

## Updating of ibex distribution in Southern Italian Cotian Alps

*Dematteis A.*<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

Two ibex populations were present in Cuneo Province at the end of the 90's: Maritime Alps, 700-800 ibex, and Viso Mt., with 60 animals. A reintroduction, between 1999 and 2003, was made by Cuneo Province in South Cotian Alps in order to repopulate in a continuous manner all the Cuneese Alps. The study area limits at north with Granero Mt. watershed, at west with France border and at south with Maddalena pass and Stura river, for a total area of 70.000 hectares. Before this operation, eleven wintering areas were identify by an environmental valuation model created for this purpose (A. Dematteis, *et Al.*; First international conference on alpine ibex, Cogne (Aosta), 2000), and three of them were choose for the releasing. Forty-five animals (23 females and 22 males), captured at the Maritime Alps Natural Park, were release in three different valleys: Varaita Valley (N=13, 1999 and 2003), Maira Valley (N=22, 2000 and 2001) and Stura Valley (N=10, 2002). Spring's census were run from 2001 to the present year, to monitor the population increase. The census were made on the eleven macro areas, divided in 25 smaller zones of wintering. Data of census, which represent the minimum real number population existing, demonstrates a constant increase of the population: 65 ibexes were census in 2001, 79 in 2002 ( $\lambda_{2001/2002}=0.21$ ), 144 in 2003 ( $\lambda_{2002/2003}=0.82$ ;  $\lambda_{2001/2003}=0.61$ ) and 116 in 2004 (as a result of the difficulty to reach observation sites due to snow). The demographic increases observed are partially due to the continuous releasing operations, the recall of neighbouring animals coming from Torino Province and from France, and the qualification of the selected areas.