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ABSTRACT BOOK

a cura della Società Geologica Italiana



Geology for a sustainable management of our Planet



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INDEX

OPENING CERIMONY

Jackson C.A-L. - Geoscience Communication During the Energy Transition	90
Adiyaman Lopes O. & Sabo R. - Geology and the Sustainable Development Goals	91
Bignami L. - Geology: as fascinating as difficult to describe	92
Casalini E. - The storytelling of natural beauty to learn how to recognize and share itaa.....	93

PLENARY SESSIONS

Antonucci M. - Digital classroom for petrology and mineralogy	95
Della Moretta D. - How Geoscientists can make the difference in industrial carbon storage projects	96
Erba E.* - The birth of the modern ocean and its first 180 million years of crises, speciations and extinctions	97
Foria F. & Pantaneschi S. - L'analisi qualitativa e quantitativa del rischio geomorfologico e la sua gestione tramite sistemi di allertamento lungo le infrastrutture ferroviarie	98
Hernández Molina F.J.* - Contourites and mixed depositional systems: a paradigm for deepwater sedimentary environments	99
Hudson-Edwards K.A.* - Sustainable mining of critical raw materials: opportunities and obstacles for geoscientists	100
Pellegrini M.* & Fischer M. - Carbon isotope analyses on dissolved inorganic carbon of seawater samples: sample preparation and analysis using the GasBench Plus system	101

S1. Geobiological and geochemical approaches in the study of bioconstructions and microbe-mineral interactions: new tools for modern and ancient environmental reconstructions and bio-remediation

Balzano S., Ghani J., Bettinelli A., Zhao Y., Guo L. & Funari V.* - Mine tailings characterization and potential pychoremediation	103
Borrelli M.*, Kairouani H., Micheletti F., Zaghoul M.N., Fornelli A. & Perri E. - Microbial signatures in the Early Jurassic phosphatic sandstones of the External Rif (Northern Morocco).....	104
Borrelli M.*, Perri E., Heimhofer U., Umbro B., Santagati P. & Le Pera E. - Role of microbes in the the Pliocene giant cold-seep system of the Croton Basin.....	105



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Cipriani M.*, Maruca G., Dominici R., Muzzupappa M., Bruno F., Lagudi A., Gallo A., Rosso A., Sanfilippo R., Bracchi V.A., Basso D. & Guido A. - ROV-based sampling as tools for geobiological determination of recent marine bioconstructions.....	106
Dela Pierre F.*, Natalicchio M., Birgel D., Giunti S., Guibourdenche L., Pellegrino L., Aloisi G. & Peckmann J. - Authigenic carbonate and native sulfur formation in Messinian (Upper Miocene) marine sediments: sedimentological, petrographical and geochemical constraints	107
Guerrieri S.*, Borrelli M., Medas D., De Giudici G. & Perri E. - Biomineralization of As-schwertmannite in acid mine drainage.....	108
Guerrieri S.*, Borrelli M., Medas D., De Giudici G., Sedda L., Musu E. & Perri E. - Heavy metal-minerals microbial mediated coprecipitation in mine tailings drainage	109
Guido A.*, Fuoco I., Vespasiano G., Cipriani M., Maruca G., Scalercio A., Talà A., Calcagnile M., Belmonte G., Alifano P., Tredici S.M., Sicoli G., Gargano D., Bloise A. & Apollaro C. - Microbial activity involved in aluminosilicate mineralization in an arsenopyrite mine.....	110
Maruca G., Cipriani M., Apollaro C., Vespasiano G., Dominici R., Bruno F., Lagudi A., Bracchi V.A., Basso D., Mauri F., Cellini E., Pirrera L., De Benedetto C., Piscitelli V.F. & Guido A.* - GIS-based protocol for benthic habitat mapping of Coralligenous build-ups (Isola Capo Rizzuto, Calabria, Italy).....	111
Natalicchio M.*, Pellegrino L., Carnevale G., Cavagna S., Dela Pierre F., Lozar F., Pastero L. & Varese C. - Minerals & microorganisms, a possible relationship: an awareness project of GEOMICROBIOlogy ...	112
Onnis P.*, Calandrelli T., Alisi C., Dore E., Fancello D., Frau F., Marras P.A., Medas D., Musu E., Pisano B., Podda F. & De Giudici G. - From bioleaching to biomining: learning from geomicrobial processes in mining areas.....	113
Santagati P.*, Borrelli M., Guerrieri S. & Perri E. - Microbial micritic cementation in a Late Pleistocene (MIS 5.5) mid-latitude shallow-water calcarenite (Gulf of Taranto, central Mediterranean).....	114
Santagati P.*, Guerrieri S., Borrelli M. & Perri E. - Capo Colonna (Crotone Basin - Southern Italy) MIS 5 calcareous bioconstructions: an association of algal, metazoan, and microbial framebuilders	115
Tenuta S.*, Evans K.A., Reddy S.R., Rickard W.D.A. & Saxey D.W. - Nanoscale biosignatures in native-Cu and sulphides from the Wadi Tayin ophiolite, Oman	116
Vespasiano G.*, Cipriani M., Maruca G., Apollaro C., Ponte M., Dominici R., Bruno F., Muzzupappa M., Rosso A., Sanfilippo R., Bracchi V.A., Basso D. & Guido A. - Integrated Geochemical/Geobiological approach for the identification of environmental proxies in Coralligenous bioconstructions.....	117
Youm C.I.*, Gueye A., Miyouna T., Ba F., Signaté A.S., Sow S.N., Sissokho M., Doumbouya M.F., Errami E. & Sow E. - Petrography of stromatolites from the summit of the Pelel Formation in the Walidiala valley (Madina Kouta Basin, Kédougou, Senegal)	118

