

Preface

Since the mid 1990's, the field of paleoherpetology in Germany has experienced a remarkable burst in research productivity and importance. In particular, young students were developing a new interest in the study of fossil amphibians and reptiles, paralleling a growing enthusiasm for new analytical tools and methodologies.

One of the best signs of this "new movement" was the establishment and subsequent success of the *Treffen der deutschsprachigen Paläoherpetologen* ("Meeting of German-speaking Paleoherpetologists"), or "Palherp", which was first held in Düsseldorf in 1997 and has since become an institution in the paleontological meeting calendar of Central Europe. Over the years the lists of participants included not only vertebrate paleontologists from the German-speaking realm, but also researchers from all over Europe and as far afield as North America. In addition, the meeting has spread increasingly beyond the borders of paleontology, as indicated by the repeated attendance of comparative zoologists and extant herpetologists.

In May 2008 the meeting was held for the 12th consecutive time, and for the first time at the Museum für Naturkunde, Berlin. As a tribute to this premiere, the increasing success of the meeting and the thriving state of research in paleoherpetology in Germany, we wish to present a special volume of the museum's own jour-

nal, the *Fossil Record*, which is devoted exclusively to studies of fossil amphibians and reptiles. Distributed over two consecutive issues, the topics of the contributions range from small, newt-like Palaeozoic amphibians to the gigantic sauropod dinosaurs from Tendaguru to a simulated bird gastric mill, reflecting just a portion of the wide diversity of this field.

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