

Editorial

New species and records of mammals from Africa

Tropical Africa and surrounding islands such as Madagascar, the Comoros, Bioko, São Tomé and others are hotspots of vertebrate diversity. Although mammals have been the subject of research for centuries, the full diversity of African mammals is still not known, as new discoveries are being made every year (REEDER et al. 2007). From 1988 to 2008, 175 new taxa of mammals, including five new genera, 136 species, and 31 new subspecies, were named from this region (HOFFMANN et al. 2009). Primates, rodents, bats and shrews are the mammal groups in which most new discoveries were made. These discoveries add to the common knowledge of the world's biotic richness, but they also have strong implications for conservation measures (CEBALLOS & EHRLICH 2009). Yet, it is an alarming fact that very little is known about the biology and full distributional range of most of these newly discovered taxa. The reviews of REEDER et al. (2007) and HOFFMANN et al. (2009) show that the discovery of new mammals in Africa is continuing. In 2009, three species of bats and two species of shrews from Africa have been named so far: *Miniopterus aelleni* (GOODMAN et al. 2009; Madagascar), *Mops brachypterus* (STANLEY et al. 2009; Pemba Island), *Triaenops menamena* (GOODMAN & RANIVO 2009; Madagascar), *Suncus hututsi* (KERBIS PETERHANS & HUTTERER 2009; Burundi), and *Sylvisorex akaibe* (MUKINZI et al. 2009; D. R. Congo).

The present issue includes five papers which describe new species of mammals from Africa, two rodents and three shrews. Another paper presents new distributional data of small mammals from Mount Kupe in Cameroon, including a new record of the recently described *Hylomyscus walterverheyeni*. It continues the tradition of the Zoologisches Forschungsmuseum Alexander Koenig in taxonomic research on African mammals, mainly associated with the name of its former director Martin Eisentraut, and of Bonner zoologische Beiträge publishing pertinent studies (e.g. HUTTERER 1992).

This issue is also a tribute to four scientists, three still active and one deceased, who have served the scientific community highly, three of them for a very long time.

Michael D. Carleton, curator of mammals at the National Museum of Natural History, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C., is honoured by associating his name with a new species of *Eliurus* from Madagascar (GOODMAN et al., this issue). Carleton has revised various groups of rodents from Africa and Madagascar, and is well known

for his monumental work, together with Guy G. Musser, on the rodents of the world (CARLETON & MUSSER 2005).

Duane A. Schlitter, former curator of mammals at the Carnegie Museum of Natural History, Pittsburg, is honoured by associating his name with a remarkable new species of *Surdisorex* from Kenya, the third species of the genus (KERBIS PETERHANS et al., this issue). Schlitter has promoted the scientific study of mammals in various African countries such as Kenya, Somalia, Namibia, and South Africa, and served the scientific community by organizing and supporting several successful meetings on "Ecology and Taxonomy of African Small Mammals" (SCHLITTER 1978).

Gordon B. Corbet, former curator of mammals at The Natural History Museum, London, is honoured by associating his name with the largest species of *Sylvisorex* ever discovered. He has served the scientific community by writing a number of textbooks on the mammals of the Palearctic Region, Indomalayan Region, and the World (e.g. CORBET & HILL 1991), and by revising African mammals such as hedgehogs, hyraxes, and hippos.

Hans G. Rupp, who is honoured by associating his name with a new species of *Dendromys* from Sudan (DIETERLEN, this issue), was a German student of zoology based at the University of Tuebingen. He was an excellent field biologist and studied the ecology and distribution of rodents in Sudan and Ethiopia (RUPP 1980), often together with Gerhard Nikolaus, and both discovered numerous new species of mammals, including the one now named for Rupp. He died in Kenya in 1979, at the age of 32.

We are grateful to all these colleagues for their great service, and also to the authors of this issue for their participation in this project.

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