

THE FIRE SALAMANDER ON STAMPS

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[Ed. New member Vic Eichler, a naturalist, author, and retired biology professor, is a career amphibian biologist.]

Salamandra salamandra, commonly known as the Fire Salamander, is probably the best known salamander throughout central and southern Europe where it is found. This amphibian is also found on the postage stamps of numerous countries. The scientific name of this salamander, which is recognizable by the mixing of its black and yellow skin pigmentation, was given by Linnaeus, the originator of scientific nomenclature, in the year 1758.



S. salamandra
Croatia Sc#864
set of 3 Amphibians
also in bktl pane 10



S. salamandra
Belgium Sc#1801
WWF Endangered
Reptiles & Amphibians

The salamander is found among leaves on the floor of deciduous forests, and they often crawl into openings in tree trunks or fallen wood in search of worms, larvae, insects, and spiders that make up its diet. The name “fire salamander” has persisted in the folklore of many European countries, probably due to instances when wood containing a salamander hidden within was put into a home fire, and the heat drove the small amphibian out of the wood where it appeared to originate in the flames.



S. salamandra
Czech Rep. Sc#3278c
from SS of 4+4 labels
Krkonoše Mountains
Nature Protection



S. salamandra
East Germany Sc#664
from set of 4 Fauna

While captive individuals may tame down enough to be handled, skin glands are capable of producing a toxic alkaloid secretion that affects the nerves and muscles. The chemical, when released into the mouth lining of a predator from the salamander’s skin glands, can cause hyperventilation as well as strong muscle contractions leading to convulsions and the immediate release of the prey by the grasping animal.



S. salamandra
Laos Sc#1180
from set of 5 “Reptiles”



S. salamandra terrestris
Luxembourg Sc#766
from set of 4
Wildlife Conservation

The color pattern of yellow and black pigmentation is quite variable, and several subspecies have been identified. There may be black spots on a basic yellow body, or yellow spots on a basic black body. The extremes of these color patterns are shown in the illustrations below.



S. salamandra
Mail (2010)
SS of 1 Amphibians



S. salamandra terrestris
Slovakia Sc#580
from set of 2
Nature Preservation

The popularity of this species is recognized by this sampling of postage stamps. Like amphibian species worldwide there is concern that pollution of air, land, and water, as well as the drying effects of climate change and diseases that are affecting many species of amphibians will affect populations of the Fire Salamander as well.



S. salamandra
Spain Sc#1897
set of 5 Amphibians



S. salamandra
Turkey Sc#2472
from set of 4
World Environment Day



S. salamandra
Yugoslavia Sc#2291a
strip of 4+label
Nature Protection