**Introduction**

The Neuropterida is a small superorder of holometabolous insects that contains ca. 6,500 extant species and is distributed worldwide. In Italy, neuropterid insects are relatively well investigated. The Italian name for the Neuropterida – lacewings (in a broad sense) is neurotteri (for the Italian names of neuropterid orders and families see Letardi 2005).

**Neuropterida of Italy**

The Italian fauna contains a substantial fraction of the total Neuropterida biodiversity of Europe and the western Palaeartic. The number of species found in Italy is similar to that of the Iberian and Balkan peninsulas, the two other major peninsular areas of southern Europe. Italy, however, contains a lower percentage of endemic species than the Iberian and Balkan peninsulas, which contain, respectively, distinct endemic faunas of Dilaridae and Raphidiidae (among other endemics). The high biodiversity of Italy (195 extant species) relative to many other European countries is attributable to its southern location on the continent, together with its varied climate, topography, and vegetation, all of which promote elevated species richness.

Letardi (1998) contains a general discussion of the zoogeography of Italian Neuropterida. The fauna of Italy can be subdivided into four groups of species based upon their generalized distributions: Afrotropical (few species), Mediterranean, European (or South European), and 'widely distributed' (e.g., Holarctic, Palaeartic, Sibero-European, or Euro-Mediterranean). The overall European Neuropterida fauna (with the exception of the Sialidae) shows a clear increase in biodiversity from north to south. However, the fauna of Italy exhibits only a slight biodiversity increase over the north-south gradient, which is probably due to the overall southerly location of the Italian peninsula on the continent. The biodiversity of neuropterid species is quite similar across most of the administrative regions of Italy, although the island faunas of Sicily and Sardinia are notably more depauperate.

This work provides interactive access to lists of the Neuropterida species that are presently known to occur in Italy, and in each of its 20 administrative regions (Figure 1; Table 1). Also included are related data on the nativity and extra-Italian distributions of these species.

**History of the Study of Italian Neuropterida**

The following review draws heavily on the work of Letardi (1998) and Nicoli Aldini (2005). The oldest evidence of neuropterous insects in the scientific literature published in Italian dates back to at least the 15th or 16th century and regards antlions.
and green lacewings are present in the substantial corpus of watercolour images of insects built up during the 16th century by the great naturalist from Bologna, Ulisse Aldrovandi (1522-1605), which were later reproduced in his work *De animalibus insectis* (1602). His illustrations of adult antlions, and a green lacewing, are among the earliest to be found in printed works. Between the 16th and the early 18th centuries, other Italian authors mentioned or dealt with lacewings, particularly the outstanding scientist from Reggio, Antonio Vallisneri (1661-1730), who published bionomical and behavioural observations on antlions and green lacewings; he was the first to publish the life cycle of an antlion and to describe and illustrate the stalked eggs of green lacewings. The first published, well-located, records of Italian Neuropterida are found in Allioni's (1766) work *Manipulus Insectorum Tauriniensis*, in which two lacewings (most likely *Chrysoperla* sp. and *Chrysopa perla* (Linnaeus)) are cited as having been collected in the vicinity of Turin in northern Italy. Allioni also collected the ascalaphids from which Fabricius later described *Libeloides latinus* (as *Ascalaphus italicus*). In 1774, Ginanni recorded *Euroleon nostras* (Fourcroy) in pine woods around Ravenna, on the northern Adriatic coast. Finally, in the last decade of the century, the studies of Domenico Cirillo and Vincenzo Petagna in southern Italy and of Pietro Rossi in central and northern Italy, increased the size of the known neuropterid fauna to a couple of dozen species. Pietro Rossi, who became the first University Professor of Entomology in the world, described in his works (1790, 1792) two new species, *Hemerobius italicus* and *Myrmeleon flavicornis* (now *Italochrysa italic* and *Megistopus flavicornis*), with their type localities ("locus typicus") in two Italian cities (Florence and Pisa, respectively). Rossi was also the first worker to record from Italy species now placed in the orders Megaloptera and Raphidioptera.

During the 19th century, the number of studies on Italian Neuropterida greatly increased. In addition to contributions from several renowned German-speaking neuropterologists (such as W. G. Schneider, H. A. Hagen, and J. H. Albarda), there were a good number of keen local entomologists, some highly skilled, engaged in collecting and studying these insects. Among them, Achille Costa stands out. Together with his father, Oronzio Gabriele, and his brother, Giuseppe, Achille studied large areas of central and southern Italy, describing several new species, some of them still valid at the specific and generic levels. With the works of A. Costa (1855, 1858, 1863), C. Tacchetti (1861), and a variety of foreign entomologists, the second half of the century saw the number of known Italian Neuropterida rise to 60 species.

During the first half of the 20th century, L. Navás, the most prolific author on the Neuropterida to date, made significant contributions to the knowledge of the Italian fauna—although he also contributed to significant faunistic and taxonomic disorder by describing many new species that are today considered synonyms or *nomina dubia*. In the middle of the century, Italian neuropterology was dominated by the works of Maria Matilde Principi (1952, 1956, 1958, 1960, 1961, 1966), an early-adopter and promoter of the practical use of lacewings as biological pest control agents (she was one of the first Italian researchers to promote this practice among local agronomists). Principi and R. A. Pantaleoni, one of her students, are co-authors of the most recent printed checklist of the neuropterid fauna of Italy (Bernardi lori et al. 1995), which is still one of the basic reference resources for taxonomic and faunistic studies in Italy, together with the broader European faunal work of Aspóck et al. (1980) and the contemporaneous work of Monserrat (1980). The review by Aspóck and Hözel (1996) of the Neuropterida of the Mediterranean area also remains very useful, particularly for understanding of the relationships of the Italian fauna to the broader fauna of the western Palearctic region.

Methods

The data for this module of the World Neuropterida Faunas suite has been derived primarily from the Italian web resource *Neuropterida presenti sul territorio italiano* (Letardi 2016), which provides baseline faunal data for the country and regions of Italy, and access to a wide variety of related fauna-related information. In the current Neuropterida of Italy presentation, all faunal lists are interactively generated based upon user-selected options for five fauna-definition parameters. The parameter options selected are used to generate lists of consistent and parallel format from an underlying set of distribution data. Each faunal list presents the following information for each listed taxon: (1) higher classification [order and family], (2) current name [species or subspecies], (3) presumed nativity to list area, (4) broader geographic distribution, (5) temporal occurrence, (6) lithostratigraphy [for fossils, where available], and (7) taxonomic status. List taxonomy and nomenclature follow the Neuropterida Species of the World catalogue (Oswald 2015).

Adult lacewings were collected using an insect net, malaise trap, sticky trap, or were collected by hand near a light source. Antlion larvae were excavated from their pits using a spoon or a sieve. Insects were preserved either in ethanol or dry (pinned or pointed) and most are deposited in the author’s collection in Rome.