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Museu Bocage ON the morning of 18 March, 1978 the sky of Lisbon was illuminated by a giant fire, similar to the one that some centuries earlier under the inquisition destroyed lives and books. Ironically, during the fire irresponsible persons called the headquarters of Lisbon newspapers claiming that they had set the fire to the Faculty of Science of Lisbon and that they were a part of a movement whose objective was the defense of the western culture! A curious way indeed of defending the western culture! True or not at 0100 hrs. a fire began and by 0500 hrs. the whole zoological—the Museu Bocage—and geological departments of the National Museum of Natural History of Portugal and some laboratories of the Faculty of Science of the University of Lisbon were reduced to ashes.

In the four hours thousands of specimens representing most zoological groups, including extinct or rare species, types, the richest zoological library in Portugal (including many old and rare books) and the personal work of many years by several people were destroyed.

Fortunately the botanical collections, that comprise the Welwitsch Herbarium collected between 1839 and 1861 were kept in another building that was untouched by fire. The rich Botanical Garden that surrounds the Faculty did not suffer.

A monastic institution where young missionaries from the “Companhia de Jesus” were prepared for their duties overseas was formerly located at Rua da Escola Politecnica on the site of the building that housed the Faculty of Science of Lisbon. This monastic institution was created in 1619 and suppressed by Marquis de Pombal, prime-minister of king Joseph I, when he expelled the Jesuits from Portugal. In 1761, the Marquis founded the “Colegio dos Nobres” (college of noblemen) that was renamed the “Polytechnic School” in 1837 when new ideas blew over Portugal. In 1843 a first tragedy occurred and a violent fire destroyed the Polytechnic school building. It was not until the end of the century that the whole building was completely built. In 1910, the Portuguese monarchy was overthrown by the Republic and in 1911 the Faculty of Science of the University of Lisbon replaced the Polytechnic School.

The beginning of the collections of the Museu Bocage was in the Royal cabinet of the Palace of Ajuda (Lisbon). These zoological collections were part of those of the National Museum that

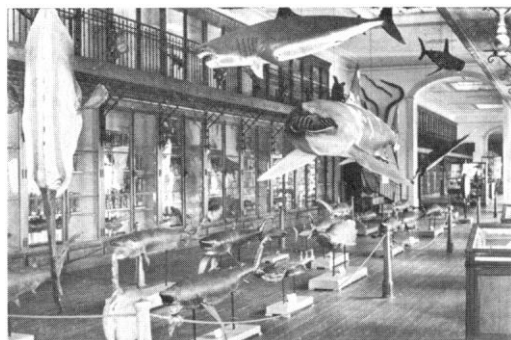


Fig. 1. The gallery of fishes in the former ichthyological collection of the Museu Bocage (photo by F. Reiner—Museu do Mar, Cascais, Portugal).

was incorporated into the Polytechnic School in 1858 thanks to Jose Vicente Barbosa du Bocage, Professor of Zoology. This is one of the reasons that the Department of Zoology and Anthropology of the National Museum of Natural History and the Laboratory of Zoology of the Faculty of Science, are called Museu Bocage in honor to this brilliant and indefatigable man who contributed much to the knowledge of diverse zoological fields. The Ajuda collections comprised many overseas specimens (Africa and Brazil) including those obtained by Alexandre Rodrigues Ferreira during his 1783–93 explorations in the Amazonian region.

Misfortune seems to have accompanied the collections despite the efforts of a few Portuguese scientists often working under harsh conditions. The first difficulty was in 1807 with the Napoleonic occupation under Junot. Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire accompanied the military expedition as he did with Bonaparte in Egypt and after examination of the collections at Ajuda sent 1583 specimens to the Museum of Paris in 1808; including 100 fish specimens many if not all of them collected in Brazil by Rodrigues Ferreira. Cuvier described these fishes with the rather euphemistic indication “don du Musée de Lisbonne,” a gift from the Museum of Lisbon” (many years later Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire’s son also spoke about a “volunteer exchange”). The document signed by Junot still exists, like some other precious manuscripts (among them two albums with the original coloured drawings of Rodrigues Ferreira). They were very fortunately saved from the fire being in a safe embedded in a one meter thick (!) wall.