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S2. The global challenge of plastic pollution: causes, impacts and solutions

Birarda G., Bonanni V., Buosi C.*, Caridi F., Casu M.A., Costanzi E., De Giudici G., Gianoncelli A., Longo E., Marras P.A., Medas D., Meneghini C., Onnis P., Pili S., Pivetta T., Sabbatini A., Tromba G., Vaccari L. & Zizic M. - Response of benthic foraminifera to plastic pollution	120
Buoninsegni J.*, Tessari U., Marrocchino E. & Vaccaro C. - Integration of microplastic gravimetric separation protocol considering sediment texture and composition	121
Canovi C.*, Siligardi C. & Cedillo-González E.I. - Investigation of the efficiency of several TiO ₂ microstructures for the photocatalytic degradation of nanoplastics	122
Croce A.*, Bertolotti M., Roveta A., Ugo F., Bertolina C., Farotto M., Bellis D., Quaglia M., Carratta L. & Maconi A. - Identification of microplastics in human tissues and fluids: a pilot study.....	123
Festa R.M.*, Lo Bue G., Musa M., Marchini A., Riccardi M.P. & Mancin N. - Extraction of microplastics from marine environmental matrices: density separation protocol validation	124
Fracchiolla T.*, Veneziano F., de Luca A., D'Abbicco V., Trani R., Moretti M. & Lisco S. - Evaluation of microplastics in coastal and marine sediments of the Ionian Sea (Southern Italy)	125
Lo Bue G.*, Musa M., Kaestner A., Di Martino D., Busi M., Shakoorioskooie M., Riccardi M.P. & Mancin N. - Imaging of microplastics in bio-engineered marine substrates: a neutron tomography approach...	126
Lo Bue G.*, Musa M., Lisco S., Marchini A., Riccardi M.P. & Mancin N. - Microplastic dynamics in the littoral reefs created by Sabellariid Polychaetes in the Southern Adriatic Sea.....	127
Merlino S.*, Locritani M., Morigi C., Gerard N., Bianucci M., Muccini F., Lombardi C., Bronco S., Ricci L., De Monte C., Granata U. & Cucco A. - Plastic accumulation on a marine protected area: the case study of the Giannutri Island in Tuscan Archipelago	128
Monnanni A.*, Rimondi V., Morelli G., Nannoni A., Sforzi L., Martellini T., Cincinelli A., Chelazzi D., Laurati M., Lattanzi P. & Costagliola P. - Microplastics characterisation in shallow waters of the Arno River (Central Italy) and its discharge into the Mediterranean Sea: the main impacting role of the smallest size particles	129
Pellegrini C.*, Saliu F., Bosman A., Sammartino I., Raguso C., Mercorella A., Galvez D., Petrizzo A., Madricardo F., Lasagni M., Clemenza M., Trincardi F. & Rovere M. - Hotspots of microplastic accumulation at the land-sea transition and their spatial heterogeneity: the Po river prodelta (Adriatic Sea).....	130
Pierdomenico M.*, Casalbore D., Morgana S., Ridente D. & Chiocci F.L. - Source-to-sink propagation of marine plastic and accumulation in seafloor sediments: the role of sedimentary gravity flows	131



