

Original Research Article

Philately's Implications in Ecological Education via Romanian Thematic Joint Issues (V) - regarding the 3rd collaboration with WWF

ABSTRACT

The collaboration of the Romanian postal administration with the World Wildlife Fund (WWF), and its purely philatelic interpretations, was limited to the introduction in the postal circulation, starting with 1977, of philatelic issues aiming at the protection of various endangered species. Thus, in addition to the issues that appeared in 1977 and 1984, towards the end of 1994, a third philatelic issue appeared. This, entitled "World Wide Fund for Nature", illustrates various species of fish, most of which are also found in aquatic ecosystems in Romania. In this context, the purpose of this paper is to make known to the public and to widely promote the term of protection and sustainable management of habitats and those endangered species, as an alarm signal of their condition. The results of the research undertaken emphasize once again the mass character of thematic philately and the fundamental role - as an ambassador of the promotion of knowledge - that it has had over time, and still has. Regarding the philatelic issues studied, in terms of the rich material reproduced (postage stamps, blocks and other forms of pagination, first day covers - FDCs, illustrated and maximum postcards, occasional envelopes, and postal circulation), it can be stated that it highlights another concern of the WWF (conservation of fish species), from the perspective of promoting natural capital.

Keywords: biodiversity, endangered species, fish, Romanian thematic philately, WWF.

1. INTRODUCTION

In Romania, the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) has been working since 2006 to protect the wild environment in the Carpathian Mountains and along the Danube: protected areas, forests, brown bears, bison, Danube Delta, sturgeons. Added to all this, as they say, is the stimulation of the transition to the green economy and an environmental education program for young people [1]. All these steps come in response to some of the Romanian initiatives to conserve ecosystems, respectively, to promote the services of forest and aquatic ecosystems [2].

WWF-Romania has worked and still works in numerous cross-border projects that aim to reduce illegal activities on wildlife. If poaching and other illegal wildlife activities (habitats and species of flora and fauna) occur within well-organized networks, an international network is also needed to counter them. And this in the conditions in which illegal activities against wild species represent the fourth most frequent criminal activity in the world. Overrun by drug trafficking, counterfeiting, and arms smuggling alone, wildlife crime generates \$ 280 billion in

annual revenue [3]. Besides, they have serious negative effects on life on the planet, including a significant reduction in biodiversity and the complete extinction of some animal and plant species.

Romania benefits from a rich faunal and floristic biodiversity [4],[5]. The country's natural habitats have reserves recognized in Europe, housing in considerable densities, predatory species, aquatic species, as well as many species of migratory birds, which elsewhere are rare or threatened with extinction [5]. In this context, the conservation of biodiversity and the perpetuation of a healthy balance between different species, as well as between them and the living environment, is the object and purpose of many areas of interest, including philately. The prerogative of philately for the protection and promotion of various species is also noted at the national level, where philatelic issues have paid homage to the endangered species and the protected areas of which they are part.

The recent history of Romania, after 1977, records the construction of a special thematic philately, in terms of the pieces made, with the otherwise considerable contribution of the WWF [6]. In Romania, philately under the influence of WWF has thus managed to manifest itself as a civilized way of respecting habitats, as well as an activity designed to promote elements related to maintaining a sustainable balance between the environment and community [7],[8]. This balance must also exist with the various species of fish that populate aquatic ecosystems, the appearance of the 1994 philatelic issue being an important step in consolidating and appreciating the human-environment relationship. Even the knowledge of the respective fish species among the general public, with or without attributions in environmental protection, can be seen as a desideratum of WWF or the preoccupations of the Romanian postal administration.

2. MATERIAL AND METHODS

The documentation for the realization of this paper started from our concerns for ecology and the management of protected areas [9]-[11]. Having at hand a series of relevant studies at the national level [12]-[14], regarding the management of protected areas, as well as biodiversity, we decided to continue exposing the relationship between Romanian philately and WWF, practically the third official collaboration. This ended with the appearance of the philatelic issue "World Wide Fund for Nature", towards the end of 1994.

