

## Dr Jacob van der Land, marine biologist extraordinary

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This contribution is an attempt to sketch the life and works of Dr Jacob van der Land, curator of worms and chief marine biologist of the National Museum of Natural History, on the occasion of his official retirement. Born in 1935, Jacob van der Land read biology at Leiden University (1958-1964), where he obtained his Ph.D. in 1970 on a treatise on the Priapulida under the supervision of Prof. Dr L.D. Brongersma. In 1964 he was appointed curator of worms in the museum. Later on he took over leadership of the invertebrate section (excluding insects) of the museum and was also placed in charge of all marine research. Initially, Van der Land organized field trips for biology students of Leiden University to Scandinavia, who were able to sample seagoing studies from a research vessel. From the early seventies on he conducted a number of smaller and larger marine expeditions mainly in the tropics (particularly in SE. Asia). His talent for organisation, management and leadership in the field was outstanding and led to the complete success of these undertakings. In an interim period in the museum's history he also participated in the general management. Subsequently his talents were severely tested when in 1996-1998 he was asked to supervise the almost traumatic move of the museum from the old premises in the Raamsteeg to the purpose-built new complex in the Darwinweg elsewhere in Leiden. Apart from having made a significant impact on the study of various groups of worms and worm-like animals (Turbellaria, Priapulida, Oligochaeta, Tardigrada, Vestimentifera), Van der Land also greatly influenced marine research in the Netherlands by participating in scientific management on a national scale. A list of his publications until early 2000 is attached.

Jacob van der Land was born on 4 April 1935 in the village of Kollum in the northern province of Friesland as a member of a family with five sons. Here he grew up in an agricultural area with at that time still plenty of natural environment. In 1945 the family moved to Wassenaar, the leafy suburb of The Hague famous for its beautiful surroundings, full of inspiration for a budding naturalist. When he had married Ank Noort (also from Wassenaar) they settled in this town. After national service and various commercial ventures he read biology at Leiden University in the period 1958-1964 where he obtained his master's degree *cum laude* for his work on the taxonomy of Carabidae (Coleoptera), Tardigrada and the plant family Orobanchaceae, and on aspects of the reproduction behaviour of cranes. After having held various teaching positions in secondary schools in his student days, Van der Land was appointed curator of 'Vermes' at the Rijksmuseum van Natuurlijke Historie, Leiden, after having been awarded his degree. Here, he initially pursued his studies of various groups of worms *sensu lato* as he had already done for his master's thesis. In 1970 he was awarded a Ph.D. on his treatise 'Systematics, zoogeography and ecology of the Priapulida'; the work was done under the supervision of Prof. Dr L.D. Brongersma, direc-



Fig. 1. Jacob van der Land in a pensive mood, a recent portret.

tor of the museum and extraordinary professor of systematic zoology, Leiden University.

Although Van der Land had worked on limnology and parasitology, his main attention was soon drawn to marine research. Those were the days that biology students still had the time to do, and indeed were expected to indulge in, field-work abroad. He soon made a name for himself for organizing student field trips to Scandinavia in order to study the highly diverse fauna of the sometimes deep fjords in Norway and Sweden with the help of research vessels, so that all sorts of sampling techniques could be demonstrated. So thorough was some of this work that it led to the discovery of new species of Monogenea and Trematoda parasites in various species of Chondrichthyes. A comprehensive report in Dutch on these Scandinavian trips was even reprinted. Several students were captivated by this kind of research and some went on to become marine biologists in their own right. In fact, Van der Land's unfortunately deceased eldest son Marco (1963-1998) was a successful fisheries biologist.

