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Author(s)	Mawatari, Shunsuke; Okada, Hisatake
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Preface

The International Symposium "Dawn of a New Natural History - Integration of Geoscience and Biodiversity Studies" was held at the Graduate School of Science, Hokkaido University, Sapporo, 5–6 March 2004. It was organized by the 21st Century Center of Excellence (COE) for "Neo-Science of Natural History - Origin and Evolution of Natural Diversity" launched in September 2003 as a 5-year-long, grant-in-aid project awarded by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT). Seventeen papers were presented orally during five sessions of the symposium, seven of them by invited speakers from Canada, France, Germany, Japan, and the USA. Twenty-two papers were displayed as posters. The papers spanned widely varying themes, such as the interactions between Earth and life (with a focus on interactions among climate change, human impact, and biotic responses), the diversity of life, and geological materials, structures, and processes. They dealt with various aspects of tectonics, geochemistry, natural resources, ocean drilling, integrative biology, biogeography & evolution, and biodiversity databases.

An outcome of the symposium, this proceedings volume consists of 23 papers, including a brief introduction to the COE Program. For editing, reviewing, and administration related to this volume, we thank the following individuals: core members and research staff of the current COE program (Kiyoshi Fujino, Haruo Katakura, Noriyuki Suzuki, Takeo Horiguchi, Shin Tochinai, Hiroharu Matsueda, Hiroshi Nishi, Ken Sawada, Urumu Tsunogai, Matthew H. Dick and Pitambar Gautam), Renji Naruse of the Institute of Low Temperature Science at Hokkaido University, and Yasuo Sakura of Chiba University.

As evidenced by thought-provoking and fruitful discussions, we are sure that the symposium served as a forum for research collaboration and mutual interactions related to the newly emerging multidisciplinary field of the "Neo-Science of Natural History" that crosses the traditional boundaries of the geosciences and biosciences. We earnestly hope that this volume will serve as a base for firmly establishing this emerging interdisciplinary discipline.

Shunsuke Mawatari and Hisatake Okada
July 2004