

Preface

“Fossils are, after all, a window to the past and a desperate truth that we will never have an entire clear picture of the ancient times”—Claudia P. Tambussi

This book is the compilation of nearly 30 years of fascination for fossil birds and their evolution. That fascination has maintained my enthusiasm for research on all aspects of birds to the present day. Fortunately, 10 years ago my colleague Federico “Dino” Degrange added his own enthusiasm.

The purpose of this book is to provide a synthesis of the fossil bird record of South America and Antarctica through Cenozoic, considering the geologic forces and climatic–environmental forces that may have shaped its evolution.

The central point is on terrestrial or arboreal birds, but some considerations on aquatic (continental or marine) birds are also made. The temporal focus is on the Paleocene through Pliocene times.

The book begins with a preview (Chaps. 1–4), in which the scope, conceptual, geological, and paleogeographic framework are laid out. The rest is arranged into five main sections. Three chapters compile the information about the main fossil localities chronologically organized. The penultimate Chapter deals with the zoophagous guild, analyzing the record of 13 associations and evaluating the possible dominance of zoophagous over other guilds. The final chapter deals with Bio-Connections of South America and Antarctica with Other Continents and therefore addresses some issues on bird biogeography.

The information came from our own examination of fossils as well as a literature review. The data, however, are not homogeneous, since some temporal gaps without, or with only very scant, information occurs. Some topics inevitably arise in more than one section, but we have tried to keep the repetition to a minimum, and to cross-reference wherever possible.

A second goal of this work is to provide a textbook and source of inspiration for students and novel researchers. We expect that our results have the desired effect. This book is intended to provide a reasonable basis for further research.

During 2011, Dr. Silvio Casadío (CONICET and Universidad Nacional de Río Negro) and Dr. Miguel Griffin (CONICET and Universidad Nacional de La Plata)

organized the symposium *Seaways and landbridges: Southern Hemisphere biogeographic connections through time* in Argentina, which proved to be an interesting space for exchange and discussion on the same topics approached from very different perspectives. This symposium gave us the push to start this work.

Claudia P. Tambussi



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