

SIBM and EMBS Marine Biology Networks



Participants in the SIBM and EMBS congresses could admire the awe-inspiring interior of the Aula Magna of the University of Genoa

Summer is a good season for marine biologists to make known their findings to the rest of the world, judging by the multitude of conferences and congresses with a marine biology theme held during this period.

The 35th annual congress of the Società Italiana di Biologia Marina (SIBM), held in Genoa, this year addressed the multi-faceted theme of "biodiversity in protected areas".

With a sea area spanning 20 times the extent of the terrestrial area, Malta should be considered as a quintessential maritime nation, yet despite this, just a handful of members of the organisation hail from Malta, including Professor Patrick J. Schembri, Matthew Camilleri and myself.

Mr Camilleri will present a paper at this year's congress, which he co-authored with S. Ragonese, M. Darmanin and B. Rosso, entitled "On the presence of *Lobotes surinamensis*, Bloch, 1790 (Osteichthyes, Lobotidae) off the Maltese Islands (Strait of Sicily-Central Mediterranean)".

All congress proceedings will be published in the journal *Biologia Marina Mediterranea*.

The SIBM annual congress was conveniently held right after that of the European Marine Biology Society (EMBS). The first was held on Monday and Tuesday, while the second opened on Wednesday and ended yesterday, both at the Aula Magna of the University of Genoa, a monumental 16th century palace within walking distance of the city centre.

As a matter of historical interest, within the University campus, one can still see the first Italian tricolore which students, led by Goffredo Mameli (composer of the Italian national anthem) proudly hoisted in Genoa in 1847 to mark the routing of the Austrian troops.

The European Marine Biology Symposia trace their origins to 1960 when a series of German marine biological symposia was initiated by Otto Kinne, Director of the Biologische Anstalt Helgoland.

Since these first symposia attracted marine scientists from outside Germany, it dawned upon the organisers that they could be open to European participation. In answers to a questionnaire sent out in 1965, 98 per cent were in favour of the European Marine Biology Symposium being held at regular intervals; 65 per cent were against affiliation to any existing international bodies. As a result the first European Marine Biology Symposium was held on the island of Helgoland, Germany, in early autumn 1966.

Such was the success of this meeting that symposia have been held annually since 1966. To date, they have been organised in some 20 European countries, attracting marine scientists not just from Europe but from all over the world.

The topics for discussion at the symposia and all aspects of organisation are left to the inviting institution. One, or sometimes two or three topics, are chosen which normally reflect the interest of the inviting body. This year, the 39th EMBS congress addressed two themes: "Biodiversity in enclosed and semi-enclosed seas", and "Artificial habitats and the restoration of degraded systems".

The aims of the annual symposia are:

- to provide a forum for the presentation of current marine biological research verbally and by posters;
- to encourage a wider interest in marine biology and an awareness of the need for the proper management of European seas and coasts among politicians, managers, industrialists, environmental planners, and the public;
- to support specialist group discussions or workshops on themes of particular interest;
- to foster inter-European links and co-operation between research workers in marine biology.

All works submitted to the EMBS are, after being considered by peers in the subject, eventually published in the *Hydrobiologia* journal.

Why Genoa?

Genoa, the ancient capital of one of the four Italian maritime republics, was declared the European City of Culture for 2004, hence the holding of two top-notch marine biology congresses marks an indelible espousing of culture and science, mirroring the feat achieved by Barcelona in holding the CIESM congress in June while hosting the World Forum till next September.

As a result of its status, Genoa is witnessing a whole kaleidoscope of activities. On Saturday, for example, an exhibition entitled *Transatlantici: Scenari e sogni di mare* (Transatlantic liners: seascapes and sea-oriented dreams) will be inaugurated at the Maritime Museum, the largest in Italy.