

## **Characterization of ibex birth sites in Southern Italian Cotian Alps**

*Dematteis A.<sup>1</sup>, Martino L.<sup>1</sup>, Menzano A.<sup>1</sup>, Tizzani P.<sup>1</sup>, Craveri P.<sup>2</sup>, Meneguz P.G.<sup>3</sup>*

<sup>1</sup> Centro Ricerche sulla Gestione della Fauna Selvatica (Cerigefas), Sampeyre (CN), <sup>2</sup> Provincia di Cuneo, Assessorato Tutela Fauna, <sup>3</sup> Dipartimento di Produzioni animali, Epidemiologia ed Ecologia – Università di Torino

Several studies report the females ibex ability of selecting their sites of birth on the basis of environmental peculiarities. The ibex birth sites, in fact, are described as rock slopes hard to reach, with double function of protecting female and kid from predators, and of allowing kid to learn quickly how to move in their typical habitat. Our aim is to characterize the ibex birth sites in order to have more information on: a) the species' ecology from a territorial use point of view; b) the choice of reintroduction sites. The study area limits at north with Granero Mt. watershed, at west with France border and at south with Maurin pass and Maira river, for a total area of 47.000 hectares. Twenty-six localizations of new birth kids were recorded in a period of 5 years.

The datum was obtained from recurrent observations of radio-equipped females during the birth period. The site of birth was analyzed for height and exposure. The 3.8% of ibex birth sites observed are located at an elevation lower than 2000 mt., the 15.5% between 2000 and 2500 mt., the 69.2% between 2500 and 3000 mt. and the 11.5% upper 3000 mt. The 4% of ibex birth sites observed are exposed between north and east, the 80.6% between east and south, the 7.7% between south and west and the 7.7% between west and north. From the observation of data reported, we can suppose the existence of a specific strategy in the choice of ibex birth sites. As a matter of fact, sites located between east and south and with elevation ranging from 2500 to 3000 mt. seem to be preferred.