

# Preface

This book deals with the use of animals for medicinal purposes—one of the oldest forms of biodiversity use known to humankind, which is still practiced throughout the world. Ingredients derived from wild animals are not only widely used in traditional remedies, but are also increasingly valued as raw materials in the preparation of modern medicines.

Hence, conserving the resource base upon which traditional medical systems rely is critical both from an ecological and a cultural perspective. Following this recognition, “Animals in traditional folk medicine: implications for conservation” provides a compilation of current articles discussing key issues on the use of animal products, their trade and conservation, highlighting the importance of inter- and cross-disciplinary approaches to increase our comprehension of the interfaces between traditional medicines and the conservation of biodiversity and ecosystem processes.

The book has its origins in a series of field investigations conducted by us, to document the trade and use of medicinal animal species in Brazil, which resulted in the publication of a number of articles focusing on zootherapeutic practices, and their implications for conservation. These led to an invitation, by Dr. Verena Penning, editor of *Life Sciences* of Springer, to edit a book on the theme.

We readily accepted the challenge, knowing that a book focusing on the different facets of the use of animals in traditional medical systems would fill a significant gap in knowledge, and could become a valuable tool for students, researchers, conservationists, managers, and policy-makers. With the contributions from a distinguished group of international experts, this book aims to introduce the reader to the historical and contemporary uses of animals for medicinal purposes, and to discuss their implications for conservation.

This book owes a debt of gratitude to many people. Thanks are due to the Dr. Verena Penning and Annet Lindqvist (Springer-Verlag), and to all contributors who embraced the “book project” with us. Thanks are also due to all

interviewees, who kindly shared their knowledge with the authors of the various chapters which make up this book.

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