

LICHENS

On 27 June 2019, Belarus issued a set of three stamps and a souvenir sheet of six showing lichens. Each stamp also shows a small insect (see the listing in the Entomology column).

There are not many stamps that feature lichens. The American Topical Association dATABase from which it generates its topical checklists shows only 25 entries pertaining to this botanical subject not counting these. It could be easy to acquire a complete collection of this topic.

Marina Vitkovaskaya designed the stamps based on artwork by Alexander Mityanin. They were printed on chalk-surfaced paper using offset lithography by “Bobruisk Integrated Printing House named after A. T. Nepogodin,” and perforated 13×13½.

Each design was issued in a separate miniature sheet of nine (4,000 sheets each) along with a souvenir sheet of six (15,000 sheets) containing two of each design.

The letter denominations pay the following rates:

A (42k): Domestic letter up to 20 grams weight within Belarus.

M (1.38r): International air mail postcard

H (1.50r): International surface letter up to 20 grams weight

Lichens are organisms formed as a result of the symbiosis of a fungus with different combinations of algae and/or cyanobacteria. Lichens are important for the biosphere. They grow on rocky and sandy terrain where there is no soil and help to break these down to form soil. Lichens also provide living conditions for other organisms.

Lichens are used to obtain dyes, sugar, alcohol, and some medicinal substances. They are among the first living organisms to suffer from air pollution. Their reaction to air pollution is used in the lichen-indication method for assessment of the degree of air pollution in cities and in forests.

The first stamp shows the Common Orange Lichen (*Xanthoria parietina*). It grows on rocks, walls, or tree bark and has been reported in all continents except South America and Antarctica. This lichen also appears on the tree bark in the right-hand margin of the souvenir sheet.

The middle stamp shows the Lungwort Lichen (*Lobaria pulmonaria*). This lichen consists of a fungus and a green algal partner living together in a symbiotic relationship with a cyanobacterium—a symbiosis involving members of three kingdoms of organisms. It occurs in Europe, Asia, North America, and Africa, and is considered threatened in many areas.

The final stamp shows Devil's Matchsticks (*Cladonia floerkeana*). It is a symbiosis of an algae and a fungus and grows in damp places and on rotting wood. It is found in Europe and North America.

