

## Preface

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When the Sandelzhausen fossil site was discovered in 1959, nobody sensed that it would once become one of the richest fossil sites of Europe's terrestrial Neogene, being attractive to vertebrate and invertebrate (gastropod) palaeontologists all over the world.

Sandelzhausen's research history is tightly linked to the palaeontology in Munich, Institut für Paläontologie und historische Geologie, later the Department für Geo- und Umweltwissenschaften, Sektion Paläontologie, of the Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität and Bayerische Staatssammlung für Paläontologie und Geologie. Volker Fahlbusch, professor at the University-Institute, was the leading scientist, who spent a major part of his professional career over the last 50 years on the investigation of this fossil site.

We both were not yet born when the site was discovered in 1959, but became members of the Sandelzhausen working group and excavation team at the beginning of the second excavation campaign (1994). Volker Fahlbusch's enthusiasm for the site was definitively contagious and priority position of Sandelzhausen research in our scientific careers was set.

Although the first excavation campaign from 1969 to 1975 yielded a substantial quantity of fossils, the collection multiplied during the second excavation campaign. Every

year provided another highlight in the form of as yet unknown faunal details, such as completely new taxa or dentition, as well as skeletal elements. Confronted with a rapidly growing unstudied fossil collection and contemporaneously appearing difficulties to extend the excavation area, the Sandelzhausen team decided with heavy heart to end exploitation of the fossil site. Thenceforth, we focused on the investigation of the fossils and invited international specialists to contribute to the Sandelzhausen research. They all met at the Sandelzhausen Symposium 2005, supported by the German Science Foundation (DFG GZ-4850/88/05), to present and discuss their results in the faunal and environmental context.

Due to Bettina Reichenbacher, then president of the Paläontologische Gesellschaft, the present volume was initiated to unite as much data as possible from the Sandelzhausen fauna in an international peer-reviewed journal. With this volume we present a major part of a highly motivated collaboration of international specialists of different ages and career stages over the last few years. Primarily, this concerns all authors who contributed to the volume, but also our reviewers R. Bernor (Washington, DC, USA), H. Bochéréns (Tübingen, Germany), J. Damuth (Santa Barbara, CA, USA), M. Delfino (Florence, Italy), B. Engesser (Basel, Switzerland), M. Erbajeva (Ulan-Ude, Russia), J.T. Eronen (Helsinki, Finland), R.S. Feranec (Albany, NY, USA), L.J. Flynn (Cambridge, MA, USA), M. Harzhauser (Vienna, Austria), K. Heissig (Munich, Germany), E.J.P. Heizmann (Stuttgart, Germany), G. Höck (Salzburg, Austria), M. Hugueney (Villeurbanne Cedex, France), R.M. Hunt (Lincoln, NE, USA), N. López Martínez (Madrid, Spain), L. Maul (Weimar, Germany), G. Merceron (Villeurbanne Cedex, France), A. Nützel (Munich, Germany), P. Pelàez-Campomanes (Madrid, Spain), J.-C. Rage (Paris, France), F. Rivals (Tarragona,

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During the final preparation phase of this volume Volker Fahlbusch passed away on 30 October 2008. We are deeply saddened by the loss of our teacher and friend and finish this volume in remembrance to him.

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◀ **Fig. 1** Characterization of Kurt Heissig by Markus Moser (Munich) by typical mimics, gestures, and postures captured in several snapshots, mainly in Sandelzhausen. From *above left in clockwise direction*: the teaching, the highly demanded, the poetical, the splashy, the smurfy, the sceptical, the wait-and-see, and the nice Kurt

Spain), M. Speight (Dublin, Ireland), L. Werdelin (Stockholm, Sweden), and W. Wessels (Utrecht, Netherlands).

The successive editors-in-chief M. Amler and O. Rauhut (both Munich) deserve thanks for their support of the volume and assistance during its preparation. The production of the volume was subsidized by the companies Wolf GmbH (Mainburg), Ziegelwerke Leipfing & Bader (Vatersdorf), Kreissparkasse Kehlheim, and several private donors.

Due to the high output of scientific results from Sandelzhausen the submitted manuscripts on Suoidea (J. van der Made, Madrid), Ruminantia (G.E. Rössner, Munich), ectothermic vertebrates (M. Böhme, Munich), Proboscidea (U.B. Göhlich, Vienna), and proboscidean palaeodiet (I. Calandra, Hamburg; U.B. Göhlich, Vienna; G. Merceron, Lyon) could not be considered for this volume. They will be published in a soon volume of this journal.

We dedicate this volume to our dear colleague Kurt Heissig to pay tribute to his position as a fantastic vertebrate palaeontologist and a core member of the

Sandelzhausen team on the occasion of his retirement at the end of 2006 (Fig. 1).

As a postdoc he joined the first Sandelzhausen excavation campaign. Later as curator of fossil mammals at the Bayerische Staatssammlung für Paläontologie und Geologie in Munich he was responsible for the preservation and integration of the Sandelzhausen mammals into the collections and also attended the second excavation campaign. His outstanding expertise in mammal osteology was essential during the excavation and preparation of the hundreds of bones and their fragments.

In the scientific community he is well known as a specialist in rhinos and for his contribution to micromammal biostratigraphy. However, the spectrum of his interests was much wider, as reflected by his nearly 100 publications. Since January 2007 he has been retired, but visits the state collection regularly with many plans for future research.

We admire him as a highly educated, widely interested, straightforward, and loyal colleague as well as for his scientific work performed over the years. We thank him for countless advice in vertebrate palaeontology and regional geology, many hours of fruitful discussions, enjoyable conversations, and fancy entertainment. We wish him still more fortunate and active years and hope for his continuing company.