The collection, analysis, and interpretation of the philatelic material (postage stamps, envelopes "first day of issue", maximum postcards, and other post-philatelic effects) were done, as we have been accustomed repeatedly, by consulting specialized catalogs [7],[8],[15] and various philatelic trade sites. Platforms such as Allnumis, Colnect, Delcampe, eBay, PicClick, StampWorld, and wopa-plus were used. The information from the platforms was useful in the documentation and presentation of the technical characteristics that the entire philatelic issue includes being made on their account. Where the information proved uncertain or interpretable, we turned to other philatelists. Their consultation focused mainly on postage stamps and maxims.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In the following, we continue our extensive project of promoting and analyzing the Romanian postal collaborations with other entities and organizations [15],[16], and WWF in this case, by presenting the philatelic issue "World Wide Fund for Nature" or "Animals Protected worldwide (WWF)". We will therefore stop to debate and reflect on it, to argue the valence of the show in relation to environmental protection policy and strategies, as specific elements of WWF-Romania.

3.1 "World Wide Fund for Nature" (WWF) postage stamps, 1994

The third issue in the series of those made in collaboration with WWF appeared on October 20, 1994, on chrome paper (England), in 48x33 mm lace format, and with 13½ perforations. The issue entitled "Worldly Protected Animals (WWF)" is based on four postage stamps depicting fish, respectively, sterlet (*Acipenser ruthenus*) with a face value of 150 lei, waxdick (*Acipenser güldenstaedti*) - 280 lei, stary sturgeon (*Acipenser stellatus*) - 500 lei and Baltic sturgeon (*Acipenser sturio*) - 635 lei (Fig. 1a-d) [18],[19]. Their layout was done by G.L. Vasarhelyi. The pieces designed under LP #1359, respectively, Mi RO#5034..37, Yv RO#4200..03, G RO#5660..63, and S RO#3954..57, were organized in pagination and implicitly printed in sheets finished of 10sqm (Fig. 1e), with a circulation of 300,000 complete series. Regarding the FDCs, 3000 sets of 2 pieces were recorded under the Romanian postal administration (see Fig. 2) [20]. As expected, FDCs were also made under the WWF arrangement, as evidenced by the official logo and the statement "WWF WORLD WILDLIFE FUND Official First Day Cover" (see Fig. 3) [21],[22], but also a series of maximums (see Fig. 4) [23]-[26].

