

The Natural History Museum, dedicated to the physician and naturalist Francesco Minà Palumbo, was established in Castelbuono to preserve and promote the scientific and cultural heritage donated by the Morici family, heirs and keepers of the memory of their eminent ancestor.

The museum collections consist of thousands of specimens, which represent the main body of the museum, various objects, and a prestigious and extensive natural history library that includes the published and unpublished works of Minà Palumbo. Among the latter, his most precious works are certainly the large corpus of illustrated plates showing the natural history of the Madonie. Minà Palumbo dedicated most of his time and resources to the making of this work while he was a physician in Castelbuono. This was a difficult task for a man who was living far away from the scientific and cultural centers of the 19th century.

The iconographic work consists of hundreds of illustrated plates describing the flora and fauna of this region, observed from within its complex cultural background. Thanks to the efforts of Minà Palumbo's heirs, namely Michele Morici, his son Francesco, and Francesco's children, Maria Antonietta, Michele and Vincenzo, this corpus of scientific drawings has been studied and analyzed by several scholars. The local Cultural Center established in Castelbuono in the 1970s and the Francesco Minà Palumbo Museum of Natural History, established in 1991, have joined efforts to promote the publication of this important artistic and scientific work, and pay tribute to the memory of this important son of Castelbuono.

Over the past decades, the Museum of Natural

History has gone to great lengths to preserve and promote its collections. Special thanks go to Minà Palumbo's heirs, who have given their permission for this publication, printed by the publisher Enzo Sellerio, and to the editors, Pietro Mazzola, director of the Francesco Minà Palumbo Museum of Natural History, and Francesco M. Raimondo, director of the Department of Botanical Sciences at the University of Palermo, both naturalists, and both from in Castelbuono.

The Museum of Natural History, and the university department, have contributed to funding this project, which at first seemed impossible to accomplish. We cannot say how happy we are to have had the chance to reach a wider audience. For this reason it is our pleasure to thank all those who have assisted us in our labors: the editors, the scholars who have contributed and collaborated, the Morici family, the patient publisher, and finally the regional government, namely the department of cultural heritage, who have so firmly supported this project.

This publication brings to an end forty years of care and passion expended by the various people who, moved by their affection for the history and tradition of Castelbuono, their home town, and for one of its most important sons, have seen their dreams realized. I hope that from this point on, this Museum of Natural History will continue to be involved in new and long-standing promotional strategies.

Palermo, June 2011

Nunzio Marsiglia

President of the Francesco Minà Palumbo
Museum of Natural History