



EDITORIAL NOTE

A special issue on pterosaurs - the first vertebrates to develop active flight

ALEXANDER W.A. KELLNER

When I was pursuing my Ph.D. at Columbia University in a joint program with the American Museum of Natural History, Kevin Padian, a professor at the University of California, Berkeley, USA, suggested the idea of an informal meeting bringing together scientists working with pterosaurs, the first group of vertebrates to develop active flight. Dr. Padian had done extensive work on these flying reptiles, making important contributions to the study of their flight mechanism as well as their terrestrial locomotion. I loved the idea and, during the 55th Annual Meeting of the Society of Vertebrate Paleontology (SVP), held in Pittsburgh, we organized the “First Workshop on Pterosaurs” on October 31, 1995.

It was a two-hour conversation between a dozen researchers that actively study these winged reptiles. The success of the event made it clear that we should seek this exchange of information in a more formal meeting. This is how the symposium on pterosaurs began, with the first one held the following year (1996) in New York, at the American Museum of Natural History, during the 56th Annual Meeting of the Society of Pterosaur Paleontology (SVP). Entitled “*Symposium: Advances in the Study of Pterosaurs*” the event, organized by myself and Kevin, took place on October 16, 1996, with a packed room, being one of the most popular sessions of that SVP meeting. A total of 20 studies were presented – orally or in posters – and a tribute was paid to Dr. Peter Wellnhofer, a German paleontologist who made important contributions to the field, particularly regarding flying reptiles.

Since then, eight more such meetings have been organized, the most recent being the 9th International Symposium on Pterosaurs, in the city of Crato, Ceará, to which this edition refers. A tenth symposium is on the way, with a preliminary forecast for September 2026 in Hami, China (Xiaolin Wang, personal communication, 2025).

As is well known, pterosaurs are fascinating creatures whose remains are found on every continent. They are not dinosaurs, which, incidentally, have also been extensively studied, with many forms being found in Brazil (e.g., Müller 2023). Research on pterosaurs has grown over the years, and these reptiles have become quite popular with the public (e.g., Hone 2012). However, most fossils consist of quite fragmented bones, and there are few deposits with a significant number of more complete and well-preserved specimens, some of which are found in Brazil (e.g., Pinheiro et al. 2025). It should be noted that several Brazilian specimens were obtained through illegal collection, which causes various problems (Kellner 2023).

As part of an editorial policy, the Annals of the Brazilian Academy of Sciences (AABC) annually organizes special editions dedicated to specific topics (e.g., Kellner 2024). This edition (AABC 97.Suppl.1)

presents 19 articles on a variety of aspects concerning pterosaurs, as noted by the editors (Sayão et al. 2025). There is also a letter to the editor, dedicated to Dr. Llewellyn Ivor Price (Campos 2025), who described the first pterosaur from Brazil (Price 1953) and, years later, also the first from the Araripe Basin (Price 1971). I would like to thank the editors of this special publication – Juliana M. Sayão, Taissa Rodrigues, and Shunxing Jiang – for their important work in bringing all these articles together.

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How to cite

KELLNER AWA. 2025. A special issue on pterosaurs - the first vertebrates to develop active flight. *An Acad Bras Cienc* 97: e202597s1. DOI 10.1590/0001-37652025202597s1.

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