

## Preface

It gives me great pleasure to write a short preface to this special volume of contributions to knowledge of Middle Eastern mammals. More than three decades of research has been devoted here at the Harrison Institute to the mammal fauna of the Arabian Peninsula. One of the principal purposes of that study was to stimulate interest in further research into this fascinating fauna by indigenous students in universities and museums in the region. It is therefore very rewarding to see such excellent and meticulous work being produced by local zoologists adding substantially to the existing knowledge. Much of this new research is being published in *Zoology in the Middle East*, a relatively new and flourishing journal, which is serving a most important channel. I note as particular examples of the excellent quality of this new research the papers on the Forest Dormouse in Syria and on mitochondrial cytochrome-b sequencing of Iranian Long-eared Hedgehogs, as well as various papers on taxonomy, diet and reproductive biology of Iranian and Turkish bats. These are only a few examples from the recent issues of the journal amongst many of the kind of meticulous and valuable research now being produced. It is impossible to overstate the importance of this work in our present situation, with ever increasing pressure on the shrinking natural environment, with growing threats to the survival of many species of Arabian mammals. We learn, for example, from an article in this volume that even the common Three-toed Jerboa, *Jaculus jaculus*, is considered to be scarce today in the U.A.E. Several other works on the population of rare and endangered Middle Eastern mammals published in *Zoology in the Middle East* include the Persian Leopard, the Jungle Cat, the Sand Cat, the Mediterranean Monk Seal, and the Arabian Tahr – and the journal has thus become an important information source not only for scientists, but equally for conservationists and nature conservation managers. We must endeavour to gather as much information as possible in order to promote the conservation of this unique fauna and disseminate the knowledge as widely as possible. This volume will clearly make a considerable contribution towards this end. We in the Harrison Institute wish to give our sincere encouragement to all those who are participating in this urgent task.

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