

EDITORS FOREWORD

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The APIS SILVATICA international congress, held in Pantelleria from 16 to 20 May 2022, had the objective of bringing together the institutions and the researchers who are involved in the study of the unmanaged (free living) colonies of *Apis mellifera*. The Latin name given to the conference, APIS SILVATICA, recalls the binomial nomenclature introduced by Linnaeus in the 18th century and was meant to be a subtle provocation. Apparently proposing a taxonomic status proper to the colonies of *Apis mellifera* that live in the wild, the intention was instead to underline the perfect bio-ethological identity between the managed and unmanaged colonies of the honey bee. Only in recent years several studies have been carried out on *Apis mellifera* as a component of natural ecosystems and not just as an organism functional to human activities. As emphasized by the *San Michele all'Adige Declaration* (June 12, 2018) the western honey bee is a wild animal and preserves its intact wildness and its irreplaceable ecological role even when it is managed by man. Despite the general absence of data prior to the transfer of the *Varroa destructor* mite to *Apis mellifera*, the dramatic drop in the number of wild beehives that this spillover has caused is now considered a crucial problem both from the point of view of the negative effects on ecosystems and on beekeeping too. It was therefore essential to bring together the researchers engaged in recent years on this topic, both to summarize the knowledge acquired so far and to promote, through the essential exchange of ideas, the progress of the studies on free living honey bees. In addition to this main area of research, the conference also aimed to address the theme of the relationship between the western honey bees, farmed or wild, and the other Apoidea, to take stock of current biological, ethological and ecological knowledge as well as the problems related to the protection of these organisms, thus also involving the different organizations and institutions that work in this sense. One of the objectives of the conference, which had been scheduled to end on May 20, World Bee Day, was in fact to bring together the participants in the joint drafting of a document on the importance of wild honey bee colonies and the imperative need to give them a protection.

The conference was strongly desired by the Pantelleria Island National Park, in the wake of the first results relating to the research conducted on the local western honey bees and on the other wild Apoidea living in the island. In fact, on this island more wild than managed colonies of *Apis mellifera* live which, in addition, despite recent introductions of beehives from other territories, seem to preserve some identity deriving from their long isolation. For the scientific organization of

the APIS SILVATICA conference, the University of Palermo and the Edmund Mach Foundation were therefore involved, which, respectively, in recent years have been studying the non-Apis Apoidea and the local honey bees of Pantelleria. The large and international scientific committee that the Pantelleria National Park, the University of Palermo and the Edmund Mach Foundation have brought together for the organization of the conference was made up of representatives from the world of research, institutions and associations related to and the protection of the environment.

The efforts expended in the organization, the timing after a year and a half of almost total absence of face-to-face conferences due to Covid-19 and the extraordinary location proposed, meant that APIS SILVATICA took place and ended in totally positive way. The absolutely cordial climate established among the participants, representatives of about 17 countries from 4 continents, but above all the very high scientific level of the contributions, have allowed not only to achieve the pre-established objectives but have convinced the Pantelleria Island National Park and the scientific committee to transform the APIS SILVATICA conference into a fixed appointment, in Pantelleria, held every two years.

We therefore thank the Pantelleria Island National Park for its efforts in the organization and funding of APIS SILVATICA and for the enthusiastic welcome given to the meeting participants.

Finally, we wish to thank all the participants in what we can now consider the “first edition” of APIS SILVATICA, and give them and many others the appointment in Pantelleria for 2024.