



CollMap

MAPPING THE NATURAL HISTORY COLLECTIONS OF THE ITALIAN SCIENTIFIC MUSEUMS

The Natural History Collections of the Italian Scientific Museums

In about 250 years, students of biodiversity have discovered and named almost one million seven hundred thousand living species. Testimony to this immense drive for knowledge by mankind is represented by the biological collections preserved in the Natural History Museums throughout the world. The Italian Association of Scientific Museums (ANMS) estimates that there are tens of millions of biological specimens in the Italian museums alone: a vast deposit of information essential for the understanding of biodiversity and study of its evolution.

The national project CollMap

The Ministry of Education, University and Research recently funded the project CollMap by the Italian Association of Scientific Museums for the census of the most biological collections housed in Italian Scientific Museums. The project will involve the complete survey and on-line availability of the biological collections starting from the network of ANMS-affiliated museums. The features of each collection will be described and the scientific importance and number of specimens will be reported.

Looking to the past to know the future

A future development of the project CollMap will be to record and make available all single specimens data starting from the ANMS-affiliated museums. In fact, each specimen contains a huge amount of scientific and environmental information able to answer questions such as: what was the genetic makeup of past populations? Or which species inhabited a certain area and when? Comparison of the data on the recent past contained in the Natural History Collections of the Italian Scientific Museums with the present-day environmental scenarios will provide an indication of how the planet's ecosystems are changing and evolving.