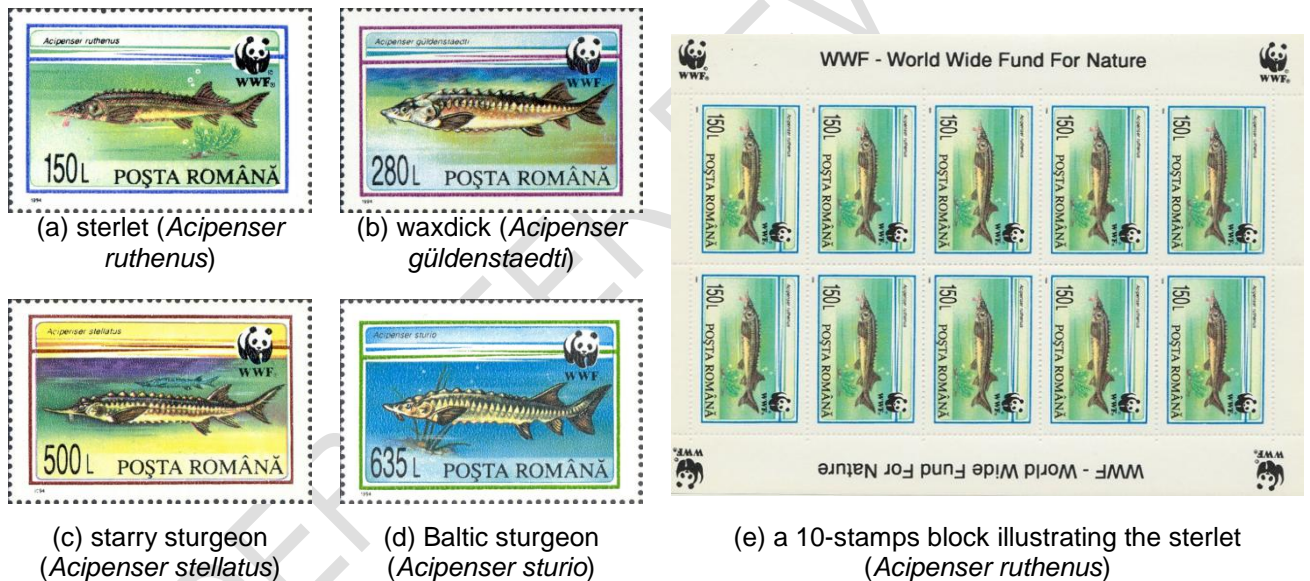


Fig. 1. The philatelic issue "World Wide Fund for Nature", 28.10.1994, Bucharest

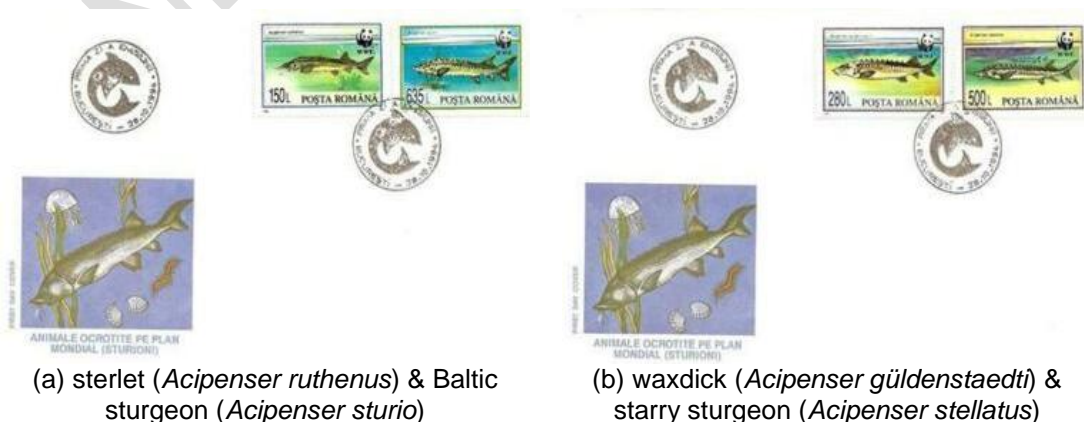


Fig. 2. The official FDCs, made by Romanian postal administration, of the philatelic issue "World Wide Fund for Nature", 28.10.1994, Bucharest



Fig. 3. The official FDCs, made by WWF, of the philatelic issue "World Wide Fund for Nature", 28.10.1994, Bucharest,

3.2 Errors and philatelic varieties

In terms of the aspect of errors and philatelic varieties, so far we have not been able to identify either. Philatelic errors were not recorded in the various specialized catalogs, recognized and frequently used at the national level, in the form of deviations from the standard postage stamp (official model).

3.3 Maximum postcards

As mentioned before, there are several maxims [27], some even circulated [28]-[30]. These are particularly well and clearly outlined illustrations, practically speaking for itself. All four support postcards used were carefully selected, just to capture the specifics of each species.

