

**CONSIGLIO NAZIONALE DELLE RICERCHE
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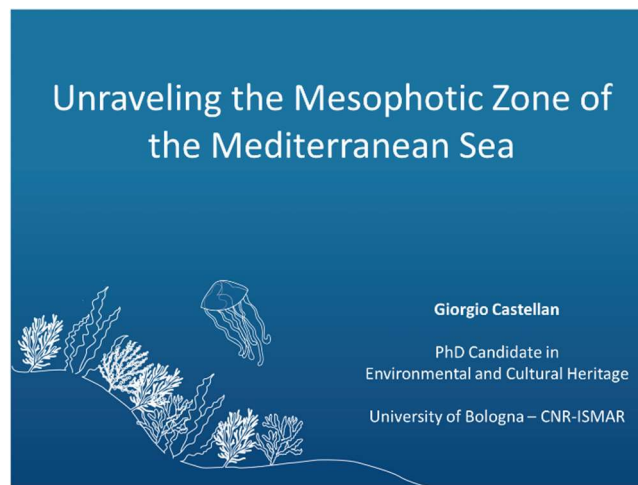
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Unraveling the Mesophotic Zone of the Mediterranean Sea

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Mesophotic ecosystems are corals, algae, and sponges assemblages constituting complex three-dimensional structures mainly found between 30 m and the bottom of the photic zone. From the early 2000s, the volume of scientific literature about benthic mesophotic ecosystems is strongly increased, together with the awareness of both their biological richness and related ecological importance. However, the Mediterranean Mesophotic Zone and the biological assemblages it hosts are still poorly studied with respect to the extra-Mediterranean areas. During this seminar, we will explore the available information regarding the Mediterranean Mesophotic Zone with a focus on its conceptual and spatial definition. Preliminary results on the biodiversity and the ecological functions it supports, and how environmental factors drive the distribution and the composition of Mediterranean mesophotic assemblages will be also presented.