

collectors fascinated by these amazing creatures. Anyone can identify a cat as a cat, whether it is a tiny domestic cat or a huge lion, and felines have fascinated and inspired us since the beginning of recorded history.

Over the years I have been blessed by having number of beautiful cats as members of my family, and naturally being a stamp collector from a very young age I was unable to ignore stamps with images of cats, both domestic and wild. Eventually my collecting interests narrowed down to wild felines only, especially to the King of the Beasts.

The main criteria in picking the lion for my exhibit called The Lion – Most Symbolic Animal of All was the fact that the lion’s presence and role in human culture is larger and more diverse than of any other animal.

Question: How did you decide on the number of frames needed for your topic?

Larry: I did not decide on the number of frames until I collected suitable philatelic and non-philatelic material and read a lot of books and articles on the beaver, which took a couple of years. I decided early on that I wanted to create a display exhibit since I wanted to show a piece of beaver fur, beaver felt, trade tokens, coins, banknotes, and so on. I only decided on the number of frames after I had written my story on the beaver.

Greg: At the beginning of the process of research for the development of the structure of my exhibit I did not have a set number of frames in mind. Only after the lengthy process of analyzing the scope of philatelic and non-philatelic material in my possession and creating the blueprint of the plan did it become clear to me that the most appropriate number of frames for my exhibit is seven. I felt that it would allow me to cover all aspects of the plan and create a balanced exhibit.

Question: Can you describe how you developed your plan?

Larry: I read a lot of books about the beaver, their engineering feats such as building lodges and dams, the fur trade and the reintroduction of beavers in many areas in Eurasia, where the beaver had disappeared because of over hunting. I also researched the importance of the beaver in First Nations culture as well as the use of the beaver in advertising. So, it was through my research and reading that the plan began to emerge.

Greg: The development of the plan is the key factor in the process of the creation of an attractive and successful thematic, or thematically organized exhibit. In the very beginning of the development of my exhibit I acquired a substantial number of publications and read them thoroughly and highlighted the most relevant excerpts for my exhibit. Then I created a blueprint of the plan and began analyzing the available material and made a list of the so-called “white spots,” which helped me to make a list of what I needed to look for to be able to have a comprehensive and balanced narrative. I must admit that I am an enthusiastic fan of display exhibits, as it gives me an opportunity to support the narrative even if there is a lack of specific philatelic material. I re-mounted this exhibit seven times, and I must thank judges and fellow experienced exhibitors for helping me with their advice and suggestions during the process of achieving a balanced

plan. I am especially thankful to Edwin Andrews and Robert Henak for their deep analysis and extremely helpful on the point suggestions.

Question: What were some of the challenges in finding material?

Larry: While most stamps showing beavers are readily available, non-philatelic covers franked by those stamps are more difficult to find. Pieces of postal stationery that show beavers and that have been postally used are better than mint copies, but provide an extra challenge. Covers from locations that were named because of beavers in the vicinity, such as Beaverton, Oregon, or Biberach, Germany (biber = beaver in German) are nice finds, especially those posted before 1900. One always hopes to add preproduction material to an exhibit to earn points for rarity/difficulty of acquisition, but availability and one’s budget may make that difficult.

Greg: The biggest challenge was the search for items to cover several specific areas of the exhibit, especially trying to find fitting material to have a good balance of philatelic and non-philatelic items on every page. At least fifty percent of my exhibit pages were re-mounted after I was able to find material which fits better to each page. It was also challenging to find unique and rare items, especially in a good condition.



Figure 1. Larry identifies these issues (from Austria, Estonia and Great Britain) as good representatives of the beaver.

Question: What are some of your favorite items?

Larry: Although there are around 100 postal issues that depict the beaver, only a few, in my opinion, are good representations, such as those from Austria, Estonia and Great Britain (Figure 1). Canada’s first stamp, the 3-pence issue of 1851 has the distinction of being the first stamp to depict a wild animal. An unused copy was beyond my pocketbook, so, instead I show a trial color plate proof with “specimen” overprint in a block of four (Figure 2). A letter, written in 1838 and sent from Norway House, Rupert’s Land via Hudson’s Bay Company canoe to York Factory, then by HBC supply ship to London, England where it entered the mails as a ship letter and was rated ¼ sterling collect (in manuscript) mentions that the fur trade was particularly good that year (Figure 3). It is a treasured find. Another item I like includes a fancy pictorial cancel from Beaverpond,



Figure 2. A trial color plate proof with "specimen" overprint.

