

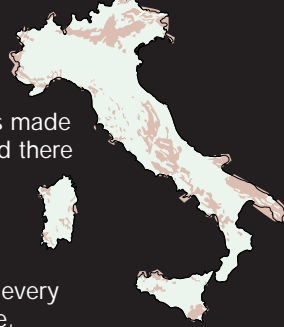


Caves:
The reign of absolute darkness and silence,
broken only by the sounds of water dripping and
trickling.



Not only darkness and silence:
A multitude of colourless, blind organisms, from
tiny crustaceans and insects to the mythical
proteus (olm), live in darkness.

Karstism is not a rare or
curious phenomenon: in
Italy, 27% of the territory is made
up of karstifiable rocks, and there
are more than 33,000
registered caves.



Evolution has transformed every
karstic massif into a unique,
unrepeatable world, home to many endemic
species (species which do not
exist anywhere else on Earth).



The very presence of endemic
species is one of the criteria
which the Habitat Directive of
the European Community
applies when choosing natural
areas which it is our duty to
safeguard.



This volume is a guide to the
world of caves and their
inhabitants.
It aims at making accessible to all
the most important aspects of one
branch of scientific knowledge,
until recently only to be found in
specialized publications.



Caves and karstic phenomena

ITALIAN HABITATS



Caves and karstic phenomena

ITALIAN HABITATS
Ministero dell'Ambiente e della Tutela del Territorio
Museo Friulano di Storia Naturale