The sterlet (*Acipenser ruthenus*) is a common species of Eurasian sturgeon. It is one of the smallest sturgeons, a common species in Central Europe. The sterlet is fished, but can also be raised for caviar or gelatin obtained from its eggs, or caught by aquarists. Although it is a member of the sturgeon family, it is an exclusively freshwater fish. It is located on the Danube. It prefers deep and clear waters, with a hard bottom, approaching the shore only if it is steep. It does not support turbid and oxygen-poor waters. It feeds on crustaceans and

insect larvae. It measures on average 60-70 cm and weighs 4-5 kg, reaching 1-1.25 m and 16 kg. Meat and caviar are highly prized.

The waxdick (*Acipenser gueldenstaedtii*) is a marine fish, which lives in the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea and migrates for reproduction in the rivers that flow into them. Three geographical breeds are described in the literature: *Acipenser gueldenstaedtii colchicus* in the Black Sea basin, *Acipenser gueldenstaedtii gueldenstaedtii* in the northern Caspian Sea, and *Acipenser gueldenstaedtii persicus* in the southern Caspian Sea. The usual length is 1-2 m, and the usual weight is 20-30 kg, but it can reach 115-120 kg. He can live for 50 years.

It has an elongated body, thick in the front, laterally compressed in the back. His body is covered with 5 longitudinal rows of bone shields. The short, wide, and obtuse snout has 4 mustaches on the underside. The small, straight mouth has no teeth. The upper lip is slightly split in the middle, and the lower one is interrupted for a long distance. Dorsal and anal fins located in the back. The coloration is very variable: in some specimens, the back is black-gray, and in others, we speak of dirty green or dark green. It is dirty white below the sideline and on the abdomen. Adults feed on mollusks, crustaceans, and polychaetes, except fish. It has economic importance, being fished. After blinding, the sturgeon has the tastiest meat of acipenserides. It is eaten fresh, salted, or smoked. It is also prepared as a marinade. Its cherries, dark gray in color, are also highly prized and are sold fresh or stuffed.

