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Reserve Bank highlights country's fourth decimal coin series in September

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The South African Reserve Bank's fourth decimal coin series celebrates South Africa's natural heritage.

The South African Reserve Bank (SARB) will highlight the country's fourth decimal coin series in September as the nation observes Heritage Month. The new circulation coin series features deep ecology as the overarching theme and is the first complete set of coins to be issued in the country's democratic dispensation. The SARB's focus on the coin series comes after the launch of the upgraded banknotes and coin on 3 May 2023 where the focus was placed largely on the upgraded banknotes.

The fourth decimal coin series has a contemporary appearance, and the design elements offer valuable information about the country's identity, including its culture, national symbols, history, languages, flora and fauna, cities and technology.

New security features have also been added, making the coins difficult to replicate.

The series was designed and engraved by South African artists and developed in consultation with key stakeholders such as the South African National Botanical Institute (SANBI), Pan South African Language Board (PanSALB) and the Institute for the Blind to ensure inclusivity, accessibility and accuracy of the design elements.

The six-coin denominations and designers are:

- 10c 'Cape honey bee' by Carl Jeppe;

- 20c 'bitter aloe' by Zinhle Zulu;
- 50c 'Knysna turaco' by Kotie Geldenhuys;
- R1 'king protea' by Lilian Guerra and Richard Stone;
- R2 'springbok' by Temba Mkhangelu; and
- R5 'southern right whale' by Sujay Sanan.

The coins retain the colours that South Africans are familiar with. The cents are brown (copper) or gold (bronze), the rands are silver, and the R5 is a bi-metallic copper alloy of both the gold (bronze) and silver colours. Each coin design has a unique landing pattern with various sides, which helps the visually impaired to identify the coins' value.

While the coins have undergone a makeover, they remain circulation coins. This means that they are worth their face value and can be used alongside earlier circulation coin series.

Design note to editors:

The 10c coin was designed by Carl Jeppe, a design lecturer, and bears the Cape honey bee which is indigenous to Southern Africa. The bee plays a vital role in South Africa's agriculture and agricultural economy by pollinating crops and producing honey.

The bitter aloe adorns the 20c coin, designed by Zinhle Zulu, an illustrator and cultural visual storyteller. The bitter aloe is a tall, single-stemmed plant that can grow to a height of 10 feet (3 metres).

The Knysna turaco or the Knysna loerie as it is referred to in South Africa, is a large turaco. The tall, elegant bird on the 50c coin was designed by Kotie Geldenhuys, an illustrator and graphic designer.

The South African Mint's Lilian Guerra and Richard Stone collaborated on the R1 coin, featuring the king protea, which has the largest flower head in the genus. This flower is also the national flower of South Africa. It is adapted to survive wildfires by its thick underground stem which contains many dormant buds; these produce new growth after a fire.

The springbok, featured on the R2 coin and designed by award-winning visual artist and environmentalist Themba Mkhangelu, is the national animal of South Africa. A feature unique to the springbok is its ability to perform multiple leaps into the air of up to 2 meters above the ground.

The R5 coin designed by Sujay Sanan features the southern right whale, which can be found in the southern part of the southern hemisphere. During the winter months these whales migrate to the coastal waters of South Africa, with more than 100 of them known to be in the Hermanus area.

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