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Abstract

Atlas of Mammals of Venetia

The results of the Atlas of Mammals of Venetia are presented in this volume. The Venetia region territory was divided into 10x10 km squares that correspond to the 1:25000 scale maps of UTM. The data employed for the realization of this Atlas were collected from 1970 to 1995.

A total of 82 species have been confirmed (three of them are Cetacean). It is worthy to be pointed out the presence of some taxa, because of their importance from an ecological and biogeographical point of view.

Among Insectivora, one of the most interesting species is the pigmy white-toothed shrew (*Suncus etruscus*), seldom met in the north-eastern Italy but found in the Venetia in some xerothermic areas. The alpin shrew (*Sorex alpinus*) and the pigmy shrew (*Sorex minutus*) are, on the other side, distributed limitedly to the microthermal areas of the Prealps and of the Alps; the status of the water shrews (gen. *Neomys*) is still under consideration and we are working for a better knowledge of their real distribution and of their ecological choices.

Concerning the Chiroptera, Venetia is the Italian region that has got the largest number of sighted species. Bechstein's bat (*Myotis bechsteini*), Brandt's bat (*Myotis brandtii*), noctuls (gen. *Nyctalus*), barbastelle (*Barbastella barbastellus*) and free-tailed bat (*Tadarida teniotis*), rare and hardly known species in the rest of the national territory, deserve a particular mention.

Among Rodentia, forest dormouse (*Dryomys nitedula*), striped field mouse (*Apodemus agrarius*), field vole (*Microtus agrestis*) and Liechtenstein's pine vole (*Microtus liechtensteini*) find in the south-western Venetia the limit to their distribution area. Venetia is, as well, the north-eastern limit of the area of Savi's pine vole (*Microtus savii*).

The position of Carnivora is really interesting if we consider that there are species in settlement or even in expansion. The species in question are the jackal (*Canis aureus*), permanently present in the province of Belluno, the lynx (*Lynx lynx*), the wild cat (*Felis silvestris*) and the brown bear (*Ursus arctos*), that are slowly resetting in new territories. The fox (*Vulpes vulpes*), the beech marten (*Martes foina*) and the badger (*Meles meles*) seem to be clearly in expansion even in settings which are very different from the ones they are used to. Polecat (*Mustela putorius*) is, till now, the less sighted Mustelidae and probably the rarest. The disappearance of the otter (*Lutra lutra*) is recent; it has been sighted until the end of the 70's.

Among Ungulata, besides the typical alpine species which are the effect of recent reintroduction and repopulating, we can sight also mouflon (*Ovis orientalis musimon*) and fallow deer (*Dama dama*); these last two have been subject of uncontrolled iulets for hunting purposes and, at present, are settled in permanent but localized groups. Recently we have been assisting to the expansion of the red deer (*Cervus elaphus*) from North and from East.

The status of the species belonging to Cetacean is, at present, the less known among Venetian Mammals. In the regional waters we can sight only two coastal species: the bottle-nosed dolphin (*Tursiops truncatus*), more frequent, and the striped dolphin (*Stenella coeruleoalba*), rare but probably in expansion. The common dolphin (*Delphinus delphis*) and Risso's dolphin (*Grampus griseus*) seem apparently disappeared, while the sights of sperm whale (*Physeter catodon*) are absolutely unusual.