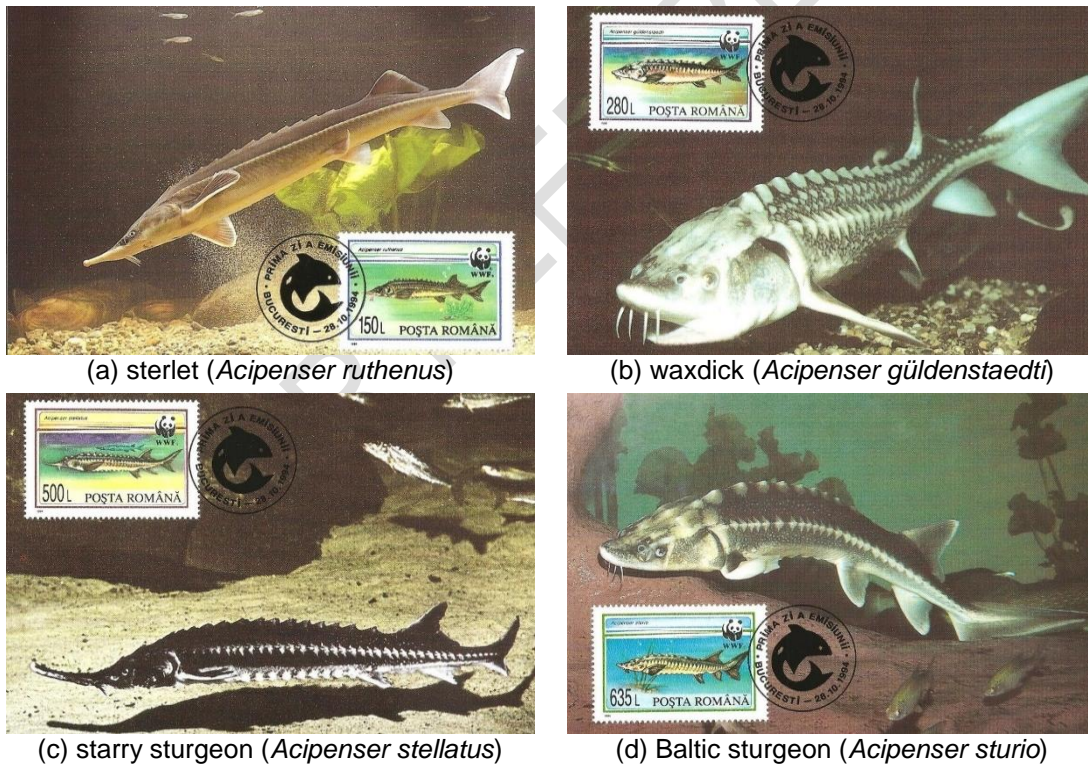


Fig. 4. The official maximum postcards of the philatelic issue "World Wide Fund for Nature", 28.10.1994, Bucharest,

The starry sturgeon (*Acipenser stellatus*) is a species of sturgeon that lives in the Black Sea, Caspian Sea, and the Sea of Azov. The body has 5 rows of rhombic bone discs, differing from other species in the family Acipenseridae by the length of the snout, the lower jaw is interrupted, and the upper jaw represents about 60% of the length of the head. The back is

colored black and brown. The maximum length it can reach is 214 cm, and the weight is 68 kg, ordinary specimens measure 80-100 cm and weigh 5-8 kg.

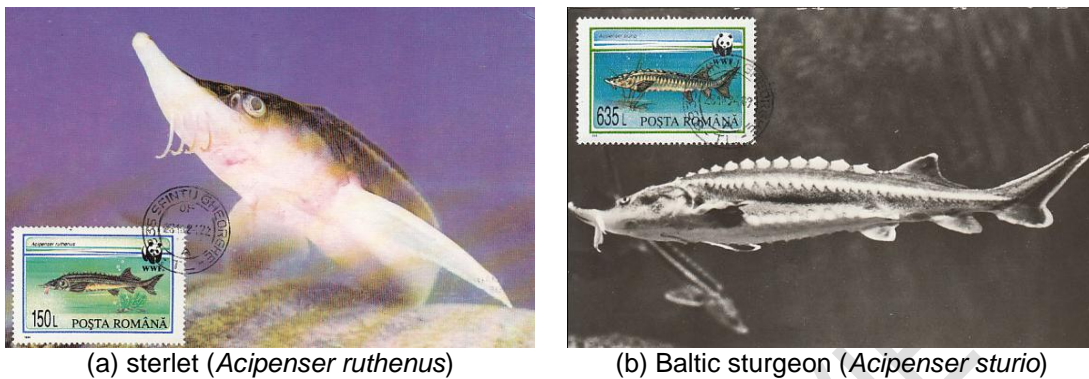


Fig. 5. Circulated maximum postcards of the philatelic issue "World Wide Fund for Nature", 28.10.1994, Bucharest

The Baltic sturgeon (*Acipenser sturio*) is an endangered marine fish of the acipenserid family, which is widespread on the Atlantic coast of Europe as far as Norway, the Baltic, North, Mediterranean, Adriatic, and Black Seas. Climb the river over long distances. Today, this species lives only in the Garonne River (France). It has not been fished in Romania for 60 years and is considered an extinct species, in the past, it was found along the coast and in front of the mouth of the Danube. The usual length is 80-100 cm, and the usual weight 80 kg, maximum 400 kg. It can live for 100 years, but in rare cases, it exceeds 25 years.

It has an elongated body, thick in the front, compressed laterally in the back. The body is covered with 5 longitudinal rows of bone shields: an odd dorsal row, a lateral and ventral row on each side. The head is completely covered with bone plates. The muzzle of medium length, almost triangular, with a rounded tip, with 4 short, unflagged whiskers on the lower face. The lower transverse mouth is not provided with teeth. It also has a yellow-brown back, sometimes with green marble, a white or yellow abdomen, and white flanks. Food in the Black Sea consists mainly of anchovies, and in other seas benthic invertebrates. Migratory species spend most of their lives at sea. It climbs the river in April-May, to lay its eggs in places with a strong current on a gravel bottom. It has economic value, being fished. The meat is less tasty than other sturgeons. Its eggs are of inferior quality.