The fish collection of the Museu Bocage was modest compared with the ornithological collection, for example, or with the ichthyological collections of some other museums but it was

rich in quality, including rare fishes and some types. The specimens were the labor of indefatigable scientific workers and explorers like Anchieta, F. Newton, F. Brito Capello, B. Osorio and others. Bocage also managed to enlarge the ichthyological collection (in 1858 made up of mounted specimens others preserved in fluid but often lacking collection information) and tried to have the specimens stolen by Junot returned from Paris. As these specimens had been discussed by French scientists and a lot of time had elapsed since the French invasion, Bocage accepted what he called a total indemnity by the receipt of good duplicate collections of the Museum of Paris—birds, mammals, reptiles among others, and 47 fishes, some of them from overseas and the oceanographic expeditions of the “Talisman.”

About 100 specimens of the ichthyological collection recently caught in Portuguese waters were saved, because they were being studied at the Marine Laboratory at Guia-Cascais (that belongs to Museu Bocage) not far from Lisbon and 154 specimens of common Portuguese and tropical species were incredibly spared in one of the glass cases of the gallery of fishes despite the adjacent destruction. One of the laboratories that did not burn contained additional specimens of Portuguese freshwater fishes. The type material of Portuguese cyprinids was also spared.

As the cards of the ichthyological collection have disappeared it is difficult to establish at this date a complete list of the type material lost (a task we are planning to do in the near future). Let us only say that **all the marine fish types have disappeared.**

Some type material had disappeared previously. One of the reported causes is that a grenade fell inside the African gallery during one of the revolutions that took place in Lisbon about fifty years ago. Decidedly the Museu Bocage has suffered many misfortunes.

The fire was a terrible loss not only for Portugal but also for the scientific community; but the will of emerging from this “Guernica without victims,” as Prof. G. F. Sacarrao called it, is very great. The generous young collaborators of Museu Bocage are beginning to cruise the Portuguese waters in search of new material; friends from France, United States, Soviet Union, England, Democratic Republic of Germany, Italy, Israel, Denmark and other countries are sending us books, reprints, and periodicals . . . and here we beg that others help us in the same way. Later when the Museu Bocage has been reorganized we shall ask for specimens.

—LUIZ SALDANHA, *Museu Bocage-Faculty of Science, Lisbon, Portugal.*

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John T. Greenbank JOHN T. Greenbank, retired fish biologist and former ASIH member died 9 June in Montrose, Colorado.

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International Commission THE required six months' notice is given of the possible use of plenary powers by the International Commission on Zoological Nomenclature in connection with the following name listed by case number: (see Bull. Zool. Nom. 35, part 1, 31 July 1978): 2162 (*Trionyx*) *steindachneri* Siebenrock, 1906: proposed validation (Reptilia, Testudines). Comments should be sent in duplicate (if possible within six months of the date of publication on this notice in Bull. Zool. Nom. 35, part 1), citing case number to: R. V. Melville, The Secretary, International Commission on Zoological Nomenclature, c/o British Museum (Natural History), Cromwell Road, London, SW7 5BD, England.

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Chairman-Curator DEPARTMENT of Natural Sciences, Florida State Museum, University of Florida. To administer research-oriented department of 12 curators in systematic biology, ecology, paleontology, zooarcheology. Research interest in any related field. Curator or Associate Curator. 12 month position beginning July 1, 1979, negotiable salary. Application deadline November 1, 1978. Name three references and send C.V. to: Search Committee, Department of Natural Sciences, Florida State Museum, University of Florida, Gainesville, 32611. An Equal Opportunity/Affirmative Action Employer.