



Official announcement from the Department of Entomology (Museu Nacional, Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro) on the fire at the São Cristóvão Palace

Rio de Janeiro, October 06, 2018

This announcement concerns the situation of the Department of Entomology (Museu Nacional, Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro) after the tragic fire at the São Cristóvão palace, which occurred in the night of September 2, 2018. Unfortunately, this sad event destroyed ten of our eleven laboratories. It also destroyed the whole area in which our Entomological Collection was located, including two large museum storage compact cabinets and various other smaller cabinets. The single laboratory that was not affected by the fire is located in the Alípio de Miranda Ribeiro building, which is attached to the palace; this laboratory houses part of the Diptera collection. Our main collection had about five million specimens. Although we are still not able to provide an adequate estimate of how many specimens were destroyed, because what was left of the cabinets is currently not accessible, we are prepared for the worst-case scenario. This is due to the fragility of our specimens and their labels, which most probably did not withstand the terrible fire. We estimate that our surviving collection includes a few tens of thousands of specimens. This material includes the aforementioned part of the Diptera collection and specimens that were on loan to other institutions; some of the latter are already being returned to us. Sadly, many specimens from other institutions that were sent on loan to the Museu Nacional were likewise lost. The whole situation is truly devastating because the work of several generations of scientists and naturalists, who contributed for assembling the largest Brazilian collections for several insect orders (including more than three thousand primary types), was almost completely lost. Furthermore, a huge amount of laboratory equipment, obtained through research grants, was destroyed. The latter, of course, will be replaced in due time.

The Department of Entomology is survived by its eleven professors, seven technicians/biologists, and various undergraduate and graduate students. The staff does intend to rebuild the insect collection and carry on the outstanding scientific work of the

Department. Temporarily, we are housed in buildings of the Museu Nacional located in a nearby campus (Horto Botânico) at the Quinta da Boa Vista park. These buildings are from the Vertebrates and Botany departments, as well as the museum central library. We thank our colleagues for their warm and generous welcome in their laboratories and offices at this really difficult time. The projects of our students, most of them from the graduate school of zoology of the Museu Nacional, have already been resumed or are currently being evaluated; we are confident that these projects will be concluded successfully. We have already applied for grants for resuming our routine work and are making plans for scientific expeditions.

We greatly acknowledge the many generous manifestations of support and donation offers sent by colleagues and institutions from Brazil and abroad, as well as by private donors. We do hope to have a new building in the near future, so that we can continue our work in more suitable facilities. Our staff does have the strength to overcome this difficult moment. We are going to resume our research activities and rebuild our insect collection.

The staff of the Department of Entomology

Department of Entomology – Who we are:

The staff of the Departamento de Entomologia (Museu Nacional, Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro) includes currently 11 professors, 1 emeritus researcher, and 7 technicians. The professors are the principal investigators in various research lines on insect taxonomy and diversity. Some of these lines have no researchers in other Brazilian institutions. The staff has already published 1,144 scientific papers, 601 of them in the last 10 years. 60% of the professors are research productivity fellows from the Brazilian national research funding agency (CNPq). We have served as advisors for 92 D.Sc. and 104 M.Sc. dissertations. Currently, 23 D.Sc. and 17 M.Sc. students work under our supervision. All professors provide peer reviews for international scientific journals and half of them work as editors. We are responsible for a large number of courses in the graduate school of zoology of the Museu Nacional (18 courses of the basic curriculum plus four additional courses).

Professors and their research lines:

Alcimar L. Carvalho - Taxonomy, biology, and phylogeny of aquatic insects, especially Odonata. Cultural Entomology.

Cátia A. M. Patiu - Diptera systematics, especially Sarcophagidae and Conopidae.

Felipe R. Vivallo - Taxonomy, systematics, and bionomics of Hymenoptera, especially neotropical and Andean bees.

Gabriel Mejdalani - Morphology, biology, systematics, and phylogeny of Hemiptera, especially Cicadellidae.

Leonardo Gil Azevedo - Phylogenetic systematics, taxonomy, and biogeography of Diptera, especially aquatic taxa.

Marcela L. Monné - Systematics and evolution of Coleoptera.

Márcia S. Couri - Systematics and biology of Diptera.

Maria Cleide de Mendonça - Ecology, taxonomy, and morphology of Collembola.

Miguel A. Monné (emeritus researcher) - Systematics and evolution of Coleoptera.

Pedro G. B. S. Dias - Systematics and taxonomy of Orthoptera, especially Grylloidea.

Sonia M. L. Fraga - Taxonomy of Neotropical Blattaria. Brazilian Lepidoptera.

Valéria Cid Maia - Biology and taxonomy of Cecidomyiidae (Diptera).