3.4 Occasional envelopes and other philatelic effects

For the philatelic issue "Animals Protected Worldwide (WWF)", a series of philatelic effects were identified under the motto "Visit the Zoo!", which we reproduced in Fig. 6 [31],[32].



(a) sterlet (*Acipenser ruthenus*)



(b) waxdick (*Acipenser güldenstaedti*)



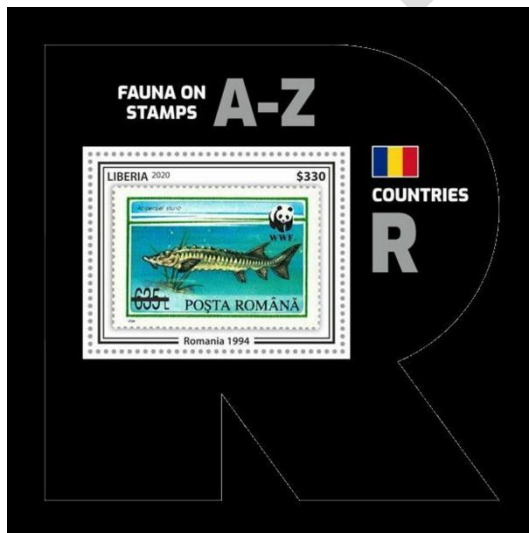
(c) starry sturgeon (*Acipenser stellatus*)



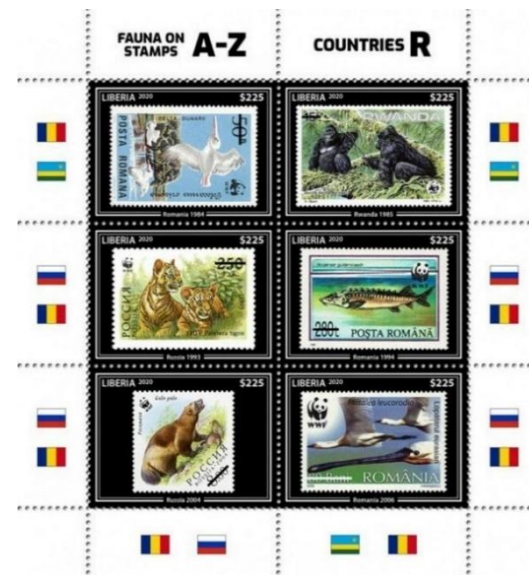
(d) Baltic sturgeon (*Acipenser sturio*)

Fig. 6. Different philatelic effects of the philatelic issue "World Wide Fund for Nature", 28.10.1994, Bucharest,

The postage stamps in question had a special impact at international level as well. These were very well perceived and accepted by the community. As a result, they were reproduced under a new pagination by the Liberian postal administration (see Fig. 7) [33]-[35].



(a) Baltic sturgeon (*Acipenser sturio*)



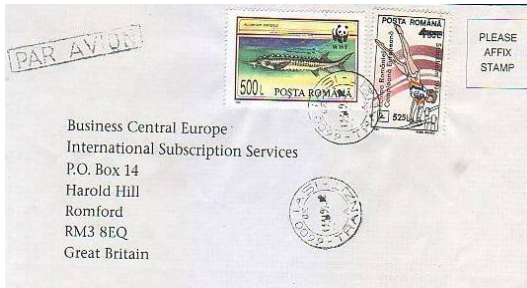
(b) waxdick (*Acipenser güldenstaedti*) & other animal species

Fig. 7. Philatelic effects achieved as a result of the reissue of the philatelic issue "World Wide Fund for Nature", 28.10.1994, Bucharest

As you can easily see, along with other stamps specific to Romania-WWF collaborative issues, some that have appeared in other countries are included. All keep their original layout form intact, the only visible change being at the level of the nominal value. The latter is cut with a simple line and replaced accordingly with an equivalent value for Liberia.

