

**Wildlife in Italy. Touring Editore, Milan, and Italian Ministry for the Environment and Territory, Rome**

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MINELLI, A., C. CHEMINI, R. ARGANO, AND S. RUFFO (eds.). 2004. *Wildlife in Italy*. Touring Editore, Milan, and Italian Ministry for the Environment and Territory, Rome. 448 pp.  $\approx 20.5 \times 28$  cm, hardback. Price and source for purchase not available. ISBN no. not printed in book. [Also as (2002) *La fauna in Italia*. Same publishers, 448 pp.,  $21.4 \times 28.7$  cm, hardback. Euros 45.00. ISBN 88-365-2621-7, from Touring Club Italiano (<http://www.touringclub.com>)].

This book surprised me. It was not much of a surprise that a country renowned for *La dolce vita* should take its wildlife seriously. More of a surprise was that its Ministry for the Environment and Territory should have teamed up with Touring Club Italiano to produce such an excellent book. Might we now hope that the American Automobile Association will team up with Florida's Department of Environmental Protection to follow this fine example? Still more of a surprise is that the book is available in a well-translated version in English.

On p. 14 we read that wildlife is "all species and subspecies of vertebrates and invertebrates, each subdivided into one or more populations, living in a given geographical area, on land or in the sea, not in captivity or raised by man, but part of natural ecosystems..." This excludes plants, which I hope are covered in a companion book, although I saw no mention of one. The number of species now recorded in Italy amounts to 55,600 excluding Protozoa ("which are generally considered separately"). Vertebrates account for a little over 2% whereas arthropods are 82%, and insects alone account for 37,000 species. Perhaps because of this recognition of the numerical importance of insects, their diversity is well-covered not only in the section dealing with invertebrates, but among numerous examples throughout the book.

The book is divided into 10 chapters and has 22 contributing authors. I'll call the parts chapters, sub-chapters, and sections, and to my mind this arrangement works very well. Chapters and sub-chapters are as follows: 1. Introduction (Wildlife and environment); 2. Italian wildlife (A brief history of research; An overall view of Italian wildlife [which deals with Italian biogeographic provinces]); 3. The terrestrial wildlife in the plains and mountains (The environments and wildlife of Italy; Animals of the high mountains; The invertebrates; Amphibians, reptiles and mammals; Birds); 4. Freshwater wildlife (Freshwater invertebrates and fish; Birds of freshwater environments); 5. Wildlife associated with man (Urban wildlife; Parasites of man and domestic animals); 6. Wildlife of sandy and rocky coasts (Coastal environments; Birds of coastal environments); 7. Marine wildlife (The wildlife of the Mediterranean; Betwixt sky and sea: seabirds); 8. Cave wildlife (The underground world); 9. The origins of Italian wildlife (Paleogeographic events and the foundations of Italian wildlife; Origins of fish in inland waters; Quaternary wildlife); 10. Italian wildlife: Past, present and future (Rarity and extinction of species; Wildlife conservation).

The text is accompanied by numerous figures in color or black-and-white and numerous color pho-

tographs. There is, of course, a preface, in fact three of them, by the Minister for the Environment and Territory, the President of Touring Club Italiano, and the Chairman of the Centro di Ecologia Alpina, respectively. They explain the inception of the book. There is a comprehensive index giving scientific names as well as English-language common names where these exist. There are 6 pages of bibliography listing all the books of the impressive series *Fauna d'Italia* as well as an individual bibliography to accompany each chapter.

Two books (Alden et al. 1998; Whitney et al. 2004) are perhaps Florida's contenders for the readership that in Italy would buy Minelli et al. Although Alden et al. (1998) has the same number of pages, it is a sturdy paperback designed in Field Guide dimensions for use in the field; the much smaller page size constrains its ability to present as much information even though it uses a small font and has 30 pages crammed with small photos illustrating selected insects and thumbnail accounts of them. Whitney et al. (2004) has a similar number of pages to Minelli et al. (2004), the page size is almost the same, and it is available in hardback and in paperback, but it has almost no information about insects. Both books on Florida devote much space to plant life, but the Italian book does not do so because it is about wildlife. Alden et al. (1998) devote twice as many pages to birds as to insects, but that's understandable because it is an Audubon Society book.

This book was sent to me as a gift by Dr. Walter Rossi (Aquila) who could not advise me of a source for its purchase. I later contacted its principal editor, Dr. Alessandro Minelli (Padua), who, after days of effort, wrote to tell me that he, too, had been unsuccessful in finding a source and price for the English version reviewed here: those things remain a mystery of Italian bureaucracy, described by him as kafkaesque. What a pity. You may have to buy *La fauna in Italia* and practice your Italian: don't forget that espresso coffee, which may help you, was developed to a fine art in Italy.

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