



The 1980s field researches at Pirro Nord were developed thanks to the inspired and energetic activity of CLAUDIO DE GIULI (1938–1988)

by

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CLAUDIO DE GIULI was born in Florence on September 9, 1938, and passed away in Faenza on November 27, 1988. During his later years Claudio's major interest was the Neogene and Quaternary vertebrate record from the Gargano area. The present collection of contributions on the Pirro Nord local fauna is an occasion to celebrate him on the twenty-fifth anniversary of his death.

CLAUDIO DE GIULI received his degree in Geological Sciences at the University of Florence in 1967, under the supervision of Prof. AUGUSTO AZZAROLI. Claudio's university career began thanks to research grants from the Italian National Research Council (CNR) which he held from 1969 to 1972. From 1973 to 1977 he had teaching posts, first at the University of Camerino, and then at the University of Florence where, from 1977, he was Associate Professor in Palaeontology.

His fascination for, and professional involvement with, Vertebrate Palaeontology was due to the influence of Professor AUGUSTO AZZAROLI, who encouraged and supported him in establishing the basis of his scientific career during the CNR fellowship years. Under his guidance, Claudio began to be an expert in fossil horses and in Neogene-Quaternary continental stratigraphy. His deep interest in field work and in studying museum collections led him from 1969 to 1972 to visit fossiliferous localities and museums/institutions in England (London, Bristol), France (Paris, Lyon, Montpellier), the Netherlands (Amsterdam, Utrecht), Spain (Madrid, Barcelona), Nigeria (Sokoto district), and throughout former Soviet Union (Moscow, St. Petersburg, Kiev, Tbilisi). This intense activity enabled him to establish strong relationships both at

the human and professional levels (most of the latter inherited by his later students), and gave him the basis for a number of scientific publications and research reports. His experience in Neogene and Quaternary continental stratigraphy led to his becoming corresponding member of INQUA subcommission "Pliocene-Pleistocene Boundary", and of the IUGS, ICS Working group on "The Neogene/Quaternary Boundary". He also collaborated with the INQUA sub-commission on "Mediterranean and Black Sea Shorelines".

At the University of Florence, he contributed to strength the Vertebrate Palaeontology research group, focusing research activities on the systematic revision of Villafranchian mammal assemblages, and on the biochronology and dispersal events of Plio-Pleistocene continental Mammals. Most of his energy and interest since early 1980s had been targeted on the evolution, biochronology and paleogeography of the Neogene and Quaternary vertebrate record of the Gargano area (Apulia). Although the Claudio's main interest in the region was the Mio-Pliocene endemic vertebrate assemblages of the so called "*Mikrotia* fauna", he provided a crucial contribution to the first discovery and description of the Early Pleistocene vertebrate assemblage known since then as "Pirro Nord local fauna". For about ten years Claudio coordinated the field research at Pirro Nord, contributing to the assembling of an outstanding fossil vertebrate collection of this Early Pleistocene fauna. He published a first paper on the Pirro Nord small mammal fauna "with *Allophaiomys*" in 1984 (co-authored with DANILO TORRE), and two additional ones (co-authored with DANILO TORRE and FEDERICO MASINI) were published in 1987, and (posthumously) in 1990. Since

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then colleagues and students from the University of Florence have continued to carry out geo-paleontological field work in the Pirro Nord area.

Since the discovery of the late Messinian mammal fauna of Cava Monticino at Brisighella (Faenza) in the early '80s he had been involved in the study of this important assemblage, and within this project he organized the International Workshop on Continental Vertebrates at the Mio/Pliocene boundary, held at Faenza on March 28–31, 1988. Sadly, in the same year Claudio was struck by a fatal heart attack while he was working on the proceedings of the workshop.

In his role as Professor, Claudio educated and inspired many students, and some of them went on to hold Faculty positions (one of them being the writer). His enthusiasm for Palaeontology was contagious, and he delighted in talking to those who shared his passion, whether they were professional palaeontologists or not. His love for field work and his enthusiastic presence is still missed by all who knew him and had the pleasure of working and studying with him.

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