FOREWORD

On the 22nd of July, 1999 Paul Y. Sondaar celebrated his 65th birthday. In The Netherlands, this is usually the age at which one stops an active career and starts to be an 'elderly person'. Such is not normally the case with active scientists like Paul. Paul stopped being formally employed by Utrecht University in 1992 (as a result of stringent budget cuts), but he remained active as a researcher and certainly will remain active for years to come. As such, nothing special about the birthday. We could, however, not bear the thought that nothing would happen. Now officially being banned from the possibility - or obligation - of having an employment, Paul can safely enter a career as a scientific volunteer. Instead of flowers and some bottles of wine at the retirement party, we wanted to give Paul a bouquet of scientific flowers: a volume of articles that reflect his broad scientific interest, that will honour his many achievements, and that will act as an impetus for further scientific work.

From the bibliography published hereafter, Paul's list of publications, one can get an idea about the topics Sondaar studied. Yet perhaps his most important contribution to science is the development of the mammalian paleontology of islands. The idea that elephants can swim, the idea that only those mammals that can either swim or raft are able to reach so-called oceanic islands by sweepstake dispersal is a central dogma in Paul's work. We have often heard him say '*Do you think that elephants can not swim? Of course they can, because elephants have a snor - kel!*', which exclamation at once expresses his interest in island evolution ánd his curious and phantasy-rich mind. It is now the title of this book.

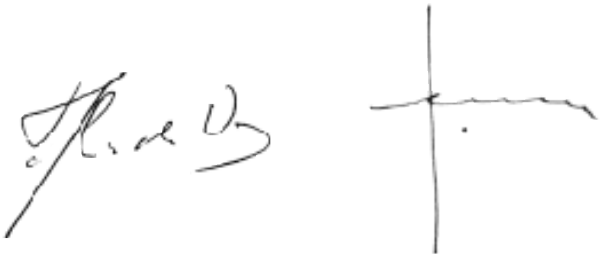
Once colonized by sweepstake route, the islands develop *unbalan - ced endemic island faunas*, which means faunas with only herbivores - such as the good swimmers hippopotamus, elephant and deer, while carnivores that usually don't swim, are lacking. These unbalanced faunas consist of only a few genera with sometimes a lot of species. Adaptations occurred, in which, generally speaking, larger mammals became smaller (dwarf hippos, dwarf elephants, etcetera) and small mammals became larger (such as giant rats and hedgehogs). As a result of the absence of predation and the roughness of the terrain, many adaptations can be observed in the locomotory system.

Initially, Sondaar started with the study of fossil horses. One thing he should never do was to study the evolution of man, because that was the field of his boss, prof. G.H.R. Von Koenigswald. But Paul had 'bad' luck, because in Sardinia he discovered fossil man and that put him on a trace that ended on Flores where he found artifacts. Recently (1998), he wrote a paper about the comparison of horse evolution and human evolution. Paul was back in the old footsteps

again. In addition to his scientific work Paul has always done educational work in the form of exhibitions and popular scientific papers. Many interviews and newspaper items concerning Sondaar's work appeared in local and national newspapers. Paul even writes children books and designed a colouring album for children.

We have assembled what we hope is a fitting tribute to Paul Sondaar, thirty articles ranging from the very beginning of life on earth to Holocene extinctions, from small mice to elephants, and from the slushy Dutch sediments to the caves in Indonesian bedrock.

Paul, on behalf of all your friends: please go on!



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