

SCIENTIFIC EXPEDITION TO THE SALVAGE ISLANDS,
JULY 1963

I.

INTRODUCTION

By C. H. C. PICKERING & G. E. MAUL.¹

With 1 figure.

Our knowledge of the Natural History of the Salvage Islands is almost entirely based on observations made and material collected during a few short-term visits by investigators who had to take advantage of boats that passed these islands making a one or, sometimes, a two-day stop. The shallow, rocky coastline of the two smaller islands of the group offers no natural harbours, which makes landing there precarious and often dangerous. Consequently, even fewer naturalists have been able to visit these than the Great Salvage Islands. Naturally, scientists working under these disadvantages were badly handicapped by being poorly equipped and by lack of time for thorough collecting and more profound observations and study. It is, nevertheless, astounding how much knowledge about these far off islands it has been possible to bring together through the years, and a fair amount has been written on their zoology, botany and geology in scattered publications. The need, however, to give scientists a better opportunity for the study on this interesting area has long been felt, and the desire and endeavour to bring into being an expedition that could to some extent offer these possibilities to scientists was fulfilled at last when the certain promise of funds for the undertaking and other help from various sources were given. Thus an agreement was reached with the management of the whaling station (Empresa Baleeira do Arquipélago da

1) Museu Municipal do Funchal, Madeira.

Madeira) for the hire of the whaler «*Persistência*» for about a fortnight in the month of July.

The scientific personnel of the expedition which was then organized, including the doctor, consisted of the following members: Muséum national d'Histoire naturelle de Paris: C. JOUANIN & F. ROUX (Birds); British Museum (Natural History): W. H. T. TAMS (Insects); Seminar für Didaktik der Biologie der Justus Liebig-Universität, Giessen: E. WEINREICH (Insects) & W. MEINEL (Fishes); Centre National de Volcanologie, Bruxelles: J. HONNOREZ (Geology); Museu Municipal do Funchal: G. E. MAUL (Fishes);

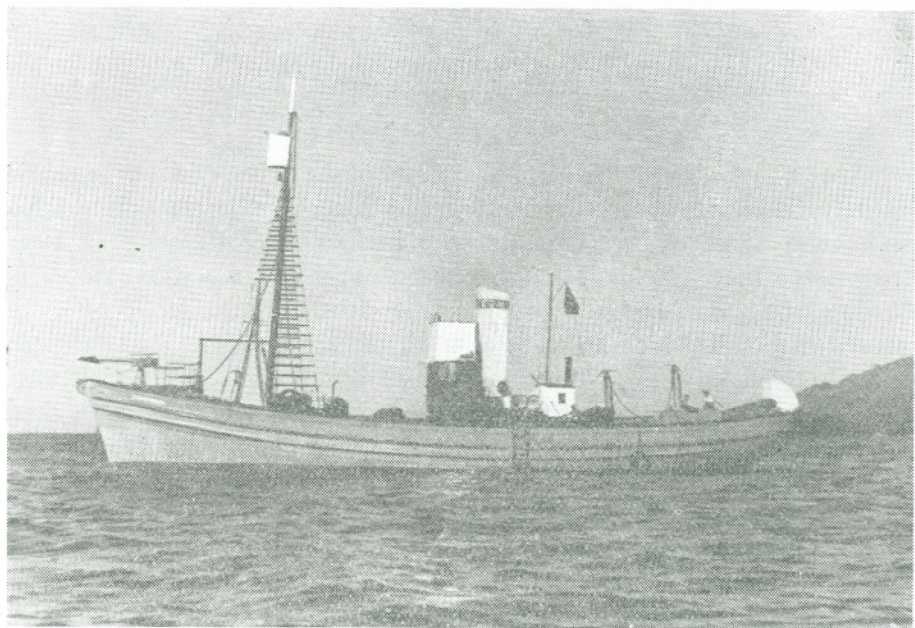


Fig. 1. - The whaler «*Persistência*».

C. H. C. PICKERING (Botany); ÁLVARO REMÍGIO DE SOUSA (Doctor). The date of departure from Funchal was the 15th of July and anchor was dropped at Selvagem Grande the next day, the 16th of July, at approximately 4 p. m. The date of return from there was the 26th of July at approximately 9 a. m., to be back in Madeira on the 27th. From the 16th to the 26th the whaler remained at anchor in Baía das Cagarras, except on the

20th and 21st of July, when two excursions to Selvagem Pequena (or Pitão) were organized. During the second of these excursions a short visit to Ilhéu de Fora (or Pitão Pequeno) was made.

Due to rough sea and general uncertainty of the weather a longer stay on the smaller islands was not possible and work in the sea was difficult. On the other hand, the collections made on land (arthropods and plants) were satisfactory in spite of the advanced season, while for the Petrels and Shearwaters considered as whole, it was probably the peak of the breeding season, and observations could be made on the behaviour of the five species which nest on the Salvages and which were all present at the time, though at different stages of their own annual cycle. Also an interesting geological collection was assembled.

The various collections are being studied by specialists and the resulting articles are to be published in this bulletin under the above title as they become available. Material derived from former visits to this area and preserved in this Museum will also be included.

Any possible type material will be placed in the collection of the Museu Municipal do Funchal, as well as a set of duplicates. Regarding the remaining material, each author will mention the Museum collection where it is to be placed.

The expedition was made possible largely due to generous help from two sources, and sincere thanks are due to the Câmara Municipal do Funchal and Imperial Chemical Industries Limited for the funds to defray the expenses for the hire of the whaler. The Empresa de Cervejas da Madeira must be thanked for the generous gift of beer and soft drinks. Our gratitude is also due to: — Dr. W. S. Bristowe, for recommending the undertaking to the Imperial Chemical Industries Limited; Captain John David Howell of the USS «Kaskasia» for presenting a Desalter Kit; Simplicio dos Passos Gouveia of Empresa Baleeira do Arquipélago da Madeira and, finally, the master and crew of the «Persistência», without whose enthusiastic readiness to help at all times, the expedition could not have been the success it was.

Finally, we would mention that the observations that could be made this time have proved that an expedition at an earlier, for some groups more propitious season, would be of great interest, so it is hoped that it will be possible to pay a further visit to the islands under similar circumstances in the near future.