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Preface

The scientific journal of the entomology department at the Natural History Museum Basel will be concluded with this 35th volume of "Entomologica Basiliensia et Collectionis Frey". Originally, the journal was edited by Walter Wittmer and Cesare Baroni Urbani and has appeared almost every year since 1975, for a period of 42 years. Its publication is inseparably linked with the name of Michel Brancucci who became co-editor in 1980 and editor-in-chief from 1981. As in all museum based journals, the papers have focused on the study of the extensive material stored in the NHMB collections. The journal is therefore an important document of the scientific treasures of the museum's entomological collections.

We acknowledge gratefully the contribution of the Advisory Board of this journal and of additional external reviewers of manuscripts. Though Michel Brancucci was by far the main actor in editing the journal, he was continuously supported by the entomology unit of the museum and benefitted from the help of further technical and administrative personnel of the museum. We thank the board of the foundation Pro Entomologia for its financial and strategic patronage in favour of the journal. Our special thanks go to the authors of the individual papers, who enabled the existence of our journal through all these years.

The two final volumes concentrate on the scientific results of the "Beetles of Laos" project initiated by Michel Brancucci and lead by him from 2003 until his demise in 2012 (see vol. 34 of this journal). Michel Brancucci passed away five months after his last expedition to Laos, and therefore was unable to publish his planned Laos volumes himself. The current editorial team has been making every effort to compile and design these two volumes in his sense, which is why Michel Brancucci is listed as an editor of this second volume as well.

Up until now, many scientific contributions about the material of the Laos expeditions have been published in various journals. A large amount of additional mounted, but still unidentified, material is available for study at the NHMB Coleoptera collection, and still more freshly mounted specimens are arriving. Also, in future, the material of Michel Brancucci's Laos project will be available to the scientific community worldwide through various publications.

Despite the designation of protected areas in Laos, the pressure on pristine habitats and the natural wildlife diversity continues to grow. Through his activities, Michel Brancucci made a substantial contribution to our knowledge about the diverse beetle fauna of the country. He made it possible to describe and document the occurrence of many taxa, before they face the risk of getting lost forever, as has happened already in many other parts of the world.

The Laos project was set up with the goal to establish a long-term cooperation with scientific institutions within Laos. First contacts to forestry offices and the Faculty of Agriculture at NUOL (National University of Laos) were made, and several of their students, officers and scientific personnel participated in the expeditions. Unfortunately, the untimely demise of Michel Brancucci made it difficult to intensify these relations into a deep-seated institutional cooperation. Still, we hope to have awoken interest in our Laotian partners to further study and preserve the rich insect fauna of Laos at their own initiative, or in cooperation with other partners. We owe our Laotian partners a great deal by sharing with us their inherent knowledge of their beautiful country and enabling scientific exchanges. We acknowledge gratefully their generosity and hospitality. Michel Brancucci would certainly have dedicated this publication to the people of Laos. We are glad to herewith act to this effect.

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