3.5 The postal role of the show "World Wide Fund for Nature"

Postage stamps, as expected, were introduced in both domestic and international postal circuits. As can be seen in Fig. 8 [36]-[43], we are dealing with various pieces, circulating in Great Britain, Italy, or even Hungary.



(a) starry sturgeon (*Acipenser stellatus*)



(b) waxdick (*Acipenser güldenstaedti*) & Baltic sturgeon (*Acipenser sturio*)



(c) starry sturgeon (*Acipenser stellatus*) & Baltic sturgeon (*Acipenser sturio*)



(d) Baltic sturgeon (*Acipenser sturio*)



(e) sterlet (*Acipenser ruthenus*), waxdick (*Acipenser güldenstaedti*), starry sturgeon (*Acipenser stellatus*) & Baltic sturgeon (*Acipenser sturio*)



(f) sterlet (*Acipenser ruthenus*), waxdick (*Acipenser güldenstaedti*), starry sturgeon (*Acipenser stellatus*) & Baltic sturgeon (*Acipenser sturio*)



(g) sterlet (*Acipenser ruthenus*) & starry sturgeon (*Acipenser stellatus*)



(h) waxdick (*Acipenser güldenstaedti*)

Fig. 8. Different circulated pieces with the postage stamps of the philatelic issue "World Wide Fund for Nature", 28.10.1994, Bucharest

From the rich philatelic material (postage stamps, blocks, FDCs, maxima, and postal integers) that was, in turn, identified, reproduced, and analyzed, we managed to highlight the 3rd existing collaboration between the Romanian postal administration and WWF. Moreover, it could be shown that such collaboration is a beneficial one, because the issue itself has become visible internationally, more efficient than if there was no collaboration with WWF.

With over one billion stamps printed and close to 400 issues by the end of October 2006, the sale of stamps from the WWF conservation stamp collection has raised over 20 million Swiss Francs in royalties and has become an important source of funding for WWF's conservation activities. The WWF stamp collection is the largest collection in the world [44]. Proceeds from the sale of the stamps have helped fund a range of activities - from the conservation of endangered species (even the species mentioned in the current article) to helping forest and coastal-dwelling communities improve their standards of living through sustainable use of their natural resources.

4. CONCLUSION

The work, as it could be observed, comes as a completion of the Romanian thematic philately, and as a continuation, somewhat natural, of the collaboration with WWF. The community development policy and strategy promoted by WWF, in full agreement with the protection of habitats and the conservation of various endangered species, are also found in this case. Fish species are very well characterized, visually, being among those that require some attention, their habitat is often difficult to test by human activity. Moreover, as we pointed out at the beginning, illegal activities are more than visible in terms of the impact produced. As such, we consider this study as a good example of the application of species conservation policies that closely targeted being in the first phase locals, and only then the visitors/tourists interested in the picturesque habitats.

In this study, there are conclusive observations on the philatelic implications of promotion through the circulation of philatelic pieces, but there are no other details related to the local policy of action for the environment from the perspective of using philately. We have not even been able to identify details regarding the programs for educating young people in the sense of nature protection. However, we believe that more attention should be paid to thematic philately at the local and regional level. It should be included as an information resource in promoting local species and habitat conservation policies and strategies, in terms of organizing exhibition events.

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DEFINITIONS, ACRONYMS, ABBREVIATIONS

LP: Romfilatelia philatelic list

Mi: Michel Catalog

Sc or **S:** Scott Catalog

Sg or **G:** Stanley Gibbons Catalog

Yt: Yvert et Tellier Catalog

UNDER PEER REVIEW