
Communication from the Graduate Program in Biological Sciences (Zoology) of the UFRJ/Museu Nacional

By this time, much have been published mourning the cultural tragedy in the night of September 2nd. The main building of the National Museum and a sizeable part of its historical and scientific collections burned to ground, including Egyptian mummies and an ethnographic collection with historical records from native Brazilian ethnical groups already extant, as well as historical documents, millions of specimens of invertebrates, fossils, the exhibition, most of the administration, dozens of laboratories, and the largest and most important Brazilian library of anthropology.

However, not all has gone. After the dust has settled, the staff returned to work. More than that, they started to create a new and forward-looking agenda. Since the day after the fire, work and research groups organized themselves in several activities.

After all, the Museum is not only a material cultural heritage. The National Museum is also an intangible historical and scientific heritage. This is expressed by the historical achievements in the scientific research and popularization, as well as the process of fostering new generations of scientists.

Our graduate program in Zoology was created 40 years ago. So far, over 900 M.Sc. and D.Sc. degrees were awarded. Our former students are spread all over Brazil, working in universities, research institutes, schools, NGOs, and enterprises, contributing to a dream of a Nation built under the principles of sustainability.

In this time of crisis, we want to reassure our commitment to excellence with the continuity of our work. Moreover, to embrace and support our students, in particular those who were affected by the flames that took our home.

The projects of 40 of our students were hindered, some by the loss of specimens, others by the destruction of laboratory equipment. The program will grant special support in coordination with the faculty and other students.

Our community is ready, not only to embrace those students but, also, to keep the high standards that sustain our graduate program as one of the largest in biodiversity and a reference in Brazil's highly regarded zoology.

We resumed the classes at the Botanical Garden in Quinta da Boa Vista. We are arranging thesis and dissertations defenses and the admission exam to the 2019 class will be hold in schedule. While new facilities are being built, faculty and students that lost their labs are being welcomed by colleagues that can provide the lab services needed to keep research going.

We greatly appreciate the support and words of encouragement we receive daily from colleagues from Brazil and abroad. Our struggle will be hard, but we are gratified of the help from the University Presidency and the National Museum Directorship as well as its other graduate programs. We also count on the support from CAPES and other governmental agencies, surely aware of the importance of preserving the conditions for excellence on our graduate program.

Fundamentally, we can count on the passionate struggle of our students, who at this time of crisis, are showing that the excellence of their training is not limited to academic issues, but to their humanitarian and solidarity stances, capable of overcome the countless difficulties they will certainly find throughout their careers.

Rio de Janeiro, September 12th, 2018