

## *Polistes* paper wasps: emergence of a model genus

This special issue was a long time in the making. Its origins stem, really, from the early 1990s when a collection of researchers gathered in Italy to discuss paper wasps. It is easy to see why researchers were, and are, so fond of these beasts. These insects tend to live in relatively small social groups, construct un-enveloped nests that allow easy visibility of events occurring on the comb, and are not morphologically constrained into distinct castes. As such, these are ideal animals for studying many topics in behavioral ecology and evolutionary biology.

Proceedings from that meeting were eventually formalized into the text “*Natural History and Evolution of Paper-Wasps*” by Turillazzi and West-Eberhard (Oxford Science Publications, Oxford University Press 1996). This ‘yellow book’, as it is affectionately called, became the bible to a growing set of researchers similarly focused on paper wasps. This special issue is the product of a second conference, held at the Tufts University European Center at Taillores, France in spring 2005. This conference was attended by many of the members from the first meeting, but also by several new participants.

We called this meeting, “*Polistes* paper wasps: emergence of a model genus”. Our goal was to discuss our research, and to position *Polistes* wasps as a model genus within the biological sciences. While that is a long-term goal, our short-term goal was to produce a topically broad report representative of the current research in *Polistes* wasps, a goal we hope we achieved with the publication of the present issue.

Inside these pages you will find papers on topics that fit within all levels of analysis, and across multiple levels of biological organization. We are proud of the breadth of research questions, and the methods used to address them, presented in these papers. We are awed by what the future holds for *Polistes* research.

We must extend our thanks to all participants, to Peggy Newell and Kevin Dunn — who helped fund the conference, to Gabriella Goldstein — the Director of Tufts University’s European Center, to Caroline Blackie, Mags Blackie and Eva Alden — who helped with editorial duties, to Krzysztof Raciborski — the managing editor of the *Annales Zoologici Fennici*, and to the paper wasps — who seem to tolerate our many intrusions.

**Philip T. Starks & Stefano Turillazzi**



A photo of the conference participants, taken on the back steps of the main building at the Tufts University European Center. From bottom left: C. Lorenzi, J. Strassmann, F. Dani, L. Beani, T. Monnin, A. Liebert, L. Dapporto, J. Hunt, D. Queller, K. Pickett, P. Nonacs, T. Curtis, S. Sumner, J. Carpenter, E. Tibbetts, N. Stamp, J. Field, G. Gamboa, K. Tsuchida, S. Turillazzi, P. Starks, and R. Cervo. Photo taken by Gabriella Goldstein.