

Marine Microworlds

Excursions to the Bottom of the Adriatic Sea

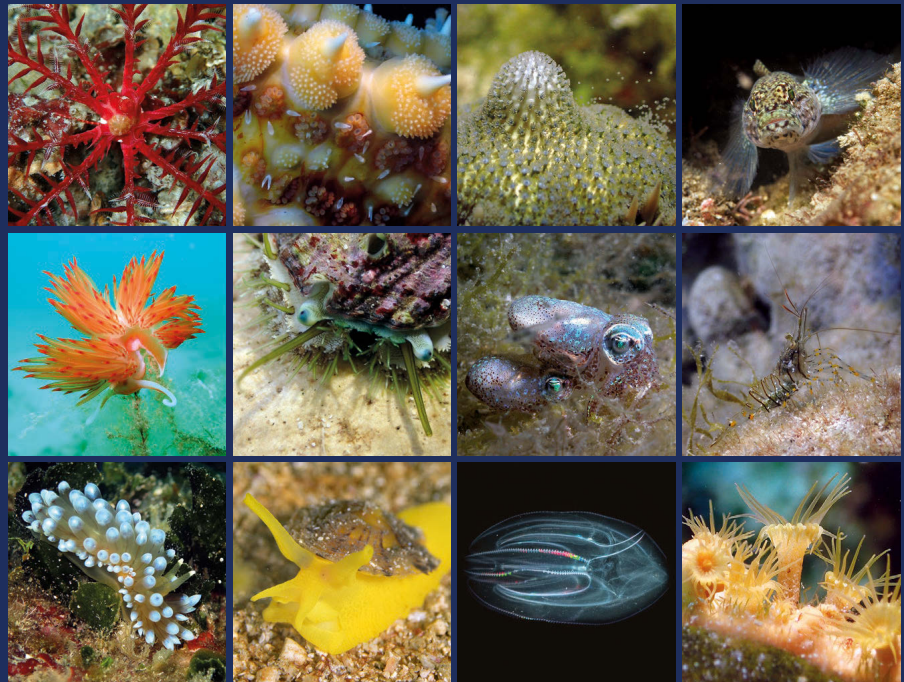
Roland R. Melzer, Bastian Brenzinger, Tobias Lehmann,
Tihomir Makovec, Borut Mavrič, Roland Meyer,
Manuel A. Staggli and Martin Heß



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The northern Adriatic is in turmoil. Harmful human impact has caused die-offs and drastic changes in the number of species and their structure, with many things changing from bad to worse. However, in marine protected areas and other localities that still are in an almost pristine state, one finds magnificent microworlds, animal communities of the seafloor, exhibiting a wealth of shapes, colours, and life habits – masterpieces of nature. To the human eye, these species' survival tricks range from decent to weird. They are small but excellent, difficult to find, and a revelation once they are on camera. The present book has been created to celebrate their beauty and tell their stories: How does "natural engineering" allow for their survival with the help of fans, filters, tentacles, pumps, and slime nets? How can some of them hide in plain sight while others bore into solid rock? What do they do to find mates? This book is meant as an advertisement for those little beauties and their diversity. In an ocean thrown out of balance by human activities, they are in limbo and deserve protection. Guardians wanted!

The authors of this book, a group of dedicated naturalists, underwater photographers, and marine researchers who have watched the northern Adriatic benthic communities for decades, have thus reached deep into their photo collections and into their accumulated knowledge about marine organisms, and present their favourite photos, their favourite tales with the hope that the readers will fall in love with the splendid miniature communities at the bottom of the sea.



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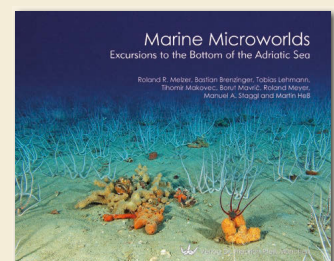
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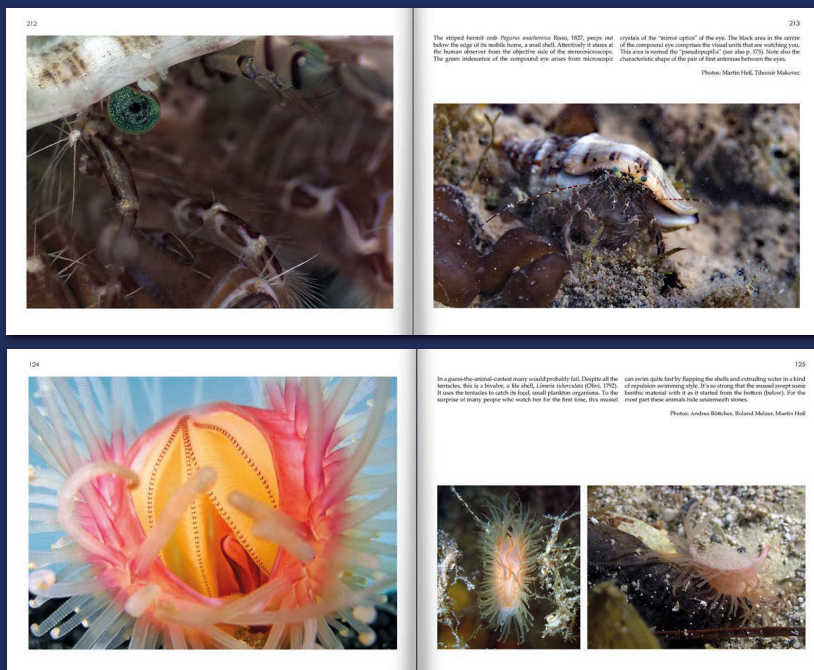
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Roland R. Melzer, Bastian Brenzinger, Tobias Lehmann,
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399 coloured and 6 black-and-white images

