

AMPHIPODA: TOWARDS NEW PERSPECTIVES



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BOOK OF ABSTRACTS



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Fouling Amphipoda of central Mediterranean marinas: a community characterized by suspension-feeders and non-indigenous species (NIS)

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Marinas are hotspots of NIS which can threaten marine biodiversity and are spread by boating, a notable vector of Amphipoda introduction due to the order's limited spreading abilities. This work aimed to inquire into the variability and dynamism of Amphipoda fouling fauna in three Italian key sites: the Palermo and Trapani marinas, both highly anthropized recreational boating spots facing two protected marine areas, Ustica Island and Egadi Islands, and the marina of Licata. Amphipods were collected for the first time in two additional sites, in the marine protected areas of Bergeggi, Italy, and in the Kerkennah archipelago, Tunisia, allowing for comparison of communities along a north-south axis, at different latitudes and levels of anthropogenic impact. The study was more than an assessment of diversity, it also considered the species' biological traits. The total number of identified individuals was 1520, belonging to 16 different species. Four were NIS or cryptogenic species. The NIS *Caprella scaura* Templeton, 1836 was abundant in all marinas and surpassed in both abundance and frequency the other present predator, *Phtisica marina* Slabber, 1769, likely due to *C. scaura*'s plasticity of feeding behaviour, being able to rely on filter-feeding when fully matured instead of being limited to carnivorous predation like *P. marina*. The cryptogenic species *Jassa slatteryi* Conlan, 1990, a grazer efficient in the creation of detritus, was only in Trapani. Wherever *J. slatteryi* was absent, we found the detritivorous tubicolous *Erichthonius brasiliensis* (Dana, 1853) and the NIS *Stenothoe georgiana* Bynum & Fox, 1977, in Palermo, Licata and one of the sampled piers in Trapani. The highly invasive detritivorous, tubicolous NIS *Laticorophium baconi* (Shoemaker, 1934) was found in all except one sampling site in Licata, where the mediterranean *Monocorophium acherusicum* (A. Costa, 1853) was still present. In Kerkennah, the NIS *Ampithoe bizseli* Özaydinli & Coleman, 2012 was collected; in Bergeggi *S. georgiana* was present. The sites showed an ample variety of species occupying the available trophic niches of a community characterized by suspension-feeders. Fouling community structure and NIS assemblage varied, unrelated to seasonality, among the different marinas but also between separate piers within the marinas of Trapani and Licata.