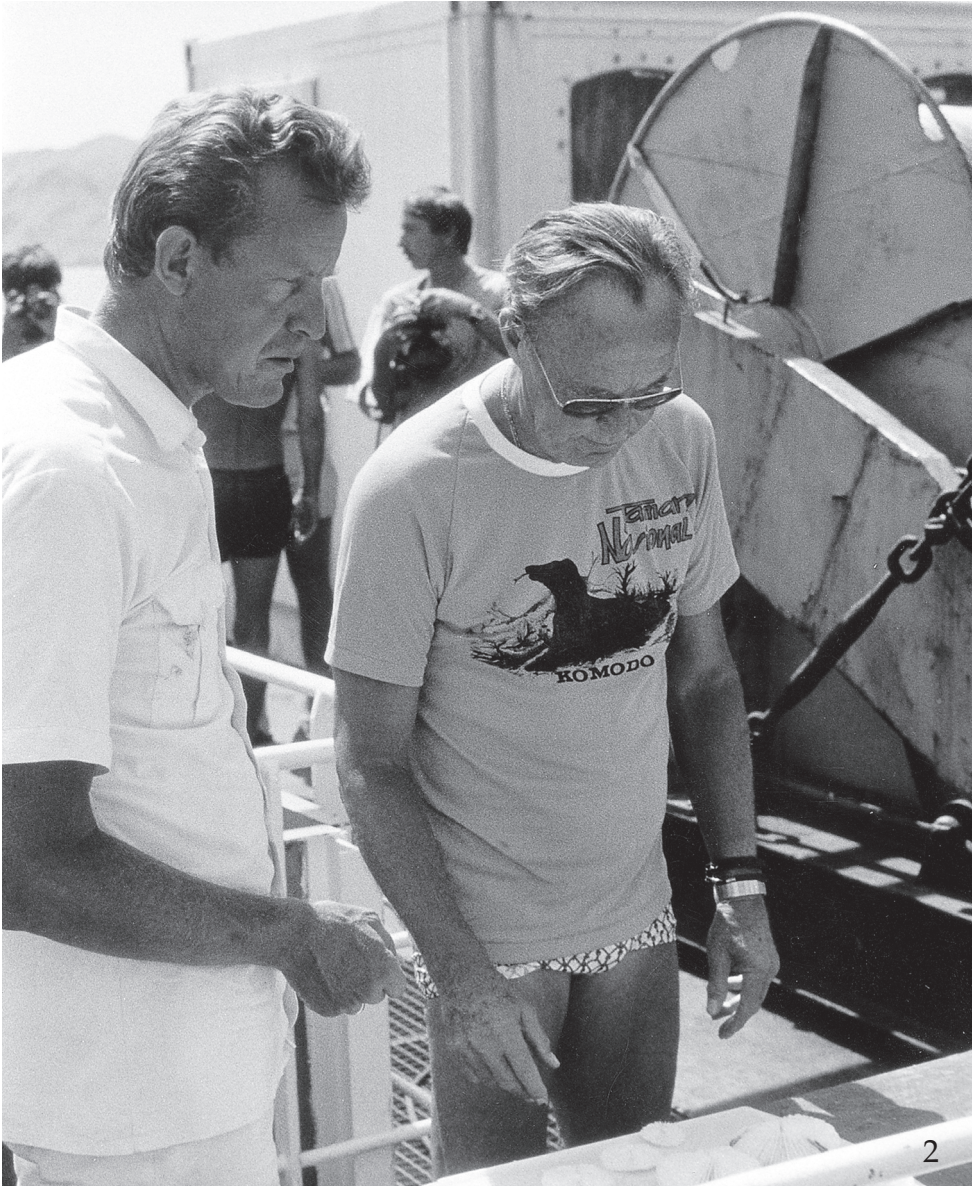
Van der Land's museum work first concentrated on Priapulida and subsequently on Vestimentifera (much of this work in cooperation with his Danish colleague Arne Nørrevang), with considerable success in interpretation of the life of these much disputed worms. Studies of other more or less obscure groups of worms among the Oligochaeta and also of the Tardigrada were continued. He also had his share in supervising student work for master's theses, etc.

Soon, however, he took part in marine research in the tropics. The then director of the museum, Prof. Dr W. Vervoort (vide Van Bruggen, 1998), had already initiated sea-going research on a modest scale, but his multifarious duties as museum director and professor of systematic zoology made him delegate this type of research to Dr van der Land.

Van der Land has greatly influenced the organisation of the marine research efforts of the Netherlands by occupying council positions in various national and international bodies. He arranged four series of marine expeditions, mostly on behalf of the museum, first with the naval research vessels H.Nl.M.S. Luymes and later H.Nl.M.S. Tydeman, still later with the specially converted ship R.V. Tyro, to the Caribbean (CICAR Project, 1970/1972), the West African waters (south-eastern parts of the Atlantic Ocean: CANCAP expeditions, 1976-1986; Mauritania expedition, 1988), to central and eastern Indonesia (Indonesian-Dutch Snellius II programme, 1983-1984), and the Seychelles (Oceanic Reefs Expedition, 1992-1993). Since the last-mentioned major expedition, small scale land-based coastal marine research has been conducted in Indonesia with the support of locally hired vessels (Sulawesi/Celebes, 1994; Ambionia and Ceram, Moluccas, 1996).