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Rizzo A.*, Barracane G., Bonifazi G., Capobianco G., Cucuzza P., Gorga E., Mele D., Scardino G., De Santis V., Lapietra I., La Salandra M., Lisco S., Liso S., Marsico A., Mastronuzzi G., Parise M., Serranti S., Scicchitano G. & Sozio A. - Litter distribution in marine and coastal environments: highlights from ongoing research projects 132

Sabbatini A., Birarda G., Buosi C., Caridi F.*, De Giudici G., Medas D. & Vaccari L. - Effect of plastics on marine ecosystem: preliminary findings of Phthalates (PAEs) on Gromiids 133

Sasso C.*, Lapietra I., Liso I.S., Marsico A. & Rizzo A. - Microplastics analysis from sediment samples collected at Capitolo Beach (Apulia, Italy) 134

Sozio A.*, Rizzo A., Aucelli P.P.C., Anfuso G., Barracane G., Dimuccio L., La Salandra M., Scarrica V.M., Staiano A., Tarantino M.P. & Scicchitano G. - Multidisciplinary approaches for the analysis of Beach Litter distribution in coastal environments 135

Valdrè G. *, Moro D., Moro L., Helal K.M. & Fragasso J. - Autonomous underwater vehicles (AUVs including gliders) for the characterization and monitoring of environmental conditions in fresh and marine waters 136

S3. Antarctica and the Arctic: unveiling the geological past and future evolution of polar regions

Andò S.*, Perotti M., Zurli L., Torricella F., Colizza E., Ferrante G.M. & De Santis L. - High-resolution mineralogical and petrographic analysis of marine sediments in Antarctica: from silt to gravel 138

Balestrieri M.L.*, Olivetti V., Chew D., Zurli L., Zattin M., Drakou F., Cornamusini G. & Perotti M. - Multi-proxy single-grain provenance analysis to tackle growth and retreat of West Antarctic Ice Sheet: insights from apatite and zircon U-Pb dating coupled with fission-track age and geochemical analysis of apatite 139

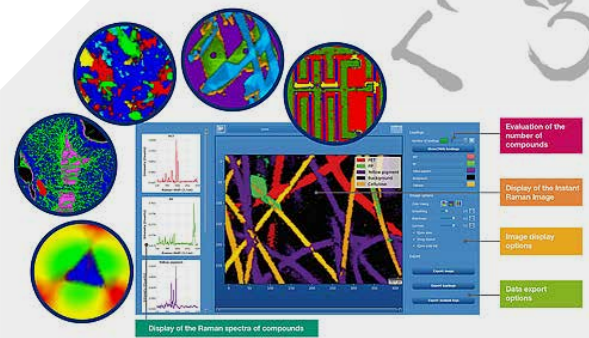
Battaglia F., Torricella F., Belt S., Capotondi L.*, Colizza E., Colleoni F., Di Roberto A., Langone L., Giordano P., Mollenhauer G., Pochini E. & Tesi T. - GRETA (CoolinG overR the VicToria LAnd (GRETA)): resolving the Ross Sea response to continental climate change during the last two millenia 140

Bronzo L., Morigi C.*, Carbonara K., Caricchi C., Musco M.E., Douss N., Gois Smith F.S., Villa G., Cascella A. & Lucchi R.G. - Paleoclimatic reconstruction of the past 30.000 years through analysis on calcareous nanofossil assemblages on the west Spitsbergen margin 141

Caridi F.*, Sabbatini A., Howa H., Mouret A., Nardelli M.P. & Pusceddu A. - Soft- and hard-shelled foraminiferal assemblages to assess the vulnerability of Foraminifera to climate change in Kongsfjorden, Svalbard 142

Cornamusini G., Zurli L., Liberato G.P., Corti V.*, Gulbranson E.L., Perotti M. & Sandroni S. - A lithostratigraphic reappraisal of a Permian-Triassic fluvial succession at Allan Hills (Antarctica) and implications for the terrestrial end-Permian extinction event 143

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Corti V.*, Spina A. & Cornamusini G. - Stratigraphic constraints on the Beacon Succession of the Transantarctic Mountains through palynological data 144

Crispini L.*, Civile D., Ferrante G.M., Locatelli M., Morelli D., Volpi V., Accettella D., Accaino F., Busetti M., Läufer A., Armadillo E., Colizza E., Salvini F. & Ruppel A. - Geodynamic processes at the Pacific margin of North Victoria Land (Antarctica): new evidence from offshore geophysical data on the crustal structure and seabed morphology (PNRA_BOOST Project)..... 145

