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Preface

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## Preface

The present volume contains the first part of the contributions presented at the XXXIV Conference of the Italian Society of Biogeography (Società Italiana di Biogeografia – SIB), which took place at Ischia (Naples, Italy) from 21<sup>st</sup> to 25<sup>th</sup> October 2002. Several institutions, namely the CONISMA Consortium, the Italian Society of Marine Biology, the Stazione Zoologica Anton Dohrn of Naples and the Tor Vergata University of Rome are acknowledged for their contribution to the success of the meeting, and the Direzione generale per la Protezione della Natura of the Italian Ministry of Environment, headed by Dr. Aldo Cosentino, is acknowledged for financial support to the Proceedings' publication.

Similarly to the past conferences held by S.I.B., contributed papers were focused on the state of art of the fauna and flora of a given area: in this case the Mediterranean Sea, one of the biodiversity hotspots of biosphere. The Authors were requested to present a contribution that would update the systematic and chorological knowledge of the different taxa constituting the marine fauna and flora of the Mediterranean. Along with this challenging task, another relevant aim of the conference was to highlight the biogeographical significance of the Mediterranean biota by discussing the role of its historical and dynamic components. Careful consideration was given to Lessepsian or Atlantic immigration processes and their likely relationships with climatic change.

Most of the important marine taxa, together with some of the most inconspicuous ones, are dealt with in this part of the conference proceedings. A few other general contributions are expected in the second part where some more specialized issues will be included. A historical perspective of the zoological and marine biology scientific environment during the golden age of the Stazione Zoologica Anton Dohrn of Naples, authored by the general Secretary of SIB, Baccio Baccetti, introduces the Proceedings. Two general papers on geology and sea-level changes will be of help to highlight the role of some factors that influence the occurrence and distribution of species.

The XXXIV Conference of the Italian Society of Biogeography has been a precious occasion to bring together marine biologists and traditional biogeographers. I am confident that this volume will represent a valuable landmark in the assessment of the knowledge on marine biodiversity, as it was for the past SIB conference proceedings. Indeed, for almost fifty years now, the SIB proceedings (formerly “Lavori della Società Italiana di Biogeografia”) have been representing the authoritative coverage for both analytical data and the state of art of regional biodiversity in our Country, and in other areas investigated by Italian naturalists.

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