
Preface

This book is prepared by the A.V. Zhirmunsky Institute of Marine Biology, Far Eastern Branch of the Russian Academy of Sciences (IMB; Vladivostok) as an outcome of long-term collaboration of the IMB with Russian, Chinese, and Vietnamese institutions, and international organizations and networks in the fields of marine biology and biodiversity. Particularly, ideas and research findings presented in this book have been discussed during two meetings held in Nhatrang City jointly with the Institute of Oceanography, Vietnam Academy of Science and Technology (2010) and the Research Institute of Aquaculture No. 3 (2011), with financial support from the Asia-Pacific Network for Global Change Research (APN). For more than 35 years, the IMB has had a long history of research cooperation with Vietnamese and Chinese scientists on biological studies of the South China Sea. Moreover, Russian marine biologists have successfully collaborated with these Asian countries since the 1950s, resulting, in many cases, in new information on marine biological phenomena and developing biodiversity understanding. Although we do not share common seas, our environmental problems are similar, and declining biodiversity is one of the most challenging. Environmental pollution, global warming, biological invasions, coastal modifications, and overfishing all contribute to the current biodiversity crisis. The South China Sea is one of the most biodiversity-rich regions of the World Ocean, and is partially included in the East Indies Triangle (Coral Triangle), a centre of maximum marine biodiversity. However, the biodiversity of the sea has been insufficiently studied, and, therefore, every step to a better understanding is very important. In this book, we have tried to cover a wide range of marine organisms. We have invited scientists from the IMB, the Zoological Institute, Russian Academy of Sciences (St. Petersburg), Pacific Research Fisheries Centre (TINRO-centre, Vladivostok), South China Sea Institute of Oceanology, Chinese Academy of Sciences (Guangzhou), and Nha Trang Institute of Technological Research and Application, Vietnam Academy of Science and Technology (Nha Trang) to present both comprehensive reviews and research papers on the key biological groups: corals, mollusks, nemerteans, sea kraits and snakes, and

macrophytes, and also on the composition and distribution of intertidal communities. We hope that this book will be of broad interest for marine biologists in countries bordering the South China Sea and other tropical seas. Preparation and publication of the book was supported by the FEB RAS project VANT-005 (A.V. Adrianov) and the APN projects ARCP2010-18NMY and ARCP2011-10CMY (K.A. Lutaenko).

Editors