

Introduction to the Proceedings

The Tenth International Symposium on Tardigrada took place in Catania, Italy from 18th to 23rd June 2006 and was held in the Auditorium of Benedettini, a fascinating historic building in Catania's downtown. There were seventy-one participants at the Symposium, representing fourteen countries. The Symposium provided a unique opportunity both to review the progress of tardigrade studies and to allow all delegates to meet and to discuss topics of common interest. The Symposium included thirty-four lectures and thirty-one poster presentations on a wide variety of topics in tardigrade biology. They included systematics, morphological and molecular phylogeny, faunal studies, biogeography, ecology, survival strategies, and modern molecular methodologies in tardigrade research. The twenty-four papers appearing in this special issue of the *Journal of Limnology* represent most of the contributors present in Catania.

The Symposium offered an interesting Round Table on the systematic criteria of Tardigrada, and the opportunity to examine and to compare type materials from several tardigrade collections: Pilato and Binda's collection, Bertolani's collection and, thanks to the Museo Civico di Storia Naturale di Verona, Italy, Ramazzotti's collection, Maucci's collection and Biserov's collection. Moreover, many tardigradologists contributed by bringing their own material.

The Symposium included a conference excursion to Volcano Etna, as well as visits to the "House of Butterflies", a site of particular naturalist interest located in the garden of the Department of Animal Biology of the University of Catania, to the "Area Marina Protetta Isola dei Ciclopi", to the fascinating "Kitchen house" of the Benedettini monastery and to the monumental Civic Library "Ursino – Recupero".

We want to thank the other members of the Organizing Committee - Roberto Bertolani, Maria Grazia Binda, Roberto Guidetti and Oscar Lisi - for their precious hard work. We wish to thank Tiziana Altiero, Vincenzo Costa, Agata Esposito, Giuseppina Fassari, Silvana Ferrari, Fabio Marino, Alessandro Marletta, Antonio Puma, Angelo Ronsisvalle, Giorgio Sabella, Giuseppe Turrise, Fabio Viglianisi, Marisa Vinciguerra and all others who gave their help in the organization of the meeting in Catania.

We are indebted to all scientists who took time to review these contributions critically and to our friends and colleagues Juliana G. Hinton and Harry A. Meyer for their great courtesy and help in revising the English of many manuscripts.

Finally, we wish to thank Dr. Riccardo de Bernardi (CNR, Istituto per lo Studio degli Ecosistemi), previous editor in chief, for giving us the opportunity to publish our contributions in the *Journal of Limnology* and Dr. Gianluigi Giussani (CNR, Istituto per lo Studio degli Ecosistemi), present editor in chief, for his patience and very active help in the arrangement of this special issue dedicated to a group of small, but fascinating animals, the water bears.

We hope the reader of this volume sees evidence of the activity of tardigradologists.

Giovanni Pilato and Lorena Rebecchi
(Guest Editors)