

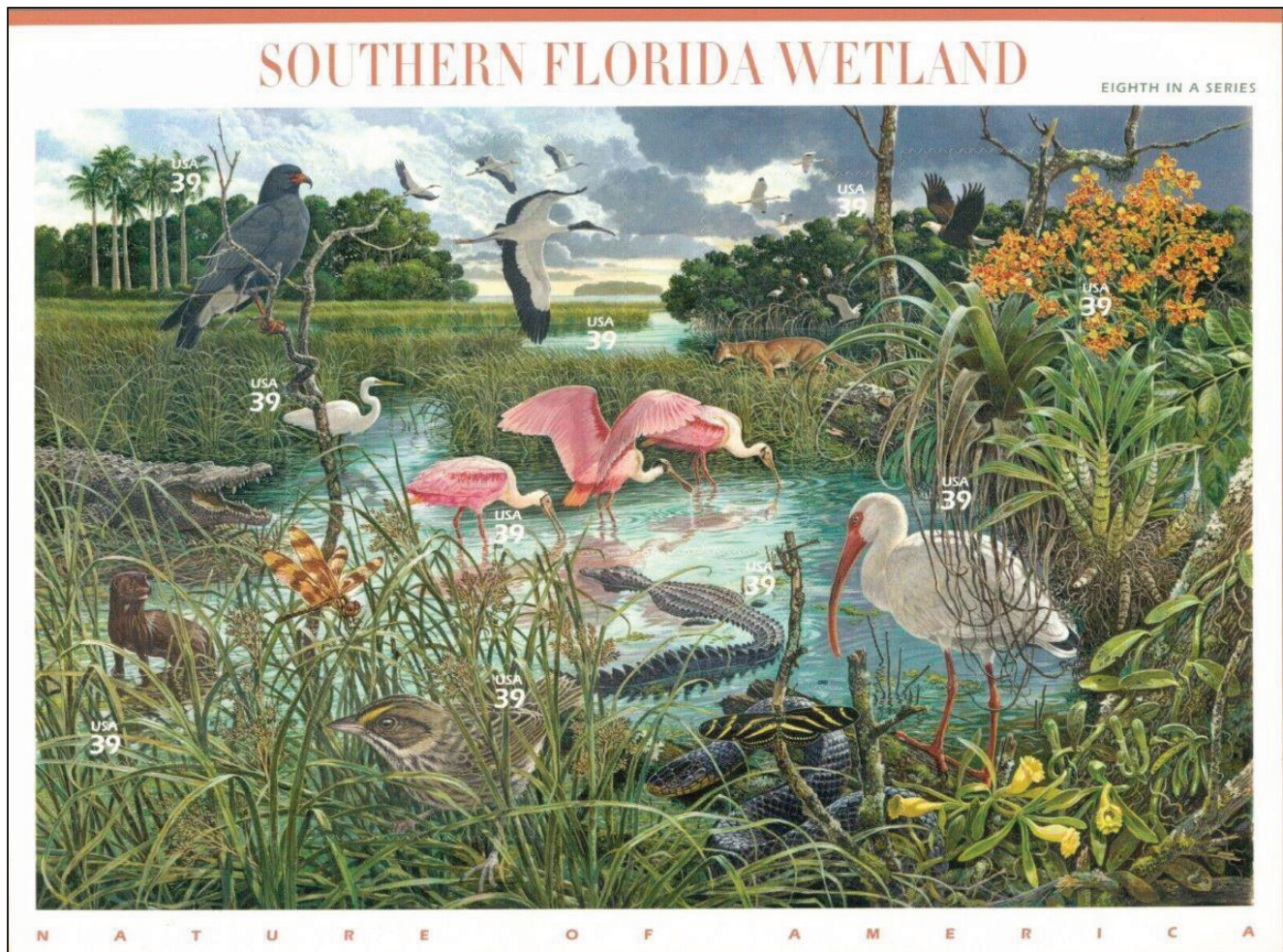
# When the Southern Florida Wetland Crossed the Red Line

By Patrick Crosby

In the September 2017 *Post Boy* club member Stan Cromwell (since deceased) lamented the large quantity of postal issues that had been released in the 1990's and so in 2000 he drew his red line in the sand – no more new U.S. first day covers for him. He asked other members to comment on their “red line in the sand” day. I knew immediately when mine was and, having just recently purchased the offending item, here is my reply.

