

SWISS BABY ANIMALS

On 2 March 2017, Swiss Post will issue a set of four stamps depicting cute baby animals. Each of the species depicted is highly endangered in Switzerland. A set of four picture postcards with each design will also be released.

Eurasian Otters (*Lutra lutra*) used to live on the banks of practically every stretch of water in Switzerland. They became extinct in Switzerland in the middle of the 20th century as a result of over-hunting. To ensure a natural return of the species from border areas, or a successful repopulation, the country must restore its water habitats, especially in the central plateau.

The otters are widely distributed across the rest of Europe and parts of Asia and Africa.

The **Eurasian Lynx** (*Lynx lynx*) was reintroduced to Switzerland in 1971. The animals are able to survive in heavily cultivated terrain because they are extremely discreet. A stable population has established itself mainly in the northwest Alps and the Jura.

The lynx is a medium size cat and the largest lynx species. It is widely distributed across eastern Europe and northern and central Asia.

Because their natural prey was being hunted by man, **Eurasian Wolves** (*Canis lupus lupus*) had no choice but to feed on farm animals. This led to the wolves themselves being hunted down and eventually disappearing from Switzerland at the end of the 19th century. Since 1995, wolves have been regularly migrating back into the country from Italy and France. Since 2012, there have been cub births every year in the Calanda mountain range in Graubünden.

The Eurasian Wolf is the largest of the Old World grey wolves weighing up to 175 pounds (80 kg). It was widespread throughout Eurasia prior to the Middle Ages, but was systematically exterminated since then. Populations have recovered since World War II and is now widespread throughout northern and central Asia.

About one hundred years after becoming extinct in Switzerland, almost every summer since 2005, **Eurasian Brown Bears** (*Ursus arctos arctos*) have roamed through Switzerland's Alpine valleys. The animals come from the Austrian-Italian-Slovenian border region. Bears live inconspicuously and frequently their presence is not even noticed. Hunting and loss of habitat almost resulted in the complete disappearance of these once widespread animals.

The brown bears are making a comeback in northern and central Europe. But the largest population is found in Russia and parts of central Asia.

The stamps were designed by Simon Hofer from Bern, Switzerland. He consciously factored the sympathy effect into his portrayals of the baby animals. The animal is in the foreground and the unicolored backgrounds heighten the eye-catching effect.

