

Dear colleagues

For the third time since the inaugural congress in September 1889, Paris will be host to the Congress of Zoology, in August 2008. The first congress was chaired by Alphonse Milne-Edwards, after which came the 1948 congress, presided by Maurice Caullery. This will be the 20th time that Zoologists meet to share knowledge and experience in a spirit of conviviality.

Since the 18th century, Paris has been a centre of intense and innovative zoological activity, stimulated by some exceptional personalities, who not only marked their epoch, but live on in our scientific heritage. The University of Paris and the National Museum of Natural History are associated with the prestigious names of Buffon, Daubenton, Lamarck, Cuvier, Etienne and Isidore Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire, Duméril, Lacépède, Latreille, Audoin, Henri and Alphonse Milne-Edwards, Blainville, Quatrefages, Lacaze-Duthiers, Giard, Caullery, Grassé, Gallien, Wolff and many others. It was here that these authors spent their scientific careers, teaching and elaborating their theories, proposing new concepts, making observations and writing reference works, always arousing interest and admiration. These scientists exerted a determinant influence in a variety of zoological fields: taxonomy and systematics, descriptive and experimental zoology, embryology and morphogenesis, ecology of aquatic and terrestrial environments, ethology, genetics and evolution. In Paris, you will be following in their footsteps.

French Zoology does not just bask in the nostalgia of its prestigious past. It integrates the current themes of modern research, at a time when the inventory of biodiversity, the functioning of the environment, the ecology of the animals within it, relationships between species and individuals, the problems linked to the preservation of our shared environmental heritage all constitute important challenges. This is expressed at all levels of analytic and integrative knowledge, ranging from molecule to ecosystem, encompassing gene, cell, function, organism, population, perispecific taxa and the major structural plans.

The French zoologists are very happy to invite you to meet together in Paris in August 2008, for a congress that should present a special interest on the eve of the bicentenary of Lamarck's "Philosophie zoologique", one of the fundamental texts that helped to shape our collective activities.

In the name of the French zoologists and on behalf of the organizing committee, I have the honour of inviting you to Paris and look forward to the pleasure of welcoming you here in 2008.

Jean-Loup d'HONDT

President - General Secretary of the Société Zoologique de France