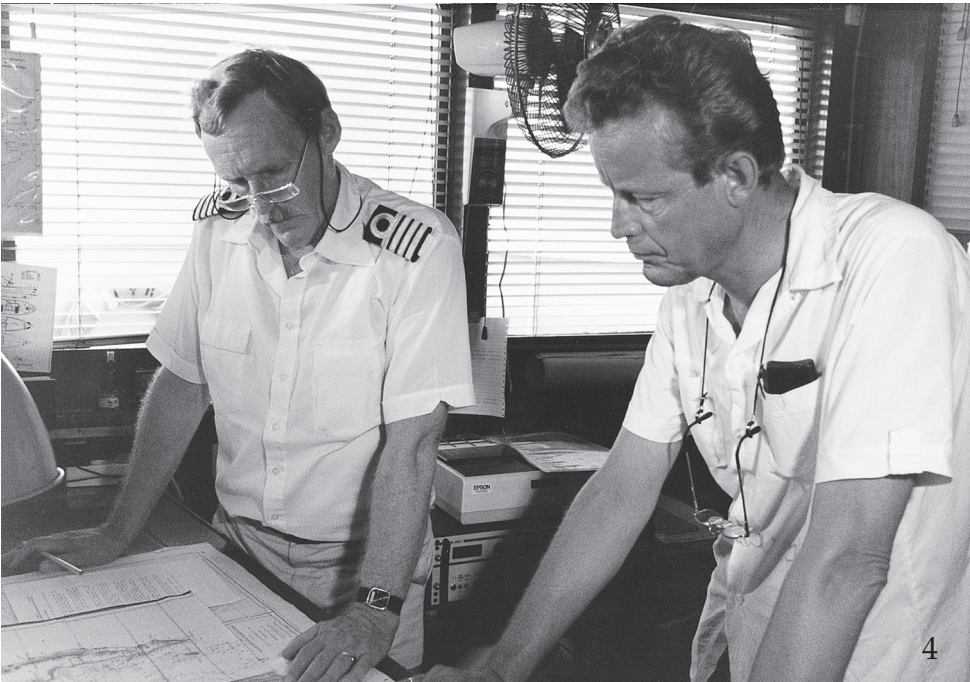
When the museum fell under interim management in the years 1988-1991, Van der Land was asked by acting director A.O.J.M. de Caluwé to participate in the general management, particularly as regards planning a new building and the direction of future policy. He had to invest a lot of time in these projects but was happy to contribute his expertise.

His moment of truth came when the director asked him to supervise the move from the old museum in the Raamsteeg in the centre of Leiden to the new purpose-built complex in the Darwinweg west of the railway station next to the new universi-



Figs 2-4. Jacob van der Land with dignitaries during marine expeditions: 2, with H.R.H. Prince Bernard of The Netherlands, and 3, with Mr. W. Deetman in his capacity of Minister of Science, at the launching of the Snellius II Expedition to eastern Indonesia (1984); 4, on the bridge of the R.V. Tyro with Captain J. de Jong, Seychelles expedition (1992).

Figs 5-6. Jacob van der Land during the Seychelles expedition (1992-1993): 5, with a newly dredged representative of the Gorgonaria; 6, on deck supervising operations.





ty hospital complex. The old museum building, erected to the specifications of the third director Dr F.A. Jentink, had been occupied since shortly before the First World War, but had not been completed. Indeed, exhibition galleries were never built, although modest additions to the building had given some additional floor space for storage. In the period 1996-1998 Van der Land took charge of the enormous task of moving millions of specimens and all laboratories and library facilities; only part of the mammal and bird collections (large mammals inclusive of the extensive cetacean collection; birds' nests, etc.) were to remain in the old building. With the assistance of a consortium of moving firms and all museum staff and personnel he succeeded in a smooth transition to the new complex so that by the official opening in April 1998 most of the museum was functioning as before.

Van der Land is much of a community man. He has taken part in many local activities and has played a role in organisations such as the church, local politics, a school board, a Rotary Club, etc. In addition he has been a computer wizzard right from the start, much to the benefit of the museum and his wide circle of friends.

Partly thanks to Van der Land the Netherlands soon occupied a prominent position internationally as regards sea-going research. He attended numerous local and international conferences in order to disseminate the results of the Dutch sea-going exploration. Locally he participated in the management of marine research on a national scale with a good measure of success. Marine research has now become established as an important component of biological research in the Netherlands. This is due to the cooperation of many scientists with university and museum backgrounds, but it is fair to state that Van der Land has contributed more than his share to this field. One of his colleagues from outside Leiden has once stated that the picture of marine research in our country would have been totally different but for the contributions by Van der Land. Undoubtedly many colleagues will agree with this statement.

Van der Land's exploits frequently led to contacts with the media. Autobiographical data are available in Van der Land (2000); on his retirement he was interviewed by the biological periodical 'Bionieuws' (Werner, 2000). Acknowledgements are due to various colleagues for reading the manuscript and supplying data, but particularly to Mrs J.M. van der Land née Noort.

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