

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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SLITHERING TO A POST OFFICE NEAR YOU; REPTILES AND AMPHIBIANS COME ALIVE ON NEW STAMPS

WASHINGTON — Are they alive, these creatures that croak, hop, slither and slide? Not quite, but the images on the new Reptiles and Amphibians commemorative postage stamps, to be issued by the U.S. Postal Service on Oct. 7 in San Diego, Calif., are amazingly realistic.

The first day of issue ceremony for the 37-cent, self-adhesive Reptiles and Amphibians stamps will take place at 10:30 a.m. PT at the San Diego Zoo, 2920 Zoo Drive.

“With the issuance of the Reptiles and Amphibians stamps, we have a wonderful opportunity to help educate the public about something we feel is very important — our environment,” said Azeezaly S. Jaffer, vice president of Public Affairs & Communications for the Postal Service, who will dedicate the stamps.

“These colorful and unique stamps will appeal to everyone, including serious and casual stamp collectors, and especially children. We are proud that the nation’s stamp program reaches out to a diverse audience, encompassing a broad range of subjects that highlight the milestones of our scientific, historical and cultural achievements,” said Jaffer.

Scheduled to join Jaffer at the first day ceremony are Thompson Fetter, president, Zoological Society of San Diego and San Diego Postmaster Glenn Crouch.

The stamps and the first day postmark sought by collectors will be available on Oct. 7 only at the event (both at the front gate and inside the Zoo) and at San Diego Post Offices. The stamps will be available at Post Offices across the country starting Oct. 8.

Collectors wishing to attend the first day ceremony must purchase a general admission ticket to the Zoo. Adult admission is \$19.50 and children 11 years old and younger are admitted free during October. For more information, go to the San Diego Zoo Web site at www.sandiegozoo.org.

Each year, the Postal Service designates October as National Stamp Collecting Month and issues a commemorative stamp — or stamps — that appeal to young people. This year the Reptiles and Amphibians stamps help highlight this educational and family-oriented activity.

The Reptiles and Amphibians stamps come in a pane of 20 stamps. The design features five digital illustrations by Steve Buchanan of two amphibians and three reptiles: the blue-spotted salamander, the ornate chorus frog, the reticulate collared lizard, the ornate box turtle and the scarlet kingsnake. The five designs are repeated four times each.

Reptiles and amphibians have long fascinated human observers; these mysterious creatures are prominent in the history, religion and mythology of many cultures. Although some people fear them, reptiles and amphibians are beneficial to humans and the

environment. Sensitive indicators of environmental health and quality, their presence or absence can show if an area is healthy or potentially hazardous for wildlife and humans. Key species in wetland and terrestrial habitats, they play important roles in the food chain. As predators, they help control populations of rodents and insects. Venom from some species of snakes has significant medical applications.

Unfortunately, populations of many reptiles and amphibians are declining. The causes include habitat loss, air and water pollution, global climate change, invasive species, exploitation by human beings and disease.

The blue-spotted salamander (*Ambystoma laterale*) lives in forests with moist soil. A secretive amphibian, it stays under cover during the day, hiding under leaves or logs or in burrows. At night, it emerges to search for food on the forest floor. When threatened by predators, it releases a sticky foul-tasting substance from glands in the skin of its back and tail. This long-tailed salamander earns its name from the blue spots on its shiny, black body. Its range includes the northeastern United States and the Great Lakes region.

A nocturnal amphibian, the ornate chorus frog (*Pseudacris ornata*) is more often heard than seen. Its distinctive call is a series of rapid metallic peeps, which it gives during late fall, winter and early spring. This frog lives near ponds, ditches and wet meadows. Although it is a member of the tree frog family, its toe-pads are so small that it burrows in the ground instead of climbing trees. It always has black or dark brown spots on its sides, but can vary in color from tan or brown to green, or be a mixture of these hues. The ornate chorus frog is found in the southern U.S. coastal plain and in north Florida.

The reticulate collared lizard (*Crotaphytus reticulatus*) is an alert, active reptile with a large head, long tail and strong limbs. When moving fast, it runs upright on its hind legs. If cornered, it may hold its mouth open in a display meant to frighten antagonists. A resident of thorny brush country in the Rio Grande Valley of south Texas, it may be seen sunning on rocks or found hiding beneath rocks or debris. "Reticulate" means netlike; this lizard has a network of pale lines on its head, body and limbs, as well as black spots on its back. Its "collar" is a vertical black bar on the sides of its neck.

