



UNIVERSIDADE FEDERAL DE PERNAMBUCO
DEPARTAMENTO DE ZOOLOGIA

Dr Diogo Loretto
Dr Nathalie Olifiers
Editors, *Oecologia australis*

Dear Drs.,

Please find enclosed my manuscript entitled “Morphometrics of the largest New World marsupials, opossums of the genus *Didelphis* (Didelphimorphia, Didelphidae)”, by D. Astúa, to be submitted for publication in *Oecologia australis*, in the special issue "Mamíferos da região leste do Brasil: um tributo à carreira do Dr. Rui Cerqueira".

Opossums of the genus *Didelphis* include some of the best studied species of opossums on several aspects, from their morphological variation to systematics to ecology and natural history. Several studies have evaluated size variation within species groups or comparing some of the species of the genus, yet none has so far addressed size and shape variation within the genus with a sample consisting of all currently recognized species. Here I provide such an analysis, where I show that most of the existing variation within the skull and mandible of the species that constitute the genus are related to size, either as size itself or as shape related to size (allometry). This is discussed in the light of the current understanding of integration patterns that characterize the skull of all marsupials and specially Didelphidae, in order to understand the diversification process in the genus.

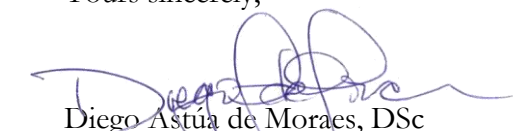
Dr. Cerqueira was my undergraduate and MSc advisor, and is one of the leading authorities in the biology of *Didelphis*. Knowing his fondness for the genus, the present work was carried specifically to be submitted for publication in this long deserved special issue.

I hereby declare that the present work has not been published nor is it simultaneously being submitted elsewhere.

I suggest the following names as potential referees for this work:

- Dr. Alfred Gardner (Smithsonian Institution) - gardnera@si.edu
- Dr. Roger Pérez-Hernández (Universidad Central de Venezuela) - perezroger2002@yahoo.es
- Dr. David Flores (Museo Argentino de Ciencias Naturales) - davflor@gmail.com
- Dr. François Catzeflis (Universite de Montpellier) - fcatzefl@univ-montp2.fr
- Dr. Gabriel Marroig (USP) - gmarroig@gmail.com
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Yours sincerely,



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