The U.S. Postal Service (USPS) went bonkers in the 1990's and until 2010 with copious amounts of merchandise and excessive postage stamps and postal stationery for sale. My specialty was U.S. postal cards including new issues. I had already cut down on the number of each new stationery issue (including envelopes and aerograms) I was buying.

But when I called the Stamp Fulfillment Center in Kansas City to place an order and asked for two sets of the just issued Southern Florida Wetland cards (a package of 10 cards) I was told they were sold out. Wait a minute – these cards had been issued only 2-3 weeks previously! “Sorry, but these were a special issue and went quickly.” Aargh! I never heard of a “Special Issue” card. Another USPS rip-off! The Post Office lost a long-time collector customer that day. My only regret is that I didn't quit collecting the new issues years earlier.



Full pane of 10 39¢ stamps. This was pane number 8 in the 12-pane series of Nature of America.

From 1999 to 2010 the USPS issued the Nature of America series of 12 panes of postage stamps. Each pane depicted a large scene which included 10 self-adhesive stamps. When the eighth pane in the series, Southern Florida Wetland, was issued on October 4, 2006, the USPS also decided to issue postal cards with the same overall design on the view side, while the 10 different stamp designs were printed as postage on the address side.

The normal size of a postal card was not large enough to effectively show the overall design, so they made each card 5" x 7". This was larger than was allowed to receive the reduced card postage rate of 24¢, and instead the letter rate of 39¢ was required. The USPS probably assumed the increased size and cost would limit the cards' usefulness.



The view side of the postal cards and the address side of the cards.

The cards were printed in pairs with micro-perforations between each pair of cards. Five pairs including all 10 stamp designs were loosely stacked (no binding) and then shrink-wrapped. \$3.90 worth of postage sold for \$7.95 – if you were lucky enough to find them.

Only 10,000 shrink-wrapped sets (100,000 cards in total) were produced. Cards that had already been shipped to Stamp Distribution Offices were recalled. Dealers and collectors in the know jumped to make large orders for the limited supplies from the Stamp Fulfillment Center.

By the time I made my phone call they were gone. There were only two other places the cards had been for sale by the USPS – the first day city for the cards and the stamps, Naples, FL, and the Mega-Event Stamp Show in New York City October 5-8.

**WARNING:** Do not be fooled by a seller's comment, "In original Post Office packaging." This is not a good thing and may result in wavy, deformed cards as the wrapping keeps shrinking. Shrink-wrapping on postal cards should be removed ASAP. The information labels on the wrapping can be clipped and saved. The cards I just bought ended up being shrink-wrapped and warped.

The United States Postal Card Catalog values a set of 10 mint cards (S492-S501) at \$35. My 2019 Scott Specialized (UX478-UX487) at \$9 per pair, or \$45 for all 5 pairs. I paid \$21 at the APS Store at <https://www.hipstamp.com/> Of course, these are all mint prices since legitimate usage of these black sheep cards are scarce.

References:

- Lewis E. Bussey and Bill Geijsbeck, "Southern Florida Wetland Postal Cards" Postal Stationery, Journal of the United Postal Stationery Society 49 (Jan-Feb 2007): 3-4.
- United States Postal Card Catalog 2020, United Postal Stationery Society, edited by Lewis E. Bussey, 2015, available at <https://upss.org/>.
- Scott 2019 Specialized Catalog of United States Stamps and Covers (Sidney, OH: Amos Media, 2018).

*Patrick Crosby is a member of the Nevada Stamp Study Society and collects U.S. postal stationery, stamps, and postcards with an emphasis on postal history.*

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