The ornate box turtle (*Terrapene ornata*) is a reptile of prairies and open woodlands. It burrows to escape the heat, and large numbers sometimes emerge after rainstorms. This turtle has an important adaptation that protects it from predators — it can close its shell completely because it has a hinged plastron (lower shell). It may be recognized by the radiating yellow lines on its dark carapace (upper shell). It is found primarily in the central and southwestern United States.

Although harmless, the colorful scarlet kingsnake (*Lampropeltis triangulum elapsoides*) closely resembles the venomous eastern coral snake, whose snout is black rather than red. The kingsnake has black bands separating red and yellow bands; the coral snake has red and yellow bands touching. As the saying goes, "Red on yellow kills a fellow. Red on black, friend of Jack." This mimicry protects the scarlet kingsnake from potential predators. A secretive woodland reptile, it is seldom seen in the open except at

night or after heavy rains. A powerful constrictor, its prey includes venomous snakes, for it is apparently immune to their venom. The scarlet kingsnake is found in the southeastern and south-central United States.

To see the Reptiles and Amphibians stamps, visit the Postal Service Web site and open this press release at www.usps.com/communications/news/stamps/welcome.htm.

Current U.S. stamps, as well as a free comprehensive catalog, are available by toll-free phone order at 1 800 STAMP-24. In addition, a selection of stamps and other philatelic items are available at the online Postal Store at www.usps.com/shop.

Since 1775, the U.S. Postal Service has connected friends, families, neighbors and businesses by mail. It is an independent federal agency that visits 140 million homes and businesses every day and is the only service provider to deliver to every address in the nation. The Postal Service receives no taxpayer dollars for routine operations, but derives its operating revenues solely from the sale of postage, products and services. With annual revenues of more than \$66 billion, it is the world's leading provider of mail and delivery services, offering some of the most affordable postage rates in the world. The Postal Service delivers more than 43 percent of the world's mail volume—some 203 billion letters, advertisements, periodicals and packages a year—and serves 7 million customers each day at its 38,000 retail locations nationwide.

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TECHNICAL DETAILS

Issue: *Reptiles and Amphibians*
Item Number: 454900
Denomination & Type of Issue: 37-cent commemorative
Format: Pane of 20 (5 designs)
Series: N/A
Issue Date & City: October 7, 2003, San Diego, CA 92199
Designer: Steve Buchanan, Washington, DC
Art Director: Derry Noyes, Winsted, CT
Typographer: Steve Buchanan, Winsted, CT
Artist: Steve Buchanan, Winsted, CT
Engraver: Keating Gravure
Modeler: Avery Dennison, SPD
Manufacturing Process: Gravure
Printer: Avery Dennison (AVR)
Printed at: AVR, Clinton, SC
Press Type: Dia Nippon Kiko (DNK)
Stamps per Pane: 20
Print Quantity: 80 million stamps
Paper Type: Nonphosphored, Type III
Adhesive Type: Pressure sensitive
Processed at: AVR, Clinton, SC
Colors: Yellow, Cyan, Magenta, Black
Stamp Orientation: Horizontal
Image Area (w x h): 1.475 x 1.100 in./35.814 x 21.336 mm
Overall Size (w x h): 1.625 x 1.25 in./39.624 x 25.146 mm
Full Pane Size (w x h): 7.750 x 7.150 in./173.48 x 130.175 mm
Plate Size: 200 stamps per revolution
Plate Numbers: "V" followed by four (4) single digits
Marginal Markings: "© 2002 USPS" • Header • Price •
Plate position diagram • Plate
numbers (2 per pane) • 4 Barcodes
on back

Catalog Item Number(s): 454920 Strip of 5 - \$1.85
454930 Block of 10 - \$3.70
454940 Full pane of 20 - \$7.40
454963 First day cover, set of 5 - \$3.75
454993 Full Pane of 20 w/FDC, set of 5 - \$11.15
454967 Poster - \$12.95

How to Order the First Day of Issue Postmark

Customers have 30 days to obtain the first day of issue postmark by mail. They may purchase new stamps at their local Post Office, by telephone at 1 800 STAMP-24, and at the Postal Store Web site at www.usps.com/shop. They should affix the stamps to envelopes of their choice, address the envelopes (to themselves or others), and place them in a larger envelope addressed to:

REPTILES AND AMPHIBIANS COMMEMORATIVE STAMPS
POSTMASTER
PO BOX 509903
SAN DIEGO CA 92150-9903

After applying the first day of issue postmark, the Postal Service will return the envelopes through the mail. There is no charge for the postmark. All orders must be postmarked by Nov. 6, 2003.