

ON THE 80TH ANNIVERSARY OF GÜNTHER EDMUND MAUL

When in November 1930 Günther Edmund Maul arrived in Madeira from Germany to take up his post as taxidermist to the future Funchal Museum, no one could have guessed what an impact his presence in Madeira would make on scientific circles both nationally and internationally.

In January 1931 he set about preparing, organising and displaying all the material available. When in 1933 the Museu Municipal do Funchal was officially inaugurated it was almost entirely due to his skill and dedication that all the collections which it contained, especially zoological specimens, were so admirably presented.

Mr. Maul developed a keen interest in several branches of natural history, especially in the study of fish, which with the passage of time, resulted in his being considered an ichthyologist of world repute. He has identified and classified over 20 rare species caught in Madeira waters, several of which are new to science. He has published some 50 scientific papers and to date about 25 animal genera and species have been given his name.

In 1940 he was appointed director of the Museum where, almost single handed, he dedicated himself to enriching the collections of insects, fish and birds. He also built up an excellent herbarium and an important collection of scientific books.

In 1945 he founded the Boletim do Museu Municipal do Funchal, an annual publication which was distributed world-wide and through which the international scientific community became aware of the work that was being done in Madeira in the field of Natural History. For the 10 first years Mr. Maul wrote most of the papers appearing in the Boletim, all of which were dedicated to the study of Madeira fish. Overseas scientists who had studied many different aspects of Madeira Natural History then started publishing their papers and for the past 30 years and more the authors have been mostly British, French, German, Swedish or Portuguese scientists.

In 1959 Mr. Maul founded another scientific publication, Bocagiana, which deals not only with Natural History subjects of the Madeira Archipelago but also of the three other Macaronesian Archipelagos, the Azores, the Cape Verde and Canary Islands. Some 150 articles have been published to date.

Also in 1959 he founded the Municipal Aquarium which, quite apart from being a great tourist attraction, is considered the best aquarium of its kind in Portugal, exhibiting only specimens caught in Madeira waters. In fact, all exhibits in the museum are restricted to specimens taken in the Madeira Archipelago, a principle which Mr. Maul has always strictly adhered to.

Mr. Maul has taken part in 11 international scientific expeditions and has visited and worked in several British, American and German institutions where he is highly

considered as an expert ichthyologist. He was responsible for the visit of Jacques Cousteau to Madeira in Calypso in 1956, and in 1963 he organised the first international scientific expedition to the Salvage Islands. This expedition awakened scientific and general interest in these remote, uninhabited islands and their seabirds, but nowhere more than in the mind of the writer of this short note. Ornithological studies and a seabird ringing scheme were carried out under Mr. Maul's guidance which finally lead to the Salvage Islands being declared a Nature Reserve, the first of its kind in the whole of Portugal. Also in 1963 he was invited to take part in the 50th Anniversary of the American Society of Ichthyologists and Herpetologists in Vancouver, Canada, where he read a paper on two species of Madeira fish (*Mupus maculatus* and *M. ovalis*). In 1966 he dived to a depth of 2290 m. in the French bathyscaph "Archimede", which was in Madeira at the time, and helped in the scientific work of the expedition.

In 1982 Mr. Maul was awarded the Medal of Merit of the City of Funchal and in 1983 he was awarded the Cross of Merit of the Order of Merit of the Federal Republic of Germany.

On a more personal note, Jerry, as he is known to his innumerable friends both in Madeira and abroad, is not only the architect and almost single handed builder of the Museu Municipal do Funchal, but is an institution unto himself. Until 1981 he ran the Museum virtually alone, with very little modern equipment at his disposal; he dealt personally with all correspondence, writing nearly always in long hand, edited and published the Boletim and Bocagiana and at the same time carried out various scientific studies, yet his door was, and still is, permanently open to all those wishing to consult him. He has always found time to share generously his vast knowledge of natural history with both scientists and interested laymen young and old. He has a gift of explaining the matter in hand in a clear and simple manner, awakening, specially in the interested student, a desire to know even more.

When any facet of Madeira natural history is being discussed among his friends and no satisfactory conclusion is reached, there is always a final unanimous decision: "Ask Jerry". This "Ask Jerry" solution to many local natural history problems has been passed on from father to son and from son to grandson in at least one case, and this gift of arousing interest in the young has borne fruit in several instances and one in particular: As Jerry's retirement age approached, his greatest worry was who was to take over from him at the museum? One day in 1978 a local biology student entered the museum and asked to speak to Mr. Maul. Jerry was greatly impressed by this young man who returned several times to discuss natural history questions. Jerry confided to a friend: "I think I have found someone who will eventually take over from me".

In 1979, Jerry, at the age of 70, was obliged to retire but was asked to remain as director on a temporary basis, which he did until 1981, when a new director was appointed: Dr. Manuel José Biscoito, the former biology student. The municipality of

Funchal, realising the international importance of its museum, permitted that under the able and dynamic leadership of Dr. Biscoito additional staff should be engaged, new equipment acquired and methods modernised.

Despite his retirement, Jerry still works a five day week at the museum, taking part in and advising on the scientific work which is being done. He also continues to edit the Boletim and Bocagiana and is in the happy position of being able to see with his own eyes that the museum which he created is in competent hands, thus assuring the continuity of the excellent name it has acquired worldwide. Many scientists and friends still go there to discuss natural history matters with him and may they be able to go on doing so for many years to come.

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