

# Felines on the Stamps of Mountainous Karabakh

By Greg Balagian

Nagorno-Karabakh, or officially the Republic of Mountainous Karabakh, is a de facto independent republic located in South Caucasus.

Predominantly populated by Armenians, the area became disputed between Armenia and Azerbaijan, when both countries gained independence from the Russian Empire in 1918. After Soviet Union established control over the area, it was forcibly placed within Azerbaijan SSR in 1923.

In 1991, as the USSR was collapsing, people of Nagorno-Karabakh held a referendum and expressed their will to become independent and eventually reunite with Armenia.

The country remains unrecognized by the United Nations, and subsequently by the Universal Postal Union.

The Republic of Mountainous Karabakh issued its first set of stamps in

1993, and it has been issuing stamps and other philatelic materials regularly. Although the stamps are not listed in the Scott catalog, they are in Michel.

Three stamps with images of felines have been issued by the Karabakh Post. The first one was issued in 2008 and is a part of the Europa series. One of the stamps shows the very first postmark of the republic depicting a 13th century bas-relief lion from Gandzasar, an Armenian monastery in Karabakh.

The second stamp was issued in 2009 in a set of three stamps and depicts a Eurasian lynx (*Lynx lynx*) issued in a miniature sheet with labels which also bear an image of the lynx, incorrectly inscribed, "*Felis lynx lynx*."

In 2013, a sheetlet titled "Preservation of Wildlife" included the Pallas' cat or manul inscribed "*Felis manul*," now classified as *Otocolobus manul*. 🐾



Fig. 1



Fig. 2



Fig. 4

Fig. 3



Fig. 5

Karabakh Post has issued three stamps with cats not listed in the Scott Catalogue and two pictorial postmarks: Fig 1, Europa stamp with a postmark of a 13th century bas-relief lion from an Armenian monastery (2008); Fig. 2, enlargement of the lion postmark; Fig. 3, Eurasian Lynx stamp and label (2009); Fig. 4, Eurasian lynx postmark; and Fig. 5, Pallas' Cat (2013).