

An overview on Italian coccidologists

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The most relevant Italian coccidologists and their contributions to studies on scale insects are briefly outlined. **Oronzo Gabriele Costa** (1787-1867) and his son **Achille Costa** (1823-1898), both active in Naples as professors of Zoology at the local University and directors of the Zoological Museum of Naples. The Florentine **Adolfo Targioni Tozzetti** (1823-1902) was the first outstanding Italian Coccidologist. Besides the description of several species, he attempted a systematic revision of the group and was in regular correspondence with the contemporaneous coccidologists (f.i. Signoret in Paris). The famous Entomologist **Antonio Berlese** (1863-1927) was an assistant of Targioni Tozzetti and then professor in Portici (Naples). It is worth mentioning his studies on *Icerya purchasi* Maskell (Hemiptera: Monophlebidae) and *Pseudaulacaspis pentagona* (Targioni Tozzetti) (Hemiptera: Diaspididae) and the successful introduction to Italy of their specific natural enemies. His assistants were Leonardi and Silvestri. **Gustavo Leonardi** (1869-1918) mostly studied Italian scale insects fauna, becoming in short time a high level specialist but also described species from Argentina and Africa. He died before his time and his well known book on Italian scale insects was published posthumous. **Filippo Silvestri** (1873-1949) is considered the most remarkable entomologist of his generation and his contributions cover pure and applied entomology. He had a deep interest in coccidology and described many new species from Asia, Africa and south America. His collection of scale insects from all over the world is in Portici. **Vincenzo Lupo** (1908-1999) was an assistant of Filippo Silvestri. His favourite subject was the study of Diaspidids. In 1950 moved to the University of Catania and founded the local school of Entomology, still very active in scale insect studies. He revised and illustrated all genera and species of Italian Diaspididae. **Giovanni De Lotto** (1912-1990) started his training in entomology at the local Museum of Natural History of Venice. From 1945 onward he joined the British Department of Agriculture as entomologist, at first in Eritrea, then in Kenya, and later in Pretoria, South Africa. De Lotto was an eminent and internationally recognized coccidologist. He established many new genera and described tens of new species. Moreover his species illustration are excellent. He come back to Italy in 1979 when retired. **Salvatore Marotta** (1958-2001) started studying scale insects under the guidance of the professors E. Tremblay and Antonio Tranfaglia in Portici. He was a passionate student of scale insects, interested in everything concerned this group. For a long period he faced a heavy illness, but in spite of this he went on with firmness and perseverance with his studies. The results of his researches are in 49 high quality papers. His sudden death aged 43 left a great blank.