

GIANT EARWIG EMERGES on St Helena stamps

by Trevor W. Hearl

St Helena's famed Giant Earwig, unseen for the past 20 years, is set to re-appear on 6th July 1995 - on St Helena's postage stamps. The last live *Labidura herculeana* was seen in 1967 when Belgian naturalists collected forty for natural history museums. Subsequent searches, notably by the Project Hercules team led by Dave Clark of London Zoo's invertebrate department in 1988, attracted widespread interest in the British press, but failed to find any more from which to breed to save the species.



Now the Giant Earwig is to be given pride of place on a special £1 Souvenir Sheet in a five-stamp commemorative set of St Helena's Endemic Invertebrates. Designed by Crown Agents Stamp Bureau and drawn by Ian Loe with advice from Paul Pearce-Kelly of London Zoo, chairman of the St Helena Working Group, other stars of the Island's insect world being featured include:

- Blushing Snail (*Succinea sanctaehelenae*) 12p
- Golden Sail Spider (*Argyrodes mellissi*) 25p
- Spiky Yellow Woodlouse (*Laureola atlantica*) 53p
- St Helena Shore Crab (*Platypodiella georgie*) 60p

As a contrast to these colourful creatures on the stamps, the modest Sandy Bay Blackfly (*Simulium atlanticum*) is depicted on the First Day Cover.

With a St Helena Post Office release date of July 6th, thematic collectors will have time to decide where woodlice and earwigs fit in the framework of philatelic features. Meanwhile my advice would be to get the St Helena Nature Conservation Group's splendid full-colour wall poster Invertebrate Wonders of St Helena from

which the stamp designs were taken, showing these and four other endangered species - a limited edition surely destined to become a collectors' item.

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