

EDITORIAL

Introducing *Zoologia Caboverdiana*

When I first visited the Cape Verde Islands, back in 1986 and 1987, I would not have guessed that this marked the beginning of a long and intensive relationship with the islands, their people and their wildlife. In the course of these early visits, which focused on endemic birds and seabirds, it became clear that the situation of many taxa was dramatic and decisive steps to safeguard their continued existence were urgently needed. After consultations with local authorities, it was agreed that an action plan should be drafted and during the following eight years I worked in Cape Verde for prolonged periods each year, engaging both in research and educational activities. One of the outcomes of this was the designation of a number of areas as Natural Reserves protected by law, thus laying the basis of the network of protected areas that we know today.

At the time, the only zoologists present in Cape Verde worked at the agricultural and fisheries institutes and, out of necessity, their activities concerned matters of applied biology only. Laudable as that may have been, it surely felt as a handicap that there was nobody locally who had any idea of the significant number of endemic taxa of birds, lizards and geckos in Cape Verde or the importance of the islands as a breeding place for seabirds, sea turtles and humpback whales. Although the zoology of the islands had been the subject of a number of ship-based scientific expeditions, mainly focusing on marine life, during the 1980s and several international symposia dedicated to the flora and fauna of Cape Verde had been held in Europe, this had raised little or no interest within the islands themselves. Quite understandably, the young republic had other worries and priorities at the time, including the ever present danger of food and water

shortages and, as is often the case in such circumstances, the basic distinction recognized in nature was between edible and non-edible organisms.

This year, Cape Verde will not only celebrate 35 years of independence of the Republic, but also witness the birth of the first scientific society in the country. This is an extraordinary event of which I could only have dreamed during those early years of my involvement with the islands. The establishment of the *Sociedade Caboverdiana de Zoologia* signifies a major step in the development of the country as a grown up nation. It means that a new wave of local zoologists have appeared on stage, taking up the subjects of their studies with endearing and stimulating enthusiasm. There are now local malacologists, ichthyologists, cetologists and other marine biologists, as well as entomologists, ornithologists and conservation biologists, demonstrating that great strides have been made. At the core of these developments has been the integration of the *Instituto Superior de Engenharias e Ciências do Mar* in São Vicente into the newly founded University of Cape Verde. This has caused considerable spin off and has accelerated the spread and depth of zoological research in Cape Verde.

The *Sociedade Caboverdiana de Zoologia* sets itself as a goal to promote zoological research in the broadest sense in Cape Verde. It aims to offer a common platform for zoologists engaging in research on any aspect of the zoology of the Cape Verde Islands, be it on marine or terrestrial organisms or in the realm of paleontology. It is envisaged that organizing symposia and workshops will be amongst the society's future activities. To start things off, a peer-reviewed biannual journal, *Zoologia Caboverdiana*, is being

launched, which will become available free-access online. We hope to have a website ready soon, which will enable the free download of all papers published in the new journal.

Meanwhile, Vol. 1, No. 1 of *Zoologia Caboverdiana* is being distributed amongst a large number of researchers deemed to be interested in this endeavour. The first issue offers papers on a scala of taxa, from birds to dolphins and from butterflies to bivalves. We are proud and happy that among the authors that contributed to this issue is a Cape Verde citizen, hopefully paving the way for many

more to come. There appears to be plenty room for the new journal, offering an outlet for the publication of results of many kinds of zoological research as well as faunistic topics. We strive to maintain the highest scientific standards and the Editorial Board sincerely hopes that you will consider *Zoologia Caboverdiana* when it comes to publishing your work.

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Editor, *Zoologia Caboverdiana*