



Endangered underwater world in postage stamp format

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Topics: Biodiversity | Ecosystems

Two new Swiss postage stamps focus attention on endangered biodiversity in Swiss water bodies. Two Eawag researchers with a long-standing interest in aquatic biodiversity provided scientific advice to the Swiss Post on the selection and design of the animal and plant species depicted.

Bodies of water are hotspots of biodiversity. But it is precisely these habitats that are under particularly heavy pressure from human intervention, for example through the construction of river banks, the utilisation of hydropower or the input of nutrients and pollutants. The animal and plant species living in bodies of water are therefore particularly threatened. Around a fifth of them are already extinct or threatened with extinction. The Swiss Post is dedicating its two latest special postage stamps to some of these species, as announced in today's stamp magazine "Die Lupe". The stamps will be available from 2 May.

One of the two stamps shows the Lake Thun Balchen, one of several whitefish species that only occurs in the lakes of Thun and Brienz, together with the Chara algae (also known as stonewort) and pond mussels in the lake's sediment. The second stamp shows three inhabitants of the River Doubs: the white-clawed crayfish, the Zingel asper (also known as the Rhone Streber, the apron and the Roi du Doubs), and the common water moss.

The aquatic research institute Eawag has long been involved in research and conservation of aquatic biodiversity. Ole Seehausen, Head of the Fish Ecology and Evolution Department, and Christoph Vorburger, Head of the Aquatic Ecology Department, therefore provided scientific advice to the Swiss Post on the selection and design of the species depicted.



The Zingel asper is known as an umbrella species: if it survives, many other, less sensitive species will survive with it. (Photo: Lukas Rüber, Natural History Museum of Bern)

The rarest fish in Switzerland

The population of the Zingel asper in particular has declined dramatically in recent years, explains Ole Seehausen. “At the last official count in 2021, just one specimen was sighted.” However, the fish is a true camouflage artist. As it has very high demands on its habitat, it is especially sensitive to changes in its environment. Nevertheless: “If it survives, many other, less sensitive species will survive with it,” explains the fish expert. This makes the Zingel asper particularly worthy of protection. For this reason, much is being done to enhance its habitat. But this alone is not enough to save this highly endangered species. Efforts are therefore currently being made to breed it. In France, where the Zingel asper also occurs, this has already been done successfully, says Ole Seehausen. “Today, the population there is growing again.”

Underwater postage stamp competition

The two new special stamps are part of a Europe-wide series. In addition to the Swiss Post, many other European postal organisations are therefore issuing postage stamps on this year's theme of underwater flora and fauna. From 9 May, the various typical national motifs can be viewed on the [website](#) and assessed in a competition.

Cover picture: The two new Swiss postage stamps, which will be available in May, depict endangered species from Lake Thun and the River Doubs. (Image: Post CH Netz AG)

Related Links

Swiss Post website for the underwater flora and fauna stamps

Articles on the new special postage stamps in Swiss Post's customer magazine

The postage stamps can be purchased at Swiss Post branches from 2 May. They can already be pre-purchased online.

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