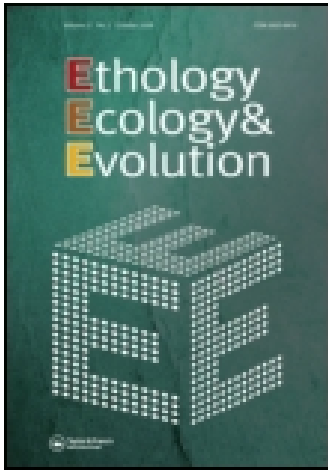


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Publisher: Taylor & Francis

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## Ethology Ecology & Evolution

Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:

<http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/tee20>

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Published online: 22 Jul 2013.

To cite this article: Marco Vannini , Gianna Innocenti & Elena Tricarico (2013) Francesca Gherardi (1955-2013), Ethology Ecology & Evolution, 25:3, 303-304, DOI: [10.1080/03949370.2013.821785](https://doi.org/10.1080/03949370.2013.821785)

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/03949370.2013.821785>

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### Francesca Gherardi (1955–2013)

Francesca Gherardi, Associate Editor of *Ethology Ecology & Evolution*, died on 14 February 2013, aged 58. She was Associate Professor of Zoology, Conservation Biology, and Applied Ethology at the University of Firenze (Italy). She was a top tier researcher, known and appreciated throughout Europe and the world. Her scientific production was vast, in particular on crustaceans and biological invasions and alien species, but these are just a few of the themes she published on, producing more than 200 articles on referred journals. She bravely fought a difficult tumour for more than three years when finally in February her condition deteriorated and she urgently returned to Florence from the United States where she was actively conducting research. Her editorial work, in addition to her scientific labours, was constant and intense. In addition to the *EEE* she was on the editorial boards of 13 journals and had acted as a referee for more than 100. We remember her with warmth and admiration.

Francesca Gherardi was born in Florence, on 12 November 1955. In 1979 she obtained a master degree with the maximum grades (110/110 cum laude) in Biology at the University of Florence (Italy), under Prof. Marco Vannini discussing a thesis on aggressive behaviour, dominance hierarchies and individual recognition in decapods. The results were then published in two separate papers.

During a brief period of activity as a Secondary School teacher she collaborated with the science historian Bernardino Fantini, Geneva University (Switzerland), publishing two significant papers on the history of Ethology. She also spent a period at Berkeley University (USA).

In 1984 she was admitted to the PhD program in Animal Biology (Ethology), under the supervision of Marco Vannini. For her PhD thesis she engaged in intense research both in field and in laboratory. In 1987 she was awarded a PhD on eco-ethology of the freshwater crab *Potamon fluviatile*. The results of this research line in the following years, thanks to the collaboration with Fiorenza Micheli and other students that Francesca had been able to coordinate, yielded at least 10 papers.

In 1986 she participated in a research mission organized by CNR (National Research Council) “Centro di Studi per la Faunistica ed Ecologia Tropicali” in Somalia, where for the first time she became interested in tropical decapods, in particular in hermit crabs and their gregarious behaviour. From 1988 to 1998, thanks to the subsequent programmes, she continued to work on Brachyura and Anomura from the East African mangrove swamp and published a large number of papers. She also became progressively more interested in Mediterranean hermit crabs.

Concurrently, since 1988, she developed a fruitful collaboration with Dr Graziano Fiorito of the Stazione Zoologica Anton Dohrn, Naples. This collaboration on learning problems and, together with her student Elena Tricarico, on individual recognition in *Octopus vulgaris* continued for more than 10 years.

In 1992, Francesca became researcher at Florence University at the Department of Biology and began an activity so intense and with such a long series of collaborations that it is difficult to briefly synthesize here.

At Shannon Point Marine Centre, she collaborated with S.D. Sulkin, G. Muller-Parker, and above all with Patsy McLauhlin, focusing on the study of the hermit crab *Discorsopagurus* and the systematics of hermit crabs from the Maldives. In the same period she began to collaborate with Bella Galil (Tel Aviv University) and to develop her own research on hermit crabs. For this Francesca spent time in several internationally renowned laboratories, such as the Department of Marine Biology, Port Erin, Isle of Man; Department of Zoology, University of Hawaii at Manoa, Honolulu; Hawaii Aquatic Science Research Unit; Curtin University of Technology, Australia. Subsequently her interest in the hermit crabs, which went on to co-exist with other activities that absorbed her strongly in 1995, led her to develop other very fruitful collaborations with Brian A. Hazlett, University of Michigan, Michigan, and Jelle Atema, Boston University Marine Program, Woods Hole.

In 1995, Francesca was approached by an officer of the Tuscany Region in relation to a problem: a strange red crayfish was ravaging the fauna and flora of Lake Massaciuccoli, in Tuscany. From this moment on, Francesca devoted herself with enthusiasm not only to the problem of the red swamp crayfish (*Procambarus clarkii*), but she gradually became an internationally renowned expert of crayfish and of alien species and biological invasions in general.

Francesca formed a large research group, including Silvia Barbaresi, Patrizia Acquistapace and especially Laura Aquiloni and Elena Tricarico, that quickly become an international reference point for the problem of invasive species.

This was also due to the many and lasting collaborations established with astacologists and researchers on biological invasions of international level such as Maria Ilhéu, Universidade de Évora; William Daniels, Delaware State University; Glen Whisson, Curtin University of Technology, Perth; Catherine Souty-Grosset, Université de Poitiers, Piero Genovesi, Chair of IUCN ISSG; Dianna K. Padilla, Stony Brook University. For her work in the field of astacology, Francesca was first elected secretary, then president of the IAA (International Association of Astacology). The association awarded her the "Distinguished Astacologist 2010". Included among the experts of biological invasions in European databases, she has participated in numerous national and international projects related to invasive species, often coordinating them. The results of this intensive research on crayfish and non-native species have resulted in more than 150 publications in international journals.

In 2011, Francesca became Associate Professor of Zoology at the University of Florence, unfortunately when her illness had already been identified. After an initial period of hope followed by periods of care and alternating phases of improvements, periods that Francesca exploited to the end working hard, no treatment was possible, until, on 14 February 2013, Francesca passed away.

Marco Vannini, Gianna Innocenti, Elena Tricarico