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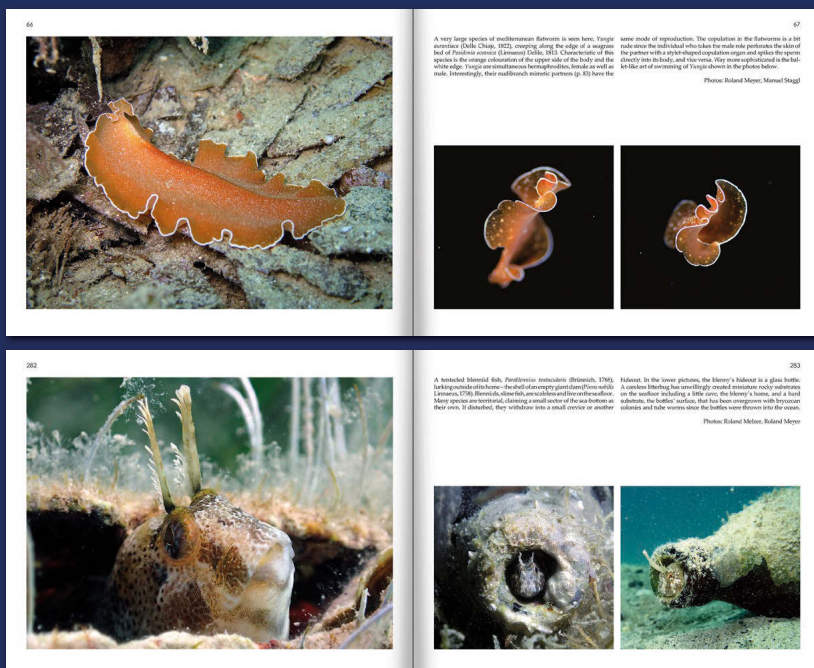
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More than 200 Species of all major adriatic animal groups are shown on 152 richly illustrated double pages. Beautiful underwater pictures and breathtaking macroscopic images, as well as the relatable and scientifically sound accompanying stories, allow an entirely new access to some of these often overlooked animals.

Contents

Into the black	6
Into the blue	7
Some basics about the microworlds of the sea floor	8
How this book was created	11
The sources: benthic algae and plankton	12
Porifera – sponges	16
Ctenophora – comb jelly fish	32
Cnidaria – polyps, sea anemones, corals and jellyfish	34
Plathelminthes – turbellarians or flatworms	62
Mollusca – snails, slugs, cuttlefish and clams	70
Polychaeta – marine ringed worms	138
Pycnogonida – sea spiders	162
Crustacea – mantis shrimps, decapods, mysids (opossum shrimps), isopods (marine woodlice) and others	164
Echinodermata – sea stars, sea urchins, sea cucumbers, serpent stars and feather stars	226
Bryozoa – moss animals	250
Tunicata – sea squirts and synascidians	258
Teleostei – fish	278
Elasmobranchii – sharks and rays	312
Epilogue, dedication and acknowledgements	316
The photographers' suggestions for further reading	317
Species list	318
The underwater photographers	320



Underwater naturalists, in a holiday setting, are often perceived as a bit weird. "Look! Why is this person staring at the algae for so long?" or "Hey! Seen this? Somebody is taking pictures in the mud with a huge camera all the time!" It's a bit the same with the photos these people take "from the mud." In scientific books, the underwater photographers are often mentioned in small fontsize on the last pages, where they are difficult to find – they run kind of a poor second.

In this book, it's different. Here, the naturalists and photographers speak up and show why they love nature watching so much and why they sometimes even direct their cameras into the not so attractive corners of the sea – to go after the secret stars, the hidden life invisible to the unexperienced eye – marine microworlds. By doing so, they follow a long tradition of watching marine life in the wild that dates back to the earliest diving biologists, e.g. Filippo Cavolini in the 18th century and Anton Dohrn in the 19th. First, this book is meant to celebrate the little masterpieces of nature found in the Adriatic, their magnificent diversity and their historico-cultural importance, be it as sex symbols, money or food. Second, we want you, dear reader, to fall in love with these miniature beauties of the seafloor. Consider this content advertisement for them, since they need protection. The man-made threats of life in the ocean are massive, and therefore this book is meant as a contribution to its defence, including not only the macroworlds, but also the microworlds of marine life.