In 1906, Dr J. W. B. Gunning was Director of the 'Transvaal Museum and Zoological Gardens', as they were then known, and he decided that the time had come for the Museum to publish its scientific research results in its own Annals, the first issue of which came out in 1908. In the century that followed, 44 volumes of the Annals of the Transvaal Museum have been published, and these have contained a total of 783 papers, of which all but 64 have been concerned with the documentation of the incredibly rich biodiversity of southern Africa, past and present. It was Carl Linnaeus, born in 1707 and often called the Father of Taxonomy, who started a system of naming, ranking and classifying organisms, and this process has continued to the present day, allowing us to understand the biodiversity of Planet Earth, of which we are a part. This is where the papers in the Annals of the Transvaal Museum, during the last 100 years, have made such an important contribution.

The Transvaal Museum is currently a zoologically-orientated institution, but in its early years a large collection of minerals and rocks was also built up, which was donated to the Geological Survey, while the botanical collection, started by Miss R. Leendertz in 1898, and about which 11 papers appeared in the Annals, was donated to the National Herbarium, which forms part of the Botanical Research Institute.

Turning to the description of animal biodiversity as reflected in papers in the Annals during the last 100 years, 260 papers on insects have appeared, followed in abundance by 78 on mammals, 49 on reptiles, and 36 on birds. On the fossil side, there have been 38 papers dealing with fossils from Karoo sediments, while 69 have been concerned with Plio-Pleistocene fossils, including our early hominid ancestors.

The systematic studies on South African fauna, reflected in papers in the Annals, have also led to several comprehensive, standard works on our fauna. For instance, Dr Austin Roberts, who worked at the Museum from 1910 till 1948, and had 41 publications in the Annals, produced both The Birds of South Africa in 1940 and The Mammals of South Africa in 1951. Similarly, Dr Vivian FitzSimons wrote The Lizards of South Africa in 1943 and The Snakes of Southern Africa in 1962. On the invertebrate side, Dr Georges van Son joined the Museum staff in 1923 as the first Curator of Entomology and he was busy with Volume 4 of his Butterflies of Southern Africa when he died in 1967. There have been many other invaluable books based on studies that have been described in the Annals. The process continues to this day.

**Dedication**

It is appropriate that this Centenary Anniversary Volume of the Annals of the Transvaal Museum should be dedicated to someone who did more than anyone else to ensure that the vertebrate collections, on which so much research has been based, should be of such a high quality. This person was Mr Saul Sithole, who worked at the Transvaal Museum for a total of 62 years and who was greatly admired by his colleagues, not only for the kind of person that he was, but also for his remarkable skills in the preparation of specimens essential for the documentation of South Africa's biodiversity.