and other birds can be found perched on Rhinos, feeding on external parasites. Rhinos roamed through Europe in pre-historic times and were depicted by early Europeans in cave paintings.



First Rhino Stamp, 1909



Rhino Conservation and Protection

Today very few Rhinos survive outside national parks and reserves. Rhinos are threatened by poaching due to the demand for their horns, and habitat loss as a result of human populations encroaching on the land and destroying forests. The World Wildlife Fund (WWF) works to strengthen protected areas in Africa and Asia and to stop illegal trade of Rhino horns.

Now comes the task of organizing and researching my collection before undertaking the somewhat daunting step of exhibiting it. The American Topical Association tables at both WESTPEX and PIPEX have been very helpful and encouraging with each step along the way, and when I do reach the exhibit stage it will be that encouragement, and the encouragement of other collectors that prompted the journey along. Wish me luck on what lies ahead!

[Ed. Note: In a 28 May 2013 article, Erika Bolstad for McClatchy News Service reported that some American organizations are assisting South African park rangers by providing aerial drones and predictive technology to help prevent poaching and capture the criminals involved in these activities. I hope these operations are successful because the world is losing hundreds of rhinos every year. The ignorant Asian cultures are paying tens of thousands of dollars per pound for rhino horns. Rhino poachers, like drug dealers, are in this business for greed—not because of some destitute sob story. In some countries, the punishment for being caught with rhino horns is merely a fine. Personally, I think when poachers are caught, we should cut off one of **their** appendages (and I think you know the one I mean) and see how well they get along after that.]