Dumon Steenssens L.*, Lisco S., Micheletti F. & Mastronuzzi G. - Sedimentologic and petrographic characteristics of beach ridges in Terra Nova Bay (Antarctica)..... 146

Dumon Steenssens L.*, d’Elia M., Quarta G. & Mastronuzzi G. : ¹⁴C age determination of beaches ridges from Terra Nova Bay, Antarctica..... 147

Ferraccioli F.*, Ebbing J., Wiens D., Eagles G., Gohl K., Forsberg R., Armadillo E., Young D., Blankenship D.D., Aitken A.R.A., Jordan T.J., Mather B., Ford J., Verdoya M. & Jacobs J. - 4D heterogeneity in geological boundary conditions beneath the West and East Antarctic ice sheets: what have we learnt and what do we need to know?..... 148

Fioraso M.*, Olivetti V., Balsamo F., Rossetti F., Zattin M. & Cornamusini G. - Oligocene-Miocene structurally-controlled hydrothermal activity along the Transantarctic Mountains: evidence from apatite thermochronology 149

Galli G.*, Morigi C., Thuy B. & Gariboldi K. - The use of macrofaunal microfossils to unveil past Holocene changes: a case study from Edisto Inlet (Ross Sea, Antarctica)..... 150

Gamboa Sojo V.M., Morigi C.*, Langone L. & Lucchi R.G. - Paleoceanographic changes suggested by planktic and benthic foraminifera in the Western Svalbard Slope (Bellsund Drift) during the last century..... 151

Langone L.*, Bensi M., Aulicino G., Battaglia F., Caridi F., Carotenuto A., Cerino F., Diociaiuti T., Gallerani A., Giglio F., Kovacevic V., Kralj M., Mangoni O., Mansutti P., Monti M., Morigi C., Patrolecco L., Rauseo J., Relitti F., Retelletti Brogi S., Sabbatini A., Serino E., Tesi T., Ursella L., Greggio N. & Giordano P. - Mechanisms driving formation and preservation of the laminated sediments of Edisto Inlet, western Ross Sea (Antarctica): the sub-seasonal variability of particle composition and fluxes .. 152

Lucchi R.G.*, St. John K., Ronge T. & IODP Exp-403 Science Party - IODP Expedition 403 Eastern Fram Strait Paleo-Archive: preliminary results from the last expedition of the International Ocean Discovery Program 153

Olivetti O.*, Cattò S. & Zattin M. - The topography of the high latitude mountain chain and the enigma of high-standing plateau..... 154



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Pastore G.*, Marschalek J., van de Flierdt T., Andò S., Vermeesch P. & Carter A. - Contrasting provenance signals during Pleistocene interglacial periods influenced by West Antarctic Ice Sheet climatic response recorded at IODP Site U1524 exp. 37	155
Perotti M., Zurli L.*, Marschalek J., Mallery C., van de Flierdt T., Licht K., De Santis L., McKay R., Kulhanek D. & Expedition 374 Scientists - Clast petrography from IODP 374 cores in the central Ross Sea (Antarctica): implications for sediment provenance and source terranes.....	156
Sabbatini A. *, Morigi C., Bartolini A.C., Bardin J., Caridi F. & Monti M. - Assessing planktonic foraminiferal species from Antarctic sea-ice as a paleoceanographic proxy: preliminary insights	157
Sciarra A.*, Ruggiero L., Mazzini A., Florindo F., Wilson G., Mazzoli C., Anderson J.T.H., Olivetti V., Romano V., Sassi R., Bigi S. & Ciotoli G. - A multidisciplinary investigation into the source and impact of greenhouse gases in the Dry Valleys, Antarctica.....	158
Simonetti M.*, Montomoli C., Capponi G., Salvatore M.C., Casale S., Musumeci G., Cox S., Lyttle B.S., Pertusati P.C. & Läufer A. - Geological map of the Convoy Range and Franklin Island quadrangles (Victoria Land, Antarctica)	159
Tomassini A. *, Rocchi I., Masotta M., Petrelli M., Ágreda-López M., Ubide T. & Rocchi S. - Ice load modulation of plumbing system dynamics: Insights from intracrystalline texture and chemistry at The Pleiades Volcanic Field, Antarctica	160
 S4. Chemostratigraphy through time and space: Reconstruction of palaeoenvironment and palaeoclimate by using geochemical proxies and isotopes	
Akaki M.*, Sato H., Onoue T., Maron M., Ishikawa A. & Rigo M. - Geochemical studies across the Norian/Rhaetian boundary in the Pignola-Abriola section of the Lagonegro Basin, southern Italy	162
Aversa L., Cornacchia I.*, Aldega L., Catanzariti R., Gori F., Marianelli D. & Brandano M. - Clay minerals, trace elements and stable isotope geochemistry reveal increased biogeochemical weathering during the Middle Eocene Climatic Optimum: the Ligurian Alps record (northern Italy).....	163
Baldassarri L. *, Fanti F., Dinelli E. & Bais G. - Geochemical analysis and palaeoenvironmental reconstruction of the laminated limestones from the Villaggio del Pescatore fossil site (Trieste, Italy)	164
Brocker K.*, Border E., Montagna P., Rigo M., Áki Ragnarsson S., Valdimarsson H., Hilma Ólafsdóttir S., Therre S., Fohlmeister J., Trotter J., McCulloch M., Schröder-Ritzrau A., Lausecker M., Blaser P., Reverdin G., Colin C. & Norbert F. - Seawater temperatures, pH and water mass provenance reconstructions over the last century from cold-water coral geochemistry in the North Atlantic Ocean.....	165

