

96 Elephants: Synopsis

Purpose: The purpose of this exhibit is to get people to think about elephant conservation through the language of philately, using the conservation meme “96 Elephants” promoted by the Wildlife Conservation Society.

Scope: The conservation meme “96 elephants” is depicted by showing a total of 96 elephants in the exhibit (some are *very* small). It’s meant to be a puzzle for the reader until the get to the last page. One frame is appropriate here as while the story of human-elephant interactions could be told with far more elephants and far more frames. the limitation to the 96 elephants of the meme will hopefully cause more people to think about conservation and look up the organization’s website. This is more properly called a display exhibit as some of the items do not fit the strict definition needed for a topical or thematic (such as the 96 Elephants stickers)

Challenges: It was a challenge to find stamps showing the various items addressed that totaled only 96 elephants. On the first pass, we actually found that we had 105 in the exhibit due to some items having very small elephant depictions.

We also wanted to show a diversity of items and unusual philatelic items depicting elephants. The most interesting items are the following. First, there is the commercial letter on page 9 used within the Belgian Congo. Although it was less than 400 miles from Manoro to Elizabethville, airmail was the only viable method of postal communication as roads were almost nonexistent at the time. The imperforate US circus poster stamp on page 12 is a rare postal usage as the press sheet was relatively scarce (only 10,000 copies). The “Kleine forgery” on page 13 as well as the East German-West German postal war cover on page 14 are interesting historical documents of the Cold War. These items will be indicated by a star.

Finally, it was quite a challenge to find a cover with an elephant theme where the denomination was “96” units. It was this find that encouraged us to try the “96 Elephants” theme for the exhibit.

It should be noted that the exhibitors are 20 year adjunct members of the Elephant Managers Association, the US organization for elephant keepers and friends of elephants in the US, and have learned much about these magnificent animals from our friends, both human and elephant, there.