

History, Animals on New Estonia Stamps

Formerly a part of the Russian Empire before 1918, and from 1940 a part of the Soviet Union, Estonia gained its independence once more in 1991. Unlike some former Soviet bloc countries, Estonia has a conservative philatelic program. Its first stamps were issued in 1918 and to date there are less than 1,000 total stamps, many of which present the sights, culture and history of this Northern European nation.

The Baltic Chain

On August 23, in a joint issue with Latvia and Lithuania, Estonia issued a €0.55 single to celebrate the 25th Anniversary of the Baltic Chain. Held on August 23, 1989, the Baltic Chain was a giant demonstration held to influence Soviet authorities and to express the will of freedom of the people of the three Baltic nations. The human chain of nearly 400 miles, from Tallinn to Vilnius, consisted of up to one million standing along the route. The demonstration coincided with the 50th anniversary of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, that unlawfully changed the national status of the Baltic countries, placed them within the Soviet Union, and thus robbed them of their independence.

Herdbook Centennial

A single with a very different theme was issued on July 19 to mark the Centennial of the Herdbook of the Estonian Native Breed Cattle. More than 100 years ago breeders of Estonian country breed cattle realized that good production results could only be expected if it was possible to make a choice among the animals. For this it was necessary to record the origination, appearance and production data of the animals. As a result breeders started to document production data, instituting the Herdbook. The first animals were on August 21, 1914.

The Herdbook includes all the country breed heads of cattle of



suitable descent. There are stricter requirements for the bulls: the bulls and their mothers are studied genetically, assessed, measured and photographed and for the mother of the bull there are requirements in terms of appearance and of production.

Tallinn Zoo

A souvenir sheet of two stamps issued on August 25 commemorates the 75th Anniversary of the Tallinn Zoo. The zoo, which is located in Estonia's capital and largest city, includes animals that are not very often seen in other zoos. The wild goats and mountain sheep exhibit, for example, has the largest number of species in the world.

Several species in danger of extinction, particularly eagles, vultures, cranes and big cats, are cared for and their propagation is fostered within the framework of internationally coordinated programs. In the past quarter of the century the focus has been centred on the study of an extremely rare species, the European mink, and, by means of as up to date methods as possible, creation of a new natural habitat. The Amur leopard, *Panthera pardus orientalis* and the bearded vulture, *Gypaetus barbatus*, that have been reproduced in the souvenir sheet are two of the protected species at the Tallinn Zoo.

The stamps of Estonia, as well as the issues of 20 other postal administrations sold at face value may be accessed at the World Online Philatelic Agency, <http://www.wopa-stamps.com/>.

Information also can be found at our Stamp News Now website page, <http://www.stampnewsnow.com/WOPA-NewIssues.html>.