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Multiparameter markers of territoriality: geochemical-isotopic and fluorometric analysis for asparagus characterization

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Keywords: isotope, soil, geochemistry.

The coastal environment of the Eastern area of the Emilia-Romagna Region is characterized by sandy soils, typically dry and exposed to salinization phenomena. These challenging conditions, usually critical for plant life, are worsening due to climate change, making it a priority to strengthen territorial resilience by characterizing and enhancing local crops that ensure a better response to saline and drought stress. The “Asparagus of Altedo PGI” demonstrates remarkable adaptability to the local soils making it a cornerstone product of this region, important for both economic valorization and territorial uniqueness and heritage. Sandy-based terrains offer ideal conditions for the emergence of asparagus turions; however, notable variations spanning from sandy-clayey loam soils to lean sandy soils delineate a gradient from inland to coast.

By conducting the multi-parametric analyses of the soil-plant system, we unveil the intrinsic connection between agricultural products and their native terroir. Leveraging geochemical-isotopic techniques alongside advanced plant phenotyping methods it is possible to discern opportunities to detect potential asparagus diversification driven by soil and environmental characteristics.

Soil samples were subjected to XRF analysis for major elements; soil and plant samples underwent ICP-MS-QQQ compositional analysis down to ultra-trace elements and EA-IRMS analysis (Marrocchino et al., 2023). The stable isotopes of light elements present in crops, such as carbon ($\delta^{13}\text{C}$) and nitrogen ($\delta^{15}\text{N}$), offer a unique form of ‘isotopic signature’ reflective of both the geochemical conditions of the soil (D’Archivio et al., 2014) and the metabolic specificity of the plants, including processes such as photosynthesis and nitrogen assimilation. PCA analysis revealed a remarkable differentiation of soils based on geochemical factors achieving resolution even at scales of just a few tens of kilometres. Notably, the abundance of Na₂O effectively delineated the coastal fields from the inland ones, while soil samples from the close-to-town Malborghetto field exhibited distinctiveness through elevated concentrations of specific heavy metals (Cr, Ni, Pb), setting them apart from their counterparts. In addition, the turions were subjected to fluorometric analysis by fast chlorophyll *a* fluorescence induction (OJIP) (Ferroni et al., 2022), a non-destructive near-instantaneous method for physiological plant assessment. An interesting correlation emerged between soil diversity and chlorophyll fluorometric parameters. Despite the uniformly excellent photosynthetic functionality of the plants observed across all fields, it was possible to distinguish the asparagus samples based on their geographical origin.

Work is still in progress to achieve a comprehensive understanding of the seamless continuity between soil and plant dynamics in correlation with the environmental attributes of the surveyed fields.

D’Archivio A. et al. (2014) - Analysis of the mineral composition of Italian saffron by ICP-MS and classification of geographical origin. *Food Chem.*, 157, 485-489.

Ferroni L. et al. (2022) - Fast chlorophyll *a* fluorescence induction (OJIP) phenotyping of chlorophyll-deficient wheat suggests that an enlarged acceptor pool size of Photosystem I helps compensate for a deregulated photosynthetic electron flow. *J. Photochem. Photobiol. B Biology*, 234, 112549.

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