

Introduction

Considerations on the 4th International Congress on Biodiversity “Man, Natural Habitats and Euro-Mediterranean Biodiversity”

Alfredo Petralia

Ente Fauna Siciliana Onlus, Noto (Siracusa, Italy) - Choe Onlus, Strongoli (Catanzaro Italy)
Personal address. Via Carrubella 13/C, 95030 Gravina di Catania (Catania, Italy); mail: alfredo.petralia@yahoo.it

Received 06.12.2019; accepted 12.12.2019; published online 20.12.2019

Proceedings of the 4th International Congress on Biodiversity “Man, Natural Habitats and Euro-Mediterranean Biodiversity”, November 17th-19th, 2017 - Malta

There is no doubt that the history of naturalistic knowledge is as long as the history of man. The observation of nature has followed the progress of our species at least since our most distant ancestors tried to impress shapes and images on the rocky walls of what they observed around them, also trying to interpret the hidden meanings to understand their essence. And since then we have continued to do so.

In his “Metaphysics”, Aristotle argued that man aspires to knowledge by its natural inclination. And perhaps it is no coincidence that “The Stagirita” in the study of nature ends up immersing itself at the peak of its maturity in the last years of its life (and its production on the subject is monumental): it is probably in the nature that he ultimately sought to find ever more extensive and in-depth answers to fundamental questions which we still place today as a refrain: who we are, where we come from, where we are going.

A naturalistic investigation at the bottom is nothing but a piece of a puzzle, the one through which we humans try to complete the framework without boundaries of knowledge. “*A painting without borders*”: undoubtedly an oxymoron that nevertheless

contains in itself the fascination of continuous discovery that accompanies the ability to marvel in discovering the new.

With a stupendous phrase, Albert Einstein suggests that “*The important thing is to never stop asking. Curiosity has its reason to exist. One can do nothing but be amazed when one contemplates the mysteries of eternity, of life, of wonderful structure of reality. It is enough if we try to understand only a little of this mystery every day. Never lose a sacred curiosity*”. In these words is condensed the meaning, and I would like to say the mission, that every good researcher should set for himself as goal of his journey: this still in the spirit of that research giant that suggested that “*The joy of observing and understanding is the most beautiful gift of nature*”.

Well, I am convinced that the cultural value of this volume must be sought in these considerations: it is a further contribution to the knowledge of nature, in particular of biodiversity, also in view of its protection in the path already traced by the now historic Rio Conference of 1992 which stressed out key objectives: the conservation of biodiversity, the sustainable use of biodiversity, a fair and equitable

distribution of the benefits deriving from the use of genetic resources, ultimately encouraging actions that can propitiate a sustainable future. We all see how this target has not yet been fully achieved, despite efforts to do so, on the contrary, there are very many indicators that tell us otherwise. But it is equally evident that the guard, the political, social, economic and cultural effort to reverse that trend cannot but be strengthened.

Studies and research such as those that the volume contains go in that direction. They are the essential, initial step to protect biodiversity: first of all get to know it. *“One cannot love what one does not know”*, argued Fyodor Dostoyevsky in his famous novel *“Besy”*. Are words that echo in the sentence of Giulia Maria Crespi, founder of the FAI, *“You protect what you love and love what you know”*. Therefore the protection of biodiversity starts from its knowledge and Biodiversity Journal works in this sense.

But this volume also contains a further specific added value that is linked to its long-term programmatic design. It includes research that has been exhibited during the 4th International Congress on Biodiversity which, with the subtitle *“Man, Natural Habitat and Euro Mediterranean Biodiversity”* was hosted by the University of Malta. So it was the fourth in a series of conferences dedicated to biodiversity: the first in Palermo in December 2012, the second in Cefalù in 2014, the third in 2016 in Noto, while a fifth was celebrated in Sofia in 2019 and already is forecasted the celebration of a sixth congress. It is therefore a scientific project characterized by a cultural continuity that aspires to continue. Moreover two peculiar aspects are added to the objective of communicating and spreading bio-

diversity surveys: the first is the conjunction of the pure research with the biodiversity-human relations and interactions, the second is the accentuation of the attention on Euro-Mediterranean biodiversity.

Furthermore, this series of scientific appointments have as goal to represent moments of periodical meeting and comparison between researchers who also intend to build a scientific community in which to graft and enhance human relationships strengthening them by means of the periodicity of the exchanges also aiming to the enlargement of the collaborations. An attempt therefore to create an ever wider cenacle where information, experiences, proposals, solidarity and friendship are exchanged.

It therefore seems to us of particular value and importance the will to share a path in which alongside a vision of biodiversity integrated with the environmental problems, and not only that, a chorus of components and subjects emerges that contribute to the realization of the common goal. To date, the actors of this project, alongside Biodiversity Journal which first launched it, were the Ente Fauna Siciliana (Naturalistic Association of Noto, Siracusa), the University of Catania, the University of Malta, the Sofia University, Chloe (Naturalistic Association of Strongoli, Catanzaro), thanks to the support of scientific committees made up of qualified and authoritative scholars.

Finally, a thank you goes to all the participants of the 4th congress of the series for the richness of their contributions, as can be seen reading not only this volume but also the others that are part of our scientific itinerary. Thanks also to all representing the numerous authoritative institutions that attend this ideal congressional-cultural relay race that we will try to carry on.