

In 1991, the Laboratory of Ethology (LabEt) was created as a branch of the Department of Zoology at the Federal University of Pernambuco, Brazil. Since then, we have been deeply engaged in studying and promoting the science of animal behaviour in our region and country. Here, students learn research theories and techniques to help generating research projects and new scientific information (see [publications](#)). There are currently [10 students](#) in the LabEt (six aspiring the bachelor's or similar degree and four pursuing a graduate degree). A great part of our activities is done in

[collaboration](#)

with people from other labs and institutions. This has brought refreshing new challenges and help in mastering old ones (see

[publications](#)

). Laboratory activities are coordinated by

[Prof. Dr. Antonio Souto](#)



Research

Our research mostly focuses on the behaviour of non-human animals (e.g. uacaris, common marmosets, gray dolphins, sea horses and mosquitoes). One particular area of great interest is the study of communication in Neotropical primates. Special attention has been given to the behavioural contexts associated with specific vocalizations and in what situations they occur. A further objective in such studies is to understand how flexible their communication is. Recently we started a cooperation with the University of California (San Diego Campus) in order to further investigate the vocal communication in common marmosets. Free-living common marmosets have been also put to solve cognitive tasks. This last line of research is part of an ongoing cooperation between our university and the University of Vienna.

As human behaviour contains interesting biological aspects, we are starting to study it. As a first

step, we tried to explain why humans tend to find others more attractive when under the influence of alcohol. We found out, using simple geometrical figures, that alcohol diminishes the ability to perceive asymmetry, a factor that possibly renders people more attractive. We will put more efforts in this direction as it raises a host of scientific and social issues.

Mosquitoes form a special part of our interest as they are vectors of different diseases in Brazil. The ultimate goal is to understand how females choose ovoposition sites when confronted to a variety of urban circumstances. Such information aids to develop and improve methods and devices to help monitoring and controlling these insect populations in the cities. We hold a patent in this area.

Last but not least, we are also interested in improving the quality of teaching biology in public schools. For this purpose we are training teachers to use digital video cameras, still cameras, microphones and non-linear editing systems to create more realistic and interesting classes.

Financial support

The LabEt has been involved with projects financed by the following organizations:

- CNPq (National Council of Scientific and Technological Development, Brazil)
- Mohamed bin Zayed Species Conservation Fund (United Arab Emirates)
- Rufford Foundation (UK)
- Margot Marsh Biodiversity Foundation (USA)
- Fundação O Boticário (Brazil)
- FACEPE (Fundação de Amparo à Ciência e Tecnologia de Pernambuco, Brazil)
- PADI Foundation (USA)
- The World Bank/IDB (USA)
- Odebrecht Organization (Brazil)
- National Science Foundation (USA)

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