Ohio on an over-franked cover postmarked in 1933 (Figure 4). Of the non-philatelic items in my exhibit, I like the Canadian Bank Note Company engraving showing beavers at work (Figure 5). In a display exhibit, non-philatelic items can often illustrate features of the story that no available philatelic item can. Some of these items, while not expensive, are items that seldom appear. If you see an unusual item for sale, it is best to purchase it then, as you may never see it again. One such item is one produced after World War I. With money in short supply, many German towns printed their own emergency notes, known as notgeld. The note shown, from the municipality Beverstedt (Beaver city) is dated 1922 (Figure 6).



Figure 3. A letter, written in 1838, mentions that the fur trade was particularly good that year.



Figure 4. This piece has a fancy pictorial cancel from Beaverpond, Ohio on an over-franked cover.



Figure 5. A Canadian Bank Note Company engraving showing beavers at work.



Figure 6. A German emergency note (“notgeld” in German) from Beverstedt (Beaver city).



Figure 9. One of Greg’s favorite pieces is this cover, the only known example of this design type mailed to a foreign country.

Greg: There are numerous items in my exhibit that are notable. On the title page there is a beautiful Civil War Patriotic Cover with symbolic depiction of Union General Nathaniel Lyon. This cover is the only known example of this design type mailed to a foreign country. (Figure 9.)

I love advertising covers and there are a number of them in my exhibit, but two of them are exceedingly rare and should be noted. The first one is the advertising cover of Steen Brothers Hercules Powder mailed in 1904 (Figure 10), and the second one is the advertising cover of E. S. Frost, manufacturer of Colored Rugs or Mat Patterns, Rug Hooks, Frames, etc. (Figure 11).

I was lucky to purchase unique tarot card made in 1790 by famed German printer, Johann Matheus Backofen (Figure 12). Another rare item that I was lucky to acquire is the 1916 POW letter, franked by non-denominated label issued by Belgian authorities at the request of German military for use as a postage at Dutch internment camps for Belgian prisoners of WW I (Figure 13).



Figure 10. An advertising cover of Steen Brothers Hercules Powder mailed in 1904.



Figure 11. This lion-themed advertising cover is from E. S. Frost, manufacturer of Colored Rugs or Mat Patterns, Rug Hooks, Frames, etc.



Figure 12. Greg also includes this tarot card made in 1790 by famed German printer Johann Matheus Backofen.



Figure 13. Note the lion on the nondenominated label of this 1916 POW letter.

And lastly, I would like to bring your attention to an 1834 Spanish stampless folded letter mailed from Leon to Barcelona with an illustrious red hand-stamped free frank of Leon (Figure 14).

Question: *What advice would you offer someone contemplating an exhibit on an animal?*

Larry: I think you want to choose an animal for which there are a fair number of postal issues featuring the animal. In most exhibits on an animal, you would be expected to detail the taxonomy/classification, description, distribution and habitat, family life, food, predators, etc. Each animal will have other aspects to discuss, for example, its relationship to man, its part in popular culture, whether it is endangered and so on. Above all, choose an animal that fascinates you, and have fun!

Greg: My lifelong fascination with felines has helped me better understand and appreciate the natural world and genuinely enjoy the beauty and diversity of countless species of animals. Of course, anyone who also loves and appreciates the animal kingdom has his own favorite ones: be it a dog, a gorilla, an elephant, a butterfly, an eagle, a shark, or a reptile, and if that person is a topical stamp collector, there are surely albums and boxes filled with material that is dear to his or her heart.

I passionately believe that true philatelists cannot fully enjoy our wonderful hobby by merely acquiring the philatelic material without being involved in the most enjoyable aspect of philately – the process of creating an exhibit with a purpose of displaying it at a stamp show, so many others can see and appreciate it. Each exhibit is unique, so be creative, think out of the box, use the enormous possibilities of the internet in both the research and finding needed material. Most importantly, listen to your heart, and do what makes you genuinely happy and fulfilled. 🌟



Figure 14. An 1834 Spanish stampless folded letter with a red hand-stamped free frank of Leon



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